

# Sikh Environment Day 2011: A Community Comes Together

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## Introduction

During the week of March 14th, more than 450 Sikh temples (gurdwaras), schools, and organizations around the world participated in Sikh Environment Day. March 14<sup>th</sup> was chosen by the EcoSikh team to mark the day when Sri Guru Har Rai became the seventh Guru of the Sikhs. Guru Har Rai Ji is remembered in the Sikh tradition for his sensitivity to nature and his passion for preserving it. The 7<sup>th</sup> Guru was instrumental in developing Kiratpur Sahib on the banks of tributary of the [Sutlej](#) in Punjab as a town of parks and gardens: he planted flowers and fruit bearing trees all over the area, as well as medicinal herbs and wildlife sanctuaries. According to Sikh history this created a salubrious environment, attracting birds and animals to the town and turning it into an idyllic place to live.

In October 2010, with the help of the Norwegian Government, the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) and the active participation of many Sikh leaders, an organisation called

EcoSikh was launched, with one full-time employee in Punjab and one part-time in New York, as well as a number of active and senior volunteers and trustees. The key programme for EcoSikh's first five months was to coordinate, organise and advertise Sikh Environment Day.

This report is in two parts. The first part deals with the results: how far Sikh Environment Day reached this year. The second part looks at the methodology: how we, and the entire Sikh community, did it.

## PART ONE: RESULTS

### Key Organisations

- The news about the Sikh Environment Day celebrations reached Sikhs in all corners of the world when, after discussions with EcoSikh staff, the highest Sikh decision making body, Sri Akal Takhat Sahib issued a formal statement calling all Sikhs to plant a tree on the Gurgaddhi Diwas (enthronement day) of Guru Har Rai Ji. In a letter issued in early February, Giani Gurbachhan Singh Ji, who is the Jathedar (religious head) of the Akal Takht, expressed concern over the state of the environment and encouraged all Sikhs to participate.
- The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), which is the key management agency for Sikh gurdwaras around India (outside New Delhi) then announced it was organizing tree planting and distributing saplings at seventy-eight historical Gurdwaras throughout the northern states of Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh. It was also going to direct that the *raagis* (singers) focus *kirtan* and *katha* (sacred songs and hymns) on the environment that day. Thousands of plant saplings were distributed to members of the *sangat* (Sikh community) in these locations. In addition, students and staff at 62 schools and colleges run by the SGPC participated in the festivities.
- The youth organisation Akal Purakh Ki Fauj commenced a pledge and sign campaign to inspire Sikh pilgrims at five major Sikh centres, or *Takhats* across the subcontinent to celebrate Sikh Environment Day. It distributed leaflets with ten simple tips to save energy and the environment during the celebrations.

### Charismatic Sikh environmental leaders

- Sikh environmental leaders Baba Balbir Singh Seechewal Ji of Sultanpur Lodhi, Kapurthala district and Baba Sewa Singh Ji of Khadoor Sahib, Amritsar district participated in the celebrations by encouraging Sikhs in villages across Punjab to take care of the rural environment. Baba Seechewal led a plantation drive along the Sant Avtar Singh Marg Road, and planted and distributed saplings in four areas and two

schools. During the school day, Baba Seechewal spoke to the students about the responsibility for human beings to take care of all creation.

- Baba Sewa Singh Ji also organized a plantation drive of two trees per house in seven villages around Patiala district. An awareness stage performance was given in a gathering of four schools and tree plantings were organized within the schools. Punjabi University, Patiala together with the Punjab Eco-friendly Association (PEFA), organised a procession, with slogans focused on protecting ecology, and performed a comic drama on the environment at the end of rally.
- Bibi Inderjit Kaur of Pingalwara charitable society, which has a model organic farm outside Amritsar, arranged a three-day workshop on natural farming in Sangrur district, a week before March 14th. The workshop focused on traditional farming techniques without the use of hydrocarbon based chemical fertilisers and pesticides, which have posed considerable challenges to the soil and water systems of Punjab. Farmers were encouraged to save seed for the next crop to conserve agricultural biodiversity and learned about the benefits of natural farming over chemical farming.

