

## SIKH UNITY NETWORK NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Issue 2

Khalsa March Edition, April 10, 1999

## Six thousand gather at Khalsa Convention

#### **By Savraj Singh**

Approximately six thousand Sikhs from the U.S. and the world gathered at the Meadowlands Exposition Center last Saturday to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the Khalsa. Sikhism is a monotheistic faith and is the fifth largest religion in the world.

After a youth performance of the Sikh Anthem, New Jersey Secretary of State DeForest B. Soaries inaugurated the convention by presenting a proclamation from Governor Christine Whitman, who was unable to attend. The proclamation declared April 14, 1999 to April 14, 2000 as The Year of the Khalsa.

The convention was divided into three separate panels. The panels addressed the Creation of the Khalsa, Humanitarian Concerns of Sikhs, and the Future of Khalsa, respectively. The overall presentation included over a dozen speakers and dignitaries from Canada, India, the United States and the United Kingdom.

Dr. Surjit Singh Gandhi, a Sikh historian from Punjab, detailed the events that preceded 1699. Dr. Gurtaran Singh, from Punjab University remarked on Khalsa as a community. Dhadhi Vaars about the Punj Pyare (the five beloved) were also performed during the first panel by the Ranipur Valian Bibian, a set of

<

"folklore bards." A Tae Kwon Do demonstration by Sikh Youth from New York also enlivened the presentation.

Dr. Jasdev Singh Rai, Chairman of the Human Rights Group, United Kingdom, addressed the acceptance of different faiths by today's secular society as part of the second panel. Sardarni Ramandeep Kaur, an attorney from Canada, stressed the principle of equality in Sikhism. Dr. Cynthia Mahmood of the University of Maine then spoke of Human Rights and self determination. She is currently working on a book about women in Sikhism, and she wrote Fighting for Faith and Nation, Dia*logues with Sikh Militants*. Humorous skits that demonstrated various precepts of Sikhism rounded out the panel.

The third panel addressed the future of the Khalsa, and included speeches by Ms. Mary Pike, an attorney currently defending two Sikhs, Barrister Harjit Singh of London, Dr. Amarjit Singh of Washington, and Dr. Gurcharan Singh, a professor of international studies at Marymount college. Dr. Seif Sharif Hamad, Chairperson of the General Assembly of the Underrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization praised the nationalism of Sikhs.

A riveting Gatka presentation by a group from California concluded the convention.

There Is One God His Name Is Truth siq numu He Is The Creator kraw p**r**Ku Without Fear, Without Hate inrBauinrvhu He is Beyond Time Akwl morig He Is Beyond Birth & Death, He Is Self Illuminated Ajbhl sBM By His Grace Can You Know Him gr plswid ]

The Mool Mantar. The first verses of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the Holy Scripture of the Sikhs. These verses were written by Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of the Sikh Religion.

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### Inside this issue...

Poem: Sikhs in the 20th Century	2
Learn Bani from your CD player	3
The story of the Birth of the Khalsa	4
Kids: Color-in Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji	5
Are you strong enough?	7
Khalsa March Schedule	8

Khalsa Poetry

This is kind of a satire poem. It shows how individuals make justifications for everything that they do, which is against Sikhism. An individual knows what he/she is doing is wrong, though continues to do so. Assuming that Sikhi is within, a person continues on with life with that assumption never attempting to progress. In the same manner the individual goes about comparing oneself to family, relatives and friends. One doesn't have time for Gurdwara because he/she is to tired from Friday and Saturday night parties. One claims to be for human rights, but remains ignorant and does not understand the concept of Khalistan. Overall this poem is about the Sikhs of today. The individual in this poem is ignorant, hypocritical, and is always making contradicting remarks.

