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Ik oāṅkār sat̃ nām kartā purakh̃ nirbhā'o nirvair akāl mūrati ajūnī saibhā'n gur parsād̃.



The Sikh Bulletin

GURU NANAK MISSION

March April 2014

ਚੇਤ-ਵੈਸਾਖ ਪੜ੍ਹ ਨਾਨਕਸ਼ਾਹੀ

editor@sikhbulletin.com

Volume 16 Number 3&4

Published by: Khalsa Tricentennial Foundation of N.A. Inc; 3524 Rocky Ridge Way, El Dorado Hills, CA 95762, USA **Fax** (916) 933-5808
Khalsa Tricentennial Foundation of N.A. Inc. is a religious tax-exempt California Corporation.

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GURU NANAK DARBAR GURUDWARA DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES A FIRST OF ITS KIND DEDICATED GURUDWARA IN THE MIDDLE EAST

A SPECIAL ISSUE OF THE SIKH BULLETIN



EDITORIAL

MILK BARS TO DESI SHRAB BARS IN THE LAND OF THE GURUS

It was more than half a century ago, June 25th 1960 to be exact, that I stepped off the Indian soil and on to Pakistan's at Wagah border, hitchhiking my way across the Middle East, Europe and the United States to the University of Washington in Seattle.

My first return visit to India came in 1968. Eight years had brought changes but mostly in the increased population. Before 1960 I had seen people ride on top of the trains but this time, at least in Ganganagar District of Rajasthan, people were riding on top of the buses as well and not the double decker kind.

There was, however, one bright development in Panjab. At almost every road crossing over the irrigation canals there was a Milk Bar and my favourite was almond milk. Cold bottle of milk was so refreshing during Panjab's summer and healthy, I still remember it fondly.

In 1976, to avoid the summer heat because my family with six and four year olds was with us, I chose to travel during January through March. It had its own discomfort, very cold for lack of central heating that we take for granted here. I do not have a memory of whether the Milk Bars were still there in 1976 or not. But this time there was no sign of them but '*desi shrab thekas*' were in every village, thanks, no doubt, to both the ruling parties in Panjab.

This year, after 38 years, I decided to pay a visit to my village, 35BB in Ganganagar District of Rajasthan, the village that I left in 1960, for good, where I grew up and where my nine siblings were born. I wanted to see what miracle my youngest brother had brought to the place where he was born. (Please see The Sikh Bulletin July-August 2012 at www.sikhbulletin.com).

This time the changes since 1976 were profound. For starters we travelled by car from New Delhi airport to 35BB, in the middle of the night in thick fog, in many ways more convenient than train, although even train travel has improved. All the narrow gauges in District Ganganagar are now to the standard of the rest of the country and one does not have to switch trains going from New Delhi to Ganganagar. Paved roads are

plentiful, although they have a lot of room for improvement including educating the public in the rules of the road.

But not only one thing has not changed it has added to its ranks another of God's creatures. To the wandering cattle on the streets of the cities you can now add stray dogs. In Goa the visitors had to avoid disturbing at least half a dozen stray dogs, blissfully asleep, at the entrance to a historical Church. The stray dogs in the cities are just as numerous as the cattle used to be and still are and they make themselves comfortable on sidewalks, streets, and at the entrance to the shops, totally oblivious to the pedestrians and noisy traffic.

But what is missing in every city are the trash bins; as a result the whole city is a trash bin. What I learnt about cleanliness of human surroundings in first grade in the village school in 35BB has escaped the city folks and even the village folks. 35BB Primary School that had one teacher and 22 students grades 1-4 in my time has four teachers in a Middle School for twice that many students and within two miles of the village are two Public (Private that is) Schools, for profit, with English medium. As the educational opportunities have increased, the civic sense has disappeared. When we visited my alma mater I could not help but point out to the teachers bits of paper littering the ground around the children seated on the floor. Response was shocking. Parent involvement in their children's education has increased so much that they have forbidden the teachers to ask their children to keep the school litter free.

In New Delhi when our tour bus stopped for lunch in a rather posh area, with tourist emporiums surrounding a fenced park, I asked a security guard outside one such emporium where I could throw the banana peel in my hand. He pointed to a corner of the fenced park across the street where I could see a cluster of cattle and dogs. I walked up to see a heap of garbage with the animals munching on it. I added my contribution to this recycling bin.

Tongas and rickshaws are mostly gone, at least in Panjab but vehicles of various kinds are plentiful. The family of one of my sisters had gone from the States to their village in Ganganagar District for the wedding of their granddaughter, a month before my visit. As is the custom in India these days, they had hosted 1200

people for the party. I asked my brother in law where he accommodated all the relatives during the nights. No body stayed the night, he responded, everybody has cars and after the functions everybody went home and came back the next day.

Every village in Ganganagar District, at least where all of my relatives live and whom I visited, are linked with paved roads. Same is true in Hoshiarpur District of Panjab. During my college days the travelling time to relatives' villages that used take most of a day now took less than an hour by car; now that is a real improvement. And yes India has toll roads too.

Where ever we drove in Rajasthan, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh and flying from Udaipur to Bombay, there was one common sight, the brick kiln chimneys. I do not recall seeing any during my last two visits. As a result adobe homes in the villages are being replaced with baked brick and villages have water works and electricity. Now that is a real improvement.

As before, the villages are cleaner, quieter and healthy to live in and the cities are crowded, noisy, filthy, smelly and unhealthy to live in. In Panjab's Doaba, several villages, ancestral home to NRIs in Canada, United State and UK, have been adopted by their Diaspora sons and living conditions improved by bringing modern sanitary practices. Water, sewer and drainage has been piped underground, streets are paved and wired for electricity.

One fact manifested itself every place I went to, a very large growth in India's population. The places I knew, I failed to recognize and nobody seems to be concerned about it.

We had combined three visits into one, eleven days to visit relatives in Ganganagar District of Rajasthan and where I and my wife were born and educated, in Panjab, seventeen days of a guided tour of New Delhi, Agra, Rajasthan, Bombay and Goa, through Virgin Vacations and three days in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. It was a miracle that everything went smoothly and exactly as planned, in spite of the hectic and chaotic days.

I had never been south of the Chandigarh, Delhi, Jaipur line. While teaching Geography for the Indian Air Force in New Delhi in 1959 I had planned a student

excursion to Ceylon. All of my colleagues were very concerned about us, northerners, travelling by train for days through the territory of the southerners. Relief was felt by them all when on the morning of the day we were to depart New Delhi the news broke that the Ceylonese had assassinated their Prime Minister, Mr. Bandaranaike, forcing us to cancel the trip. The change in that kind of attitude this time was refreshing. Our driver was from Uttra Khand, the Chefs and other hospitality industry workers were from all over India, placed in the hotels and restaurants by their privately run hospitality schools.

I had lived in Delhi for two years, 1958-1960, had visited the Red Fort, Chandani Chowk, Gurudwara Sis Ganj Sahib, but neither the Jama Masjid nor the alleys and narrow streets around it. Most charitable comment I can make is that I am so grateful I do not have to live there.

Bombay, the Slumdog Millionaire city, was a pleasant contrast to Delhi. Both are big and home to India's ethnic diversity but Bombay appeared to be much cleaner and more accepting of India's ethnic diversity than New Delhi and much safer. While Delhi newspapers carried daily stories of rapes and murder, it was pleasantly surprising to see young couples of all religious beliefs, including scarf clad young Muslim women and, even single young women, strolling and jogging on the Marine Drive across from our hotel in Nariman Point. The best pleasant surprise was Udaipur, the City of Lakes, the cleanest city of all that we visited.

The culmination of this trip was the three night stop in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, the city of the future, in the present, a *mangal* in the desert, with a crowning jewel for a Sikh, not the Burj Khalifa, but Gurudwara Guru Nanak Darbar. I had wanted to see it in person since 2012 when I first reported about it in the September-October 2012 issue of The Sikh Bulletin. Result of this wish fulfillment is this special issue of The Sikh Bulletin on this Gurudwara.

Our tour manager/guide, Mr. Kapil Rohatgi, was so eloquent and knowledgeable about India that I requested him to write for this issue what he was telling the tourists. His article appears very last.

Hardev Singh Shergill

GURU NANAK DARBAR GURUDWARA, DUBAI

On the way back from India I had planned to stop over in **Dubai, United Arab Emirates**, to visit the first ever in the Arab world, **Guru Nanak Darbar Gurudwara**. I am so glad that I was not only able to do just that but also get to meet, face to face, with the person whose leadership brought this all about, Mr. Surender Singh Kandhari.



Other than the first article, which is a reproduction of first reference to this Gurudwara in the September-October 2012 issue of the Sikh Bulletin, most of the material in this issue has been provided by him; rest has been found on google.

According to THE SIKH 100, "*Surender Singh is youngest President of the Automobile Association of Andhra Pradesh and youngest Captain of the Emirates Golf Club in Dubai. Chairman of Al Dobowi Group, one of the largest tyre distribution companies in the world, he contributed a total of 65million Arab Emirate*

Dirhams to build the first 'legal' Gurudwara in the United Arab Emirates. It is built on land donated by the ruler of Dubai, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum. The structure is over 100,000sq foot and has served over 40,000 worshippers in a single day. The Gurudwara had its opening ceremony in 2012."

According to Wikipedia, The United Arab Emirates, sometimes simply called the Emirates, or the UAE, is a country located in the southeast end of the Arabian Peninsula on the Persian Gulf, bordering Oman to the east and Saudi Arabia to the south, as well as sharing sea borders with Qatar, Iran and Pakistan.

Established on 2nd December 1971, the country is a federation of seven emirates (equivalent to principalities). Each emirate is governed by a hereditary emir who jointly form the Federal Supreme Council which is the highest legislative and executive body in the country. One of the emirs is selected as the President of the United Arab Emirates. The constituent emirates are **Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah, and Umm al-Quwain**.

The capital is Abu Dhabi, which is one of the two centers of commercial and cultural activities, together with Dubai. Islam is the official religion of the UAE, and Arabic is the official language.

Over the years as the economy of UAE grew, so did its need for man power. In this global movement of manpower and capital, Sikhs take second seat to no one. According to current estimates there are roughly **50,000 Sikhs in UAE of which 48000 are blue collar workers and 2000 are white collar and businessmen.**

There has been Sikh presence in the Muslim world for a long time but not in the Arab world. There still is sizeable, though dwindling, population of Sikhs in Afghanistan who are Afghan nationals. Tehran and Zahedan in Iran have had Sikh populations, primarily businessmen, going back to prior to 1947. At that time even Mashad, Iran's second largest city and close to Afghanistan border, boasted a large Sikh population to even have a Gurudwara, like the two other Iranian cities.

But by 1960 Mashhad's Sikh population had dwindled

literally to 'sava lakh khalsa'. I know that personally because when I was hitchhiking my way from New Delhi to Seattle in 1960, I stayed with the last Sikh couple in Mashad. Sikhs in Zahedan and Tehran also played host to me.

An interesting story told to me in Zahedan was that the naming of that city came about when the father of the last Shah of Iran visited Zahedan and saw the white bearded Sikh businessmen he named the city Zahedan, home of the pious.

The effort to build **Guru Nanak Darbar Gurudwara** began around the year 2002 when the Sangat of **United Arab Emirates** felt the need for a better and larger facility to accommodate its increasing numbers. It took five years of concerted effort just to get the permission to build, which was an accomplishment in itself and another five years to build.

Unfortunately, by the time the permission came through the world had entered a global recession of 2008. That made raising funds not an easy task. It taxed the willingness and capacity of the sangat to support the fund raising effort.



However, two things came together to make it happen; the perseverance and commitment to the cause by a few dedicated souls and a grand gesture by HIS HIGHNESS SHEIKH MOHAMMED bin RASHID AL MAKTOUM, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, who donated the land for Gurudwara site. What that effort achieved is the most modern Gurudwara Sahib in the world that officially opened its doors on

January 17th 2012.

Gurdwara is managed by an Advisory Board of 14 members, from all sections of the society, chaired by S. Surender Singh Kandhari. It meets once in three months to supervise and advise. It is assisted by a staff of 2 managers, 12 Granthis, 7 cleaning staff, 10 kitchen staff 2 drivers, 2 helpers, a total of 35 paid staff.

In the following pages of this special issue of The Sikh Bulletin the readers will find not only the story of the evolution of this unique and first Gurudwara in the Arab world and its serene beauty but, thanks to Geeta Chhabra Ji, also an uplifting look into the upbringing and life of an enterprising, inspiring and socially conscious individual, Surender Singh Kandhari, who sets a shining example for all of us to emulate.

Surender Singh Kandhari has found joy in giving. I hope it is contagious.

I am personally grateful to Kandhari Ji for his prompt and full cooperation in preparing this issue.

It is my earnest wish that Sikhs living in Europe and North American Diaspora will, just as I have done, make Dubai a stopover, enroute to or way back home from India and be a witness to this unparalleled event in the history of Sikhism.

Hardev Singh Shergill

GURU NANAK DURBAR _ DUBAI

[This article first appeared in the September-October 2012 issue of the Sikh Bulletin. It has taken since that time to fulfill my desire to visit this unique, first of its kind Gurudwara. Hardev Singh Shergill]

Visitors say that it is even more beautiful than the Golden Temple of Amritsar. The only Gurdwara of its kind in the modern world, some are even comparing Kandhari to erstwhile kings, who made such iconic monuments of importance during their rule.



A beautiful fact in religious harmony, when he brings home historic significance that the foundation stone of the Golden Temple was laid by Muslim Saint Hazrat Mian Mir and land donated now by Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai. Large part of the 65 million dirham spent on making it has been spared by Kandhari himself. Heavenly spirituality meets with earthly opulence. A spectacular combine made possible by the will of God, through his chosen man, Surinder Singh Kandhari.



From 24 carat gold canopies to exclusive Italian marble, the temple of worship is a masterpiece in architecture, aesthetics & grandeur, all in the name of God.

The serenity as you enter is just the same as one would find in any other place of worship. But behind the faith lies six years of toil and treasure spending in what stands as an icon of Sikhism in the Middle East.

Situated in Jebel Ali, a prominent location, measuring 100, 000 sq. ft. spread across four levels, it is visited by hundreds of devotees from across the globe.

The building contractor has guaranteed the structure for 100 years. It has high speed silent lifts. The kitchen is made & manned to five star standards. "I told the ruler that one can't surpass the Golden Temple but what we will have is the most modern Gurdwara in the world" said Kandhari, chairman of the Al Dobowi Group, and one of the most prominent NRI's in the Middle East.

The community box collections are already very high which pleases the management as they plan to spend it all in binding the Indian – Pakistan community closer.

The next steps unveil opening of hospitals & schools for public good, as well as teaching native languages and religious strictures.

DIFFERENT DIALOGUES:**MR. SURENDER SINGH KANDHARI**

In conversation with Mr. Surender Singh Kandhari –
Founder & Chairman of Al Dobowi Group, Dubai (UAE).

Educational Background:

Graduated with Honours in Commerce from Loyola College,
Chennai (India).

Professional Background:

He is the Chairman of Guru Nanak Darbar
Jebel Ali, Dubai.

By Geeta Chhabra

Silhouetted against the expanding skyline of Dubai – a regal landmark stands in tranquility – embossing the true spirit of UAE. Every time I go there, I am mesmerized by the aura of the place. From then on what I am enjoying is a tremendous mood of fulfillment and peace.

Having myself known the importance of visiting holy abodes, I have always respected and understood the spiritual sentiments which are attached to sacred monuments.

I felt a surer faith of relevance, when I thought: what could be a better place to have a dialogue with Surender Singh Kandhari – than under the roof of a holy shrine; more so, when the gentleman has been privileged to be associated with the whole developing scheme of the Gurudwara Guru Nanak Darbar. He saw it developing from the first brick to the last! In every sense of the word, Surender Kandhari has carried the responsibility with wishing extended prosperity of Indo-UAE friendship – through the birth of Guru Nanak Darbar.

Second only to The Golden Temple in Amritsar (India), Guru Nanak Darbar Gurudwara located in Jebel Ali, South West of Dubai, flourishes to remember and narrate the lineal philosophy of wise rulers, like, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, who has been gracious to grant permission for constructing the revered Sikh shrine.

It seems, by the will of God Almighty, Surender Kandhari was the ‘chosen’ man to start and complete the monolithic project. I learn from him, amidst other governing yardsticks of principles, once the basic concept of *sangat* and *langar* - spiritual congregation and community meals was explained, and how the ideas of equality in Sikhism match with Islam, were exchanged with the Ministry of Islamic Affairs – things

began to roll in a systematic order to commence the erection of the blessed sanctuary.

Surender Kandhari exclaims in appreciation, ‘The permission is one thing, but His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum gave us 25,400 sq. ft. of free land – for the community.’

He tells me in a committed tone, ‘the making of the Gurudwara – it was literally, a journey to the unknown for me. Sheikh Mohammed’s generosity and tolerance towards other religions is very commendable. He has always respected other nationalities and different cultures.’

This is a well-known fact. Thus it is this philosophical foresight and tolerant approach of the Emirati Leaders – which is providing boost to the advancement in UAE. I would say that Islam is displaying what is true of Islam! Of course, Guru Nanak Darbar Gurudwara is not the only example in evidence – in the region.

During our racy discussion in the Conference Room, over delicious snacks and tea prepared in the Gurudwara’s modern eatery – talks on different subjects began. More specifically, I was now focused on the life and achievements of Surender Kandhari. For part of the interview, his spouse, Bubbles sat with us. The lady herself is devoted in serving the community by giving many regular hours in supervising the various social events, like, *kirtans*, weddings, meals, prayers – the routine of this nature is continuously taking place in the holy premises.

Surender Kandhari is a well-respected Indian businessman in Dubai, who has taken his company’s operations to 65 countries in the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Asia and North America. He is the founder and chairman of the Dubai-based Al Dobowi Group in the business of tires and retreading. Apart from this, Al Dobowi is in the field of batteries and rubber products. The group’s leading brand partners are: CEAT, Good Year, Pirelli, Caltex, Exide, Hankook, Bandag and many more.

Furthermore, Surender Kandhari emerges as a leading global player in integrated tire management, batteries, lubricants, conveyor belt systems, and technical rubber products. Taking the group into its next phase of growth – he is set to expand Al Dobowi into the South

East Asian region, Australia, the UK and India.

As we spoke, I was beginning to realize more staunchly than ever – how well success in business and spirituality can go hand in hand! This type of a combination has given people an-all-round-contentment. We have numberless examples of men and women who have achieved stunning results – both for themselves and community development, in the process.

This cannot happen overnight because it is like the stages in metamorphosis – a gradual process of transformation ... a change over a period of time. For the stages of metamorphosis, there are factors and influences which are responsible in gradually shaping the newness.

This is exactly how Surender Kandhari evolved – taking me back to his grandfather Atma Singh's profile – who himself had helped build a Gurudwara in Vijaywada in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh in 1956. He remembers fondly the profile of his grandfather. He states, 'My grandfather was very religious, and very practical. He did six months of business and spent the rest of his time in charity-projects. He used to say, "What the right hand is giving away, the left hand should not know". This is how he was.'

I could easily make out that the childhood impressions for community service left a deep positive mark on Surender Kandhari.

Interestingly and historically, Surender Kandhari's paternal grandfather moved from Pakistan to Kandahar – in Afghanistan. It is at this point, somewhere, the ancestor adopted the surname 'Kandhari' from the fond recognition of his new homeland.

Talking about his reasons to shift from India to the UAE, Surender Kandhari says, '1976 and the following years offered many opportunities because Dubai was growing. I decided to shift here after having been groomed into the family business.' Hence, it was a conscious and an independent decision which he took for the big change.

I also understood from him that there were recessionary trends in India by 1974. The climate of the country was

tense – politically; some fundamental changes had taken, or were taking place in his life, too. His younger brother had tragically died in a car accident. So, all these factors propelled the young man to move to newer horizons – who by now was already in business for 6 years.