### Pilgrim City involvement

- The district of Amritsar led the way to greener cities in Punjab when the District Commissioner (DC) of Amritsar, K.S. Pannu initiated a plantation drive of 130,810 trees to be planted within four months beginning on March 14<sup>th</sup>. This special number represents the number of days since the birth of Sri Guru Har Rai Ji. The DC also noted that around 1,500,000 trees will be planted this year, out of which 500,000 will be planted in military areas and the other million trees will be planted in civil areas. This joint effort is supported by NGOs including Missionary Khudai Khidmatgara, Amritsar Vikas Manch, as well as the Indian military services and the Forest Department.

### Pollution-free celebrations

- The annual festival of Holla Mohalla began on 14<sup>th</sup> March in the city of Anandpur Sahib, but this year there was a formal effort to ensure that the celebrations remained pollution free. The District Commissioner of Roopnagar appealed to all Sikhs participating in the annual festival to refrain from the use of plastic bags, firecrackers and other air and sound pollutants. The Takhat Kesgarh Sahib and various organisations joined in to educate the visitors with handy tips. Tree saplings were given to the pilgrims to carry home.

## Green Gurdwaras

- The historical Gurdwara Imli Sahib at Indore and five other Gurdwaras under their committee planned to ban plastic use in their premises during normal days and especially during the two major historical Nagar Kirtans in Indore. They also proposed plans to adopt solar panels, green patches in their premises and their Khalsa schools. They observed the use of steel plates and crockery during all their celebrations on 14<sup>th</sup> March.
- The Tavleen Foundation from the same city organised a *kirtan* programme from Eak Bageecha to emphasise the value of reflecting on the idea of nature in gurbani and distributed five hundred copies of Eak Bageecha to Khalsa school students in Indore.
- In the east of the subcontinent, the sangat of the historical Gurdwara Dhubri Sahib, Guwahati established Guru Har Rai Sikh Eco-Society to combat the natural resource deterioration in their region. They involved all the Gurdwaras in their region and conducted a mass plantation of approximately 300 trees in Gurdwaras and domestic units?
- In Maharashtra, the Takht Hazoor Sahib leader approved Sikh Environment day with plant distribution at two spots in the city. The opening of Holla Mohalla, major Sikh festival, fell on the same date and the *Takht* sahib appealed the community to observe plastic free festival and large number of trees were planted and distributed along with a nature march, distribution of leaflets to educate people with basic acts from day to day life which can impact environment and banners and hoardings focussed on environment protection were installed in the city.

## Educational initiatives

- Satnam Sarv Kalyan Trust, an educational trust which provides religious studies staff in over three hundred schools gave a speech on the environment during the morning school assembly on the connection between humanity and their environment. The students from different age groups enthusiastically planted five trees per school, reporting a total of 1562 trees planted in all three hundred schools. Another leading organisation, Kendri Sri Guru Singh Sabha, based in Chandigarh motivated eight other faith organisations to celebrate Sikh Environment Day by planting trees and increasing the sustainability of their gurdwaras. Twenty of these trees were planted by Sikh leaders such as the eminent Giani Kewal Singh Ji.
- In Ludhiana, the Sikh organisations Gurmat Gian Missionary College and Sukrit Foundation organised a seminar for students to examine the Sikh perspective on the environment in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, so that succeeding generations can gain

deeper knowledge about humanity's connection to nature as understood by the Sikh Gurus. The students planted several trees in their college premises. The Ludhiana Industrialists Council also joined in the festivities by planting trees.

- In Himachal Pradesh, Dagshai Public School planted one hundred and five trees with the students and faculty. A kirtan program focussed on nature was arranged at the Gurdwara and the famous poem *Rukh* (tree) by Shiv Kumar Batalvi was recited and the chief guests cut cake and planted trees.

## Media

- Religious leaders, including SGPC President S. Avtar Singh Makkar and social reformer Baba Kashmira Singh, appealed to the community to take the message back home to their families and care for the environment within their own home. Takhat heads Jathedar Giani Gurbachhan Singh and Giani Tirlochan Singh Ji also helped to appeal for plastic free Holla Mohalla celebrations and to preserve the serene beauty of historical Anandpur Sahib.
- Many respected news writers like Yollande D'Mello from Mid Day and Megha Mann from the Tribune described this in their newspaper columns as a global event. All India Radio ran timely announcements between their programmes to spread the idea.
- PTC television presented a special footage on the environment dedicated to Sri Guru Har Rai Sahib Ji on March 13<sup>th</sup> episode of *Sikh Sargarmian* by Harpreet Sahni.
- After March 14<sup>th</sup>, newspapers across the subcontinent continued to report on the Sikh Environment Day activities organized by schools, organizations, and individuals.
- Many families living in urban areas in the subcontinent began their own kitchen gardens to produce pesticide-free fruits, herbs/spices and vegetables for their families. This was reported by the local press.
- An encouraging story was published in a local newspaper about a young twin brother and sister who celebrated their birthday with a tree planting, testimony that human beings of all walks of life have the potential to bring positive change to their surroundings.

