

Sikh Positivity Helps to Alleviate the Darkness of Unprecedented Adversity

Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh

As the United Kingdom prepares to emerge from an extended period of semi confinement and social isolation, Sikh Assembly wishes to take a moment to acknowledge the events we have experienced as a community during this time.

From the outset, when the necessity of restrictions upon movement and social distancing became apparent, the Sikh community united to educate each other and our institutions to minimise the danger to each other and the public, recognising our responsibilities concerning individual and group safety, health and welfare, including mental wellbeing in terms of spirituality, communal meditation and prayer.

These responsibilities took many forms. Individuals, like the amazing 73-year-old Skipping Sikh, Bhai Rajinder Singh, demonstrated so well the Sikh belief in physical activity being a spiritual companion, as necessary as meditation. Sikh Gurdwaras, such as Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara (Gravesend) and Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha in Derby, were very quick to embrace social media and live-streamed prayer and Shabad Gurbani recitals online from the outset. The Midlands Langar Seva Society and SWAT Nishkam are among many focus groups, Gurdwaras, and Langar Sewa teams helping the whole country to ensure hunger was not an issue, including supporting meals for many NHS Trusts. Similarly, Sikh Relief are helping the underprivileged across several states across India with food, PPE and shelter. These acts of selfless service and civil responsibility have beautifully executed Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji's concept of Kirat Karo, Vandh Shako, Naam Japoh; we have worked hard, shared with all and meditated all the while. These are shining examples of this age, that Sikhi is for humanity to embrace and recognise the whole human race as One.

It is undeniable that the Sikh community has lost some precious individuals, Gursikhs of the highest calibre and influence. Gursikhs such as Dr Manjeet Singh Riyat, Bhai Satnam Singh Virdee and Giani Amrik Singh here in the UK, and the honourable Hazoori Ragi Bhai Nirmal Singh Khalsa and so many others, leave a painful gap in the rich diversity of our Panth. We have seen our families suffer and restricted from attending funerals and prayer services for their loved ones. This pandemic has been a painful experience, but one that Sikh Assembly is proud to say the Sikh community has accepted as Hukkam with dignified fortitude. We, as a community, realise that this is true for all and wish to extend only love and respect to all society.

The Sikhs are a nation that has a rich history of persevering in the face of unfathomable adversity and have a shared experience in the world wars with our British brothers and sisters that we shall commemorate this week, on the 75th anniversary of VE Day. It is these shared values that in the coming weeks and months will continue to present the Sikh contribution to British national spirit and character and being recognised as an integral part of the national fabric.

We appreciate that there are questions to be asked and data gathering and analysis to be completed to fully understand the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on our community. We also have a responsibility to ensure the relevant authorities and agencies address our rights, resources and concerns. The world is facing this pandemic with an ongoing level of uncertainty and gaps in preparation, and due lessons must be learnt quickly. For Sikhs, in particular, the matter of PPE shortages has been an acute concern. Efforts are being made by Sikh Assembly to constructively address such issues with the Authorities. Hurdles must be crossed with transparency and constructive dialogue – this will ultimately strengthen our British and global community.

We shall share with the community our advice on how best to gradually transition out of the lockdown. We wish everybody continued good health and offer our prayers to stay positive in thought and deed, to be mentally and physically in Chardi kalá.

Guru Sahib Ang Sang.

Paramjit Kaur Matharu
Sikh Assembly, CEO