Sikh Environment Day (Vatavaran Diwas) 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION

2. METHODOLOGY AND RESOURCES

3. ACTION BY REGION

SUBCONTINENT INVOLVEMENT

ORGANIZATIONS

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS

GURDWARAS

ANDHRA PRADESH:

HARYANA

JAMMU & KASHMIR

PUNJAB

WEST BENGAL

PAKISTAN

DIASPORA INVOLVEMENT

AUSTRALIA

CANADA

MALAYSIA

PERU

UNITED KINGDOM

UNITED STATES
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The celebrations of Sikh Environment Day (Vatavaran Diwas) this year were extraordinary and moving. Sikh leaders, families, teachers, officials, journalists and many others responded to the call to celebrate the second Sikh Environment Day on the Gurgaddi Diwas of Guru Har Rai Ji on March 14, 2012. Not only was the record for participation broken, but Sikhs can be proud as a community, that today, as a result of their actions, there are many more trees being cared for on this planet, there are new gardens, new environment education materials, new reflections on nature, and perhaps most importantly there are many thousands of individuals and families who are more aware of how the environment is a Sikh issue, an issue which each of us has to respond to, rather than waiting for governments.

This year Sikhs celebrated the second Sikh Environment Day with the incredible number of more than 1,000 institutions participating - more than double the participation recorded in the first Sikh Environment Day in 2011. From Gurdwaras to businesses, schools to families, this year’s celebrations were the biggest yet.

The Sikh community witnessed powerful statements from the Akhal Takht, Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib and Takht Sri Hazur Sahib, reminding all Sikhs that protecting the environment is deeply entrenched in the Sikh way of life. Many were proud to see that both the SGPC and the DSGMC – the two key Gurdwara committees in South Asia – joined in with astonishingly far-reaching efforts to spread the Sikh vision of the environment. And then there were many other gurdwaras, schools, families, businesses, throughout South Asia and the rest of the world, who not only joined in, but helped their local sangat demonstrate how Sikhs, too are warriors for nature.

The most emotional moment for our EcoSikh program manager Ravneet Singh, was the news from Pakistan that Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of our beloved Guru Nanak, not only celebrated Sikh Environment Day with hundreds of participants, but also invited followers of other religious traditions to join. On this touching video you can see Muslims, Hindus, Sindhis and others helping unload the saplings from a donkey cart to take to the Gurdwara and celebrate environment day by planting trees. To the 1,000 and more institutions, businesses, groups and supporters from the media that participated on this day, we are thankful for their leadership, commitment, and strength.
1. Introduction

EcoSikh was able to build on many of the tools and the strategies used in Sikh Environment Day (Vatavaran Diwas) in 2011, to make this year’s celebrations even stronger. The environment has been quite a central topic in Punjab (where the majority of Sikhs live) due to the state legislative elections being held in January 2012. Environmentalists have been active in demanding for improvements in the quality of land, air, and water across Punjab, over a number of sectors. **There was a special concern about rising industrial activity in the state, the distressing water quality, the decreasing water table, low forest cover and chemical based agriculture affecting human health across Punjab.**

As an organization rooted in Sikh teachings, EcoSikh believes that Sikhs can be inspired to take responsibility for the environment through reflection and action on the words of the Gurus. This year the Sikh Environment Day as a celebration of the Gurgaddi Diwas of Guru Har Rai Ji was welcomed not only by Sikh community but also by members of other traditions including Hindus, Muslims and Sindhis, who embraced their connection with the planet for the welfare of humanity. EcoSikh not only utilized all the most effective tools and methods used in the last year program but it also overcame many hurdles and introduced new methods to build and expand this movement toward a Sikh vision for a better environment.

This report is divided into two sections: Preparation, (including methodology, resources and sewa assistance) and Action (which looks at some of the actions and activities that we were told about, although we know that a great deal more happened than is in our list).

We conclude with an assessment of how we can celebrate Sikh Environment Day in 2013 with even more enthusiasm, involvement, and impact.