## Sikhs in the Diaspora

In the Sikh Diaspora, the campaign met with huge success after *gurdwaras* and *sangats* from all over the world came together to express their concern for the environment.

## North America

- In British Columbia, Canada, the Sikh Green Team, a Sikh youth organization dedicated to taking care of the environment organized a clean-up in the local Queens Park. In association with the Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara and Sukh Sagar Gurdwara the group also organized a tree planting and a plant distribution to all members of the *sangat*. The Sikh TV station in British Columbia, Ik Onkar TV, dedicated its episode that week to the protection of the environment, featuring an interview with a young Sikh student of environmental studies Sharon Kaur, writer Sardara Singh Boyal, and a kirtan segment from *raagis* at the local Gurdwara.
- A Sikh environmental education lesson plan called The Environment: Recognizing Creator in Creation was presented at Khalsa Schools, including several private schools in Toronto and Calgary, Canada, as well as schools affiliated with Gurdwaras across North America and the Sikh Diaspora. The lesson connects Sikh history, scripture and values, to the important environmental challenges we face today, such as energy and water shortage, waste and consumption, and responsible behaviour and management of natural resources. Harinder Singh of the Sikh Research Institute and Kulvir Singh from Toronto, Canada also gave a talk on the Sikhism and the environment available on their website at Milford Gurdwara in Connecticut.
- The Sikh Research Institute, based in San Antonio, Texas supported the global celebrations by creating a Sikh environmental education lesson plan, hosting a webinar on the environment for children and adolescents, and organising a planting at the community garden run by a local food bank.
- The Gurdwara Guru Nanak Darbar in Connecticut celebrated the day with plans to install solar panels in their new gurdwara, reducing energy costs by \$16,500 per year and also reducing green house gas emissions from weekly electricity consumption. The Gurdwara also installed a machine for recycling cans and bottles and collected around two thousand cans and bottles, with proceeds from the recycling sent to Japan Tsunami Fund. The Gurdwara has collected funds for planting 130 trees and has distributed tote bags to families for reuse.
- Several Gurdwaras in areas with dense Sikh populations including Queens, New York, and San Jose and Fremont, California celebrated the day by singing shabads from the gurbani compilation Ek Bageecha, expressing a concern from the environment in the Sikh spiritual homeland of Punjab. A number of Khalsa Schools in California celebrated the day with children's art displays and The Manhattan Sikh Association also used the day to announce their formal move to use traditional steel thalis (plates) in place of disposable plates and utensils for the langar.

## Europe

- Gurdwaras in the United Kingdom, France, and Norway focused *kirtan* and *katha* on the environment to express the idea that concern for the environment is both part of the Sikh spiritual identity, and also part of being a responsible global citizen today. The enthusiastic members of the sangat in Norway also expressed their desire to take a leadership role in these issues and help create a new vision for the environment.

## Asia

- The Sikh sangat in Hong Kong participated in a tree planting in nearby Guangzhou, over the Chinese border, at a planting event scheduled for the weekend before to ensure participation by all the *sangat* members.
- The Sikh Naujawan Sabha of Malaysia (National Sikh Youth Organization) hosted a project to reconnect children with nature in the country's Bukit Nanas Forest Reserves, the country's oldest remaining rainforests located right within the vicinity of Malaysia's capital Kuala Lumpur. About 400 between the ages of seven and 12 from the local Klang Valley and Sereban joined the celebrations at the Lake Gardens at Kuala Lumpur, which included several quiz and drawing competitions. Television personalities Asha Gill and Fay Khoo attended the event, and all the children were given special bags sponsored by the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry to take the message of environmental conservation back to their homes and families.

## Australia

- In Australia, the youth group, Sikh Youth Australia organized a day of recreation for Sikh families called Sikh Green Day Out. The proceeds from the event were raised to aid the earthquake and Tsunami victims in Japan. The group also planned a day of action in consultation with Blacktown City Council Bush-care Coordinator Justine Clarke, where the Sikh youth helped to clean up more than two hectares in the popular Nuringingy Reserve, sprawling natural bush land reserve consisting of over ninety hectares.