'Governing laws in Dubai have been very pragmatic and conclusive for good business. This has helped us grow in Dubai for 38 years. We have expanded in China and other international countries,' Surender Kandhari says with a confident expression.

In our conversation, Surender Kandhari mentions with admiration – names of Dr. Paramjeet Luthra – a mature resident of UAE. He also warmly recalls his association with Ramesh Khanna (retired partner of AF Ferguson & Company residing in Mumbai). 'He was a godfather to me'. To that I reply, 'The world is small – he's my first cousin and we reside in the same building.'

The main topic of the interview again reverts to human faith... sentiments in our beliefs. Surender Kandhari confides with pride, 'I didn't ask for any donation for the construction of the Gurudwara. As I followed my dreams of building, support flowed from the community. Today, this is an iconic monument. I simply followed my elders' example and the example of Mother Teresa.'

He pauses and then repeats, again, 'The generosity of Sheikh Mohammed is never to be forgotten.'

Hearing these words, I am deeply moved because my firsthand experience – as a longtime resident of Dubai brings gratitude towards the local leaders, also. Indeed, they are far-sighted and benevolent in their vision. I also know that the Indian community, especially, the Sikh and Sindhi members are applauding the gift of the Gurudwara!

As regards to the Sikh culture - a Gurudwara is more than a holy shrine. It is the hub – demonstrating and conducting the right-code-for-living to celebrate the spirit of universal harmony. Because Sikhism is based on love and peaceful existence – it does not follow the rigid and narrow theories of blind religious theories which incite unrest. The Sikh spiritual ideology is based on rich values of building society.

The local initiative has certainly reaped a rich harvest! Today, Guru Nanak Darbar Gurudwara is on the map of UAE. Therefore, by the day and the night, the temple is delivering the finest message to the worshippers, and the world. Directly or indirectly, the monument stands tall as a beacon of goodwill and gratitude.

Guru Nanak Darbar Dubai was inaugurated on 17th January 2012 and fully functional now. Construction of the Darbar started from May 2008 and completed in December 2011.

As we drew to culminate our talks, I asked Surender Kandhari, as to what were the key recollections... past memories which he would like to share with me and my readers. He said, 'We felt we had to respect elders. *Ma Piyo di izzat*—respect for our parents.'

Later, Bubbles took me for the entire round of Guru Nanak Darbar, including the ultra-modern kitchens, the freezer room, and well-kept storerooms stacking fresh vegetables, spices, lentils and other ingredients that go to make wholesome and full of flavor meals for the *langars*.

Many weeks later, I was sitting down to compile the salient points of our conversation. Additionally, I had the opportunity to read lines from the revered *Granth Sahib*, the Sikh Scripture Book. Sentence by sentence, the beauty emerged like the bloom of the most fragrant rose!

*"There is One God of all; there is no other at all.
By Guru's Grace, the Lord comes to abide in the mind;
in the heart of such a one, He is revealed"*
*"The One God is pervading and permeating each and every heart;
the Name of the Lord, Har, Har, is revealed to the Gurmukh."*

Beautiful words ... shining light on those who believe in them.

Q 1. What has been the turning point of your life?

A. First turning point was when I got married to a wonderful partner – Bubbles and this changed my outlook to life. I became more responsible, mature and caring. My moving to Dubai to expand our business was the second turning point. I became more international in my outlook and Dubai gave me the

opportunities to grow professionally, commercially, financially and socially. The last turning point was the establishment of the first Gurudwara in Dubai with the help of all the community. This made me very spiritual.

Q 2. If you could go back in time, what would you want to do?

A. I would love to be a preacher. I would love to lead people to the right path of life. With the modern ways of corruption, scandals and extravagancies, I feel people are not making use of a beautiful life given to them by the Almighty. We should be grateful to God for the wonderful life we have, and we should start thanking HIM – instead of complaining always.

Q 3. What are your future dreams?

A. Serve humanity and the community while I still continue to be in my business career. I would not like to retire and do nothing. I would rather work, strive to higher goals and learn everyday about the new developments in technology, life and well-being.

There is God in every human and if we serve humans we serve God.



[Both Geeta Chhabra and Surender Singh Kandhari, well known to each other as longtime residents of Dubai, graciously consented to allow the publication of this interview in this special issue of The Sikh Bulletin. ED.]

About Geeta Chhabra:

Geeta Chhabra was born in Amritsar, the seat of the holiest of

Sikh shrines, the Golden Temple. In her early years, she imbibed the aesthetic and spiritual vibrations of this holy city. Following her schooling, she went to the famous institute of St. Bede's at Shimla for graduation.

Her recently published book of 40 poems: *An Indian Ode to the Emirates* (by Motivate Publishing), supported by pictorial images of UAE is dedicated to the everlasting ties between India and UAE. The bi-lingual Coffee Table Book (English-Arabic) has the Arabic translation done by the reputed Emirati Poet and Translator - Dr. Shihab Ghanem. Geeta divides her time between Mumbai and Dubai.

THE NEW GURU NANAK DARBAR GURDWARA IN DUBAI

February 1, 2010 by Dya Singh (Australia)



In the gloom and doom of global inter-religious conflict I have a ray of shining light to share. The Islamic owners and rulers of the jewel in the desert - Dubai, in the gulf states of United Arab Emirates, on the sub-continent of Arabia, the heart of Islam, have given permission to the Sikhs to build their 'gurdwara' amongst them!



Dya Singh

In early 2009 I received information through the email grapevine that a gurdwara was being built in Dubai. I was intrigued. Let us face it; Muslims do not stand in favourable light at present with acts of

terrorism, persecutions and killings of not only non-Muslims but fellow Muslims as well. Ancient Buddhist statues have been demolished by them in Afghanistan. Moderate Muslims and Bahais are fleeing Islamic countries due to persecution.

One of my tabla players is an Afghan refugee now residing in my hometown Melbourne in Australia. His family fled with their lives in danger because he comes from a long line of Afghan musicians. His uncle Khalil Gudaz is a proficient sitarist here, slowly gaining national and international fame.

Closer to home, we have conflict in Malaysia where fundamentalist Islamic groups are unhappy about their 'law' allowing non-Muslims to freely use the word 'Allah' to refer to God. They feel that that word is exclusive to Muslims and should not be used by non-Muslims.

In the process, the mindless fools amongst them have made arson attacks and have burnt down a number of churches and even thrown stones and broken the windows of a gurdwara in Kuala Lumpur. The predominantly Islamic government has not made any commitments one way or the other - further aggravating the situation.

In spite of all this negativity about Islam, there is a new gurdwara in Arabia? I was intrigued.

So, it was a pleasant and very exciting surprise last October, when Sardar Surender Singh Kandhari sent me an email inviting us to do kirtan in Dubai for Guru Gobind Singh Ji's Gurburab (birth anniversary) in early January this year. I recognised the name, because he is the man most responsible for this venture.

So we did ... and this is what I gleaned from Sardar Kandhari, S. Keval Singh Sasson and other Dubai domiciled Sikhs, about this example of positive inter-religious interaction. It is a very intriguing story.

First, a brief history. Up till 1966 Dubai was completely under British protection and the Indian rupee was the currency. That same year oil was discovered leading to a massive influx of foreign companies, including oil companies of course, investments and (mainly) Indian and Pakistani workers.

In 1971 the Emirs of Abu Dhabi, Dubai and five other neighbouring emirates joined together to form the United Arab Emirates with its own currency the UAE dirham, and gained independence from Britain.

Dubai is only a small sub-emirate within the UAE with Abu Dhabi being the largest but due to the astuteness of the Emir, His Highness Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, it began development as a business and tourism hub of the middle-east. It opened the Ali Jebel Free Zone and invited investment with minimum restrictions and red-tape. Today Dubai is called 'the business capital of the middle-east'. This has also attracted tourism on a very large scale. It boasts some of the most futuristic buildings and structures in the world. While we were there, the tallest building in the world, the 'Khalifa Burj' was unveiled. Some constructions on reclaimed land, like the Palm (residential) Island, are breathtaking.

We visited the Atlantis Hotel which is like a Wonderland and one of the most magnificent buildings I have seen in my life. We also went to the Dubai Mall, the biggest shopping mall in the world which also boasts indoor 'skiing slopes'. Yes, snow in the desert and skiing! There is a fantastic dancing fountain display every 20 minutes in a man-made lake between the Dubai Mall and the Khalifa Burj from 6pm. till midnight. The older part of the city boasts a two mile long string of jewelers and gold stores. Crime is minimal because punishment is harsh.

Some very rich and famous people live here because of tax incentives and low crime. Roger Federer I am told owns a whole floor in a luxury high of condos and one floor is especially designed as a gym according to his specifications!

In the midst of all this, the Sikhs who now reputedly number 50,000, like other non-Islamic faiths, except the Christians who do have churches, a legacy of British dominance in the past, have been conducting their religious activities more or less clandestinely or at the least, unofficially. Though temporary gurdwaras have come and gone, the community needed a permanent place of worship.

The push for an official gurdwara, according to S. Keval Singh Ji, who personally supervises the construction besides Sardar Kandhari, began about 27

years ago. The proposals kept getting knocked back but they did not give up. Five years ago, the Emir, after repeated requests from S. Kandhari and his team, gave the approval subject to consent from the 'Council of Imams' which is responsible for all matters of a religious nature.

The Sikh submissions strived to show the close proximity between Islam and Sikhism; the role played by various Muslim and Sufi saints in the developmental stage of Sikhism as a full-fledged religion including the fact that a number of Muslim 'pirs' have their hymns enshrined within the Sri Guru Granth Sahib; that Islam need not fear proselytization from Sikhs; that Sikhism like Islam believes in the one God and does not approve of idol-worship; and finally that Baba Nanak, the founder of Sikhism passed this way with his constant companion, a Muslim, Bhai Mardana, on their way to 'haj' at Mecca and Medina.

It was a pleasant and joyous surprise when consent was received from the Council of Imams, five years ago. To add to the joy and sense of well-being, the Emir bestowed a piece of land free of charge, for the Sikhs to build their gurdwara!

So, besides Christianity, which enjoys places of their worship, due to historical ties with the land, Sikhism is the only other faith which now has official sanction to have their own official place of worship on the land - a fact, all Sikhs worldwide, should be very proud of.

At the time of writing, the Dubai gurdwara named 'Guru Nanak Darbar' has reached ground level with a three storey underground car park which will accommodate up to 500 vehicles. So, the foundations have been laid for the langar hall at ground level and then a first storey for the main Diwan hall which will not have any pillars and will seat 5000.

In the midst of our own 'problems' that we appear to be experiencing with our own hierarchy in Amritsar, this gurdwara is a shining example of Sikhi well-being outside Punjab, and a positive step in inter-religious harmony

The tentative official opening has been penciled in for Guru Nanak Sahib Ji's Gurmurab in November this year (2010). This will be a historic landmark for Sikhs and Sikhism and a good time to visit Dubai.

Come and see the marvel of modernity; a place through which our 'Baba' (Nanak) passed through over five hundred years ago ... and good shopping for those so inclined - that is Dubai.

Our group had a wonderful time in Dubai and we were pleasantly surprised to be invited back for the 'opening', whenever it takes place. See you there!

SURENDER SINGH KANDHARI: A LEGACY FAR BEYOND HIS LIFETIME

By: Reena Amos Dyes & Frank Raj
The International Indian
www.theinternationalindian.com
July 1, 2012 - August 31, 2012

UAE is a place where people of all religions enjoy the kind of freedom that reflects the generosity, wisdom and tolerance of its rulers. Thanks to the UAE Sikh and Sindhi community of believers, and the generosity of the UAE's Ruler's, Dubai is now home to the Guru Nanak Darbar, the magnificent Gurudwara in the Middle East. It is second only to The Golden Temple in Amritsar, the world's most famous shrine for Sikhs.

Men who achieve great success are not uncommon in business. But those who acquire everything the world can offer and pay little attention to earthly gains to seek the greater satisfaction of spiritual fulfilment are a rare breed. Perhaps they are the ones who ultimately realize their destiny. Surender Singh Kandhari, founder and chairman of the Dubai-based Al Dobowi Group, is one such archetype individual. His unique 11 year spiritual quest to build a place of worship for his people has culminated in a contribution that will remain undiminished far beyond his lifetime. Kandhari has created history by spearheading the UAE's Sikh and Sindhi community's efforts to build the Middle East's first Gurudwara in Dubai— the Guru Nanak Darbar, in Jebel Ali. In a freewheeling interview, Kandhari told TII how he had followed his family tradition of leading the community's efforts to build Gurudwaras in places where there are none and how it was his destiny to serve God and the Sikh community.

It all started more than 58 years ago when Kandhari's grandfather Atma Singh, who himself had helped build

a Gurudwara in Vijaywada, in the south Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, in 1956, told his eight-year-old grandson Surender Singh Kandhari, that one day he too must help build a Gurudwara when he grew up. "I was just eight-years-old at that time and it struck me as a bit odd that my grandfather should ask me to do something as huge as that," he recollects. "Then strangely, when I was 12-years-old and studying at Hyderabad Public School, an itinerant palm reader told me that by the age of 45, I would become a priest. I promptly told him "no" as I wanted to run our three generation old family business in automotive spare parts in India. I had no intention of giving it all up.

However, that incident stuck in my mind and often made me think about what my grandfather said to me years ago," recalls Surender, who was born in Vijayawada in 1948. However, the demands of life soon occupied all of his thoughts and time, after he graduated with honours in Commerce from Loyola College, Chennai. "Most of the people in the tyre and automotive parts business in those days used to be uneducated or poorly educated people. But my father wanted us to be different and he made sure that we got a good education so that we would be capable of taking the family business to the next level," he explains. "I share my father's views on that and I too made sure my sons Jasjeev and Harjeev, who will one day inherit my business, were educated at the best possible institutions in Europe and they also started their careers there.

Jasjeev is a chartered accountant, and Harjeev's background is in banking and private equity," says Surender with obvious pride. In 1976, at the age of 26, Kandhari, along with his wife Bubbles, and their two young sons Jasjeev and Harjeev, came to the UAE to take the family business further, setting up a modest shop in Deira, Dubai. Talking about his reasons for coming to the UAE and his first impressions, Surender recalls: "When I came to Dubai, I saw a wealth of opportunity in front of me.

We had the early bird advantage as there were very few automotive parts and tyre companies back then. "Predictably as Dubai grew, our business grew. Massive construction projects meant that heavy equipment vehicles needed tyres to be brought into the emirate to build roads and infrastructure. As the number of vehicles in the emirate grew our business

expanded,” he reveals. Kandhari’s hard work, business acumen and reputation for honesty paid off handsomely and today the Al Dobowi Group has a multi-billion dirham business with offices in different locations in UAE, a tyre factory in the Jebel Ali Free Zone and offices in several countries across the world.

However, despite all the success and the substantial perks that come with significant achievement, Surrender, though being an avid sportsman and also Captain of the prestigious Emirates Golf Club in Dubai, always felt that there was something missing from his life. “My family and I consider Dubai our home now, but there was always something missing from our lives because there was no Gurudwara in the UAE where we could go and worship God and bond as a community. “In the Sikh culture and religion, a Gurudwara is central to the community as that’s where we gather and hold our weddings, celebrate births and festivals, mourn deaths, meet each other, eat at the Langar (free community kitchen) and bond as a people to show our care and concern for another.

The Langar is open from 6am to 9pm every day, and provides vegetarian food to all visitors, Sikh and non-Sikh alike. Volunteers serve people squatting traditional style on the floor, except on busy weekends, when there is a buffet counter. The meal is sumptuous, comprising a salad, sabzi (vegetable dish), dal (lentil), roti (bread), rice and a sweet dish with tea. “A Gurudwara is not just the house of God for us, it is the life force that ties the whole Sikh community together and our lives revolve around it. That was missing here,” Surrender reminisces. He decided to do something about it and along with other prominent Sikhs in the UAE spearheaded the community’s efforts to build a Gurudwara in Dubai.

Recalling those days of struggle when they would petition the rulers of Dubai to grant them permission to open a Gurudwara, Kandhari says: “It was a long drawn-out process. We had to explain the concept of the Sikh religion and convince them that it was a basic need of the community. “It was hard to explain to the officials even the idea of Sangat (community worship) and Langar. I had to translate excerpts from the Sikh holy book the Guru Granth Sahib, and read them out to the officials. I had to tell them that just like followers of Christ and in Islam, Sikhs also believe in one God and do not worship idols and everyone is equal in the community.

“After six long years of petitioning the rulers, who I must point out always gave us a very patient hearing, we finally had cause to celebrate when His Highness Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and the Ruler of Dubai, very generously gave us the permission not only to build the Gurudwara but he also gave us 25,000 square feet of land absolutely free near the Jebel Ali Hospital. “His only condition was that the Gurudwara should be number one in the world in keeping with Dubai’s image of being the best at everything, with its superlative architecture. “I assured His Highness that while I could not give him the number one Gurudwara in the world, as that privilege is reserved for the Golden Temple in India, I could certainly ensure that it would be the second best in the world and it would have a wow factor that would have the world talking,” narrates a thrilled Surrender Singh Kandhari.

Once they got the land, there was no stopping the 50,000 strong Sikh community and 40,000 Sindhi believers in the UAE from India and Pakistan. The best engineers, architects, interior designers and construction firms were commissioned and the work began on building what has now become an iconic piece of the UAE’s history, starting five years ago.

The internationally-reputed Dubai-based architect firm Holford Associates, that has built over 20 churches, four mosques and one temple, was entrusted with the task of designing the Guru Nanak Darbar. “Before awarding the contract, we asked the architects to visit Gurudwaras around the world, find each one’s imperfection and make a perfect Gurudwara in the UAE that would be an iconic landmark serving the needs of the community here,”

Surrender reveals. It took two years for Holford Associates and Paul Bishop Design Associates to give shape to the three storey masterpiece built over 125,000 square feet with a basement, a community kitchen and assembly halls. In fact, so vital to the project was precision and detail that Paul Bishop and designer Arafah Bashir visited the Golden Temple in Amritsar to study the frescoes and wall paintings of the Harmandir Sahib.

Five years and Dhs 65 million later, the most talked about Gurudwara in the world was commissioned on

January 17, 2012 with funds raised almost entirely from within the believing community in the UAE. “Sikhs have very large hearts where the Gurudwara and community feeding is concerned and donate very generously. Community feeding is an integral part of our religion as our Guru believed in feeding the poor first before he preached his philosophy to them. “To give you an example, every day truckloads of rice, pulses and vegetables are sent by our community members to feed everyone who comes to the Gurudwara.

We never have to buy these food items,” says a gratified Surrender proud of the Sikh and Sindhi believing community’s commitment. Thanks to the generosity of the Sikh and Sindhi community, the Guru Nanak Darbar is a much talked about community and tourist attraction that has a dedicated floor for community feasts and a huge hall for devotional songs.

The main prayer hall of the Guru Nanak Darbar with the 24 carat gold plated Palki Sahib has a 7.2 meter high ceiling and an 18-metre glass topped dome roof, which can accommodate 3,000 people. Mauve-coloured carpets, Murano glass chandeliers, Italian marble throughout the building and superb acoustics lend a distinct touch to the column-free main prayer hall.

“People from any community can visit a Gurudwara, so we have installed big screens that translate all the hymns and the readings from our holy book in three different languages – English, Hindi and Gurmukhi,” Surrender explains.

The function hall can accommodate up to 900 people and there are two basement level parking areas. There is a 54-metre water body, inspired by the Sarovar (pond) at the Golden Temple and a cascading water feature. There are two entrances to the building and devotees can leave their shoes in purpose-built racks. State-of-the art washing areas and washrooms include special areas for the elderly and mothers to rest in.