2. Methodology and Resources

**Goal Setting**

Last year, four hundred and fifty Sikh organizations and gurdwaras observed this day with activities to improve the physical environment around them. This ranged from tree planting to art competitions to seminars on the environment. After reaching the targeted four hundred and fifty Sikh institutions in 2011, EcoSikh sought to reach out to heighten the level of involvement to seven hundred Sikh institutions in 2012, from gurdwaras to schools, to businesses across South Asia and the Sikh Diaspora.

Goal setting is vital to the success of EcoSikh’s programs. It helps give us focus, and others focus: it helps make things happen.
**Toolkit**

We made a few additions to our toolkit from last year and translated more materials to help improve community activities at ground level. This toolkit included various materials for Gurdwaras, organizations, schools, business and families;

- How to celebrate Sikh Environment Day ([English](#) and [Punjabi](#)): a document with ideas to celebrate the day with activities to create awareness and real-time environment programs in Gurdwaras, schools, individuals and families.
- Messages from Sri Akal Takht ([Punjabi](#), [English](#)) and Takhat Sri Kesgarh Sahib ([Punjabi](#), [English](#))
- Eak Bageecha: a Gurbani compilation on nature
- Flyers and banners designs ([Punjabi](#), [English](#)) for notice boards and general awareness in the community
- **Pledge forms**: pledge forms to engage Sikh families to plant at least one plant or tree and maintain cleanliness in their areas.
- **10-minute Eco-Assembly Booklet for Schools**: in partnership with the Sukrit Trust, EcoSikh developed a short program for schools in India.

This toolkit was sent via emails and newsletter and it was also made downloadable on the EcoSikh website. The links were tweeted and posted on Facebook. While all resources were available and accessible by the public, the 10-minute Eco-Assembly booklet was primarily aimed at schools in Punjab and the rest of India, since many students have final exams during the month of March.

**Approaching the Takhts**

EcoSikh approached Sri Akaal Takht Sahib, the supreme decision-making body of Sikhs and Takhat Sri Kesgarh Sahib, to encourage the followers of Guru Nanak to take lead in improving the environment in all religious and community affairs and also to take part in the March 14 celebrations.

Both issued very empowering messages for all Sikhs to observe March 14 and recommended that Sikhs should minimize the use of plastic bags at Sikh temples and homes to keep their surroundings clean.

This was colossal statement to be shared with the Sikhs. EcoSikh spread this message through press releases to the major media, on Facebook, Twitter, EcoSikh, Sikhnet and other major Sikh websites. This letter was emailed to more than 10,000 contacts through the EcoSikh monthly newsletter-‘Dharat Suhavi’

**Outreach to leading Gurdwara committees**

EcoSikh approached the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), which governs almost all the major historical Sikh Gurdwaras in Punjab and Haryana. A special conference was arranged at a Gurdwara in Haryana with the help of a volunteer
Gurpreet Singh. This was the first largest meeting of Sikhs on the environment in Haryana and first ever joint action plan being launched by participating organizations including the apex body, SGPC. The SGPC has around 78 Gurdwaras and 62 Schools and colleges in Punjab, Haryana and many more local Gurdwaras hooked to its network in the two states.

Another volunteer Aash Arora, from New Delhi approached the Dharam Parchar Committee, DSGMC to commemorate the Sikh Environment Day. The Delhi committee comprises of 16 Gurdwaras and 12 Khalsa Schools.

EcoSikh also approached Takhat Sri Hazoor Sahib, Nanded Maharashtra to support this day as they did in the last year.

**Telephone and SMS**

All participant organizations and volunteers were called and SMSs were sent about Sikh Environment Day and the EcoSikh website. All the EcoSikh volunteers in other states were guided via telephone and many organizations were approached in similar way. One such organization was Satnam Sarv Kalyan Trust which participated last year with their 300 schools. It was approached via telephone and was handed over the 300 toolkits for schools in February.