### Sikhs in the 20th Century

By Harpreet Kaur

I do always tend to justify, but no way will I ever lie. I swear I shall be a good Sikh someday, even though it seems a little far away.	Usually on Sunday's I don't go to the Gurdwara and if I do it's only to stay in power. I know I'm beginning to sound like a jerk, but I jut can't help it I've got work!
The Guru has called me for my head.	-
I think I should run or else I shall be dead.	"Oops," that was a little slip on my end. I go to Gurdwara to meet my friends.
Keeping the five k's I dare not do.	I only work five days a week from nine to five and on Friday
For what will people say when I go to the pool?	nights I have a little wine, though let me make it clear that I don't drink beer.
My conscious has lead me to believe that beauty means more	
then Sikhi to me.	India is where I was born you see, for it is like my own home
Tying a turban is easy for me, but keeping thy beard, "oh my, it	to me.
can not be."	Khalistan, I can't understand for why is it in such demand?
I can style my hair in different ways and wear it down every	Killing and fighting I do not believe.
other day.	I'm all about human rights, but please don't kill me!
Washing it and combing that's all fine, but those split ends,	I manifes to wash a gates with the small lenife but let me just
"I'm sorry God," I must commit that crime.	I promise to wear a gatra with the small knife, but let me just first enjoy my life.
I don't do my nitnem everyday, but "Waheguru" I do always remember to say.	It's not about Amrit don't you see, I just want to be true to me.
Sihki is within my heart "oh pardon me," I mean at least it's a start.	I dearly love my Guru Ji and Sikhism is very important to me. A hypocrite, "oh no," I will not be.
I have Sikh friends who have never committed a kurat in	I do always tend to justify, but no way will I ever lie.
anyway, but for some reason they forget to pray. On the other hand I remember God from day to day, but in my	I swear I shall be a good Sikh someday, even though it seems a little far away.
activities I have gone a little stray.	

Sikh Unity Network Newsletter Vol 1, Issue 2 We are for and by Sikh Youth. Naina Kaur and Savraj Singh compiled this issue. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of Sikh Unity Network. For more info visit http://start.at/sikhunity, or email sikhunity@aol.com.

# **Community News**

#### Lohgarh Retreat

#### By Naina Kaur

With a prestigious, front page New York Times article, the Lohgarh Retreat is now one of the most recognized camps in the country. The official dates for this camp are June 26th-July 10th. For more information, please call 1-800-GUR-SEVA or visit their website at http://www.maboli.com/seva/ lohgarh/. Lohgarh is also looking for several GurSikhs in their early/mid twenties to volunteer their time to be counselors. Please email PkDhillon@aol.com for more information if interested.

#### Bani made easy

#### **By Rajnarind Kaur**

The main purpose of the present sewa is to help those who do not know how to correctly pronounce Gurbani. Utilising modern technology, a specific portion of a bani can be played and practiced an unlimited number of times. I am sure that Bani Pro will prove to be of immense help to those who are desirous of learning the correct pronunciation of Gurbani and to whom Punjabi is not their native language.

This Nitnem CD includes the five banis of the Sikhs. These are Japji Sahib, Jaap Sahib, Tva Prasaad Savaiye, Rehras Sahib, and Kirtan Sohila. The banis in this CD are arranged, so that, one can master a certain pauri/stanza by repeating a specific track. Japji Sahib is split into three tracks where the Mool Mantar is on its own track, the rest of Pauri 1 to Pauri 5 is on the second track, and the third track includes Pauris 6-38. Jaap Sahib is organized with each chaand on a separate track. Tva Prasaad Savaiye is on one track. Rehras Sahib and Kirtan Sohila are arranged with each shabad on a separate track.

Each CD will be \$5 and all proceeds will go towards the Sikh Youth of North America and their numerous projects. For ordering information, please contact: BaniPro@hotmail.com, 27 Kimberly Drive Ocean, NJ 07712-3318. Rajnarind Kaur, April, 1999 New York, NY USA.

#### Sikh Art Exhibition

The first international exhibition of The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms will open at the V&Ain England on 25 March 1999.