As many as 5,000 people can be fed by the Gurudwara’s five star quality kitchens and up to 600 people can eat together squatting on the ground floor. “It’s a long-standing Sikh tradition that if you come to the Gurudwara you have to eat and go. So whoever comes to the Guru Nanak Durbar, no matter what religion or nationality they belong to, has to eat and go. “In fact,

very recently we invited all the priests from the adjacent Churches to come and see the Gurudwara and participate in the Langar,” says Surrender.

Two chefs from India who specialise in Langar food have been flown in from India and are now working at the Gurudwara. The state-of-the-art kitchen has five separate stores, including a chiller and deep freezer, with the capacity to prepare 1,800 meals per hour and wash 1,200 plates and glasses an hour. It is equipped with two automatic kneading machines that can knead up to 90 kg of flour in 10 minutes, an automatic chapati machine than can make 1,200 chapatis an hour. Catering and cleaning has been outsourced to a specialist support service which has a dedicated professional team of chefs and cleaners who work hard to maintain the highest standards of hygiene.

The response to the Guru Nanak Durbar has been overwhelming with up to 10,000 visitors, both Sikh’s and non-Sikhs alike, converging on it during the weekends and a minimum of 500 visitors coming every day. “It is increasingly becoming a unique part of the community in Dubai. Many a times I have seen people from different nationalities come there just to meditate in the rooms that we have built for that purpose,” observes Surrender. It’s not just a place for the community to meet and worship, it is also a tourist attraction with visitors to Dubai making a special effort to see the exquisite place of worship.

Surrender still can’t believe he has finally been able to accomplish the task his beloved grandfather entrusted him with five decades ago. “It’s a dream come true. I still can’t believe that the Gurudwara is real. I feel like all of this is an illusion. I go there every morning and marvel at what we have achieved. “This is the most talked about Gurudwara in the world and the global Sikh community has graciously acknowledged my humble role in creating this legacy for the Sikh community in the Middle East. “It is the biggest achievement of my life, and it’s very humbling to be a part of this region’s history.

Nothing can top this for me,” says Kandhari deep in thought, as he wanders off to pay homage at the Palki Sahib.

**CONSTITUTION OF THE ADVISORY
BOARD
GURU NANAK DARBAR
SIKH TEMPLE
DUBAI
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

Table of Contents

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2. Definitions & Interpretation
3. Objects and purposes of the Temple
4. Board of Directors
5. Proceedings of Board of Directors
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1. NAME

The name of the entity is Guru Nanak Darbar Sikh Temple (hereinafter referred to as "the Temple").

2. DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATION

2.1 DEFINITIONS:

In this Constitution, unless inconsistent with the context, the words not expressly defined elsewhere shall have the following meaning:

"Board"

Means the Advisory Board of Directors

"Board Member"

Means a person who has been appointed to hold office on The Board of the Gurudwara;

"Constitution"

Means this constitution, the constitution of the Advisory of the Sri Guru Nanak Darbar Sikh Temple;

"Chairman of the Board"

Means Surender Singh Kandhari or his replacement as appointed in terms of the clause 5.7 herein;

"Director"

Means a person holding office as a director of the Gurudwara under this Constitution;

"Gurdwara"

Means SIKH TEMPLE

INTERPRETATION:

2.2.1 Expressions referring to writing shall be construed as including references to printing, lithography, photography and any other means of storing data

(including electronically) and other modes of representing or reproducing words in a visible form.

2.2.2 Where herein used and where the context shall so admit, words importing the singular number or plural number shall include the plural number or singular number respectively and words importing any gender shall include the other gender.

The provision of a table of contents, the division of this Constitution into clauses and sub-clauses and the insertion of headings are for convenience only and do not affect interpretation.

Words importing persons shall unless the contrary intention appears be construed as including companies, corporations, institutions, organizations and public bodies.

3. OBJECTS AND PURPOSE OF THE GURUDWARA

3.1 The objects and purposes for which the Gurudwara is established are:

To promote the public worship according to the usages and custom of Sikhism and for the instruction of children and adults in such worship, usages and customs;

To preserve and foster Sikh culture and beliefs;

To assist in all matters concerning the cultural and spiritual well-being of the wider community;

To foster community understanding of Sikhism and assist in the integration of new settlers in the UAE community;

To engage in any other activity of a religious or charitable nature or that is useful to the community at large;

To function and operate within the laws of Dubai and the UAE;

3.2 Income and Property of the Gurudwara:

The revenue, income and property of the Gurudwara shall be applied solely towards the

promotion of the objects of the Gurudwara and no portion thereof shall be paid or transferred by way of dividend, bonus or otherwise by way of profit or personal gain and to any member of the board.

No member of the Board shall be appointed to any salaried office of the Gurudwara or any office of the Gurudwara whereby a fee is charged or remuneration payable, or where any other financial or proprietary benefit shall be paid or transferred by the Gurudwara to any member of such Board or Gurudwara, except for the;

a) Repayment or reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses;

The Gurudwara shall not support, financially or otherwise any, entity or organization which is a trade union nor shall the Gurudwara allow any trade union activities upon the Gurudwara property.

4. THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

4.1 The Following will comprise the initial Advisory Board of Directors:

Bhagat Singh
Bubbles Kandhari
Dr. Paramjit Luthra
Dr. Parvinder Singh Pasricha
Harbhajan Singh Salmi
Hatjith Singh Sachar
Kewal Singh
L.K. Pagrani
Mohan Vairani
Niran Singh Sachdev
Partap Singh Lalvani
Surender Singh Kandhari
Vasu Shroff
Vidya Chabbria

4.2 Qualifications of Directors.

To be qualified to be appointed as a director of the Gurudwara, the director must meet the following qualifications:

4.2.1 The director must be a natural person;

4.2.2 The director shall have demonstrated leadership qualities and expertise through possession of suitable educational qualifications, conduct of successful businesses, service to the community, or participation in charitable organizations and demonstrate an understanding of fiduciary duties and the obligations arising there from and possess expertise in the ability to manage, control and administer a substantial organization which services a large community, owns substantial assets and handles substantial sums of cash;

4.2.3 The director should be of sound reputation and standing;

4.2.4 The director must not have any criminal convictions or have been arrested by the police at any time, in respect of any offence especially relating to dishonesty or violent behavior including deception, fraud, breach of Gurudwara theft, assault, abuse of illicit substances, causing bodily harm or any lewd, anti-social or indecent conduct or unruly behavior.

4.2.5 The director must not be or have been a member, supporter, participant, advocate or in any way associated with any person or organization, whether or not recognized by law, which fosters, advocates or encourages illegal conduct under the laws of the UAE or contrary to the tenets of Sikhism.

4.2.6 The director must not bring the Sikh faith, The Gurudwara or the Sikh community into disrepute.

4.3 Directors term of office

4.3.1 The Board shall be appointed immediately but the tenure of the Board shall start from the day of the opening of the Gurudwara.

4.3.2 All members of the Board shall hold office for a period of 2(two) years and shall retire at the expiration of that period.

4.3.3 A retiring Board member may be re-appointed for 2 (two) years or more.

4.4 Resignation of Directors

A Director may resign by giving 30 days written

notice of the resignation to the Board.

4.5 Remuneration of Directors.

4.5.1 A Director shall not be entitled to any remuneration, fees, salaries or any other such payments out of the funds of the Gurudwara for the work done or performed by him or her.

4.5.2 Payments to the Directors may be made strictly in the following circumstances only:

a. Reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses incurred in carrying out the duties of a Director where the payments do not exceed an amount previously approved by the Board;

4.6 Functions and Responsibilities of the Board of Directors.

The functions and responsibilities of the Board shall be one of an advisory capacity to serve the best interests of the Gurudwara. Notwithstanding the foregoing the Gurudwara may from time to time add or revoke the delegation of any of the functions and responsibilities of the Board at its discretion.

4.7 Chairperson

The chairperson shall be Mr Surender Singh Kandhari and will have to preside at every meeting of the Board of Directors. He shall be the Chairperson for life.

5. PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

a. The Directors shall meet at least once a quarter or at such time as they may deem advisable for the dispatch of business and adjourn and otherwise regulate their meetings as they think fit.

b. The quorum for a meeting of Directors shall be 50% of the Directors and the Chairman.

c. The contemporaneous linking together by telephone or other electronic means of a number of the directors sufficient to constitute a quorum constitutes a meeting of the directors and all the provisions in this Constitution relating to meetings of the directors apply, so far as they can and with such changes as are

necessary, to meetings of the directors by telephone or other electronic means.

d. A director participating in a meeting by telephone or other electronic means is to be taken to be present in person at the meeting.

e. A meeting by telephone or other electronic means is to be taken to be held at the place determined by the chairperson of the meeting provided that at least one of the directors involved was at that place for the duration of the meeting.

6. MINUTES AND RECORDS

a. Minutes of meetings:

The Chairman must ensure that minutes of the proceedings and resolutions of general meetings and of meetings of the Board are recorded in books kept for the purpose, within one 15 (fifteen) days after the relevant meeting is held.

GURUDWARA GURU NANAK DARBAR
Jebel Ali, Dubai, UAE
Operational Manual



We are grateful to His Highness Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum - UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai for bestowing his benevolence in allowing the Sikh Community to establish the Guru Nanak Darbar Sikh Temple in Dubai.

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Introduction

The Guru Nanak Darbar situated in Jabel Ali, Dubai-UAE is an architectural marvel located in the 25,400 square feet plot, alongside of Sheikh Zayed road connecting Dubai to U.A.E. capital Abu Dhabi. It is at the same time a functional complex, an avenue for community events and marriages.

The Guru Nanak Darbar is a multi-storey facility spread over 120,000 sq. building area located at T-Junction of two large accessible roads. The building has two basements, a ground floor and a first floor,

plus an intermediate terrace floor. Each basement is measured 25,000 square feet that can contain parking space for up to 140 cars. The 21,000 square feet ground floor houses the dining hall, kitchen, pantry, and store room. The reception desk and Gurudwara office is also in the ground floor complimented with wash room and shoe storage facilities.

As one roams the complex, one will be hearten and in awe. There is a 54 meter Parkarma covered with traditional grill work.

The water body flowing around the road frontage is inspired by the Sarovar of the Golden Temple. It cast a surreal reflection of the building facade with the cascade feature lending the sound of flowing water.

There are two main entrances to the complex, one from each access road. Each having wash rooms and shoe storage facilities, that is also designed to cater the special needs of senior citizens. The grand staircase is designed to hold a huge traffic of people going up and down. It is flattered by tall windows radiating natural light from stained glass that perfectly magnifies space.

The Prayer Hall has two doors and two Parshad (sweets) counters, in the lobby area. The 7.2 meter soaring ceiling is elegantly crowned by the astounding 18 meter diameter dome roof.

The column free hall is surrounded in circular form by the classical arch windows. An Aisle runs diagonally across the hall to the Palki Sahib. One will be left in pure reverence and feel grandeur in experiencing the ambiance of the hall.

The function room that overlooks prayer hall is of great utility. It boasts to service 900 people, also having a stage best fit for matrimonial ceremonies. The dining area asserts to accommodate 600 people and prepare 1800 rotisserie per hour and wash 1200 plates and glass per hour.

How to get there:

By car from Dubai on Sheikh Zayed Road

→Take Exit 25 →Take left →1st R/A right, 2nd R/A left →First right →First left →100 meters away is the Guru Nanak Darbar Gurudwara

By taxi from Dubai

- Taxis can be easily hailed anywhere in the UAE. You could also call for one at the following numbers:
- Dubai Transport (Dubai) : +971 4 208 0808
- Metro Taxi (Dubai): +971 4 267 3222
- National Taxi (Dubai): +971 4 339 0002
- City Taxi (Sharjah): +971 6 533 3550
- Al Ghazal Taxi (Abu Dhabi): +971 2 444 7787

By metro from Dubai

Take the Red line heading towards Jebel Ali. Get off the train at “Energy” Station. Upon exiting the station, Gurudwara Sahib Vehicle can be arranged on call to pick and drop devotees to and from the Gurudwara. Please call +971-4-8827550 for availing the service.

Visit <http://dubaimetro.eu/> for more information

By car from Abu Dhabi

Follow signs towards Dubai on the Sheikh Rashid Road (E11). After several kilometers, the road name changes to Sheikh Zayed Road (E11). This is a sign that you have now left Abu Dhabi and entered Dubai.
→Take Exit 25 →Take right →1st R/A right, 2nd R/A left →First right →First left
→100 meters away, is the Guru Nanak Darbar Gurudwara

Sights

- **Jumeirah Golf Estate – 15 minutes**
- **Marina Walk - 15 minutes**
- **Mall of the Emirates – 15 minutes**
- **The Palm Jumeirah – 20 minutes**
- **Dubai Mall – 30 minutes**

For Location Map and Organogram please go to the last page.

1. Operation of Gurudwara Sahib

All the operational power vests with Chairman of the Board. Any change or deviation requires his approval.

1.1 Keys of Gurudwara Sahib

There are three set of keys of the Gurudwara Guru Nanak Sikh Temple which will be kept as under:-

- a) First set of complete keys of Gurudwara Complex will remain with the Chairman of the

- Board of Gurudwara,
- b) Second set of complete keys will remain in the office with General Manager of Gurudwara sahib,
 - c) All the keys of Gurudwara will remain with sewadar who will be on guard duty except the keys of prayer hall which will remain with head priest. He will open the door of the prayer hall. Keys of the main doors of the Gurudwara will remain with sewadar on duty during night. He will also close the door in the night and open the main door in the morning.
 - d) The keys of the prayer hall will remain with head priest. He will open and close it as per the timings.
 - e) Keys of the five cash Golaks will remain with the chairman or with his nominee,

1.2 Time of Opening and Closing of main door

One Main Door will remain open from 3.30am-10.00pm.

Second Main Door will remain open from 5.00am-11am.

In the evening will remain open from 4.00pm-10pm.

(Second Main Door will remain closed from 11.00am-4.00pm 4pm during the day).

1.3 Prakash

Priest will make all arrangements for morning Prakash. Two Granthi will assist him the morning ceremony. After Prakash, Mukh Vak he will recite Path of NITNEM and perform ARDAS. He will open the prayer hall at 3 AM. Timing of other programmes will be as under;

1.4 Timings

Saturday to Thursday:

Morning

- a. Prakash of Sri Guru Granth Sahib & Mukh Vak 3.30 am
- b. Nitnem Path and Ardas, Degh 4.00 AM to 5.30 AM
- c. Kirtan -- Asa ki Var 5.30 AM to 7.00 AM
- d. Katha of Sri Mukh Vak 7.00 AM to 7.30 AM
- e. Ardas, Degh 7.30 AM to 7.45 AM
- f. Path Sri Sukhmani sahib 7.45 A.M to 9.00 AM

Evening

- a. Rehras sahib 6.00 PM to 6.35 PM
- b. Ardas 6.45 PM to 7.00 PM
- c. Kirtan 7.00 PM to 7.45 PM

d. Katha 7.45 PM to 8.45 PM

e. Samapti 9.00 PM

Friday's, Special days and Public Holiday

Morning

Same as above up to 7.30 AM.

a) Samapti of Sri Akhand/Sehj path Sahib and Ardas 7.30 Am to 8 AM

b) Kirtan & Ardas 9.00 AM to 11 AM

Evening

Same as above up to 9.00pm

Note: 01. On Special days, Celebrations and Festivals the programme timings may vary as per the decision of the Chairman of the board.

1.5 Prakash in other rooms

After the prayer hall Prakash, both the Granthis will assist the second priest to make Prakash in other three rooms. In case Sri Akhand Path is going on, they will make other necessary arrangements.

1.6 Rumala and Sukh Asthan

Priest will take care of Rumala and Sukh Asthan. He will properly maintain all the different type of small and big Rumalas clean and at proper place in the room. He will keep the keys of the room with him. He will accompany any other staff to enter inside this room. No outside person will go inside without permission of G.M.

Single piece and under size rumala will be handed over to some welfare agency once during a month.

1.7 Dress

Neat, tidy self, and clean clothes. The clothes should cover the body properly, nicely, and should impart soberness. The head should be covered. Shoes & socks have to be placed in the shoe rack. All the staff must display their ID cards.

All the devotees visiting Gurudwara should be appropriated dressed for place of worship. Dress should be below knee at least. Sewadar on duty on gate will assist them to provide sheet to cover the body.

1.8 Shoe Rack

There are shoe racks at the two entry doors, separate for male and female. Everybody entering from these doors requires to remove their shoes and socks to wash

their feet before going to prayer hall. Different colours of tokens will be given to devotees for each counter,

Shoe racks are kept in three basements so that devotees comfortably can keep their shoes and directly can come to prayer hall. Sewa will be given to identified persons.

1.9 Head Scarf

Baskets are kept in all the five floors full of scarfs to cover the head. It is desired that the devotees should not come bare head in the Gurudwara. Separate boxes for fresh and used scarf will be kept near the entry points.

1.10 Sewadar

Outside sewadar who want to do sewa in Gurudwara will be identified and will be on approved list. Their copy of passport and valid visa will be required. Degh distribution, Prayer hall sewa, will be given dress so that they can be easily be identified. List of such sewadar will be prepared so that they can be trained to serve courteously and in the best way.

For langar and Degh sewa, sewadars will be given training in Gurudwara and will wear gloves and cover their heads, as per the norms of hospitality dept. of Dubai Municipality. Their list will be maintained. For this purpose, their copy of valid visa and passport will be required.

1.11 Landscaping

Space for water fountain where water will keep on flowing and, green plantation is provided to give beautiful look to the Gurudwara premises. Sewadar will be identified for this sewa.

1.12 Car Parking

There are three nicely built up car parking in basement. There are censored barriers fixed at entry and exit. Indication to exit and proper numbering for parking is there. Provision for parking for handicap person is provided.

During normal days, when rush is less only first basement will be opened for parking. On special days, all the parking's will be opened and sewa of outside sewadar will be taken to manage the parking. In the evening, shutters of the parking will be closed by sewadar.

1.13. Function and Akhand Path Room

The provision to have exclusive function in separate room has been made. Kirtan for birth and marriage functions can be held for good number of devotee. Similarly, two rooms for Sri Akhand path sahib have been made. Booking for three rooms will be maintained at office. Charges for these are put up in Charges Chapter.

1.14 Cleanliness

Gurudwara complex is spread in five floors. Some professional, housekeeping company will be engaged to maintain and clean toilets, stairs, lifts, glasses, langar hall, basements, outside of the Gurudwara premises. 3-4 company will be called and the best one will be assigned the contract.

1.15 Langar

To manage this facility professionally, a catering company is to be hired who can take up this service with utmost care and discipline. 3-4 contractors who qualify on the quality of services to be rendered in the premises and having proven track record will be recommended to the Chairman of the Board by G.M. who intern will take the final decision on appointing the Contractor. The contract shall be renewable yearly with the approval of Chairman.

Sewadar willing to do sewa in langar will be shortlist by G.M. and their list will be maintained in office. They will be given training by contractor to assist them to observe the disciplinary norms of Dubai Municipality. Apart from the langar catering contractor will have to appoint two Sikh cook for preparation of DEGH and its distribution. Their working hours will be nine hours per day.

Raw material available in store will be given to cater after weighing and taking their receipts.

1.16 Rumala

Any Devotee interested to offer Rumala or Chandani Sahib for prayer hall of Gurudwara Sahib will be asked to prepare nicely as per our dimensions. In case any hesitation he will be requested to give Bhaita of AED 5000. A receipt will be issued for this amount by cashier.

For Akhand Path Sahib, Charges of AED 500 for Rumala will be taken if Rumala sahib is required in Gurudwara.

1.17 Ardas, Mukh Vak and Explanation

Ardas and Mukh Vak will be taken daily by Head Priest. Any Individual's name will not be taken in Ardas in prayer hall for any kind of service in the Gurudwara. He will be writing Mukh Vak with explanation on notice board at the two entrance of Darbar Hall in Punjabi and English.

There will also notification of special programmes with timings, and days. Head Priest will take care of this part.