## Africa

- In West Africa, the Sikh sangat in Nigeria focused on reducing waste and on encouraging others to lead a simple life to protect the environment. They played an important role in reaching out to Sikhs in other countries such as Ghana and South Africa and other regions in Africa where there are thriving Sikh populations.

## South America

- In Argentina the sangat in Cordoba also celebrated with a kirtan and with the message about Guru Har Rai Ji's concern for the environment.

## PART TWO - Methodology:

### Methodology: Sikh Environment Day (SED) India

#### A. Introduction:

In 2009 a group of Sikhs and secular environmentalists proposed March 14<sup>th</sup> as Sikh Environment Day. This is the New Year day according to the Sikh Calendar and more important it is the day commemorating the Enthronement of the 7<sup>th</sup> Sikh Guru, Sri Guru Har Rai ji, who had a keen sensitivity towards the preservation of nature. The 7<sup>th</sup> Guru was instrumental in developing Kiratpur Sahib on the banks of tributary of the Sutlej in Punjab as a town of parks and gardens: he planted flowers and fruit bearing trees all over the area, as well as medicinal herbs and wildlife sanctuaries. According to Sikh history this created a salubrious environment, attracting birds and animals to the town and turning it into an idyllic place to live. By October 2010, with the help of the Norwegian Government, the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) and the active participation of many Sikh leaders, an organisation called EcoSikh had been launched, with one full-time employee in Punjab and one part-time in New York, as well as a number of active and senior volunteers and trustees. The key programme for EcoSikh's first five months was to coordinate, organise and advertise Sikh Environment Day.

#### B. Methodology-

1. **Goal Setting:** The goal was to get 101 gurdwaras (Sikh temples) from India and 101 gurdwaras from the diaspora to register to participate in Sikh Environment Day. Around 90% of the Sikh community is related to these centres of faith and all the religious festivals and celebrations are conducted via gurdwaras, so they were key to all plans. The other goal was to have the same number of schools, at least, participating.
2. **Depicting sources of environment stewardship from Sikh scriptures and history:** All the Sikh Gurus respected nature and the environment but the 7<sup>th</sup> Guru was particularly important for this. EcoSikh compiled a booklet of lessons and stories from Sikh texts and history to distribute and inspire the community, as the Gurus taught. The book was also launched and distributed on the internet, and copies or links were sent to participants

two weeks before Sikh Environment Day. <http://www.ecosikh.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Eak-Bageecha-English.pdf>

3. Toolkit: a growing list of ideas about how people could celebrate Sikh Environment Day, whether as gurdwaras, communities or families was compiled, sent out as emails, printed and given away, and put up on the website.  
<http://www.ecosikh.org/resources/sikh-environment-day/toolkit-for-march-14th/>
4. **Outreach to others**
  - **Approaching the key decision-making body:** EcoSikh approached Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib the supreme decision-making body in Sikhism, and submitted the event proposal for their consent. EcoSikh appealed to the religious head of Sri Akaal Takhat, Singh Sahib Giani Gurbachan Singh, to support Sikh Environment Day. He issued a message for all Sikhs to observe March 14th and recommended that every Sikh should plant a tree on this day and attain blessings from the Guru. This was HUGE news and spread rapidly throughout the Sikh community around the world. The Sikhs are accustomed to obeying the rules and messages issued from the Akaal Takhat Sahib. EcoSikh posted this message through press releases to the major media, on Facebook, the EcoSikh website, twitter and an emailed letter. The idea was so fascinating that many environment lovers within the Sikh community extended this message to their groups and all the popular non-profit Sikh organisations.
  - **Regional decision-making Sikh organisations:** the Sikhs have four other such bodies: in South India, in the East and other two in Punjab. Takhat Hazoor Sahib (Nanded) in the south issued a similar message to observe Sikh Environment Day in their region, which led to mass celebrations in Maharashtra. Takhat Kesgarh Sahib (Anandpur Sahib in the Punjab celebrated this Green festival by promoting plant distribution in their area.
  - **Outreach to leading Gurdwara committee:** EcoSikh approached the SGPC (Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee) which controls almost all the Sikh Gurdwaras in Punjab. The SGPC has around 78 Gurdwaras and 62 Schools and colleges in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. Most SGPC Gurdwaras are historical with a large number of Sikhs associated with them. The SGPC head announced they were joining Sikh Environment Day celebrations in all its Gurdwaras and Schools by mass plantation and offering plant saplings as prasad (blessed gift).
5. **Web and mobile phone outreach:**
  - **The website:** The website, [www.ecosikh.org](http://www.ecosikh.org) was critical to the campaign especially in the diaspora where the potential for website outreach and coordination is enormous. This includes easy-to-locate online resources, map of participating gurdwaras, videos, etc. The website, however, might have played a secondary role in

information sharing about Sikh environment day. Next year it will be ready earlier, and used more.