In April 1801 Ranjit Singh was proclaimed the first Sikh maharaja of the Panjab, meaning the land of the five rivers, at Lahore. This landmark exhibition, which describes the exciting and eventful cultural history of the maharaja and his successors, features paintings, vibrantly-coloured silks and shawls, gold-decorated weapons and some of the most spectacular jewels of the Sikh treasury. They were made by and for Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims and even Europeans, reflecting the cosmopolitan and egalitarian atmosphere of the time.

The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms is being held to coincide with the 300th anniversary of a pivotal event in Sikh history when Guru Gobind Singh, the last of the Ten Gurus, initiated five of his followers to create the Khalsa, or Order of the Pure. Ever since, the symbols he prescribed (including uncut hair and for men the wearing of turbans) have identified millions of Sikhs all over the world.

For this major show, the V&A has drawn from its own extensive collections and collaborated with museums and private collectors in India, Pakistan, the US, Switzerland and France as well as the United Kingdom. The exhibition is accompanied by the book The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms edited by Susan Stronge, of the Indian & South-East Asian Department and curator of the exhibition. The book includes chapters by leading writers such as Khushwant Singh, Patwant Singh, F.S Aijazuddin and B.N Goswamy which survey the historical and religious background to the Sikh kingdoms, as well as examining particular artistic themes in detail.

Reprinted from Sikhnet Site News

#### \$28,500 for S1 KHS

#### By Savraj Singh

Rishipal Singh, a 19-year-old student in East London, paid £17,800 (\$28,500) for a license plate that reads "S1 KHS," according to *India Abroad*. This plate was produced through a random process, and was auctioned Britain's Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency.

The agency expected the plate to fetch a higher price, in the neighborhood of  $\pounds 50,000$  (\$80,000). It turned out to be a bargain for Singh, who sold his Ford car to gather money to buy the number plate.

Last year, the number "S1 NGH" was sold to a Sikh businessman for  $\pounds 108,000$  (\$ 173,000).

**Editorial Comment:** American-made "Proud to be a Sikh" license plate frame, including two Khandas and a Punjabi "Waheguru," \$5. But it's just not the same.



Page 4

## Solid support system strengthens a Sikhs individuality

#### By Naina Kaur

I stopped shaving my legs halfway through my sophomore year. That is around the time I became deeply connected with my religion, Sikhism, which has a strong belief against the cutting of hair. This includes no shaving; slightly difficult for a high school teenager approaching womanhood in a society placing so much value on beauty. There are hardly any Indians in my town, let alone any Sikhs. My sister and I are the only ones to go through our school system in what is commonly known as 'white suburbia.' This has definitely not been easy.

When I was younger, I was embarrassed to be seen with my father because of his turban. I used to dread Open House every year. The looks, stares, and snickers were impossible to ignore from the children my own age, but even harder to endure from their parents. They would turn and whisper to the adult next to them and give our family this look that made me feel as if we were out of place, even though many of them were newer residents than we.

Growing up, I did not have any Sikh friends. It was only when I was older that I started keeping in touch with my friends from religious camps

Our mutual difficulties of trying to reconcile religious and cultural values with those of society made us become each other's backbones.

that I attended annually during the summers. High school was definitely a shock for me. I stood by and watched, amazed to see old friends whom I had grown up with change before my eyes as they started experimenting with drugs and alcohol. I drifted from most of them and went to my Sikh friends who were also experiencing what I was. It was through our mutual difficulties of trying to reconcile our religious and cultural values with those of the larger society that we became each other's backbones. This group now spans several states, from me in Connecticut to my friends in New Jersey as well as others from Washington DC and all the way to California. Through e-mails, letters, and of course the phone (and you should see the bills) we are there for each other, because we know how hard it is to be different.

