

DECLARATION ON ECOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY

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World-wide preparations are vigorously being made all over the world to celebrate, in 2004, a very sacred event in the history of Sikhism: the 400th anniversary of the compilation/ installation (first *Prakash*) of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib in Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, by Guru Arjan.

Though revered as the Sikh Scripture, Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) is highly respected by faith followers of different religious traditions as a truly interfaith Scripture in the sense that the Holy Volume contains hymns of seven Gurus while the remaining sacred compositions therein are of 29 Hindu Saints and Muslim Sufis from all over sub-continental India of 15th to 17th century. That is why the Fourth Centenary of Compilation of the AGGS is being celebrated by the Sikhs in association with followers of other religions as well as leading international inter-religious organizations. The yearlong celebration of this historic occasion began on September 1, 2003.

Right in the very beginning of the AGGS the first Bani, JAP, expresses the integral bond between nature & man (ਪ੍ਰਫੁੱਲ ਗੁਰੂ ਪਾਣੀ ਪਿਤਾ ਮਾਤਾ ਧਰਤਿ ਮਹਤੁ), which is being

forcefully stressed by scientists, political leaders & religious personalities all over the world in the face of the environmental (ecological) crisis that is threatening the very existence of life on earth, as painfully articulated by the 1992 Rio Earth Summit under the auspices of the United Nations.

In this context, the World Congress of Faiths (UK) in its international conference at Punjabi University, Patiala, India, adopted (during my tenure as its Vice Chancellor) a Declaration calling upon the United Nations, among others, to declare 2004 as the Year of Ecology & Spirituality.

Traditional programs apart, the main thrust of the celebration programs on national and international levels should, in our opinion, be on "Spirituality and Ecology", and "Inter-religious Dialogue and Intercommunity Understanding" – these being the two main universal concerns being addressed by world religions today.

Declaration on Ecology and Spirituality* (Celebrating 2004 as the UNESCO-sponsored Year of Ecology and Spirituality)

“WE REALIZE:

Humankind, today, is face to face with an unprecedented ecological crisis that is threatening the very existence of life – of all organisms – in the lap of mother earth.

The environmental concerns, so forcefully expressed at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, have risen uppermost also on the redemptional agenda of the religions of the world, focusing on sacred, integral relationship between human beings and nature, between faith and ecology.

“WE REITERATE:

“We are interdependent. Each of us depends on the well-being of the whole, and so we have respect for the community of living beings, for people, animals, and plants, and for the preservation of Earth, the air, water and

soul,” as stressed in the Declaration adopted at the Parliament of the World’s Religions, Chicago, in 1993.

“WE FEEL:

There is the same pulsating presence of the Divine Spirit in both human beings and nature. There is integral, holistic relationship between human beings and nature, an envisioned by Guru Nanak, the first Prophet of Sikhism, who hailed the familial relationship by calling air as the Guru, water as the Father and earth as the great Mother – a sublime message, central to all religions, that informs the entire Sikh Scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib containing, besides the holy hymns of the Sikh Gurus, the sacred

(Continued on page 36)

(Continued from page 37)

compositions of Hindu Saints and the Muslim Sufis from the length and breadth of sub-continental India.

We are approaching in 2004 the 400th anniversary of that divine moment in the flux of time when the fifth Prophet of Sikh religion compiled the Sikh Scripture, bequeathing it to humanity as its eternal guide.

“THEREFORE:

We call upon the peoples of the world to celebrate 2004 as the Year of Ecology and Spirituality.

We call upon the United Nations to declare 2004 as the Unesco-sponsored Year of Ecology and Spirituality.

We call upon the Parliament of the World’s Religions, Chicago, and other faith organizations, the world over, to dedicate their next sessions to commemorate 2004 as the Year of Ecology and Spirituality”.

** Adopted on 30th January, 2002 at the Valedictory Session of two-day International Seminar organized by Punjabi University & World Congress of Faiths (U.K.) at the University Campus, Patiala (India),*

and signed by

Dr. Richard Boeke,
Chairman
World Congress of Faiths

Dr. Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia
Vice-Chancellor
Punjabi University, Patiala

Dr. Rev. Marcus Braybrooke
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