- **Online registration:** forms were launched on [www.ecoSikh.org](http://www.ecoSikh.org) for Gurdwaras, schools, colleges, organisations and individuals. Lists of gurdwaras and relevant organisations were found on the internet and approached by email. A paper equivalent was also sent out
- **Emails:** One of the main methods of outreach was to send direct emails to people involved in the Gurdwara committees. A good number of Gurdwaras had received the email, and many reported that they forwarded the email on to their Gurdwara heads. This will be a useful method in the future, however, a standard list and format is required. Emails should be coordinated in terms of messaging, and readability.
- **FaceBook:** A facebook 'event' was created in January to spread the word. The facebook event was initially sent to 700 people, but this tripled in nearly 24 hours and then reached a total number of over 10,000 Sikhs from across the Diaspora and in Punjab. The limitation with facebook is that there is no way to send a message to invitees once the number reaches 5,000, and so we were not able to plan an event. If coordinated roughly a month in advance, next year everyone could put up a message in support of Sikh environment day. Constant messaging on facebook and updates are needed to keep the public engaged.
- **Twitter:** We started building up a twitter account for this event, and by next year we hope to have a significant number of followers. Even the 130 at the moment still generated interest and retweets among the Sikh community.
- **Bulk email and SMS:** various non-profit social organisations were approached to release information on Sikh Environment Day to their groups via bulk emails and on their respective websites. The leading Sikh websites like [Sikhnet.com](http://Sikhnet.com) and other popular Sikh websites were also approached, and were extremely helpful. Three bulk SMS send-outs just before Sikh Environment Day proved vital as wonderful reminders. Many young people volunteer bulk SMS-ing to their groups. Some websites allow you to send 140 characters to as many phones for free, provided you should have data. This was a very successful element in our strategy. We tried our best to coordinate this in the Diaspora, by posting about the SMS campaign several times on the computer, but the exact number of texts sent out is hard to measure. Next year, recruiting a volunteer force to send out text messages would be extremely helpful.
- **Other material:** Posters/Banners/Flyers were designed. The Sikh Environment day being the first of its kind to the community, hence a package of possible ways to

celebrate this day was compiled into tips and circulated via all the possible ways amongst the participants.

6. **Traditional forms of approach:** Many Gurdwara committees still don't use internet. EcoSikh contacted them individually via telephones, letters or personally inviting them for meeting to get them registered for the SED celebrations. They were asked to recommend more prospective Gurdwaras and organisations that might participate. A database was created, and hard copies of registration forms were parcelled or (for contacts who were geographically closer) personally delivered. **Note:** such candidates normally take too long to respond back in writing, so verbal consent was accepted and they were required to keep updated via telephone. At the initial stages, talking about Sikh environment day at conferences and events with a sign-up sheet for volunteers was very helpful in establishing a network, where all volunteers were briefed at once and their city and state was documented. This helped enormously in outreach. This face-to-face approach seemed to work quite well in the Diaspora; most Gurdwaras, when approached by someone who could speak Punjabi and knew the material well readily signed on.

## 7. Partnerships

- **With Major Sikh Organizations:** Partnership was secured early on with major Sikh organizations including Sikh Research Institute, the Sikh Coalition, SALDEF, and the Sikh Activist Network. These organizations each advertised the information in their newsletters, facebook posts, and websites. Sikh Research Institute was probably the strongest of all our partners, since, they prepared an environmental education curriculum, hosted an online webinar, and also organized a planting. Sikh Activist Network would also like to continue this work and has the potential to mobilize about 4,000 Sikh youth in Canada for messaging.
- **Key Partners across Continents:** Building a 'base' across different continents was essential in getting the message out. Malaysia had the most successful model for this, since the Sikh Naujawan Saaba of Malaysia coordinates much of this activity. We hit medium success with similar partnerships in Australia and the UK, but hope to find a way to coordinate with local universities or other Sikh organizations to spread the word about Sikh environment Day. Otherwise, the sheer number of Gurdwaras that approached us on our own was outstanding.
- **Partnerships with environment activists:** It was really important to have a good support from the already active heroes of environment field. Baba Balbir Singh of Seechewal and Padam Shri Baba Sewa Singh of Khadoor Sahib added power to the EcoSikh campaign by including this Day in their agenda.
- **Civil administration:** the EcoSikh team personally invited the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Amritsar to support the idea. He in turn enrolled other local Environmental

organisations, military services and forest department to prepare a wonderful plan for the day which presented more than 100,000 trees to be planted within four months of 14<sup>th</sup> March.