This solid support system gave me strength to come to terms with being different. Growing up as a minority, it is has become very easy to relate to minorities of other races, religions, and ethnic backgrounds. I grew up feeling as if I did not belong anywhere. I did not see culture beyond the small box that I would check Asian-American. However, now from both my culture and my religion, I have learned acceptance and tolerance. I have attained an identity that has helped to shape who I am. This identity is not only a part of who I am, it is who I am.

## The creation of the Khalsa Panth: keep the spirit alive

**By Jarnail Singh** 

"Chiryoon se meh bhaaj turaon, Sava lakh se ik laraon."

-Guru Gobind Singh Ji

As you hear the pounding of the drums in the distance, the sant sipahis call out in a majestic voice that bring us all pride, "Bole So Nihal! Sat Sri Akal!" The call of the Guru's soldiers can be heard till the farthest ocean. For they are filled with the one thing that can defeat any army's weapons. They are armed with faith. Faith in their Guru, in themselves and most importantly the one thing they live for and die their religion. Not only because of his personality but also because of his creation of the Khalsa have all of us become such strong people. People gathered, people wondered, people whispered. For the Guru had sent out a Hukamnama, and he was calling all of his Sikhs to join together in a congregation. This was set for the date March 30th, 1699. Little did those people know that this date would stick in the minds of Sikhs for years to come. Because of their belief in the Guru they came together to ponder the many reasons why; why might the Guru call such an enormous congregation?

As the Guru stand in front of the anxious followers waiting for something to happen, he yelled out to them, "I ask of you only one thing, and that is your head." The people gasped in audacity. They murmured to each other, "Has he gone mad? Should we lose all faith in him? First this, what's next to come of us?" He yelled out to the crowd again. All these people who were willing to drop it all for this man and fight against the worst enemies, wouldn't give themselves up for the one they trusted the most. After much anticipation, one brave man emerged out of the crowd and marched up onto stage with dignity. After him 4 more men came to show how much they trusted this man.

As the guru took him into a tent set up aside, one could hear a thud. Once, twice, three more times. The once worshipped man, now thought to be crazed, walked out with a long shined sword or kirpan, as we know it, dripping of thick red blood. The crowd shrieked with worry. Then the 5 men walked out with pride in shining blue robes. The crowd gasped in awe. The Guru presented the



Color-in the picture of the Guru!

#### I Need a Head \*

#### By Guru Kirn Kaur

The day dawned clear and bright for the Baisakhi celebration of 1699. The Sikhs were in a festive mood because Guru Gobind Rai had proclaimed that all should come together at Anandpur Sahib.

The crowds gathered in anticipation in front of the Guru's tent. They expected to hear a stirring speech. No one was prepared for the sight of the Guru when he did appear. He was dressed in his royal blue uniform with his arms girded about him; his eyes were so intense that no one dared to look at him. He drew his sword and shouted, "I need a head!" People could not believe their ears. The Guru wanted to kill one of his beloved Sikhs? Again the cry rang out, and again. Many people ran away in fear and horror. But one man, Daya Ram, rose and said, "O beloved Guru, my head has always been yours." The

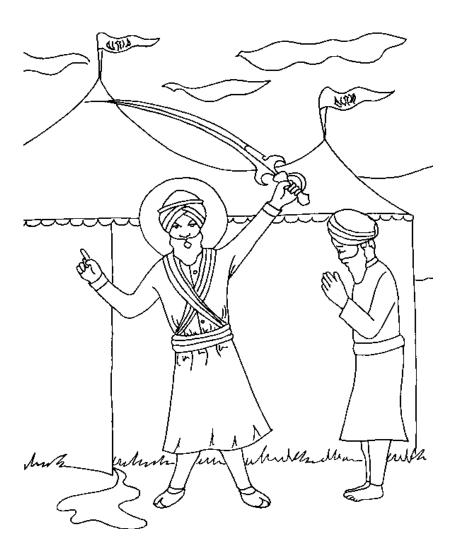
Guru took him into the tent and came out with a sword dripping with blood. Again he asked for a head. Dharm Das came up and said, "Take my head, O dear one." Once again, the Guru took him into his tent and emerged with a dripping sword. For the third time, he asked the question. Mokum Chand bowed before his Master. The Sikhs began to think that he was going to kill them all. Two more times the call went out, and two more devoted Sikhs, Himmat and Sahib Chand, stepped forward to fill the void. The Guru then went into the tent himself.