Head priest will also take care of function Rooms programmes. In the absence of Head priest, assistant priest will perform his duty. Akhand path priest will take care all the activity of Akhand path.

The devotee, who wants to do an Ardas for a specific purpose, can request the office to organize this through the priest in the private room.

1.18 Notice Board

Any information or change in rules related devotee will displayed on notice board in English and Punjabi. Notice board will be fixed outside of G.M. office. Timing of office, contact person name and telephone no will also be written. The notice board will be kept locked and Keys will remain with G.M. No notice will be displayed without approval of G.M.

1.19 First Aid Box

First aid box will be available with sewadar in the Gurudwara complex.

1.20 Ramadan

During the holy month of Ramadan special prayer sessions will be organized as per the directions of the board and with regard to the operation of Langar service facility and on other norms will be decided by the Chairman of the Board in cognizance to the local Govt. laws in force.

1.21. Lift

Provision of lift is there from basement to first floor. It is to be self-operated. In case of fire it will reach to the nearest floor and once it is opened, it will stop working.

1.22 Rubber Stamp

All the stamps related to Gurudwara will be kept in safe custody of G.M. He will decide its utilization.

1.23. Use Of Facilities

Admin supervisor will take round of the complex during day and take care of water, electricity, air conditions. Akhand Path rooms will be closed in case these are not in use. In his absence sewadar on duty will take care of this duty.

1.24 Use of Screens and T.V.

Cashier who is trained person to use computer will operate it and translation of kirtan in English with explanations will be displayed on the two screens fixed in the prayer hall daily in the morning and evening programmes. He will take care of its maintenance.

The same programme will also display on TV fixed in the langar hall in Ground floor.

1.25 Vehicles

Gurudwara vehicles are provided to pick up and drop staff from their place of stay to Gurudwara and back to the place of stay. Driver will not take out the vehicle without approval of Accountant.

All the movement of vehicle will be noted in the log book maintained in the Vehicle and office. Any repair of vehicles will be got done after approval. Petrol cards will be issued to them.

1.26. Announcements and handling of Mic

The Chairman of the Board will have the ultimate authority to handle the Mic. On a daily basis it will be handled in the following manner:

Ardas	Head Priest
Vaak sand Mukh-Vaak	Head Priest
General Announcement	GM

1.27. No Tipping

Normally, it is observed that devotee pay tips to priest and sewadar. It is good if tips are NOT given to make the functioning of Gurudwara sahib more transparent and clean.

All the staff members will be informed for this and action will be taken against the violating staff member.

1.28 Siropa

Gurudwara is a place of worship and open to all of us to serve the community. Almighty Himself gives initiative to serve the masses. Siropa will be given in

Gurudwara as and when found appropriate to visiting VIP's. Siropa will also be given in Akhand Path room for the devotees holding an Akhand Path.

2. Degh

2.1 Two sweet Rooms have been constructed on the first floor to distribute Degh. The Degh distribution duty will be given to Granthi, Langri. Their duty will be assigned by the office and priest will take this while assigning their duty for Akhand Path. Service of outside sewadar can be taken during special day.

2.2 One person in sweet room will distribute Degh while second will issue Degh receipt. Also he will issue Ardas receipts for ARDAS in prayer Hall. One sweet room will start from at 5.00 AM to 10 AM and 4 PM to 10 PM; second will function from 5 AM to 10 PM.

2.3 Langri will take care to supply of Degh to sweet rooms before it is fully consumed,

3. RAGIS and KIRTAN and KATHA

3.1 Any Kirtani Jatha called, from, out of City, will be paid **DH 5000** per month. The arrangement of boarding and lodging and transportation from the place of stay will be made. Their Kirtan time will be one hour daily in the morning and evening. Air Tickets to three persons is at the discretion of Gurdwara committee.

3.2 During this period, they will not recite kirtan without permission of Management of Gurudwara. In case, they recite Kirtan at any other place than Gurudwara Sahib, office will take care of the arrangements for a fee of 500 AED.

3.3 Kirtani Jatha's approval will be decided one month in advance so that the necessary arrangements can be made of visa and other related issues. Register of Kirtani Jatha will be maintained in office and Chairman of the board is deciding authority to select the kirtan Jatha.

3.4 During their stay, if any special kirtan programme is desired by party, they will pay DH 1000 as kirtan Bhaita to Gurudwara.

3.5 Any kirtan Jatha called, locally, will be paid DH 250 for kirtan of 45-60 minutes,

3.6 Kirtan by devotee will be allowed with the permission of G.M. Timings of the Gurudwara Sahib will be observed. They need to inform 24 hours before so that time can be adjusted and sangat will be informed accordingly. Such outside kirtan Jatha will be given half an hour to sing during the 9.00 AM to 11 am and 2.00 PM to 4.00 PM. Prime time will be given to invitee Ragi.

3.7 Katha Vachak will be only allowed to perform with the permission of the GM. The draft of the katha will have to be pre-approved. Main idea is all katha has to be on the gurbani from the SRI Guru Granth Sahib.

4. Functions and Festival Celebrations

Functions

Marriage, Anniversary, Birth

4.1 Charges of DH 3000 will be taken for use of function hall and inclusive of other facilities. No other charges for cleanliness and Electricity, Water, Security will be taken.

4.2 Party need to book the day with office, at least seven days in advance, with prior intimation in writing on the prescribed form.

This AED 500 will be only refunded later on after assessing the damages, if any,

4.3 Kirtan Bhaita DH 250 will be paid by party to Kirtan Jatha,

4.4 No function will be booked in Prayer Hall.

4.5 Party will be responsible for any misuse or nuisance or damage during the function in the Gurudwara Campus.

4.6 Akhand path charges will be charged extra.

4.7 Condolence – Hall & Kirtan –No

4.8 Special Day, Gurburab, Festival
This will be decided with the prior approval of chairman of the board,

5. Akhand Path / Sehj Path

5.1 The necessary arrangements of Two Sri Akhand Paths have been made in the Gurudwara Sahib Complex for the Sangat. Six pathi singh have been engaged on regular basis. Each Pathi will be paid DH 1500.P.M. besides lodging and boarding and transportation from the residence.

5.2 For Sehj Path, One pathi will be assigned to complete path within 30 days. He will be paid DH 300 extra for this. Similarly for Sehj path in 7 days, two Pathis will be assigned for this and DH 150 will be paid to each pathi. Charges will only be paid on completion. They will do this path in their time.

5.3 One priest will be in charge of Akhand Path. He will be responsible for all the activity related to Akhand Path/Sehj path. He will insure timely duty of Pathi.

5.4 Bhaita for Akhand Path/Sehj path will be as under:
DH 3000 for Akhand Path Sahib.
DH 2500 for Sehj Path within 7 (seven) days,
DH 2100 for Sehj Path within 30(Thirty) days,

5.5.1 For booking of Akhand path/Sehj (30 or 7 days) path, booking will be made on a form available in office with AED 3000/2500/2100. . The full amount should be paid upon booking. In case of cancellation, due to unforeseen circumstances 50% of the amount will be refunded. Two Akhand paths will be booked at a time besides the Sehj Path.

5.5.2 Any kind of Path will be booked on prescribed form available. in the office .It will be noted in the Function Booking Register. This booking will be informed to Akhand Path In charge.

5.6 Akhand path timing will be as under:
Start: 9AM – Madh 8.00 AM—Samapti 8 .00 AM

5.7 Any devotee interested for Akhand Path at their residence need to book Akhand path sahib on the prescribed form available in office. Charges for this Akhand path will be AED 5000 to be paid upon booking. Kirtan Bhaita will be extra. They need to make arrangement of night stay of pathi at their place. . In case of cancellation, due to unforeseen circumstances 50% of the amount will be refunded.

5.8 Once the operation of Gurudwara Sahib starts, booking of Akhand Path will be available through web

site of Gurudwara. The devotee will fill up form and send to office for booking .In case slot will available and a confirmation will be sent to him and devotee will electronically transfer the funds to Gurudwara. Thus devotees will save lot of time.

5.9 In case of need, pathi Singh will be arranged locally for AKAND PATH and will be paid AED 200 for one AKAND PATH. The priest In charge of AKAND PATH will take care of this duty and will take permission from GM to engage local pathi.

5.10 If Akhand Path is performed in devotee's home, the office will take care of all the arrangements.

6. Charges

CHARGES FOR GURUDWARA FUNCTIONS				
S. N O.	FUNCTION	PLACE	CHARGES	CONTRIBUTION
1	AKHAND PATH	AKHAND PATH ROOM	3000	DEGH,
2	SEHJ PATH-7 DAYS	AKHAND PATH ROOM	2500	DEGH,
3	MARRIAGE	FUNCTION HALL	3000	ONLY FUNC.HALL, DEGH
4	LANGAR	LANGAR HALL	3000	OR AS PER WISHES
5	KIRTAN	PRAYER /FUNCTION HALL	1000/250	GURUDWARA/JATHA
6	KIRTAN	HOME	500	GURUDWARA
7	CONDOLENCE	PRAYER HALL	0	DEGH, PAGRI
8	RUMALA	AKHAND PATH	500	
9	SEHJ PATH-30 DAYS	AKHAND PATH ROOM	2100	DEGH
10	AKHAND PATH	RESIDENCE	5000	
11	SEHJ PATH-30	AKHAND PATH ROOM	2100	DEGH

7. Store

7.1 Any kind of donation other than the cash will be kept in the store. No receipt will be issued for the raw materials unless it is in bulk. But for the other movable items receipts will be issued. Store keeper will maintain the record item wise in the Assets Register. He will be maintaining the raw material record. He will take permission from G.M. before issuing raw material for langar. Items of raw material will be counted and weighted and receipt will be taken while handing over to catering company. The cost of this item will be taken from the market and taken into consideration while raising the bill by caters. It is best by our self to save extra charges to contractor.

7.2 Similarly for purchases, he will put up stock position and get approval from G.M. to buy raw material.

7.3 All the record will be entered into stock register.

7.4 He will also be responsible for timely payments to vendors.

7.5 Store keeper will submit all the paper to G.M through Accountant.

8. Langar

8.1 To manage this facility professionally, a catering company will be hired who can take up this service with utmost care and discipline as comply with the rule and regulation of Dubai Municipality. The General Manager will Shortlist 3-4 contractors who qualify on the quality of services to be rendered in the premises and having proven track record will be recommended to the Chairman of the Board who intern will take the final decision on appointing the Contractor. The contract shall be renewable yearly. The contact will be responsibility to the Dubai Municipal committee for all the violations.

8.2 The weekly menu of langar for one week will be decided by the General Manager and the contractor. The raw material requirement will be given. Raw material will be supplied by Gurudwara store except perishable items such as milk, Potatoes, Paneer, and Curd. Tomato etc., All the items purchased by contractor will first be checked by store keeper of

Gurudwara. Preferably Gurudwara sahib will buy and will supply to cater.

8.3 Langer booked by individuals shall be charged at a minimum of 3000 AED. The Accountant shall be responsible for maintaining of such records and the G.M. will have the complete control on these affairs. Details of charges are given under section –**Charges.**

8.4 The services of the short listed and trained outside sewadar will be taken on function or special days. They will be given dress, gloves; head covers to wear for this purpose and will have to be fully trained by this Dubai Municipality.

8.5 Timing of langar will be as under

Morning Tea	5:00 AM to 7:30 AM
Break Fast	8:00 AM to 10:00 AM
Tea	10:00 AM to 11:30 AM
Lunch	12:00 PM to 3.00 PM
Tea	3:00 PM to 5:30 PM
Dinner	7:00 PM to 10:00 PM

9. Sewadar / Security

9.1 To have better control and understanding among the sewadars and devotees, it is decided to engage five sewadars from own community to manage and guard Gurudwara property. There are two entry gates. One gate will remain open full day and second will be closed for some time during day.

9.2 Five sewadar will manage the entry gates and timing as under:

Gate	Time	Sewadar duty
One	5am-10.00pm	(5am-1pm; 1pm-9pm; 9pm-to 5am)
Two	5am-11.00am and 4pm-10pm	(two sewadars for six hours) (Their services for two hours will be used in sweet room or prayer hall.)

9.3 Sewadar will report to Admin. Supervisor. Their duty will be on rotational basis.

9.4 Their primary job is to guard the premises, property, as well assist the devotees.

9.5 They will report any untoward incident of fire or

any other nature.

9.6 Opening and closing of the main doors as well as to watch the parking, and switch on off lights.

9.7 Any other duty assigned by office.

10. Library

10.1 To promote the Punjabi culture and religious knowledge, the library will be maintained,

10.2 Books will not be issued. It will be for reading purpose,

10.3 Religious, literature books will be kept in library,

10.4 Opening Times 9.00 Am to 11 AM and 3 AM to 5 PM

11 Cleanliness

11.1 Considering the flow of people, Cleanliness of the premises is to be managed in a well-organized and professional manner so as to ensure cleanliness be maintained at all times. A contracting agency has to be appointed for these services and should be entrusted the complete responsibility for maintenance and cleanliness of the building premises.

11.2 Quotes from 3 to 4 housekeeping company will be called. The best company on the basis of experience, rates will be put up by G.M.to chairman of the board for approval as well renewal.

11.3 Contract for one year will be made. Renewal on expiry.

12. Account and Cash

Record of all expenditures will be maintained and bills will be put up to approving authority. All accounts will be audited on monthly bases. Desired stationery will be got printed and register will be maintained. Stationery for office use will be purchased on quarterly bases.

12.1 Audit: Board of Gurudwara will decide the auditor and fees.

12.2 Opening of Cash Golak

Cash golak will be opened after fifteen days in the presence of TWO Committee members in Gurudwara

sahib complex. Golak cash will be counted by the Gurudwara staff. Proper record will be maintained and signatures will be taken by all the present golak counting members. This cash will directly go to bank account.

12.3 Receipt of Degh Cash

Cashier will give and take daily cash Degh receipts to duty person. He will submit the detail of such cash to G.M and will deposit to bank separately. Record of this will be made as per appendix.

12.4 Receipts From Sangat

Cash receipts from sangat for booking of function, Bhaitha of any kind, will go to bank account against receipt.

12.5 Cash Remittance to Bank

Cashier after the approval of G.M. will remit all the cash in bank account of Gurudwara. No expenditure will be passed from the Cash receipts, in any way. Cash will be deposited separately as per the receipts. Cashier with driver and one more sewadar will go to bank to deposit cash.

12.6 Insurance- Gurudwara Building, Cash in transit insurance, furniture & fixtures will be adequately insured.

12.7 Imprest - Account- AED 10000 will be given to cashier to meet day to day expenditures of Gurudwara and latterly be approved by chairman of Gurudwara Board

12.8 Cheque or Foreign Remittance Any amount received will be entered in a register and receipt will be sent to donor after its encashment.

12.9 Receipts other than Cash. Separate register will be maintained and its weight and other specific quality will be entered in register. It will be kept in a safe with information to management committee.

12.10 Bank Account

Chairman of the Board is the only authorized person for transactions for Gurudwara accounts.

13. Office

13.1 In charge of the office will be General

Manger. Accountant and Cashier will assist him for the smooth functioning of the Gurudwara Sahib to serve the community in courteous way as well as to promote religious culture.

13.2 All the transactions and record of accounts, cash, and booking will be transparent.

13.3 The accounting (profit & loss, balance sheet, cash flow, cash requirement) will be put up to Chairman on monthly bases for review by 10th of every month.

13.4 The office will be supervising the staff activity and guiding and leading them to perform their duties in diligent way.

13.5 The office will take immediate step to remove indiscipline and in subordination staff.

13.6 Office timing will be 9 AM to 1 PM and 3 PM to 6 PM. But they can be called at any time as per the requirement. Timing of staff will be changed as per the requirement of Gurudwara Sahib.

14. Facility to the staff

14.1 Accommodation for staff (single) is required. Four one room apartments have been taken on rent for one year. Mini bus will pick up and drop at Gurudwara and at their apartments. They will be given food in the Gurudwara.

14.2 Medical- Medical facility by way of medical cards will be provided after tie up with insurance company.

14.3 Visa- Gurudawara Will incur all the charges for their visas & medical to get their visas. Passport will be kept in Gurudwara in accounts department.

14.4 Loan: - No loan and advance of salary will be given.

14.5 Salary: - Salary will be paid for the days worked and as per attendance.

14.6 Rest Rooms in Gurudawara:- During day , provision for the rest room for driver, Sewadar, Pathi, other staff, will be made in the Gurudawara Complex.

14.7 Staff Appraisal: - Appraisal of staff on half year bases will be conducted to review their conduct, and will be put up to management committee. This will help to extend the visa of employee. Any employee found not observing the discipline or indulge in other illegal activity will be given written warning. Again found not observing the norms will be asked to leave the job.

14.8 Notice to leave the job. - The staff will be given a notice of one month to leave the job. It is desired that staff will give notice of three months before leaving the job, The relaxation of time is discretion of management. The management can give salary of one month in lieu of one month notice.

14.9 Employee manual:

Staff polices will be laid down to make them clear & comfortable to serve in Gurudawara.

They will observe the norms, policies laid down. Manual is set of instructions for them to Do & Do not. failing to observe the norms are liable for explanation, They will work as team member in courteous manner to respect the religious place,

14.10 Staff Duty Register;

Each employee will be assigned duty and his signatures will be taken in the register. Granthi duty register for Akhand path and sweet room will be maintained separately

14.11 Stay in Gurudawara

One room, furnished, be given to priest to stay 24 hours in Gurudwara complex to manage all the activity of Gurdawara Sahib. They will not move out of Gurudwara without permission of G.M. He will not book any program me in & out of Gurdawara. Similarly, one room for driver, Chowkidar, and one sewadar.

14.12 Transport;

Arrangement will be made to pick up and drop the Granthi singh to their place of residence.

14.13 Holiday;

The Gurudwara will remain open seven days a week. Staff will be given compensatory weekly off on the other days by rotation. Friday will be a working day for all the staff.

14.14 Visitors' Stay

There is no provision of rooms to stay for visitors. Anybody coming from outside cannot be accommodated in the Gurudwara. Note: All the operational power vests with Chairman of the Board. Any change or deviation requires his approval.

As per the norms of the country, person only on Gurudwara visa can work for Gurudwara

JOB DESCRIPTION GENERAL MANAGER

He shall be the lead manager/ In charge for Gurudwara and report to the Board.

Duties include the following tasks:

- Ensure disciplinary policies, procedures and contractual agreement are consistently met
- Responsible for all contractual agreements from an operational perspective and ensure realistic and practical commitments are made to clients
- Consistently meet predetermined metrics to achieve objectives and SLAs Ensure contingency plans are in place for all services
- Ensure timely and accurate reporting of performance metrics and SLAs to the Board
- Identify and resolve problem situations as a final point of escalation
- Provide strategic guidance to the staff and managers to ensure best of standard service delivery
- Support Accounts team to manage revenue and budget
- Responsible for notice board lock and key, notices display procedure.
- Authority to appoint and terminate contractors subject to approval of Chairman of the Board
- Shall be the authorized signatory for all the matters related to Gurudwara.
- Manage multiple services across the Gurudwara operations and provide strategic direction and leadership to the teams so that they consistently meet and exceed performance metrics
- Ensure effective tools and mechanisms are provided to the team to track and develop individual potential to meet objectives

- Ensure effective succession plans are in place
- Ensure timely preparation and review of goals for direct reports. Ensure accurate handling and completion of progress reviews on performance and development plans within agreed timescales and provide ongoing feedback to the Board.
- Create a high performance, fair and exciting work environment that provides motivation and development opportunities for the teams
- Ensure sharing of knowledge and best practices and counsel managers to enhance performance.
- Review performance achievements and targets regularly with the team and provide strategic direction to improve service delivery
- Develop strategies for maintaining the entire Gurudwara activities to the best of its service standards
- Make periodical presentations to the Board

Necessary Skills

- Leadership ability
- Team work skills
- Work independently without direct supervision
- Understanding of how to develop and implement strategies
- Thorough knowledge of the Gurudwara activities, history, culture and goals
- Ability to work well with all levels of the board members, executive leadership and support staff
- Able to supervise a large staff of middle management and support staff
- Know how to delegate work
- Problem-solving and conflict management
- Also includes supervising support staff. An understanding of which tasks should be delegated and which tasks should be handled personally, is vital to success.