**Direct Registration on EcoSikh Website**

Registration forms for Gurdwaras, Organisations, Schools and institutes and businesses were posted on the Sikh Environment Day registration page - a special button was put across the home page to attract visitors to register online.

**Pledge Forms for Families**

We had special ‘Sikh Environment Day Pledge Forms’ in our toolkit to engage families and generate more awareness at the ground level. The pledge forms were kept very simple so as Sikh families could begin thinking about environment and how Sikh principles guide us to care for our earth. A group of volunteer youngsters used these forms in three major Gurdwaras in Ludhiana.

**Volunteer Force**

Many youth groups volunteered to carry the handy material like the Sikh Environment Day Pledge forms and notice board posters to nearby Gurdwaras at weekends before and after Sikh Environment Day. Other volunteers in Haryana and Hyderabad made huge contributions in involving more than 350 gurdwaras, organizations and families in their areas.
Partnerships with Other Organizations

Partnerships with environment activists: Baba Sewa Singh Ji Khadoor Sahib proved a great support in shaping various orchid and plantation projects initiated by SGPC Gurdwaras in Haryana. He also organized a 15-day program at B.Ed college at Khadoor Sahib.

Sikh Organizations: EcoSikh partnered with various organisations which work closely with the community on all major religious affairs. The societies like Sikh Mission Harayana, Sukrit Trust, Akal Purakh Ki Fauj, Kalgidhar Sewak Jatha Mohali, Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle, Jawadi Taksa, Ishmeet Singh Music Institute, Sri Akal Sahaye Sewa Society Haryana, Guru Granth Sahib Sewa Society Haryana, Vatavaran Bachao Morcha Punjab, Kheti Virasat Mission Jaitu, Punjab Art Council and Environment Society Mansa were helpful in engaging a lot of families and Gurdwaras across Punjab and Haryana. In the Diaspora, partnerships with the Sikh Research Institute, Sikh Naujawan Sabha of Malaysia, SikhNet, and the Sikh Green Team provided an added push to Diaspora involvement.

EcoSikh Website

The EcoSikh website played a major role in outreach. It not only provided the toolkit and other registration process, as well as news stories from the front page but this time we created another page; ‘Who is taking part?’ which proved to be phenomenal. Through a timeline of stories we were told and heard, this page highlighted the plans and reports from various participants and generation a lot of inspiration for new comers to see such a high energy in the community about this day. This page attracted over 530 visitors in the month of March, as per our website analytic tool. The best example to quote will be Khalsa Schools and Gurdwara Behala of Kolkata who organized the most unique community programs in their institutes; like katha, kirtan, painting, cleanup drives, nature march etc.

The EcoSikh website was built and developed by volunteer business organization, ‘The White Pixels’ at Ludhiana and another great supporter, Amar Trivedi an expert website developer from Washington DC.

Press and Media

The news about the launch of Sikh Environment Day campaign and was covered by over 22 newspapers and 6 TV channels in India and Pakistan. EcoSikh called the press conference on 21st February and we had a series of press releases in various papers till 21st March, a week after Sikh Environment Day. Many of the Gurdwaras hooked with
Singh Sabhas and SGPC were observed on March 15th newspapers from all over the state of Punjab.

**Personal Approach**

Many organizations were approached personally – for example, 50 Parcharaks (Sikh Missionaries) from Gurmat Gian Missionary College were given a special class by EcoSikh, and from that session they agreed to approach 50 different villages to celebrate the day. This was a face-to-face approach and it worked for many organizations. Village organisations were either called or met to brief the concept of environment celebrations and inviting people to contribute their bit in preserving their surrounding environment.

**EcoSikh Goodwill Approach**

The existing institutional and corporate friends and supporters of EcoSikh like Advance India Project Limited, Jawadi Taksal, Ishmeet Singh Music Institute, The White Pixels and Hotel Aroma demonstrated a amazing ways to celebrate and advancing their self approach advice many others to join in this global day.