Suddenly, the Guru and the five appeared, as if from the dead. He had dressed them and himself in beautiful golden clothes so that they shone like the sun. To them he said, "You and I are one and the same." The Guru sat the five near him and said, "Guru Nanak had only one devoted Sikh, Angad. In my time there are five Sikhs who are totally devoted to the Guru. They shall lay the foundation for the new Sikh faith." The gathering cheered the five for their courage. The Guru then said, "From this day on the Khalsa, the Pure Ones, will be baptized by the Amrit. They shall become Singhs and Kaurs."

The Guru began stirring water in a steel bowl with his dagger while reciting the banis. When he had finished, two sparrows sipped some of the water and rose up into the air, fighting so fiercely that they killed each other. The Guru's wife, Mata Sahib Devan, was hurriedly brought to the scene by some bystanders. She put some sweets into the holy water so that those who drank it would be both strong and kind. The Guru honored her by making her the Mother of the Khalsa.

The Guru gave the Amrit to the five in much the same manner as it is given today. He laid down the rehit: to wear the five K's, help the poor, be faithful to one's spouse, work by honest labor, keep a healthy body, keep long hair, give one tenth of one's earnings to the Guru, and rise early and praise God's Name. When he had given them the Amrit, he asked them to give it to him. They were amazed at this request. The Guru said, "The Khalsa is the Guru, and the Guru is the Khalsa. There is no difference between you and me. I have now seated you on the Guru's throne." They then baptized him as he had them, with the same ceremony and vows. He called the five Sikhs his "Panj Piare", or five beloved ones, and thereafter called himself Guru Gobind Singh.

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#### Page 6

#### (Continued from page 4)

Panj Piyaray, or 5 beloved ones. In front of the group he baptized each and every one of them, and had them baptize him afterwards to show their equality.

He created the Khalsa Panth. Presenting guidelines to the sangat, he told them of 5 K's that must be worn at all times. Yes, he had created the Sikh army of saint-soldiers. Kesgi, Kara, Kanga, Kachera, and Kirpan, each of them representing something different. Giving them these 5 expressions of their ancestors, he told them what they would have to do in order to be a part of his newly made "army". He gave them the Kirpan, a small dagger in protection, Kes, uncut hair in simplicity, Kanga, a small comb for keeping oneself well-groomed, Kara, a steel bracelet in remembrance of wrong doings, and Kachera, knee length shorts in cleanliness.

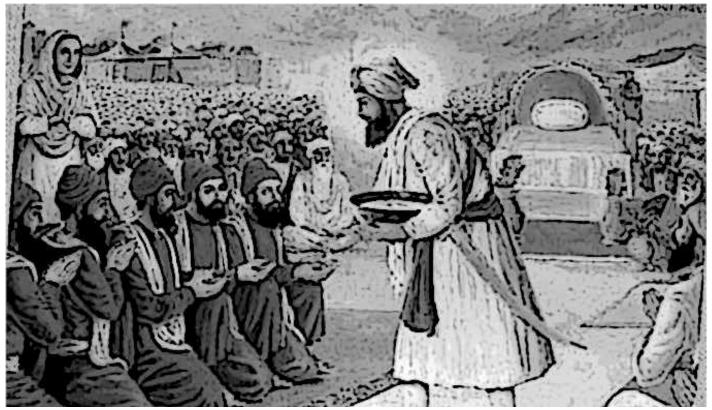
Many know of Guru Gobind Singh for his creation of the Khalsa. Most people do not know much about his early childhood. As a child, the Guru was very active and mischievous. By the age of 5, this young prodigy was organizing his own child brigade. He would pull pranks like making faces at police officers or getting people wet at the Ganges. Yet some how, how much ever mischievous he was, he would still catch the hearts of all. He was skillful, powerful and best of all had a great amount of patience. The Guru performed countless miraculous acts. People all over heard of the Guru's talent. Hindus and Muslims, alike all showed devotion and respect for the Child-Beloved.