General Manager Operations Credentials

- The position requires at least 5-7 years of related work experience and previous

management experience in any service institutions. The person should have experience in managing multiple teams executing complex back office processing functions.

- He/she should be able to contribute and implement best practices and lay down policies and procedure.
- He should be able to understand and formulate an effective service model and own and is accountable for quality, schedule, scope, effort (budget) and Service Level Agreements (SLAs).
- Required credentials may include:
- A Bachelor's degree
- Preferably a Master's degree in business administration (MBA) or a related field will be an added advantage.

JOB DESCRIPTION ACCOUNTANT

The senior accountant is responsible for applying accounting principles and procedures to analyze financial information, prepare accurate and timely financial reports and statements and ensure appropriate accounting control procedures. This position will have dual reporting. On day to day affairs will be reporting to the General Manager and periodical reporting to the Board.

Main Job Tasks and Responsibilities

- compile and analyze financial information to prepare financial statements including monthly and annual accounts
- ensure financial records are maintained in compliance with accepted policies and procedures
- ensure all financial reporting deadlines are met
- prepare financial management reports
- ensure accurate and timely monthly, quarterly and year end close
- Every month by 10th should present P&L/Balance sheet in the prescribed format to the Board through the General Manager operations.
- establish and monitor the implementation and maintenance of accounting control procedures
- resolve accounting discrepancies and irregularities

- continuous management and support of budget and forecast activities
- monitor and support taxation issues
- develop and maintain financial data bases
- financial audit preparation and coordinate the audit process
- ensure accurate and appropriate recording and analysis of revenues and expenses
- analyze and advise on operations including revenue and expenditure trends, financial commitments and future revenues
- analyze financial information to recommend or develop efficient use of resources and procedures, provide strategic recommendations and maintain solutions to day to day operations and financial problems
- Ensure the Gurudwara building is Insured, Cash in transit Insurance, third party liability insurance, Medical insurance of Gurudwara employees, workmen compensation policy
- Additional responsibilities include maintenance of Library and the stores material movement.

Education and Experience

- accounting degree or equivalent
- knowledge of accepted accounting practices and principles
- knowledge of economic principles
- knowledge of auditing practices and principles
- knowledge of applicable laws, codes and regulations
- knowledge and experience of related computer applications
- usually a minimum of 3 years' experience in the management of financial systems and budgets, financial reporting, financial data analysis, auditing, taxation and providing financial advice

Key Competencies

- attention to detail and accuracy
- planning and organizing
- strong communication skills
- information and task monitoring
- problem analysis
- judgment and problem-solving
- supervisory skills

- stress tolerance

JOB DESCRIPTION CASHIER

This position will report to the Accountant and will basically handle all the money transactions. The position requires great mathematical skills. Even though, there are computers and calculators to manage all the daily figures, one should have sound math skills despite the digital help. The cashier should also have strong ethical values as they handle lots of money.

Duties and responsibilities of a cashier

- Managing all the cash transactions in their workplace
- Maintaining daily account of the daily transactions
- Balancing the daily account at the end of each day
- Checking the daily cash balance
- Interacting with the customers that come to the counter
- Solving all their cash related queries
- Checking for the price wherever applicable as notified and checking for any discounts if applicable.
- They need to have very sharp mathematical skills
- They also have to be organized with all the work they do and maintain records
- They have to report any discrepancies they find in the accounts to their head
- They have to make reports about the transaction when it is required by the accountant
- Have to be good to all the customers, thus creating good will.

Education required by a cashier

- A degree in accounting
- Need to be great with numbers

JOB DESCRIPTION STORE KEEPER

Under direction, performs a variety of material receiving, stocking activities; stores and distributes supplies and equipment; maintains inventory and stock records; may serve as a lead worker to other classified staff in the area; and perform related work as required.

He shall be responsible for all store operations activities including material procurement, receiving, deliveries, coordinating stock, documenting transactions, maintaining records, and overseeing storage of surplus inventory.

Key Duties and Responsibilities

1. Receives and inspects all incoming materials and reconciles with purchase orders; processes and distributes documentation with purchase orders; reports, documents and tracks damages and discrepancies on orders received.
2. Makes intra- and inter-campus deliveries of requested materials, furniture and merchandise; maintains records of all deliveries.
3. Fills supply requisitions; assists to order and supplies; delivers orders to staff.
4. Receives, stores, tags and tracks material; prepares inventory lists for items.
5. Receives and stores documents and confidential files; maintains record of approved document and confidential file.
6. Responsible to return canceled and damaged items back to vendors as appropriate.
7. Handles and documents storage and transportation of hazardous materials as per law.
8. Maintain the records area and stores area in a neat and orderly manner.
9. Answers questions regarding procedures and resolves discrepancies regarding receipts, deliveries, warranties, repairs and surplus material.
10. Trains and directs the work of assistants.
11. May serve as a lead worker to other classified staff in the area.

Employment Standards

Ability to:

Perform general storekeeping duties; maintain accurate manual and computer records; perform physical labor; understand and carry out oral and written instructions;

maintain cooperative working relationships; demonstrate sensitivity to, and respect for, a diverse population.

Knowledge of:

Modern store keeping procedures, including methods of proper and orderly storage and issuance of materials; basic stock inventory procedures; requisitions, purchase orders, invoices, packing slips, bills of lading, freight tags, and the use and meaning of each; computerized warehouse record keeping systems.

Minimum Qualifications:

Any combination of education and experience that would likely provide the required knowledge and abilities is qualifying. A typical way to obtain the knowledge and abilities would be:

Education:

Graduation:

Experience:

Two years increasingly responsible experience working as Store Keeper.

Special Requirements:

Must be able to perform physical activities such as, but not limited to, lifting (up to 50 lbs. unassisted), bending, standing, climbing or walking on a consistent basis

JOB DESCRIPTION ADMN. SUPERVISOR

The Administrative Supervisor will report to the General Manager and he is responsible for assisting in the efficient management of administrative services of the Gurudwara, such as the day-to-day management of facilities, mail processing, courier service, floor operations support and compliance, security and safety related functions, staff accommodation, staff transport, general hygiene, Medical and operations. Performs direct supervisory duties of administrative staff.

Assumes responsibility and is accountable for adherence to the policies and procedures.

Key duties/responsibilities

1. Works in coordination with all the managers and plan activities.
2. Independently carries out a portfolio of responsibilities under the department's purview, such as

managing facilities, housekeeping, Security, Staff Accommodation, Medical, Transport, Meeting arrangements, VIP visits, securing approvals, and providing communications.

3. Provide expert guidance and leadership to more junior staff.

4. Perform other related duties as required and directed time to time by the G M.

5. Implement and monitor support services, including procurement of supplies and services; transport, travel and traffic, communications, engineering and information technology support; and provision of local utilities and service requirements.

6. And others on management information and general administration issues and practices.

7. Produce major/complex reports for management, as and when required.

8. Provide support to senior managers to create short- and long-term operational plan and financial aspects.

9. Oversees legal, safety, fiscal and other compliance requirements.

10. Oversees facilities, technology, and materials utilized in the department, coordinating with appropriate services.

11. Work with managers and others to develop and implement operating policies and procedures.

12. Manages operating budget and performs analysis and reporting to support decision-making.

Qualification

Should be a graduate in any discipline with minim 5-6 years' experience in similar capacity working in a mid-size organization. Flair towards maintaining high level of customer satisfaction standards and customer interaction will be preferred.

JOB DESCRIPTION PRIEST

Reports to the GM Operations.

Job Purpose

- To ensure all Granthis carry out the duties specified in their job descriptions and to assist in their personal development.
- Read interpret and explain the Guru Granth Sahib
- Ensure that all services in the gurdwara are conducted according to the Sikh Rehat Maryada (Code of Conduct)
- Perform all ceremonies such as naming, marriage, and death. Other ceremonies as required by the members of the congregation, such as celebrations of birthdays, wedding anniversaries any other for thanksgiving or commemoration.
- Teaching of Punjabi, teaching of reading the Guru Granth Sahib, guidance on understanding and analyzing the scriptures. Teaching of kirtan, Sikh history and Sikh religious philosophy as and when required.
- If required, visit Sikh families to provide spiritual comfort and console them at the time of sickness or death.

He will make arrangement of morning Parkash of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Nitnem, Ardas and Katha of Mukh Vak. In the evening, Rehras Sahib, Katha, Ardas and Sama -pathi. He will make all the arrangements for next morning's activity. He will take care of special function of Friday, Special other Day.

He will Prepare all kinds of Religious Hand bills of Gurburab. All Ardas bheta will go to Golak; not to any individual. Any body found taking Bhaita will be terminated without notice.

He will make necessary arrangement of morning Parkash in Gurudwara sahib and will recite NITNAM and Ardas. After this will arrangement of Parkash in function Hall. One Pathi will assist him and one will make arrangement of Degh and distribute to sangat.

In the evening he will recite path of Rehras Sahib and perform Ardas. He will take care of booking of Akhand path/Sehj path.

He will take care of all activity related to Sri Akhand Path/Sehj Path, Pathi duty, their attendance, payments, Ardas of Akhand/ Sejh path, Parkash before Akhand

path & Samapti after Akhand path, Degh and Akhand path for special days. He will perform duty to start and, Middle Ardas and Samapti of the Akhand path. He will ensure to collect the charges of Akhand path. Saropa will be given to party. Record of all the two Hukam namas of Sri Akhand path will be maintained in the register. All Ardas Bhaita will go to Golak.

He will, daily, write morning hukamnama on board with explanation. He, first Ardas, will take Mukh Vaak again and do katha of Mukh Vaak and will also do Ardas. He will be take care of langar and duty of Langri. He will take care of functions in the function hall.

In the evening, he will perform kirtan before Rehras Sahib and katha after kirtan and Ardas. He will take care of closing ceremony of Gurudwara sahib.

JOB DESCRIPTION OF GRANTHI

A Granthi is to work in the gurdwara and with the Sikh community. The main purpose of the role is to lead and support the spiritual life of the community, to read, interpret and explain the Guru Granth Sahib and conduct acts of worship and prayer times.

Additional duties:

Perform all ceremonies such as marriage, naming and death. Other ceremonies as required by the members of the community, such as amrit chadne, celebrations of birthdays, marriage and death anniversaries. Take part in Sikh festivals. Teach Punjabi, kirtan, Sikh history and basic principles of Sikh religion as written in the Guru Granth Sahib and developed by the 10th Guru Gobind Singh.

See to the spiritual needs of the community members and visit homes to conduct services if and when required. The Granthi is to work in the gurdwara all seven days a week ensuring prayers are conducted according to the times defined by the management committee.

A Granthi is to ensure that all prayers, ceremonies are conducted according to Sikh teachings and any non-Sikh practices are forbidden. The Granthi needs to be fluent in Punjabi so that s/he can speak, read, and write Punjabi fluently and understand Punjabi culture such as food habits, expectations of elderly of respect from

young people and an extended family works among Sikhs.

They will be assigned duty by the Priest / Priest In charge from time to time as per programme from morning to evening. They will assist in Parkash, Samapti, Akhand path, Sehj path, distribution of Degh in hall and sweet counter. Also they will assist in function hall when need be.

1. Two duties during one Akhand path per day will be assigned. They will be responsible for their duty and will reach before time after taking bath and wearing neat clothes. Two Pathis will join Head Granthi in the morning for Parkash and after that will sit for Degh counter. Their duties will be allotted and will change. Similarly at least two Pathis will join Head Granthi during Samapti. All Ardas Bhaita will go to golak.

2. For Sehj Path, One pathi will be assigned to complete path within 30 days. He will be paid DH 300 extra for this. Similarly Sehj path for 7 days, two pathi will be assigned for this and DH 150 will be paid to each pathi. Charges will only be paid on completion of path. Assistant Granthi will ensure all this duty and completion of path and path Bhaita. Ardas and time will be fixed and the final day will be taken care If Darbar Hall is required for the Samapti function, day & time will be fixed as per the that day's activity. Pathi will do Sehj path in his own time.

JOB DESCRIPTION LANGARI

The Langri responsibilities are as follows:

Preparation of Degh and distribution of Degh;
Daily 5.30 am to 9.00am and 6.45pm to 9.00pm.
Special day & Friday from 5.30am to 9.00pm
One Langri will stay during the night in Gurudwara to assist Bhai Dhan Singh and to attend to the sangat.
Second Langri will stay in the apartments to assist the staff staying there as the need be. Their duties will be rotated after 15 days.

JOB DESCRIPTION SEWADAR/SECURITY

The security services is to be outsourced.

Two Security personnel will have to be deputed during the day and one security personnel during the night.

The duty hours will be decided by the General Manager as per the direction of the Board.

GURUDWARA GURU NANAK DARBAR, DUBAI ANNUAL REPORT-2013

We celebrated the second anniversary of Gurudwara Guru Nanak Darbar on Friday the 17th Jan-2014. Prof. Darshan Singh Ji Khalsa performed the Kirtan.

The Honorable Consul general of India, H.E. Mr. Anurag Bhushan attended the function. We had a very large gathering.

We had the visit of HIS HIGHNESS, SHEIKH NAHYAN BIN MUBARAK AL NAHYAN, Minister of Culture, Youth & Community Development, Dubai, U.A.E on Wednesday the 30th October .This was a Milestone in the activities for 2013.

During the year 2013, we had the following programs:

1-Sehaj paths	10
2-Akhand Paths	103
3-Sukhmani Paths	127
4-Saturday Kirtans sponsored	98
5-Marriages	25
6-Langar Sewa	82
7-Aardas Sewa	61
8-All the Gurupurabs were celebrated and were attended by large gatherings of Sangat.	
9-Every Saturday afternoon the children were taught Gurmukhi, Kirtan and Path.	

A total of 1 Million devotees had Langar in the Gurudwara during the period, Jan-Dec-2013.

We had several VIP visitors to the Gurudwara, just to name a few,

- 1-Mr.Gurbachan Singh ji, Head Priest of Akal Takht-Amritsar, Jathedar
- 2-Mr.Jagtar Singh Ji, Head Priest of DARBAR SAHIB-Amritsar, Jathedar
- 3-Chief of Shirdi Sai Baba Trust Shri Jayant Sasane
- 4-Mr.Manjit Singh, President/Member OF D.S.G.P.C Delhi

- 5-Gen J J Singh, Chief of Army Staff- India
- 6 Dy. Chief of Takht Shri Hazoor Sahib- Nanded
- 7-Mr. Bishan Singh Bedi, Ex-Captain of Indian Cricket Team
- 8-Mr. Iqbal Singh, Ex-Governor of Pondicherry
- 9-Mr. Sarwan Singh, Ex-Minister of Punjab with Two M.L.A's
- 10-Mr. Sarabjit Singh, Ex-M.L.A of Jalandhar
- 11-Mr. Surinder Singh Kohli, Ex-Chairman of Punjab & Sind Bank & Punjab National Bank
- 12-Mr. Iman Singh s/o- S. Simranjit Singh Maan, President of Amritsar Akali Dal
- 13-Mr. Michael Singh-Hollywood Film Producer, To Prepare Documentary Film on Gurudwara Guru Nanak Darbar, Dubai
- 14-Chief of Khalsa Dewan, Amritsar
- 15-Mr. S. Partap Singh Bajwa, President of Punjab Congress
- 16-Shri Vasudev Devnani, Ex-Education Minister of Rajasthan
- 17-Dada Lachman Chella Ram Ji, Chief of Sindhi Samaj
- 18-H.E Mr. M K Lokesh, Indian Ambassador, United Arab Emirates
- 19-Rai Aziz Ullah Khan Sahib
- 20-Group of Sadhu Vaswani's "LITTLE LAMPS"

The Gurudwara building is being maintained in the best possible way and continuous repair work and maintenance is being done to keep the building as new as possible. The three buses donated by the Sangat are doing a great job by transporting the Sangat especially on Fridays and also for overseas visitors on week days. The staff of the Gurudwara is doing a wonderful job, keeping the Sangat very happy.

We had to let the head Granthi and three Sewadars go back to India for personal reasons. We have a Deputy Head Granthi, Mr. Gurmeet Singh doing the Head Granthi duties. The new head Granthi will be coming in April 2014. All the present staff are multi-tasking people. They do the Path, Kirtan and perform other required duties of the Granthis also.

In January this year we celebrated the Birth Anniversary of SHRI GURU GOBIND SINGH JI and during the celebrations, we also had the Darshan of "GANGA SAGAR" the holy relic of the Guru Sahib. Mr. Rai Aziz Ullah Khan especially brought the relic from Canada for the benefit of the Sangat. We had a

very large gathering on the 10th & 11th January 2014 to do the Darshan of the Guru Ji's relic.

The Kitchen and the cleaning are managed by Accuro' and they have done the job very diligently. The security is provided by AL IKHLAS Guard services and they have been a great help in controlling the large crowds. We have decided to release the excess raw materials of food stuff namely Rice, Daal, Sugar and Wheat which has an expiry period to the Following NGO's;

- 1-Noor School
- 2-One NGO, International Association for Human Values (IAHV).
- 3-Senses Residential and Daycare Centre for Children with Special needs.

In March we have three weekends filled with UK sangat of 80 people each group. They will be attending Kirtan and have Langar and will be taken around the Gurudwara. This is a great achievement of the Gurudwara to receive Sangat from the U.K. The Tour operator is arranging tour packages in UK for the Sangat. The Sikh channel T.V. is covering the full events on their channel. This will boost the flow of tourists from UK/Canada and the USA.

Doordarshan Punjabi Channel in India covered the "Ganga Sagar" and the Guru Gobind Singh Ji's Gurupurab celebrations in January.

Eminent Raagis from all over performed. To name a few,

- 1-Bhai Chamanjeet Singh Lal
- 2-Dada Lachman Chellaram
- 3-Bhai Surinder Singh Jodhpuri
- 4-Bhai Manpreet Singh Kanpuri
- 5-Miss Dolly Goleria and Mrs. Meenu Purshottam.

MAN BEHIND DUBAI'S FIRST GURUDWARA

**SURENDER SINGH KANDHARI,
FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN
OF AL DOBOWI GROUP**

From establishing his company dealing in automobile tires, batteries and rubber products, to being the leading light in getting the Middle East's first Gurudwara constructed in Dubai, Surender Singh Kandhari has always held on to one basic

value – always staying positive in life...

It was a value he had imbibed and a mission he had inherited from his grandfather. So it was like a wish he could never give the go-by. As he grew up and found success in life, Surender Singh Kandhari, who had kept those words of wisdom close to his heart all these years, finally fulfilled that dream in a rather grand way.

“It had all started some 58 years ago, when my grandfather, Atma Singh, who himself had helped build a Gurudwara (the Sikh place of worship) in Vijaywada, in the south Indian state of Andhra Pradesh in 1956, told me that I too must help build a Gurudwara when I grow up. “I was just eight-years-old at that time and it struck me as a bit odd that my grandfather should ask me to do something as huge as that,” recollects Kandhari.

Now, cut to the present. Kandhari is today known in his community for being instrumental in getting the Middle East’s first Gurudwara constructed in Dubai, the Guru Nanak Darbar, in Jebel Ali. With 24-carat gold canopies for the Guru Granth Sahib (the religious text of Sikhs), Italian marble, stunning chandeliers and a five-star kitchen, Dubai’s first sprawling Gurudwara is a grand realization of the aspirations of some 50,000 Sikhs living in the UAE.

