

SIKH ENVIRONMENT DAY

Website: www.ecosikh.org // Email: info@ecosikh.org

The Seventh Master of the Sikhs, **Guru Har Rai ji**, had great sensitivity towards nature. He would watch birds fly high up in the sky and admire the creation of the divine. When a wounded bird fell to the ground, he would heal it using the medicinal herbs from his garden.


Guru Har Rai ji was passionate about creating parks and gardens, where he grew medicinal plants, as well as planted trees bearing fruit and flowers. He also built a hospital for poor people in **Kiratpur Sahib** in India, which is his hometown. His **Enthronement Day**, or **Gurgaddi Diwas**, is **March 14**.

In 2010 **Siri Akal Takht Sahib**, the Throne of the Eternal, the seat of the Sikh temporal authority, dedicated **March 14** as **Sikh Environment Day**. Working with **EcoSikh**, a faith-based non-profit organization, it appealed for celebrations among Sikh communities worldwide. **Gurdwaras** (Sikh places of worship), Sikh schools, businesses, Sikh media organizations, and academic institutions across the world mark this day by taking part in many positive environmental activities.

With rapid increase in industrialization, urbanization, depletion of natural resources, increasing population, destruction of vegetation and ecosystems, extinction of wildlife, cutting of trees in plains and hills, and unsafe disposal of household and industrial chemicals and bio-medical waste has caused many environmental, health, and social disorders in our society. For example, deforestation, overuse of water and continuous increase in agrochemical use has led to dire consequences in the state of **Punjab**, birthplace of **Sikhism**. Deforestation has led to reduced rainfall, difficult land conditions and significant reduction in bird and animal life. Overuse of water has the scientific community predicting that Punjab is on the verge of becoming a desert by 2025. And most serious of all, increased use of pesticides and chemicals has caused the cost of crops to increase, natural soil organisms like bacteria and fungi to deplete, and rates of cancer, infertility and mental health problems to increase among people.

As part of **Sikh Environment Day**, Sikhs have been contributing to helping protect and preserve our Mother Nature by planting trees, recycling and reusing as much as possible, initiating kitchen gardening, reducing plastic and polystyrene usage, carefully using water, gasoline and other resources, properly disposing of household and bio-waste, reducing chemical use, using biodegradable domestic cleaning products, and increasing the use of solar energy and biogas in **Gurdwaras** and in individual households.





The Sikh faith teaches that humans create their surroundings as a reflection of their inner state, and hence the increasing barrenness of the earth reflects a spiritual emptiness within humans. Celebrating **Sikh Environment Day**, being kind to Mother Nature, and respecting and preserving the wonderful creation on this planet, is a step towards making this a better and more harmonious world, both inside and outside.

Questions for classroom discussion!

1. Do you consider protection and preservation of the environment a moral obligation?
2. What are the key environment issues in your area? What has caused them?
3. Name some long-term, sustainable measures that can be implemented for preservation of the environment?
4. How can faith communities have an impact on environment protection and preservation?
5. What actions have you or your family taken to protect the environment? What more can you do?
6. If you are a Sikh, then what can you do for Sikh Environment Day? And if you are from another community, is there a day you celebrate the environment? Or could there be?

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