As the Guru got older and matured, he turned his childhood fantasy, into reality. He put together an army of his own made up of saint soldiers just like he did as a child. His army had many confrontations with Hindus, Moguls, and other ethnic groups. Him and his army lasted through the worst battles imaginable. They were the best of the best. As the Guru's fame grew, people became aware of his gracious personality. He was not only a man of spirituality, patience, and kind-heartedness, but also a man with strength in the body and mind.

This type of combination is rarely found in people today. People these days are greedy, selfish, and from the other aspect, they are out of shape, don't watch their diets and could care less about exercise. One can see why the Guru was so respected and loved by many. He expressed his feelings like no other person would and was understood by so many. His views, thoughts, everything about him nourished people's minds. He was and always will be remembered as many things. Creator of the Khalsa, role model, warrior, even enemy; even so, I still believe Guru Ji received the respect he deserved.

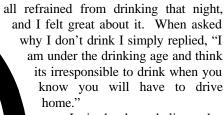
Numerous times, each one of the Gurus has been referred to as another Nanak so to speak. Before Guru Gobind Singh Ji died, he left the Guru Granth Sahib and the Khalsa Panth as his successors. So in fact the Khalsa Panth is the next Nanak, and we have the spirit of the Guru within us. So when marching with pride along the streets of D.C., please do not forget what others have fought for. Instead of hanging around with your friends or going shopping, join in unity with your Khalsa brothers and sisters. Together, and only together, can we all make a difference.

"Khalsa Mero Roop Hai Khas, Khalsae Meho Karo Nivaas" - Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji.



All Sikhs know that Sikhism prohibits drinking, smoking, and other forms of intoxication. While growing up as a Sikh Youth in America, you are naturally...

## Strong Enough to Say No



It is hard to believe that some teenagers think it is necessary to drink. But it's not. It is important that people know that it's okay *not* to drink. That is why I am doing my best to educate my friends, family, and younger children about the dangers of drinking.

I have already begun to take steps to reach out to younger kids so they can make a change in their generation. S.A. D.D. and my determination have compelled to take bigger steps in the prevention of underage drinking. For example, as an Independent Study for the Gifted and Talented program in my high school, I have chosen to give a presentation on underage drinking, cigarettes, and drugs in a middle school. Also, I currently participate in a Peer Leadership Training Program at the Anchor House in our area. Here we enlighten youngsters in the prevention of alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs.

Another way I strive to be a good role model is by keeping а S.A.D.D. keychain with me at all times. On it says, "Friends don't let friends drive drunk." If someone remembers what it says, it may stop him or her from getting in a car with an intoxicated person or getting behind the wheel drunk. In turn, this key chain's message could save someone's life, and to me it'd all be worth it.

My high self-esteem and morale are major factors in what makes me strong enough to say no to drinking and driving while intoxicated. The Sikh camps I attend, as well as my strong Indian friends encourage me to continue to uphold my values and principles. My friends know that I will not partake in drinking, smoking, or drugs at any given party. I admire that they respect me and so I do not force my views upon them, as long as they know the dangers of drinking, smoking, and doing drugs. Each of these helps me every day to become stronger in myself. And every new fact I learn contributes to my shield from drinking.

I was raised "Strong Enough to Say NO!" I was taught to be "Strong Enough to Say NO!" And I am still "Strong enough to say NO!"

Jasminder Kaur is a high school junior from New Jersey.