Kandhari is all praise for His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, for making the Gurudwara happen in Dubai. The Dubai Ruler donated a piece of land in Jebel Ali area for the Gurudwara and wanted it to be iconic. A God loving person, this Gurudwara occupies a central place in Kandhari’s life today. “If you respect human beings, it is equivalent to respecting God. It teaches you how to respect humanity,” says the 64-year-old, who is known for his humility and simplicity in life.

The early days back in India

Kandhari was born in 1948 in Vijayawada in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh. “Basically, we hailed from a business family. My grandfather moved to Vijayawada from Pakistan in 1942. My father set up his business in Vijayawada in the same year,” informs Kandhari. His father, in fact, built the first tire shop in Vijayawada since the city was a big transportation

center from North to South and was an important center of business hub for south India.

“My father ensured that all his children were well educated,” says Kandhari who has seven siblings. He graduated from Loyola College, Madras. “I was the first north Indian student to become the president of the students union in college because I spoke the local lingo and everyone thought I was a local! I can speak the south Indian languages including Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam. I am happy to have grown up imbibing the south Indian culture because you learn to be humble and docile,” he says. “Hyderabad is filled with such nice, warm, hospitable, people,” Kandhari asserts.

Kandhari wanted to pursue Chartered Accountancy but his father wanted him to join the family business which dealt mostly in automotive spare parts in the domestic market. “But in 1976 when the economic situation in India made it difficult to sell Tires we realised the business ought to be expanded to the foreign shores.”

Moving to Dubai

“In 1976, when we moved here, Dubai was just opening up as a trading hub. We derived the advantage of being the early birds. The boom had just begun and Dubai’s proximity to India was another huge advantage.

“There was freedom for business and the place was tolerant towards other cultures. Dubai was the best place to set up shop and I began exploring the idea of setting up our tire business,” recalls Kandhari, while noting that Dubai provided the best opportunity with the place becoming a financial base. “We could export to places like Iran, Nigeria. Everyone from the Middle East was buying from Dubai. It was like a big supermarket,” notes Kandhari, who finally set up in Deira in 1976, and thus was born Al Dobowi (which means the man from Dubai in Arabic).

“Over the years, our group has consolidated its global positioning by forming alliances with companies that are regarded as household names in the world of tires,” he claims, while further pointing out about those early years that modernization was in full steam and the not-so-super roads back then made their business grow exponentially.

“When the modernization process started with massive construction and up gradation of roads and large-scale movement of vehicles, tires became an integral part of the whole development and Al Dobowi was well placed to make the best use of this opportunity. And we cashed in on this,” he reveals.

The Company represents major brands like Goodyear, General, Continental, Pirelli, Hankook and Ceat; also Exide and Hankook Batteries. Most relationships are over 2 and 3 decades and very strong. The business expands over to 6 continents.

“When I came here I could see that the locals really trusted Indians, especially Sikhs which was really good. I approached a transport company here sometime at the end of 1976 and offered him tires. He asked me if I had 100 tires and I told him I did have. When he came to check it he was surprised to see that I had 10,000 tires as stock in my warehouse. He realised I was genuine and spread the word around. Thus, the business kicked off in a small manner from that point,” recalls Kandhari.

He claims he was the first person to offer warranty on tires which was a big plus. “I got tires from CEAT and MRF in India who gave me warranty. So why would I not give warranty to my customers? **My thrust was, and still is, quality.** I started my own brand – Infinity – and we remained the only tire company to provide warranty for a Chinese made Tire,” he adds.

A triumph of values

“Competition was much less in Dubai back then,” notes Kandhari who is now joined by his two sons in the business. “My sons, Jasjeev and Harjeev, pursued their education and early business careers in Europe. Having gained experience of commerce in different markets, and as qualified professionals, both have returned to Dubai and represent the fourth generation in the family firm. While Jasjeev is a chartered accountant, Harjeev’s background is in banking and the private equity sector,” he says.

As important as his family, Kandhari also stresses on the significance of taking care of the employees who are an integral part of the business. And this attitude towards life, is what Kandhari believes can make one successful. “You have to be dedicated and sincere to yourself. **If you don’t cheat others and if you are true**

to yourself, you will be successful. It’s painful to see how people kill and hurt others.

Being positive

“It’s a beautiful world. You have to recognize it. I love people. Negativity kills you. **I think staying positive is the key to my success. If you feel everything is good then everything will be good,**” says the man who despite reaching mid-60s, wants to continue working and not retire. “I do not want to retire. I wish to continue working. I want to die either in the office or at the golf course. I was lucky to have become the captain of the Emirates Golf Club. **Being happy is the medicine to remain healthy.**

If you are happy and laughing all the time, you will not fall ill. Being positive is the best way to do that. Think about the worst case scenario and **try to be content with what you have,**” explains Kandhari, while noting that he is **happy that his wife too shares a similar view.**

“Every year, we switch off from regular life. We either head to Mumbai or any part of Europe as my wife loves the rain in Mumbai. So we spend half of the time in Mumbai and the remaining part in Europe.” It does not come as a surprise when Kandhari, talking about his future, speaks about serving the community and doing charity.

“My aim in life now is to serve the community, serve the mankind. I started a charity in Delhi for orphan kids in 1984 by helping out a few Sikh families. The charity has grown big now and we now educate 30-35 students. We take care of all their needs – education etc. Some of them are even employed here in Dubai.

It is important to be respectful and respect your elders. Their blessings can go a long way in your success in life.

Kandhari adds that Dubai is the place if a youngster is making a long time career plan. “It’s a good country with good social culture. If one is looking at establishing a career here in Dubai, this is the best place. It’s the best place to set up your business in and for establishing your career and profession. If you are sincere towards yourself, no one can stop you,” he concludes. And we can’t agree more...

WHO IS THE FOUNDER OF GURU NANAK DARBAR?

[From The Deccan Chronicle]

NRI businessman Surender Singh Kandhari had made the aspirations of the 50,000 Sikhs in Dubai come to life by founding the first ever Gurudwara in the United Arab Emirates.

It is believed to be the only one of its kind in the entire country. With ornate 24 carat gold canopies and Italian marble floors, glittering chandeliers and a five-star kitchen, this Gurudwara known as Guru Nanak Darbar, has been attracting attention from all over the world.

Kandhari spent most of the 65 million Dirhams that went into making the Darbar. The place can apparently host 5,000 people at a time for a langar or a holy feast.

SIKH COMMUNITY GETS DEDICATED PLACE OF WORSHIP

First official Gurdwara opens in Jebel Ali
Gulf News, January 28, 2012

By Shveta Pathak, Staff Reporter

The UAE's first official Gurdwara, a place of worship for the Sikh community has opened in Jebel Ali.

"We are thankful to His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and ruler of Dubai, with whose permission this has materialized", said a businessman associated with the Gurdwara.

Spread over 25,000 square feet near the Jebel Ali Hospital, the Gurudwara has a dedicated floor for community feasts and a huge hall for *kirtan* (devotional songs). There is parking in the basement.



Presently Sikh community offers prayers in a Gurudwara in the temple complex in Bur Dubai.

There are an estimated 50,000 Sikhs in the UAE, hailing from India and Pakistan.

GURU NANAK DARBAR IN DUBAI

Nation May 31, 2012

www.xpressforme.com XPRESS

NEW ATTRACTION

NO ONE EVER LEAVES THIS PLACE WITHOUT EATING

By Sharmila Dhal
Senior Reporter



Sandstone splendor: Built at a cost of Dh 65 million (US\$18m), the 120,000 square foot Sikh shrine opened on January 17, 2012.

A traditional *langar* or free community kitchen at the Guru Nanak Darbar in Dubai is feeding thousands of visitors every week as the Sikh Temple emerges as a community and tourist hotspot.

Giving XPRESS an exclusive tour of the complex on Tuesday, businessmen and community members Surender Singh Kandhari and Kulwant Singh said the response to the newly opened Gurudwara has been

overwhelming, with 8,000 to 10,000 visitors converging on it during weekends.

“No one who visits the Gurudwara goes without eating”, said Kandhari, noting that the concept of *langar* stresses equality and teaches people to eat as a community.



Great equalizer: The concept of *langar* stresses an equality and teaches people to eat as a community.

The *Langar*

The *langar*, open from 6:00AM to 9:00PM every day, provides vegetarian food to all visitors, Sikhs and non-Sikhs alike. On weekdays, visitors help themselves from a buffet counter but on weekends they are served in traditional style as they squat on the floor to eat in a huge dining hall. The elderly and handicapped sit at the dining tables.

The meal is sumptuous and comprises salad, sabzi (vegetable dish) dal (lentil), roti (bread) and rice. There is a sweet dish too and tea for the asking – all of which are in a 4,000 square foot state of the art kitchen that has five separate stores, including a chiller and deep freezer.

Kulwant Singh said, “The catering and cleaning have been outsourced Accuro, a Dubai based specialist support service which has a dedicated professional team of chefs and cleaners working to the highest standards of hygiene”.

The kitchen is equipped to cater to large numbers of people: two automatic kneading machines that can knead up to 90 kilograms of flour in 10 minutes, an automatic *roti* machine that can make 1,200 *rotis* an hour, a dishwasher that can clean up 1,000 plates and glasses an hour and so on.

It uses 1,500 kilograms of vegetables, 300 kilograms of lentils and 350 kilograms of rice to feed the huge crowds during the weekends. “We make 90 kilograms of *dal* and *sabzi* in one hour”, said one of the chefs.

The sheer scale of the Gurudwara has visitors impressed. The main prayer hall, which can accommodate up to 3,000 people at a time, turns into a sea of visitors on weekends. They include both residents and tourists.

“We arrived from London this morning and the Guru Nanak Darbar was the first destination on our sightseeing agenda”, said Dave Gill, a British tourist who was visiting with his wife. “It is beautiful and blends in well with the rest of the landscape”.

“I have come from Mumbai and my father told me this is must-visit. Now I can see why”, said visitor Neelu Chadha.

“I visit every day and we are blessed to have such a place in Dubai”, said Charanjeet Banga, a resident of Discovery Gardens.

Kandhari and Kulwant Singh said they were very grateful to His Highness Shaikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai for his support and for granting 25,400 square feet land for the complex.

DUBAI'S GRAND GURUDWARA BRINGS RELIGION, TRADITION ALIVE IN STYLE

By Malavika Vettath

(Malavika Vettath can be contacted at malavika12@gmail.com)

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Indo-Asian News Service

Dubai, June 27, 2012

Ornate 24-carat gold canopies that serve as a sacred space for the holy ‘Guru Granth Sahib’, Italian marble walls and floor, stunning chandeliers and a five-star kitchen – Dubai’s first Gurudwara is a grand realization of the aspirations of 50,000 Sikhs in the UAE. And it is a **heady mix of spirituality, tradition, modernity, opulence and one man’s determination.**



On entering the Guru Nanak Darbar, one is in awe of its sheer grandeur and the attention to detail. A sense of calm descends as strains of *"Tu Prabh Daata"*, a popular Sikh kirtan, fill the air. As the ambience sinks in, Surrender Singh Kandhari, the man behind the Gurudwara, walks in, urging devotees to use the lift instead of taking the stairs to the main prayer hall.

When His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai had given free land for the Gurudwara in Jebel Ali area about six years back, the ruler of Dubai had wanted it to be iconic. And Kandhari, an NRI businessman by profession, has been true to his word. **The Gurudwara is worth every bit of the 65 million Dirhams spent on it, a large part of it contributed by Kandhari himself.**



We didn't want to compromise on anything. It is the latest Italian marble and best lights. I told the contractor I want a 100 years guarantee for the building. We may

not be there but our future generations should be able to utilize it," Kandhari told IANS in an interview.

"I had told His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, 'Well, one can't surpass the Golden Temple.' But what we have is the most modern Gurudwara in the world," said Kandhari, Chairman of the Al Dobowi Group that manufactures and distributes automotive batteries and tires.

The idea of the Gurudwara germinated 11 years ago with the growing need of a proper place of worship for the Sikhs, who until January this year shared space in the cramped temple premises in Bur Dubai.

Permission was finally given six years back. "It was the graciousness of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai ...He gave free land -- 25,400 sq. feet," said Kandhari.

On the grand opening of the Gurudwara January 17, 2012 Kandhari had compared His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai to Muslim saint **Hazrat Mian Mir**, who had laid the foundation stone of the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the holiest shrine for Sikhs.

Six months on, the community just can't have enough of their own spiritual space.

On Fridays, as many as 10,000 people visit the Gurudwara, which boasts of three floors of parking. "On Baisakhi, we had 40,000 people coming to the Gurudwara...And we served food for 40,000 people as langar," Kandhari said with immense pride, adding that several Pakistani Sikhs also come to offer prayers apart from many Sindhis and Hindu Punjabis.



The state-of-the-art kitchen, which churns out ‘langar’ for devotees through the day every day, is itself worth a peek. It is complete with **a dough-kneader, a chappati-maker and large dishwashers.** And along with the rest of the building, the kitchen too is spotless.

Apart from a large carpeted prayer hall, there are three smaller rooms for private functions, a meditation room, a library and the spacious ‘langar’ hall. Guru Nanak Darbar is modelled on both the Golden Temple and the Gurudwara in Southall, London. And Kandhari sent Paul Bishop, the interior designer, to both these shrines “to feel” the Gurudwaras.

Recognizing the need to inculcate Sikh values in the next generation of NRIs, special three-hour sessions are held for children on Saturdays at the Gurudwara where they are taught Punjabi, Kirtan and how to behave in places of worship.

“There are already 55 kids. All four of my grandchildren go, one of them being just two years old,” he said.

“The women are keen that their children learn kirtan. When you are out of India, the more Indian you become than you were in India,” he said.

Having grown up in Andhra Pradesh and later studying in Chennai’s Loyola College, Kandhari admits he knew very little about his language and religion until he came to Dubai in 1976.

That’s why he understands the need for children to be taught about their culture in a land far away from their own.

“If you don’t teach them, how will they learn? In Vijaywada, I had no one to teach me Punjabi. While in Loyola College in Madras, I almost became a Christian. Every Sunday, I used to go to church. My father then asked if I knew anything about Sikhism.

“I said ‘you haven’t taught me, how I will know?’ I started learning about Sikhism and Punjabi after coming to Dubai.”

Even though he had to take loans from friends to complete the Gurudwara, now he calls the income “unbelievable”.

“I won’t know what to do with the money after two years.” But he already has plans.

“The next plot is empty. I want to make a hospital for poor people. Healthcare is so expensive in Dubai...labourers living in labour camps nearby can’t afford it.”

Kandhari is overjoyed that the Gurudwara now attracts visitors from across the world.

“We have visitors from UK, US, France and Canada...they can’t believe that in an Islamic country we have the most modern Gurudwara.”

WORLD’S MOST MODERN GURUDWARA

The Hitavada

Sunday July 7, 2013

By Dhananjaya Bhat

The Guru Nanak Darbar Gurudwara in Dubai built between 2009 and 2011 at a cost of more than one hundred crores of rupees is the most modern Gurudwara in the world. Italian marble on the walls and floor, stunning chandeliers and a five star kitchen – it is a grand realisation of the aspirations of 50,000 Sikhs in the United Arab Emirates.



Gurudwaras mean a ‘Gateway to God’ and in fact, Guru Nanak Darbar Gurudwara is a heady mix of spirituality, tradition, modernity, opulence and the determination of Sikh devotees to ensure that their shrine fits in with the opulent modernism of Dubai, the Middle East’s most modern city.

And it was not easy. Prior to the building of this Gurudwara, Sikh and Hindu devotees of Guru Nanak

used to gather in a hall known as Al Quoz Gurudwara. Since 2002 they had appealed to the UAE government to allow them to build a magnificent Gurudwara – a place of their worship.

The push for an official Gurudwara, according to S. Keval Singh, who personally supervised the construction, besides S. Surender Singh Kandhari, began about 28 years ago in 1985. The proposals kept getting knocked back by the Dubai Government but the devotees did not give up.

The Emir of Dubai, after fervent requests from the Sikhs, led by their leader S. Surender Singh Kandhari, gave the approval, subject to consent from the ‘Council of Imams’, which is responsible for all matters of a religious nature.

The Sikh submissions strived to show to the Council of Imams the close proximity between Islam and Sikhism: the role played by various Muslim and Sufi saints in the developmental stage of Sikhism as a full-fledged religion, including the fact that a number of Muslim *pirs* have their hymns enshrined within the Sri Guru Granth Sahib; that Islam need not fear conversion of Muslims from Sikhs; that Sikhism like Islam believes in

The One God and does not approve of idol-worship; and finally that Baba Nanak, the founder of Sikhism passed this way with his constant companion, a Muslim, Bhai Mardana, on their way to Haj at Mecca and Medina.

The permission came through eight years ago, when the Emir of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, gave free 25,400 square feet of land in the centre of Dubai to build the Gurudwara, and wanted it to be iconic.

“I told the ruler, “Well one can’t surpass the Golden Temple. But what we will create is the most modern Gurudwara in the world”, said S. Surender Singh Kandhari, a local businessman, who was the main spirit behind the construction.

Guru Nanak Darbar is modeled on both Golden Temple and Gurudwara in Southall, London. Interior designer, Paul Bishop, was sent to both shrines ‘to get the feel’ of Gurudwaras.



Inspired designs: The architecture is influenced by Southall Gurudwara in London. The chandelier from Italy cost Dh 1.1million.

On the grand opening of the Gurudwara on January 17, 2012, Kandhari compared Sheikh Mohammed, also the Vice-President of UAE, to Muslim saint Hazrat Mian Mir, who had laid the foundation stone of the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the holiest shrine for Sikhs.

The Gurudwara is spread over an area of 25,000 square feet near the Jabel Ali Hospital. With 125,000 square feet built up area the shrine has three levels of basement, a ground floor and a terrace floor. The function hall can accommodate up to 900 people. There is parking space on two floors and the basement to accommodate up to 100 cars.

There is a 54 meter water body inspired by the sarovar at the Golden Temple at Amritsar and a cascade. The Main prayer hall, on the top with *palki sahib*, has a 7.2 meter high ceiling and 18 meter diameter dome roof.

On entering the building, one is in awe of its sheer grandeur and the attention to detail. A sense of calm descends as strains of *Tu Prabh Daata*, a popular kirtan or devotional chant, fills the air. Mauve-coloured carpet, chandeliers and modern acoustics lend a distinct touch to the column-free main prayer hall, topped by an 18 meter glass dome that offers generous lighting.

The main hall can accommodate up to 3000 people at a time. Apart from a large carpeted prayer hall, there are three smaller rooms for private functions, a meditation room and a library. Devotees leave their shoes in racks by the two entrances. Washing areas and water closets are fitted with some of the world’s

best plumbing equipment brands.



The main prayer hall

A modern kitchen is able to prepare 1,800 meals per hour and wash 1,200 plates and glasses an hour. It has a dedicated floor for community feasts (*langar*) and a huge hall for devotional songs (*kirtan*). Arrangements can be made for community feasts for about 5,000 people at a time. The state-of-the-art kitchen, which churns out food for devotees throughout the day every day (on an average 600 devotees come to take *prasad*), has a dough-kneader, a *chapati* maker and large dishwashers. And as with the rest of the building, the kitchen too is spotless.

“On Baisakhi, we served food to around 40,000 people visiting the Gurudwara”, says one of the volunteer devotees. And up to 600 people can eat together squatting on the ground floor on a carpeted marble floor served by volunteer who dole out free meals in the *langar* (dining hall) from about 7:00AM to 11:00PM.



Guru Nanak Darbar, the world's most modern Gurudwara, is a very welcome addition to Dubai – arguably the most modern city in the world, with its numerous show pieces like the Burj Khalifa Tower and the Palm Fond Island housing area.

NAHYAN IN SIKH TEMPLE SAYS UAE RESPECTS ALL

www.xpress4me.comXPRESS

October 31, 2013

By Sharmila Dhal

Shaikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Culture, Youth and Community Development, visited the Guru Nanak Darbar Gurudwara in Jebel Ali on Wednesday, marking the first-ever visit by a member of the ruling family to the Sikh place of worship. Arriving in a helicopter from Abu Dhabi at 6:30pm, the minister was accorded a warm welcome by members of the 90,000 strong members of the Sikh and Sindhi community.



