EARTH DAY

भूमि पतनि भवुः
EARTH, THE GREAT MOTHER

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Concept of Earth Day was first proposed by John McConnell in 1969 at a UNESCO Conference in San Francisco. He proposed March 21, 1970, the first day of spring in the Northern Hemisphere, which was proclaimed by Secretary General U Thant at the United Nations for its celebration.[8] However, US Senator, Gaylord Nelson proposed April 22, 1970. Later on it was designated as International Mother Earth Day in 2009 by a consensus resolution adopted by the United Nations [7].

However, the importance of air, water and the Earth was realized by Guru Nanak (1469-1539) exactly 500 years before John McConnell could think of it during 1969. Let us have a look into Guru Danak vision about the importance of environment (air, water and the Earth) during 15th century:

पूर्वअ पानि पिनि पिटा. ।
Paun guru pani pi it jat.।

उदर संजोगो धार्त माता।
Udar sanjogi dharti mata।

Guru Nanak is advising the humanity: Please consider the importance of air, water and the Earth;

And the Earth as the womb of mother, where everything needed by the humanity is produced with collective actions of air, water and Earth.

Rain dinas du-e da-i da-i-jag khele khele-he.।
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Night and day both are as female nurses and the whole humanity plays in their laps.

Guru Nanak has further expanded the above philosophy about the importance of environment as a Sloka at the end of JAP – The Essence of Nanakian Philosophy at page 8 of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib and it is repeated again at page 146 but under M 2 instead of M 1 [2]:

पूर्वअ दरिअ पानि पिनि पिटा।
Para dai pani pi it jat।

Pavan guru pani pitam gharat mahat.।
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Air is like a Guru, water like a father and the Earth like the great mother (which provides all types of resources and food).

Both day and night are like female-nurse and male nurse and the whole humanity plays in their laps.

During Guru Nanak’s time people were not polluting the air, water and the Earth as we are doing now, however, he was cautious to warn the humanity that they have to pay according to their activities (Good or bad deeds) so it is their duty to practice righteousness while living on the Great Mother Earth – मातृ भवुः.
Here Guru Nanak explains that the Earth is the only Planet in our Solar System where all the natural resources, i.e. air, water and the necessary phenomena - day, night, and seasons; and the suitable environment for all the living beings are found. Guru Nanak advises to practice righteousness for peaceful life and to save this Earth (Mata Dharat Mahat) for coming generation of the humanity. The Earth (Mata Dharat Mahat) as a place to practice righteousness has also been explained by Guru Nanak in the Stanza 34 of JAP as follows:

1st stotri 2nd ||

The Sikhs might have recited the above Sabds for hundreds of millions of times during performance of Akhad Paaths of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib and also while reciting JAP Bani all over the world but never realized the importance of air, water and the Earth to celebrate EARTH DAY. However, it was recognized by John McConnell in 1969 exactly after 500 years of Guru Nanak. John McConnell (1915-2012) is Peace Activist with passion for peace, religion and science.[3] Ironically the Sikh still could not recognize this realization of Guru Nanak until 2009 for another 40 years when the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) initiated a program to help the world’s religious traditions to create long-term plans to improve their relationship with the environment.[6]

Under that program the Sikh started their own EcoSikh project for celebration of Sikh Environment Day not on March 21 or April 22 but on March 14 the date when Guru Har Rai, the seventh Guru, succeeded to the House of Nanak.[6] But Encyclopaedia of Sikhism [4] and Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar say it is March 3, 1644.[5] This credit was given to Guru Har Rai for his passion of preserving flowers since a few flowers were broken from a bush with his long robe which made him very sad. I wonder why the Sikh, responsible for creating Sikh Environment Day, ignored to give this credit to Guru Nanak for his...
passion for peace, religion and science, the founder of Sikh, who made the humanity aware of the fact that air is the Guru, water is the father and the Earth is their Great Mother who provides everything needed by the humanity. And it is the duty of the humanity to practice righteousness and protect them from pollution.

Now the question is:
Should the Sikh celebrate EARTH DAY as a great event with humanity of the world on April 22nd or as Sikh Environment Day on March 14th?

I may add here that April 22 is the most suitable date for the Sikhs because during the month of Vaisakh (April):
- Birthday of Guru Nanak falls on April 15.
- The Sikhs celebrate Vaisakhi on April 13/14.
- Moreover, Vaisakh is almost peak of the Spring Season – The cheerful season according to Guru Nanak:

Guru Danak says use your mind to study Sabd attentively to understand God during the month of Vaisakh - The peak of Spring Season when everything is cheerful.

(Note: The time of blooming of shrubs and trees is variable at different places. For example, in Quebec, Canada the plants are still in dormant stage while in Punjab the farmers have harvested their crops, and flowers of shrubs and trees are gone and now bearing fruits.)

References
1. AGGS (ਅਧਾਰਤਕ) = Aad Guru Granth Sahib. 1983 (reprint). Publishers: Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar. M (੧) = Mahla, i.e., succession number of the Sikh Gurus to the House of Nanak, M is replaced with the name of Bhagat/ Bhatt for their Bani, p (ਪ੍ਰਹਤ) = Page of the AGGS).