**Customized Banners and Posters**

Many of the organizations and Gurdwaras asked for customized posters and banners. The Pakistan Sikh Council and Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee asked for specific banner designs quoting drawbacks of plastic use in the langar etc. Our volunteer in Hyderabad, Swarn Singh Nishanchi used a customized toolkit to be used for Gurdwaras in Andhra Pradesh.

**Language and Translation**

English and Punjabi were the main languages that were used in the toolkits and most of our press releases. EcoSikh also used a Punjabi version for Sikh Environment Day as Sikh Vatavaran Diwas to enhance the acceptance of this first ever global green festival in Sikhs. A volunteer Amanjot Kaur from Kheti Virasat Mission Jaitu translated the most important documents for the toolkit.

**Email and Direct Messages**

Like last year, emails and direct messages still remains an effective means of engaging Gurdwaras since a number of Sikh institutions are connected to the internet like last year. After an initial email was sent out for Sikh Environment Day in January through our bulk email channel, Vertical Response, the Presidents of Sikh Gurdwaras were emailed directly to sign on to celebrate. Most effective were the Gurdwaras that had signed on
the previous year to celebrate, though, there is room for creative ways to engage the Diaspora in the celebrations.

**Social Media**

An initial Facebook invitation was created on January 18th for Sikh Environment Day this year. While the ‘Facebook Event Page’ played an important part of Sikh Environment Day 2011, it seemed that the Facebook EcoSikh Page this year proved an even more important role through by adding webpage content and regular updates to Facebook users. According to our web analytics, a large number were directed to the EcoSikh homepage through the Facebook site.

Our Twitter feed was much more active for Sikh Environment Day 2012. With 618 active followers, many active users Retweeted our EcoSikh’s Tweets. EcoSikh can still expand its Twitter base by having other Sikhs follow us on Twitter and engaging with Twitter users in a more effective manner.

YouTube was not used in the initial stages of spreading the word about Sikh Environment Day, however in the latter stages videos of the activities in Pakistan proved very helpful. For Sikh Environment Day 2013, it is recommended that EcoSikh works with a creative video maker to make a very effective video about the day. This should be directed towards the exact steps Sikhs need to take to participate in the day.

**Blogs, Internet Sites**

The word was spread about Sikh Environment Day was also spread through a number of blogs and internet sites this year, namely Sikhnet, TheLangarHall, AmericanTurban, and SikhChic. Sikhnet published the content from EcoSikh’s newsletters directly on their website, making the news about the day much more accessible to the broader Sikh community. The Langar Hall also published a brief article on the day directly on their website with a link to the Registration forms. AmericanTurban and SikhChic published news on their website on March 14th itself, on the meaning of the worldwide celebrations.

**Volunteers and Sewa**

Sikh Environment Day could only have happened so successfully because of a huge team of helpers and volunteers. We cannot number you all, but please know that this year you made a real difference to making this a world that is better for people and for wildlife and nature. May, there be many more years that we work together.
3. Action by REGION

SUBCONTINENT INVOLVEMENT

Organizations

- **Akal Takht Sahib, Punjab**: Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Gurbachan Singh issued a statement calling all Sikhs to celebrate Vatavaran Diwas on the Gurgaddi Diwas of Guru Har Rai Ji by reducing the use of plastics in Gurdwaras and homes cleaning their surroundings. The statement endorsed the work of Sikhs across the world, and is available in both Punjabi and English.

- **Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee, Delhi**: (DSGMC) celebrated the day in 16 of the major Delhi Gurdwaras. President Paramjit Singh Sarna pledged that Delhi Gurdwaras will be leaders in green places of worship, with plans to introduce solar power, ban plastic disposables, and planting trees on premises.

- **Sewa Organisation, Sangrur, Punjab**: Many organisations from Sangrur area; including Society for Environment, Women and Abandoned NGO, Senior Citizen Club, Sahara Foundation, Cremation Ground Committee, Sewa Sanstha etc collaborated to welcome the unique idea of celebrating Sikh Environment Day by plantation drives in the city.