Addressing the gathering in the main prayer hall, Shaikh Nahyan said: “I congratulate all of you on your initiative and success in constructing this impressive place of worship”.



“Of course, the Golden Temple in Amritsar will remain the most sacred place of worship for the Sikhs”, he said, adding that this “handsome and brilliantly designed” complex must also be regarded as one of the most attractive places of worship in the world.

He touched upon some references to Mughal Emperor Akbar giving land for the Golden Temple and said the emperor believed in a multicultural community and valued all religions of the world. “The UAE is a multicultural community. It is a Muslim country. An occasion like this reflects our tolerance and respect for all other faiths”.

Acknowledging the “generous and gracious hospitality” of the community, he commended its collective efforts in making the Gurudwara a reality and hoped that it would serve as a true community center.

Surender Singh Kandhari, Chairman of the Gurudwara, honoured Shaikh Nahyan with the *Siripao*, the highest honour in the Sikh faith bestowed on “any human being who serves humanity”.

Welcoming the gathering earlier, Kandhari thanked the Rulers of the UAE for allowing Sikhs to practice the “religion of Humanity”.

“I would like to thank His Highness, Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President

and Prime minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, for generously giving land for this Gurudwara. Shaikh Nahyan’s visit today is a great honour for us as it is the first visit by the ruling family”.

He said, Sikhism, started by Guru Nanak, preaches the principles of equality and ensures no one goes hungry. “Accordingly, we are a community centre open to people of all faiths and no one who comes here leaves on an empty stomach”.

The Gurudwara receives about 1000 visitors a day and the numbers go up to 10,000 on Fridays. All have *langar* (food served in the community kitchen). Bubbles Kandhari, Vice-Chairman of the Gurudwara. Said the complex receives about 40,000 visitors on special occasions.

THE SIKH LANGAR IN DUBAI Food of the community, by the community and for the community



Nearly three weeks ago, I found myself at the Gurdwara in Dubai, the house of prayer and community gatherings for the local Sikh community. Our last minute planning coincided perfectly with Guru Nanak Jayanthi, the birthday of Guru Nanak who was the founder of Sikhism. In the words of Bengali author Chitrita Banerji, Guru Nanak had been...

“...born into a Hindu family in 1469, a time when northern India was ruled by an Afghan Muslim dynasty, the Lodis. A charismatic visionary, Nanak advocated a new faith, based on love, egalitarianism, and belief in a non-incarnate

divinity. His preaching accommodated both the Islamic idea that the goal of religion is union with God, and the Hindu notion that through meditation and good work, the devotee could purge himself of impurities and achieve freedom from the cycle of rebirth.” (Eating India, Ch. 6)

I stepped in, borrowed a headscarf, and slipped my shoes off before entering the holy area. An aromatic tsunami of ghee rushed right at me as I walked past the kitchen doors, instantly alerting my mouth to the flavours that would follow that evening. But Sona tugged me upstairs—*pooja first*.

There is always a conflict in my mind when I’m faced with religious practices that aren’t my own, no matter how broad-minded I like to believe myself to be. I stood there in a queue that was vibrant with traditional saffron-coloured head scarves and turbans, thoughts throbbing through my mind as the voices of those around me chanted the devotional hymns (*kirtan*) in unison. What would I do when I reached the front of the line? Would I prostrate myself as everyone else did? What exactly would I be prostrating to? Would I give money as a pledge to a divinity that I knew nothing of? Would I submit myself to another God, and incur the wrath of the one I called my own?

When Sona and I finally reached the *takht*, the raised platform that everyone had been inching towards, I hushed my inner conflict. Here was a place of God, a place that hadn’t questioned my religion when I stepped in, but just gave me a scarf to cover my head and welcomed me right in. Even my own community wouldn’t do that for an outsider. It didn’t matter who my God was or who ‘theirs’ was either, or the fact that my knowledge of Sikhism was painfully limited at the time (and still is). **All I I knew was that they had let me in, let me in to feel closer to God. This is Sikhism at its core—a religion that glorifies tolerance, equality, service and humility:**

“...the Light of God is in all hearts.” (Sikh religious text: Guru Granth Sahib)

When I lowered my head towards the ground, the gates to everything I had been feeling over the past few weeks just flung open and washed out all the niggling petty questions that had been croaking like toads in my head, every day for the past few days. The outrage of

having my real estate broker abscond with my rent payments, the remorse at having been fooled into believing his cooked-up stories about why the landlord wouldn’t accept my personal cheques and paying him cash instead, the humiliation of being unable to stop hot tears from rolling down my face at the property management office when I found out the news, the frustration of not having a bank guarantee come through because of a typo on an Arabic legal document, the annoyance of having to waste precious time and funds on having degrees attested for a license, the embarrassment of constantly pushing out my food tour launch dates and turn down inquiries for a tour, the pain of watching something I am so passionate about get cramps in the foot every time it tries to move forward...all of it just got dredged up out of nowhere and hung so heavily in my heart that the only thing to do was to bend down, unlock that private space between God and myself—a space that is not confined to a mosque or a temple or any such man-made place, but a space that is in my heart and mind if only I will it to be—and pray for mental peace.

I find that I can actually get closer to God in a place of worship that’s *not* traditionally my own. Where I don’t know the rituals, the customs, the appropriate hand gestures, the people around me, or anything else I’ve grown up learning and observing and becoming critical of. It’s in such unfamiliar places of worship where I’m forced to look inward and connect with the only things that do feel familiar—myself, and God.

When we stepped out, my taste buds thankfully swooped in and took control, replacing the gravity of what I was feeling with the buttery heaviness of rich, gooey, ghee-oozing *halwa* that was dolloped into our cupped palms right as we stepped out of the prayer hall. This act of being served, hand to hand, human to human, is the essence of a meal at the Gurdwara and speaks volumes about the religion and its founder.

The *langar*, or the communal dining room, was lined with rows of people sitting cross-legged on the ground, eating a simple vegetarian dinner of roti, vegetable, *daal*, and rice. I’ve heard that this entire meal is prepared by volunteers from the Sikh community—and true enough, when I peeked into the kitchen window, I could see a flurry of people in plain clothes, cooking, cleaning, and helping to serve the many meals that are provided free to anyone who steps into the langar.

Sona and I sat on the ground with everyone else, waiting to be served by the children and adults that had committed themselves to doing 'seva' (service) that evening. I peered to the side as a man with rotis approached, observing how people extended their palms for bread, a gesture that in my eyes, signalled humility and respect to both the person who is serving and to the one being served. I dipped my roti in chunky dal makhani made of earthy black lentils and mild spices, took a serving of the curried potato and peas, and nodded my head eagerly when asked if I would like an extra roti or a spoon of rice. Our glasses were filled by little girls and boys walking about with water pitchers, eager to do their act of community service for the day. When we finally heaved ourselves off of the ground, unable to tuck in anything more than a few spoonfuls of a second *sweet halwa* being served as dessert, I knew that this meal would be one that would stay with me forever. Not because of what I ate, but because of how it was prepared, served, and shared without a question, without prying into who I was, where I came from, what religion I followed. Sometimes, you need a simple experience to re centre yourself and your emotions. The Gurdwara helped me do that, if only for the few hours I spent there. I walked out full that evening, full of a simple unpretentious meal, full of great regard for the Sikh community and their principles of equality, inclusiveness and humility, full of a feeling of a reassurance that I could still connect with God at a time when all the petty things in my life had nearly blocked Him out from me.

To read about the Sikh religion and community, view this concise yet informative article on [BBC](#). For a more local perspective on the Guru Nanak Darbar in Dubai, check out this news release on [Emirates247](#) right after the Gurdwara was inaugurated in January of this year. The article also contains a [location map](#) for Guru Nanak Darbar.

PS. Sona, thanks for making this evening happen for me.

[Information in the links mentioned above is useful and printed here for the benefit of those who may not be able to access it. ED]

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THE GURDWARA BBC –RELIGIONS-SIKHISM:

This article looks at the Sikh place of worship, the Gurdwara.

**A Gurdwara is the place where Sikhs come together
for congregational worship.**



The first Gurdwara in the world was built by **Guru Nanak** in 1521-2 at Kartarpur. There are about 200 Gurdwaras in Britain.

The literal meaning of the Punjabi word Gurdwara is 'the residence of the Guru', or 'the door that leads to the Guru'.

In a modern Gurdwara, the Guru is not a person but the book of Sikh scriptures called the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

It is the presence of the *Guru Granth Sahib* that gives the Gurdwara its religious status, so any building containing the book is a Gurdwara.

Although a Gurdwara may be called the residence of the Guru (meaning the residence of God), Sikhs believe that God is present everywhere.

Before the time of **Guru Arjan Dev**, the place of Sikh religious activities was known as a *Dharamsala*, which means place of faith.

The purpose of a Gurdwara

- It's a place to learn spiritual wisdom
- It's a place for religious ceremonies
- It's a place where children learn the Sikh faith, ethics, customs, traditions and texts
- A Gurdwara is also a community centre, and offers food, shelter, and companionship to those who need it.

Gurdwaras are managed by a committee of their community.

Inside the Gurdwara

There are no idols, statues, or religious pictures in a Gurdwara, because Sikhs worship only God, and they

regard God as having no physical form; nor are there candles, incense, or bells, or any other ritualistic devices.

The focus of attention and the only object of reverence in the main hall (or Darbar Sahib) is the book of Sikh scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib, which is treated with the respect that would be given to a human Guru.

The Guru Granth Sahib is kept in a room of its own during the night and carried in procession to the main hall at the start of the day's worship.

The book is placed on a raised platform (*Takht* or *Manji Sahib*, meaning "throne") under a canopy (*Chanani* or *Palki*), and covered with an expensive cloth when not being read.

During a service a person with a whisk or fan called a *Chaur* waves it over the Guru Granth Sahib.

Although Sikhs show reverence to the Guru Granth Sahib, their reverence is to its spiritual content (shabad) not the book itself. The book is just the visible manifestation of the shabad.

The free food kitchen, or Langar



Every Gurdwara has a Langar attached to it where food is served to anyone without charge. The term Langar is also used for the communal meal served at the Gurdwaras.

The food served in the Langar must be simple, so as to prevent wealthy congregations turning it into a feast that shows off their superiority.

Although Sikhs are not required to be vegetarian, only vegetarian food is served in the Gurdwaras. This ensures that any visitor to the Gurdwara, whatever the dietary restrictions of their faith, can eat in the Langar. The meal may include chapati, dal (pulses), vegetables and rice pudding. Fish and eggs are counted as meat and excluded.

The four doors

There are four doors into a Gurdwara, known as the Door of Peace, the Door of Livelihood, the Door of Learning and the Door of Grace.

These doors are a symbol that people from all four points of the compass are welcome, and that members of all four castes are equally welcome.

There's always a light on in a Gurdwara, to show that the Guru's Light is always visible and is accessible to everyone at any time.

Flying the flag

Gurdwaras fly the Sikh flag outside. The flag is orange/yellow and has the Sikh emblem in the middle. **Top**

Visiting a Gurdwara

In India many Sikhs visit a Gurdwara before work. In Britain 39% of Sikhs go once a week, and while Sikhs do not regard any particular day of the week as a holy day, they usually go to a Gurdwara on Sundays as that fits the UK pattern of work.

Most Sikhs go to the Gurdwara on **Gurpurabs**, the festivals honouring the Gurus.

Anyone, of any faith, can visit a Gurdwara and will be made welcome.

Before going into a Gurdwara

All visitors to the Gurdwara should remove their shoes and cover their heads before entering the main hall. It is forbidden to smoke or take tobacco on to the premises and visitors cannot enter the Gurdwara while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

On entering a Gurdwara

Sikhs will bow to the Guru Granth Sahib as the first thing they do, touching the floor with their forehead. This not only shows their respect but also indicates that they submit themselves to the truths contained in the book.

People also place an offering of food or money in front of the Guru Granth Sahib. This is used to run the Gurdwara and the free food kitchen (*Langar*). The offering is not charity but a sharing of God's gifts. If a person has no money or food to offer they may offer flowers, or just some words of sincere thanks.

After bowing to the Guru Granth Sahib a Sikh will greet the congregation in a low, quiet voice with the words: "*Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Sri Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh*". This means "The Khalsa owes allegiance to God, sovereignty belongs to God alone".

Non-Sikh visitors should also bow and make an offering.

Seating in a Gurdwara

Everyone sits on the floor in a Gurdwara. This is to be humble before the Guru Granth Sahib and because it gives everyone a place of equal status to sit. Most people sit cross-legged. Cushions and seats are not allowed.

No-one should sit with their feet pointing at the Guru Granth Sahib. Anyone who walks round the Guru Granth Sahib or the Gurdwara must do so in a clockwise direction.

Men and women generally sit on separate sides of the hall.

Sacred food in the Gurdwara

Towards the end of a service *karah prasad*, a sweet vegetarian food that has been blessed will be served. This should be taken and received in cupped hands as a gift of God.

A Gurdwara service

Sikhs do not have ordained priests and any Sikh can lead the prayers and recite the scriptures to the congregation.



Each Gurdwara has a *Granthi* who organises the daily services and reads from the Guru Granth Sahib. A Granthi is not a priest but is the reader/custodian of the Adi Granth. A Granthi must be fluent in reading Gurmukhi and must be properly trained in all aspects of looking after the Guru Granth Sahib. They are expected to be an initiated member of the Sikh **Khalsa** who lives a life that exemplifies the ideals of the Khalsa.

Sikhs don't have a general official liturgy that must be used in a Gurdwara, although there are rules for particular ceremonies.

Kirtan

The morning service begins with the singing of *Asa Di Var*, a hymn written by **Guru Nanak**, founder of Sikhism.

Other hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib are then sung, accompanied by instruments. This hymn-singing is called *Kirtan* and is an essential part of Sikh worship.

Sermon

A sermon or talk, usually based on a theme from Sikh history, comes next. This is followed by the singing of *Anand Sahib*, a hymn written by Guru Amar Das, the Third Guru.

Ardas

The congregation then stands with eyes closed facing the Guru Granth Sahib for prayer (*Ardas*). During the prayer the word *Waheguru* (Punjabi for 'praise to the Guru') is often repeated.

Hukam

After the prayer, the Guru Granth Sahib is opened at a random page and the hymn found at the top of the left-hand page (Vak or Hukam) is read. The text is considered to be a relevant lesson for the day.

The ceremonial food

After the service, food is offered to the congregation. This consists of *Parshad* and a more substantial meal in the Langar. *Parshad* is a sweet made from equal quantities of wheat flour, sugar, and clarified butter. The first five portions are given to Khalsa members in memory of the *Panj Pyares* (the first five members of the Khalsa). After that *parshad* is served to everyone without distinctions of rank or caste.

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UAE'S SIKH COMMUNITY GETS ITS FIRST DEDICATED GURUDWARA

EMIRATES 24/7

Guru Nanak Darbar opened On Friday in Jebel Ali
around 35 Km from Dubai

By, Ajanta Paul

Published Monday, January 30, 2012



The United Emirates has inaugurated the country's first official Sikh Gurudwara.

Guru Nanak Darbar opened on Friday in Jebel Ali around 35 KM from Dubai, ending years of demand from the Sikh community for a dedicated place of worship. The Gurudwara is believed to be the first of its kind in the entire region.

Narinder Singh resident of Dubai and a member of SikhinDubai.com who conducts kirtan (devotional songs) believe, "It's a historical step and a boast for the Sikh community living in the UAE".

His Highness Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai gave his consent for the Gurudwara. He also gave away free land for the Gurudwara.

The Gurudwara is spread over an area of 25,000 square feet near the Jebel Ali Hospital. It has a dedicated floor for community feasts (langar) and a huge hall for devotional songs (kirtan). Arrangements can be made for community feasts for about 5,000 people at a time.

After a long-standing demand, the Sikh community believes it was an example of the strength of the community and their role in UAE society.

Media professional Abhimanyu Vir Pratap says, "It's good for the community specially people residing in this part of the town. We don't have to go as far as Bur Dubai. On holidays the entire community can gather together and exchange our views, philosophies and carry out our charity work."

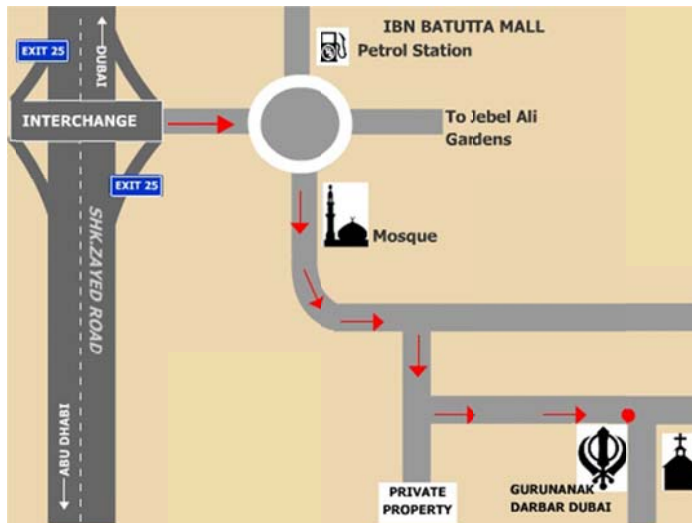
The Sikh community in Dubai till now offered prayers in a Gurudwara in the temple complex in Bur Dubai. Shweta Jain Chavan who visited the Bur Dubai complex says, "This will help our community immensely, the old complex was not spacious enough to hold large gatherings. This also goes on to show Dubai's tolerance towards other religion."

The main prayer hall of the new Gurudwara has a 7.2 meter high ceiling and 18-metre diameter Dome roof. The function hall can accommodate up to 900 people. There is parking space in the basement too.

There are an estimated 50,000 Sikhs in the UAE, hailing from India and Pakistan.

Dubai Marina resident Giftie Sahany says, "This has proved once again that Dubai is a cosmopolitan city and respects all religions when far more liberal countries like Canada are not allowing Sikhs to practice their religion freely. Dubai's efforts are commendable; also it's a credit to the Sikh community here to start a Gurudwara."

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INDIA: THE WONDERS OF EACH DAY

Kapil Rohatgi

“If you wish to know something about India you must empty your mind of all preconceived notions. Why be imprisoned by the limited vision of the prejudiced? Don’t try to compare. India is different and, exasperating as it may seem, would like to remain so ... This is the secret of India, the acceptance of life in all its fullness, the good and the evil.”

As aptly said by Mrs. Indira Gandhi, that my country is beyond comparison as still in this mystical, mythical and religious India lives the world of modernisation.

India, which was once divided into 5000 princely states and kingdoms, is the Subcontinent defined by the Great Himalayas, the Hindu Kush and the deserts beyond the hills of Kandahar, the Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea, and the Indian Ocean; a land of history that opens about the middle of the 3rd millennium BC with one of the seminal civilisations of the world.

India has been from ancient times a geographical billiard pocket, a destination, and a place of settlement rather than a staging post. In the Indian net there exists an extraordinary heterogeneity, a tapestry of cultures,

tongues, diets, deities and dress and different religions living together.

India, geographically speaking, covers an area of 3,287,782 sq. kms India lies to the North of the Equator between 8°4’ and 37°06’ in the North Latitude and 68°7’ to 97°25’ East Longitude, is the seventh largest country in the world with a population of over one billion people. It measures 3214 kms from North to South and 2933 kms from East to West. It has a land frontier of 15200 kms from West Coast up North to the East Coast and a coastline of 6083 kms from West Coast down South to the East Coast. On the North, North East and North West it is surrounded by the Himalayas and whereas, bounded by the Arabian Sea on the South West to Indian Ocean to the Southernmost tip to Bay of Bengal on the South East coast.