- **Relationship with Punjab and the Diaspora:** The events in Punjab were crucial to having the Diaspora sign on. Having the news about the SGPC, the three Takhts, and Gurdwaras in Punjab, inspired Gurdwaras in the Diaspora to take action on these efforts. News coming from Punjab through EcoSikh emails and news articles from the Tribune were crucial in having the Diaspora sign on.
8. **Other approaching festivals:** another major traditional Sikh festival called Holla Mohalla began on the same day. This festival attracted a huge crowd of tens of thousands of people. EcoSikh asked the decision-making Sikh body, the Takhat Sri Kesgarh Sahib and the relevant district Deputy Commissioner to observe plastic free Holla Mohalla festivals from this year and to support Sikh Environment Day, the first ever eco-friendly Sikh celebration for the safety of environment and the mother earth.
  9. **Press:** the press was a major participant in creating awareness. EcoSikh sent out a series of press releases along the lines of, "Sikh call for Environment Day" and news appeared in all the leading papers and media in India. EcoSikh had its existing press contact list, but also worked hard to create a new, up-to-date one. Various Sikh organisations were helpful and generous with their lists. It was important that all major actions, appeals, achievements were released with proper coverage.
  10. **Missionary Schools and organisations:** one such organisation supplies missionary teachers in more than 300 hundred schools in Punjab area. EcoSikh went to talk to them, and suggested they include this subject and specially this day in their lesson plan. A realistic and feasible plan was suggested to the 300 plus schools, including a prayer time speech for kids and planting 5 trees per school involving students, teachers and faculty to commemorate Sikh Environment Day. The plan ended up as huge success with more than 1,560 trees reported as planted as a direct result. But also an ethos of empowerment and tree-planting was initiated.
  11. **Environment clubs in Universities and schools:** These clubs are normally interconnected with other groups and clubs in their city and are a good way of gaining the participation. These clubs are important because of youth energy and innovation of ideas of celebrations and long term potential as well. Ideas like a nature march or rally, poetry competitions, painting and dramas were proposed on the theme.
  12. **Language and translation:** language can be a huge barrier when you propose a festival or event at global level. All the important informational and registration material was translated into Punjabi from English and English from Punjabi, and circulated by various means. Volunteers did a great job in translation and typing.

## D. Conclusion:

The good news is; the EcoSikh team has performed wonderfully in getting this Green Gurburab recognized throughout the world. Static friction is always 10 times rolling friction. And now EcoSikh just has to keep the ball rolling.

We have experienced so many hurdles and there will be still more to come, but on the other hand the Sikh Environment day got celebrated in more than 200 Gurdwaras, more than 50 cities in the world. Thousands of trees were distributed and many more were planted, hundreds of families started Kitchen Gardening, schools recognised that people of faith have an important role to play in protecting this planet, many exchanged plants with friends and families, many others sang Gurbani focussed on nature and prayed for the safety of the earth, organised seminars, rallies, nature march.

And most importantly, **the concept of environmentalism in Sikh writings got a special focus amidst the Sikh way of celebration and joy.**

*EcoSikh thanks all, who participated in the first environmental celebrations on the Gurgaddhi Diwas of Sri Guru Har Rai Ji. Through Divine Grace, the community carried forth the vision of the seventh Nanak in a spirit of Oneness and concern for all Creation. We feel blessed to walk on this path with our brothers and sisters throughout the world, and know that this is the beginning of a new chapter in the pages of Sikh history. May the Khalsa walk this path with grace and dignity, always remain spiritually exalted, and always remain in service of humanity.*

## CONTACTS

Bandana Kaur [bandana.kaur@ecosikh.org](mailto:bandana.kaur@ecosikh.org)

Ravneet Singh [ravneet.singh@ecosikh.org](mailto:ravneet.singh@ecosikh.org)