- **Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee, Punjab & Haryana**: The SGPC, the main governing body of the Sikh temples, held celebrations in 78 Gurdwaras, 11 colleges, 31 Khalsa schools and 12 Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) schools, planting fifty trees at each location. A total of 7,250 new trees were officially planted during the celebrations, superseding all expectations.

- **Takht Sri Hazur Sahib, Maharashtra**: Takht Sri Hazur Sahib celebrated Vatavaran Diwas again this year with nature march, a plant distribution at Nanded, and a newly developed garden at Gurdwara Shikar Ghat Sahib. The Takht will also involve the community in a campaign to plant trees in honor of Guru Har Rai Sahib Ji.

- **Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib, Punjab**: under the leadership of Jathedar Tarlochan Singh sent a message to gurdwaras throughout Punjab, citing concern over ‘unchecked development, deforestation, damage of mountain areas, and intensive agriculture.’ The Jathedar encouraged Sikhs around the world to follow the path of their Gurus in conserving Mother Nature and to plant a tree on this day in memory of Guru Har Rai Sahib.

- **Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle, Chandigarh**: a very renowned Sikh organization celebrated this green gurpurab by planting saplings at Gurdwara in phase 3B1.
and distributed 200 ornamental tree saplings in local sangat. They also held a kirtan darbar at Gurdwara Sector 71. See pictures [here](#).

- **Kalgidhar Sewak Jatha, Chandigarh**: organized a special kirtan diwan at Gurdwara Sacha Dhan, Mohali, on environment theme. Famous Ragi jathas were called to inspire sangat on this issue and take initiatives. A ceremonial tree was planted on this occasion. See pictures [here](#).

- **Gurmat Sewa Society, Tarsikka**: the organisation conducted one day plant distribution camp, starting with Ardas from Gurdwara Bhagtaan, Tarsikka. The President of this organisation Bhai Gurjit Singh spoke about the importance of trees in human life and pleaded the community to protect and plant more trees. Hundreds of trees were distributed in the camp, as many of the families participated to receive and adopt trees. See pictures [here](#).

- **Environment Society Mansa**: planted various flowering plants in a local park, various residents of the area were involved in this event.

- **Jawadi Taksal and Ishmeet Singh Music Academy, Ludhiana**: in partnership with EcoSikh organized a shabad kirtan recording program at Jawadi Gurdwara stage. The students from both the academies sung the hymns of nature from Sri Guru Granth Sahib in prescribed [ragas](#). The tracks included themes connecting spirit to other species on earth, its seasons, water, air and the bounteous earth.
These recordings were telecasted on PTC and 7Sea Channels. See pictures here.

- **Sukrit Trust, Punjab**: Throughout the month of March this organizations added an environment curriculum in their usual religious camps organized all over Punjab state. This included lectures, environment pledges and education about how Sikhism looks toward protecting the Earth. See pictures here.

- **Sri Guru Granth Sahib Sewa Society, Haryana**: a very dedicated organisation conducting religious programs in all over Haryana contacted 21 Gurdwaras and families to plant trees or dwarf plants in their surroundings.

- **Sri Akal Sahaye Academy, Haryana**: helped EcoSikh in conducting a meeting with Haryana Gurdwaras and key organisations in the State and helped in introducing the concept of Sikh Environment Day. This organisation also out reached over 40 villages in the state to invite them for celebrating Guru Har Rai’s gurgaddi diwas and involve sangat for environment protection.

- **Save Organization, Jammu and Kashmir**: celebrated Vatavaran Diwas during the main planting season beginning the first week of April. The day will include tree plantings, ecotourism and quiz programs among other activities. Handmade greetings cards and other craft items were specially designed with messages from Gurbani.

**Educational Institutions**

**Haryana**

- **Government School, Lakhmari, Kurukshetra**: students and staff planted 13 trees in total to mark the environment day celebrations in their school. There was a lot of enthusiasm in students during planting the trees, see them on YouTube.