It's been pretty exciting to be a strong Sikh youth who always turns down a drink. It has proven to me that I am a leader, not a follower, among my Sikh friends. Since day one, I have upheld my values on drinking, smoking, and drugs. I know that even one drink may kill innocent people on the road. I am strongly against drunk driving because I cannot imagine the pain and agony that may occur if those innocent people were my brother, my best friend, or my parents. This is my foremost motivation for staying alcohol-free. The destruction that alcohol does to the human body is incredible. I've seen how alcohol takes control of people and so I choose not to drink.

**By Jasminder Kaur** 

Recently, I went out with a group of 17 and older Indian people that I had just met. With the exception of myself, they were all avid drinkers. As plans were being made to drink, I made them aware of my abstinence of drinking. At first they offered me alcohol, but I said "NO." They respected my morals and

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Page 8



## Khalsa March Events

#### Friday, April 9, 1999\*:

*Amrit Sanchaar* 8:00 AM at Gurudwara Sahib Guru Nanak Foundation, Silver Spring, MD. Call (301) 384-2133 for info. Academic Program: 12:00 Noon at Lincoln Theater, 1215 U Street NW, Washington, DC. Call (202) 328-6000 for info. Program starts with Ardaas and Shabad Kirtan (Sikh Prayer & Devotional Hymns).

Paper presentations and discussions on the following subjects:

- Sikhism in the 21st Century: How to Rejuvenate the Sikh Spirit
- Persecution and Human Rights Violations Against the Sikhs since 1984 by the Indian Government
- Present Human Rights Situation under Badal Government
- Update on the Hearings of People's Commission in Punjab
- Critical Analysis by Western Scholars of Sikh Religion
- Sikhism and Spiritualism
- Economic Viability of Khalistan
- Sikh Youth and Khalistan
- Miri and Piri Concept in the Sikh Religion
- And more

Cultural Program: 5:00 PM to 6:30 PM

- Starts with Khalistani National Anthem
- Performance by Sikh Artists (Religious and Folk Songs)
- Snacks
- Adjourn

\* There will be an independent Program by the Sikh Youth at George Washington University at 8:00 PM \*

Cool Internet Sites http://www.sikhs.org http://dgmc.sikhnet.org http://www.sikhnet.com http://www.sikhnet.com http://www.khalistan.com http://www.sikhmedia.org http://www.panthkhalsa.org http://www.burningpunjab.com

#### Saturday, April 10, 1999\*:

The program starts at 7:00 AM at the Lincoln Memorial.

- Asa Di Vaar from 7:00 AM to 9: 00 AM
- Kirtan by Raagi Jathas and Sikh Youth 9: 00 AM -12: 00 Noon
- Dhadi Vaars
- Speeches by Guest Speakers
- Langar 12:30 PM

Khalsa March starts at the Lincoln Memorial 2:00 PM at 4:00 PM via Constitution Avenue to Capitol Hill. 4:00 PM Capitol Hill Program Starts with American and Khalistani National

Anthems - Brass Band Accompaniment

- Speeches by US Congressional Representatives
- Speeches by Invited Dignitaries

6:30 PM to 9:30 PM Lincoln Memorial

Cultural Program: Sikh Folk Songs, Dhadi Vaars and more by renowned Sikh Artists

Langar will be served beginning at 5:30 PM

\* As of Wednesday, April 7, 1999

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Khalsa is the army of God Khalsa has emerged through the joy of God — Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji

## http://start.at/sikhunity

#### **MISSION STATEMENT**

Sikh Unity Network provides Sikh Youth worldwide with a forum to communicate, corroborate, and better understand the Sikh Religion. SUN also seeks to assist young Sikhs facing the pressures of western society and hopes to foster the growth of Sikhi according to the 10 Gurus, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, and Rehat Marvada.

- Website highlights
- College Link
- Discussion
- Chat Room
- Intro to Sikhism
- Sikh Links
- Sikh Camps

WE NEED YOUR SUBMISSIONS! WE NEED YOUR HELP! Submit articles, poetry, and art to sikhunity@aol.com