

# Sikh Statement on Climate Change

*You, Yourself created the Universe, and You are pleased... You, Yourself the bumblebee, flower, fruit and the tree. You, Yourself the water, desert, ocean and the pond. You, Yourself are the big fish, tortoise and the Cause of causes.*

- Guru Granth Sahib, Maru Sohele, 1020

Through His teachings, our first guru, Guru Nanak Dev Ji, explained that the world we humans create around ourselves is a reflection of our own inner state. So as we look around to our wasteful and polluting practices, we obtain an insight into the chaos within us.

When the tenth master, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, founded the Khalsa in 1699, he charged Sikhs to challenge any force that threatened the wellbeing of others. He made us warriors with the responsibility to protect the vulnerable. Today, the Earth is vulnerable because of climate change and because people have not protected their environments. Today, it is time to act and show that we are true warriors of the Khalsa. We must make amends with the Earth.

Our Mother Earth, *Mata Dharat*, has gone through undeniable changes at the hands of humans. It is abundantly clear that our action has caused great damage to the atmosphere and is projected to cause even more damage if left unhandled. Since 1980, the average temperature of the earth's surface has increased drastically. Glaciers and Arctic ice are melting, and sea levels are rising - threatening plant and animal species and hurting the poor people of the world first. As Sikhs, we appeal to lawmakers, faith leaders, and citizens of the world to take concrete action toward reducing carbon emissions and protecting the environment. And as Sikhs we pledge to take concrete actions ourselves. We have a responsibility to follow our Gurus' teachings and protect the vulnerable.

Governments have struggled to find consensus and have been slow to reduce the effects of releasing greenhouse gases and excessive carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. As climate change and thoughtless practice continue to threaten food and environmental security worldwide, governments have to put environmental issues at the center

of security concerns. We should not only hope they will do so; we have to take the initiative to push our own governments to act.

Sikhs should be front-runners of change. Seva, the practice of selfless service, is a main tenet of Sikhism. Sikhs can perform seva by reducing our carbon footprints, recycling, investing in renewable energies, and being mindful about where our food comes from.

Gurdwaras, as beacons of righteous thought, must be eco-friendly. Our religious spaces, when in harmony with nature, will allow Sikhs to be more spiritually connected to Waheguru, the creator of all.

Respect for nature is ingrained in Sikh teachings. As Guru Nanak Ji said: *Pawan Guru pani pita mata dharat mahat* (Air is our teacher, water our father and the great sacred earth is our mother). If we act now, we can protect our atmosphere, water resources and earth for ourselves and for future generations. To achieve internal peace, we must first look at the environment in which we live.

## **EcoSikh, September 2014**

### **About EcoSikh**

*EcoSikh was launched in 2009 as the Sikh response to a call by the United Nations to World Religions to save Earth's environment. Since then, EcoSikh has facilitated many projects in Punjab and around the world through its two staff members in India and one in Washington. It also launched Sikh Environment Day (March 14) and over 2,000 Sikh gurdwaras, educational institutions, schools and colleges have joined this movement this year. EcoSikh has also started initiatives for the city of Amritsar and Nanded in India. Many speakers at the gala highlighted EcoSikh's commitment to spread awareness about environmental issues and to encourage green action in the Sikh community in Punjab, India and around the world.*