India is divided into 26 states and 6 union territories. The country recognises 18 major languages with almost 1,652 mother tongues and 240 dialects, so that every state in the union is multilingual, where on this basis still caste and religion grind together. It is to be considered as the second largest and heavily populated and the largest of the democracies in the world.

Indians are a tactile people, living thigh to thigh, jostling, rubbing, holding hands, and embracing, close to each other’s breath, the bubble of each other’s pots. They have learned to cram, to take a deep communal breath to admit just one for more, to fill every crevice, to hang by their nails, to sit one buttock, to stretch the seams of their streets, houses and vehicles. The new India is somewhat different whose scientific and industrial skills are no match, computer, industrial and agricultural revolution has put us Indians on the top of the 21st century. Today also the history and the modern civilisation are living together in one India.

The physical appearance of the people presents a vertical spectrum of shades in this country of colours, which has a different meaning to us – meaning life full of zest. The constant rubbing of shoulders, in the home, streets, and fields, gives India its distinctive patina. All its joints are worn, and its edges smoothed, honed by feet and hands like pilgrims’ stairs. Indeed, the true Indian motif is not the Taj Mahal, the elephant, forts and palaces or the patient farmers behind the ox-drawn plough. It is the crowd, the ocean

of faces in the land of multitudes, endlessly stirring, pushing, and moving as teeming and vigorous and urgent as spermatozoa. It is in this human circulation that one sees India's colour, variety and hive-like busyness, and senses also its power, vitality and grandeur, its near inertia, its remorseless glacial movement, as imperceptible and irrevocable as continental drift.

One shouldn't also forget the religious experience in this great country well diversified on the basis of religions. As aptly said where every Indian belonging to any religion would say

"Oh Earth, my mother, Air, my father, Oh Fire, my friend,

Water, my kinsman, Space, my brother,

Here do I bow before you with folded hands,

With your aid I have done good deeds and found clear knowledge,

And, glorious, with all delusion past, I merge in highest godhead."

So let me discover this great land of mysteries for you.

When I was young and writing about India, I embraced the gift of each day. Each day was filled with sound and movement, with thought and action, with a delighted awareness of the present, a hope for the future and a sense of the rolling forward of history. From the beginning, I somehow understood that in India, virtue lies in rushing towards each day with its joys and adventures, and even its pain and anguishes, and that the only real sin is to demean God's gift of each day by turning away.

How this country taught me this I cannot really say. However, when I think of 22 years of travelling here, I recall myself having been surrounded by people, motion and inertia, colour, joys, horrors and kindly friends, by heat and cooling rain, the odour of dung and the scent of marigold and spices, snow on the mountain, muck and filth in the village, anger and laughter, elegance and decay. This was an acute realisation of the day; I ran forward and seized what I could.

What lot of people believes that, with time, India surely will become older, as time passes that it will be different and that it won't be as full of zest, but this is wrong. There is virtue of joy in the day, and every time I think about it, I find that India and I are both

rejuvenated. Now, how can this be? When I tell tourist about my love for my country, they say: What about caste system? What about the filth and poverty? What about the stench and disease, riot and death? Yes, of course, I reply, but all that is not the whole picture. It is the rest, the huge infinite variety of the rest that once lifted my heart and continues to do so.

It is the sound of music everywhere. Houses are lit for religious festivals and weddings, with oil lamps, with strings of garish electric bulbs and with delicate little lights glowing from tree branches - we call them Princess's Lights; the dozen different regions, races and religions rolling in one India.

It is the sight of colour and the colour in the colourful dress of every Indian folk - woman. It is the warmth of the people you meet, who are so kind and so loving, the adventure of travel, and the still-existing greatest adventure - the Indian adventure of freedom. All this grand sense of theatre and drama is evident throughout in India, not simply for the tourists but for India and out of India.

All of India is a tour itinerary. Mine always starts in New Delhi simply because it has been my home - or at least the base from which I keep wandering about the subcontinent. I am, of course, a man of enormous self-control and one who conceals undue emotion. So it is not until the wheels of the aeroplane touches down that you hear a shout of "India, India, and India." For the first-time traveler who peers out the window at this great country, it is not only India but amiably enough assures that even more wonders lay in store for him in the days to come.

Let us take India at night - the sharp odour of charcoal burning in hundreds of roadside fires of the migrant workers mixed with the aroma, half-real, and half a memory, of the sweet flower that Indians call Queen of the Night. If you know India at all, you can close your eyes and be at home. Open them in the morning and there are the great red sandstone government buildings, built by the British to celebrate their own sense of power.

The British Raj is gone but the buildings remain - imperial, self-satisfied, and historic in their Mogul style. They are particularly Indian in the memory of history, very Indian in their celebration of national

pomp and glory. What buildings like that need is what India gives them - magnificent mounted lancers on guard every day, the motionless beasts of the camel corps on the bulwarks on National days, huge pipers and drummers whenever there is an excuse for a parade and thousands of oil lamps silhouetting each balcony and turret at holiday time.

There is a sense of the theatre in the magnificent military bands at the Gateway of India on Mumbai's water-front, in the bracelets of barefooted women in Calcutta, in the cymbals that are banged whilst god is paraded ceaselessly through the holy city of Banaras, in the starched turbans of the government servants and even in the white homespun caps that Indian politicians love to wear at election time in order to show their undying devotion to Mahatma Gandhi, as they climb into their chauffeured cars.

Sometimes it is cold in India and sometimes it is terribly hot, it is often dry although it does sometimes rain, which doesn't matter all that much to Indians. Just go somewhere; anywhere in India, it is alive all year, everywhere. All of India is worth visiting during one month or another as long as you not only looking but also to assimilate your poses.

New Delhi, which is known as the "Stop-go capital", is a city, which has an unusually uneven and protean history, changing its face, its ethnic composition, its religious character and its role as a subcontinent metropolis from decade to decade and century to century.

The Delhi of today - old hands call it: "Plain Delhi" - is on the move again. The city which rose and fell in importance for centuries before finally becoming the capital of British India in 1911 and of independent India in 1947, has in its chameleon-like way now begun to reflect another new age that could be called the "Computer Age".

The city's five-star hotels ring with the laughter of partygoers and late-night diners, the city of fast and modern cars, fashionable people and modernisation. Of course, for many who live in Delhi and love her for its old things - a low rise skyline, elegant bungalows with high ceilings, verandas and flower gardens, and the dusty, crusty frontier quality of many of the bazaars - the changing scenes are disturbing.

Up North there is a place called Kashmir, the land of swift-flowing, sparkling rivers and placid lakes adorned with gardens that were laid out by connoisseurs of all things beautiful, temperate forests of shade and cool valleys of emerald green, and the towering snow-clad mountains are indeed "the brightest that earth ever gave". Here, too, the hunter and the angler, the skier and the hiker, temples and mosques, monasteries and caves that are sacred to many different faiths - they also lend serenity to a valley that is truly blessed by Gods.

Down in the South is a tropical paradise of waving palms and wide sandy beaches. This thin strip of coastal territory slopes down from the mountains to Ghats in a cascade of lush green vegetation, known as Kerala.

It is a land of industrious people who have the highest rate of literacy in the country, an area where a number of cultures have met - Hinduism, Islamism, Christianity, and Judaism - and they have all left their indelible marks on the land and its people.

On the Western Ghats are the lands of the last of the Asian lions, known as Gujarat, and the land of the Maharajas, known as Rajasthan. Gujarat, where history goes back to the days when gods dallied with the mortals, the home of Gandhi and his message, astute businessperson and colourful peasants is this land.

Rajasthan, the land of princes is an area of all types of terrain - rocks, desert, lakes, and jungles. It is a land of a proud people whose courage, chivalry, and martial traditions are legendary. Here palace and fort, garden and lake attest to pride and honour, love and culture.

On the Eastern banks, from the Himalayan Heights to the tea ranges, from plantation country to the flourishing jute fields in the fertile plains of the great rivers, from the great plains to that deltaic hive of massed humanity, throbbing industry and explosive politics, it is known as the "Black Hole Of The Earth", Calcutta. This is a land of today searching for tomorrow rather than remembering yesterday.

In the Central part of India, Madhya Pradesh, is the site of the World's earliest, most famous and most highly developed civilisations, there are over 1800

magnificent monuments bearing witness to the glory that was this land of Malwa. Cheek by jowl with this centuries-old culture of varied streams, live some of the most primitive of Indian aboriginal tribes. What more in this great central plateau of rugged mountain ranges, deep ravines, and rushing rivers, there are also vast unexplored tracts of thick forests where some of the country's finest big game roam.

In the Northwest of the Indian Subcontinent bordering Pakistan is a land of the **ONLY** monotheistic religion called SIKHISM, an off-shoot of Hinduism, believing in the existence of ONE GOD or IN THE ONENESS OF GOD, was founded during the 15th century by Guru Nanak and continued to progress through the ten successive Sikh gurus, the eleventh and last guru being the Holy Scripture **Guru Granth Sahib**. It is the fifth-largest organized religion in the world, over 23 million Sikhs in the world with the majority resident in Punjab, India.

Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru established the system of the Langar (communal kitchen), in order to demonstrate the need to share and have equality between all people. Guru Nanak described living an "active, creative, and practical life" of "truthfulness, fidelity, self-control and purity" as being higher than a purely contemplative life. Sikhism endeavored for a new dispensation characterized by the values of liberty, equality, justice, tolerance and non-violence, discarding discriminations of all kinds on grounds of creed, caste, class, race, region, sex, etc.

Sikhs are expected to embody the qualities of a Saint-Soldier. It surged up across the horizon as a great revolutionary force that changed the very course of Indian history being confused as the militant religion. The Sikhs, as a sect, adopted militancy to save their own brothers from the Islamic forces when Islamic religion was at its full glory and was establishing faster than another religion in divided India.

Amritsar is one of Punjab's principal cities, dating back in history over 400 years. It is known more for the world famous Golden Temple, the seat of Sikh religion. It is here that Akal Takht Sahib (Throne of the Almighty) was revealed by Guru Hargobind Sahib in 1609.

Sometimes you discover India for yourself, by yourself and sometimes another person helps you to discover it for you. There is a place in Old Delhi known as Chandani Chowk - an unpleasant whole, where smells, dirty streets, beggars, open drains that you see only as a whole, crowded streets, hundreds upon hundreds of stalls of cloth-sellers and spice merchants, were distinct, each one of them, with its salesman, gofers, hawkers, hustling porters and businessmen, running, carrying, moving, buying and selling.

Each person, each movement, each noise and sensation was separate but together, just as real and as powerful as the red sandstone buildings and the mounted lancers. The discovery lay in the rationalisation of individuals and sensations, the sandalwood from the incense, the fried sweets from the spices. On the whole, the noise is deafening.

Now it's time to discover ancient Varanasi - it is still known throughout the world as Benares - the oldest living city on this land of the religions. Indians call this holy city which is situated on the Ganges "The Navel of The World," and for all Hindus it is. We also call it the mother of the cities, the mother of us all, the city of light, knowledge and wisdom, life and death, "The First Step into Heaven."

It is like Jerusalem with its smelly streets, huge crowds, shrieking horns, and cow dung everywhere. There are hundreds of temples, huge temples, and small wayside altars - up winding bazaar streets, in the middle of the roads and around corners. All this gives one a headache, until one suddenly realises where one is. One is in the very centre of a religious experience, a daylong, and every day religious experience.

The city, creature of the passion of prayer and belief, is the wild and deep inner heart of Hinduism. All of India comes here to worship, to pray and dance, to live, and to die. Although they are separate by night, they are all jumbled together by the dawn of the next day. The rest of the world doesn't exist for the Hindus. There is a fierce of devotion, but there is also jolliness that no one expects. The bazaars are full of children's toys, wooden dolls and bracelets, and everybody seems to have at least one child for whom to buy a trinket.

Hindus come to Varanasi to die, to be cremated, and to have their ashes thrown into the Ganges. But many people come here to pray and see and live and believe. The religion is the reality, the only reality, and they live in it and then they die in it. But mostly live in it and live for it.

This is a land, which bounces, shrieks, and smells. There are crazy monkeys that jump all over the temples and snatch garlands from around people's necks. It is wild and alive and while you are there, there may as well be no other place. Varanasi is also known as the land of the sunrise on the Ganges, is just red and beyond imagination. You see the people washing and praying, performing rites, and rituals, cremating the dead and making way towards their heavenly abode. Just touch the water and there you are fully immersed in the holy water of the Ganges.

Calcutta is worth the visit, just for the statistics. It is known as the city of numbers and superstition. There are 2,00,000 rickshaw drivers in Calcutta, exactly 1 million people sleep on the streets, 50 tons of spit is spat every day and 50,000 cows roam the streets, along with no fewer than 1,00,000 pigs.

Of course, everybody thinks that Calcutta is the worst city in the world, only it isn't. It is bad enough all right, it is dirty and filthy and hungry and diseased. Calcutta is many other things, students in coffee houses, radical mobs and a whole quarter given over to making clay gods, worshipped just one day a year, and then quickly destroyed, so that good fruits and nuts won't have to be fed to them all year round.

Having said that, the city is mainly consisted of bazaars, fruit bazaars, vegetable bazaars, Hindu bazaars, and Muslim bazaars, bazaars for cloth and gold flowers and meat and automobile part and also stolen goods. There are whole vast cities of bazaars jammed ankle deep in straw and bouncing, bouncing, bouncing all day long. Push, hustle, buy, sell, push, and hustle. It isn't neat and it isn't clean, but it surely is alive.

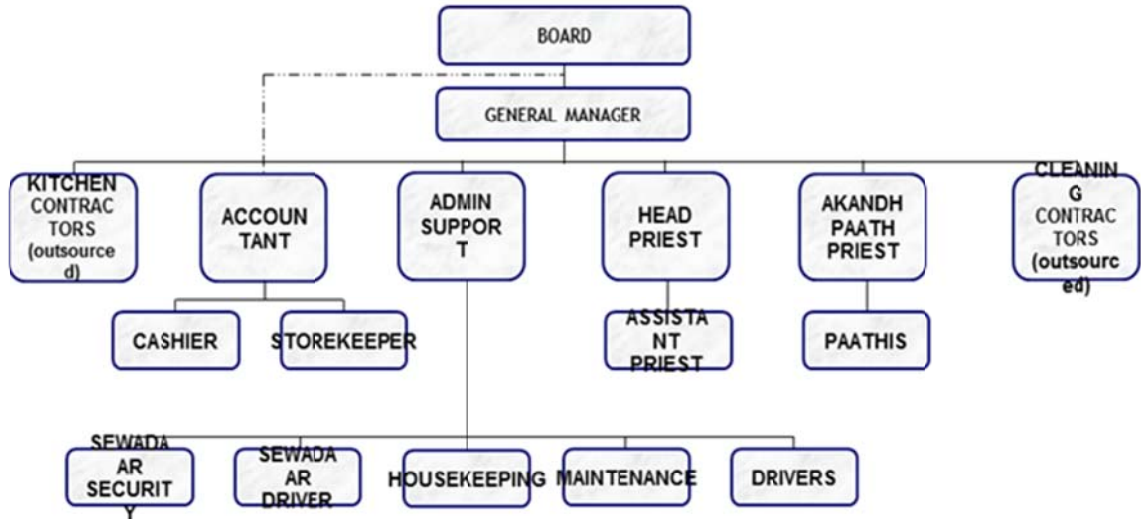
Calcutta is mostly poor and shabby, middle-class at best, a vast busy tatter of a city. In contrast Mumbai is power - Arab princes, skyscrapers, hotels, big business deals, billions of rupees, narcotics, oil, machinery, industry, women in saris slung low about their hips, money, money, money. Everywhere there are unending

shantytowns, hundreds of thousands of people pour into town looking for work. People are born, they live, and they love, next to those hotels, which are filled with men and women of gold and silk. Next you see a bundle in the street which might or might not be a person, alive or dead.

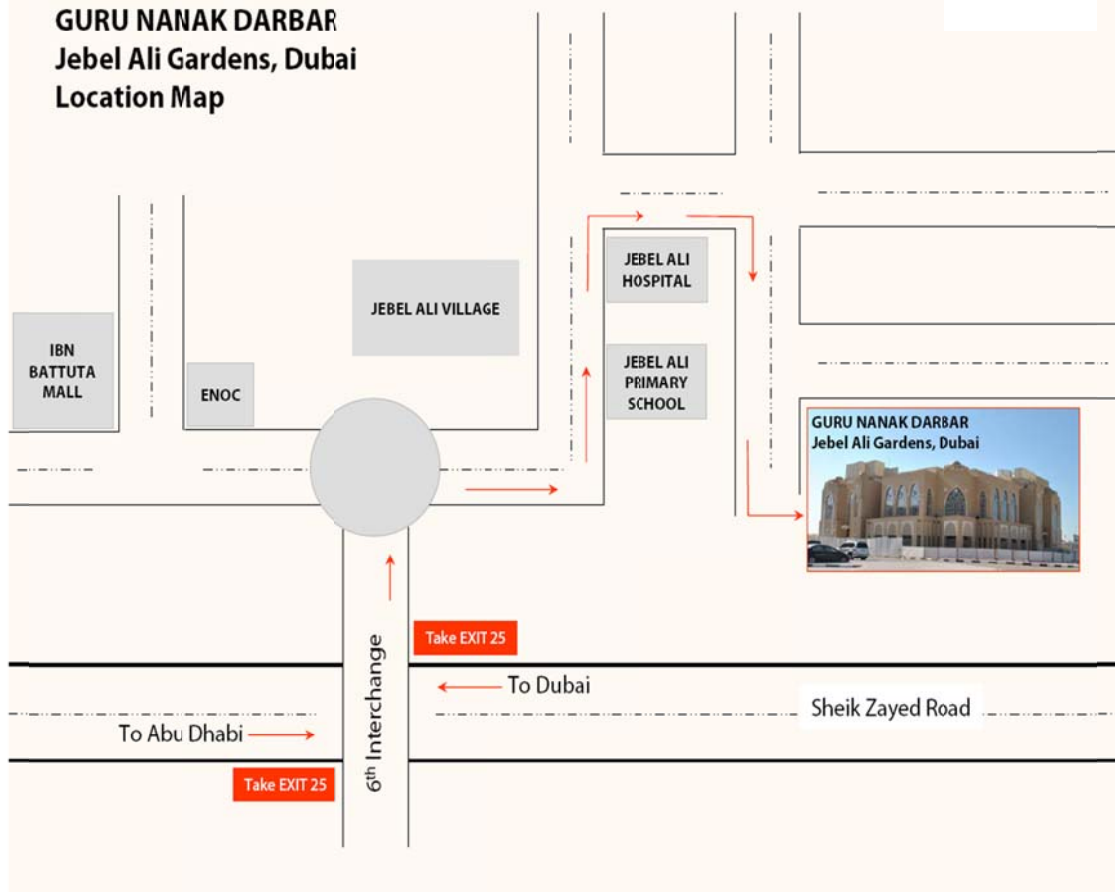
The sense of wonder that India inspires in westerners is the disturbing scenes in the villages, their people and the lives of those people, is poverty for them. It seems to be poverty but actually it isn't. The villages are clean, they have some sewers, there is farm machinery, children have real clothes, not just rags, there are some roads, and the courtyards are neat and tidy, and there are schools which have uniformed students, there are stores, banks, life insurance companies, professional colleges and more of the satellite dishes for SKY T.V.

So please understand that I really do know all the negative things that can be said about India, but you will not find many of them here, for this is an article of loving thanks for the gift of the day. On the whole, India is a great experience of free politics, a free society in poverty-stricken country struggling upwards - the great adventure.

Organogram



GURU NANAK DARBAR Jebel Ali Gardens, Dubai Location Map



Take Exit 25/Interchange No.6, R/A right, at Dead end left, First right behind Jebel Ali Hospital, First right again, straight on the left is the Gurudwara