- **Government School, Dulyani, Ambala Cant**: planted 13 trees in and around their school. Check their YouTube video along with Lakhmari School.

- **Government School, Rasoolpur, Yamuna Nagar**: organised an environment rally by school students. See their pictures here.

- **Government School, Babain, Ambala Cant**: the head teacher of this school, Mr. Desraj planted a ceremonial tree and spoke about the importance of trees to the students.

- **Government School in Kalwa, Kurukshetra** organised a plantation drive by students and staff. The school has also encouraged the whole village to organise another plantation drive in the month of April. Watch them at YouTube.
Himachal Pradesh

- **Dagshai Public School, Dagshai:** the school students and staff together celebrated the day by kirtan at school Gurdwara. Over 100 trees were planted by staff and students and 200 more trees will be planted in the season. Retd. Major General, H.J. Singh, a 1969 pass out of the school, appreciated the school efforts and shared his views about environment care, while Executive Director of the school, Amarjit Singh explained the love for environment in Sikhism with his pupils. The Retd. Joint Director of Himachal Forest Department praised the efforts by school. This was relayed on Doordarshan Channel and can be seen on YouTube and Flickr.

New Delhi

- **Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGPC):** 19,000 students at 12 Guru Har Krishan Public Schools under DSGMC were encouraged to protect nature and conserve water. The schools celebrated the day by kirtan and lectures on water conservation.

Punjab

- **SGPC Schools:** Over 11 colleges, 31 Khalsa Schools and 12 Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Schools under Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee in Punjab & Haryana planted fifty trees at each location.

- **Satnam Sarv Kalayan Trust schools, Punjab:** Satnam Sarv Kalyan Trust celebrated the day with 10-Minute Eco-Assemblies in over 300 schools in all over Punjab. And again this year they involved students and staff to plant trees in their schools, organized eco-assemblies and read the environment pledge forms.

- **Sukrit Schools:** Sukrit trust opened another gate to invite schools from all over Punjab. The trust partnered with EcoSikh and invited above 750 schools from
Punjab to chip in the global Sikh Environmental celebrations. The two organizations developed a totally new program called 10 minutes Eco-Assembly issuing a pledge to plant a tree this year, conserve water, and clean their surroundings and a short lecture on environment.

- **Guru Angad Dev College of Education, Khadoor Sahib** under the experienced guidance of Baba Sewa Singh Ji, Principal Suruchi Rishi and staff members began with a fortnight-long ‘Go Green project’ on March 5. They developed a little garden in the Girls’ hostel, organized clean up drives in the surrounding area, held public awareness camps on kitchen gardening and renewable energy sources and plantation drives at Mandi Khadur Sahib. Along with this the students spread awareness around the area of their habitations, about the conservation of natural resources, discarding the use of plastic bags and use of renewable sources of energy. Check their press release at Flickr.

- **Chief Khalsa Diwan** organized environment celebrations at Guru Har Krishan Sen Sec School, GT Road. Students took pledges to save the environment. Education Director of Chief Khalsa Diwan, Dharamvir Singh spoke about nature conservation. Students performed kirtan on nature theme as well.

- The **International Fateh Academy** at Jadiala Guru celebrated Sikh Environment Day with great enthusiasm. Educationist, Rajinder Kaur brought home to the students the need for conservation & preservation of natural resources, the significance of tree plantation. In the special assembly convened, the Guest of Honour and Director of School, S. Randhir Singh addressed the prohibition of use of goods responsible for pollution of air, water, soil etc. The students were made aware of a instances from the life of Guru Har Rai Ji which reflected His love for nature. The assembly took a pledge to save the environment in every little way that was possible. The Guest of Honour, Director Education, Principal and a few students planted saplings to motivate others to follow.

- **Sant Avtar Singh Yadgari College, Lohia Khas, Jallandhar**: Baba Seechwal planted and distributed trees in the community to mark the second celebrations of Sikh Environment Day at this College.

- **Sant Majha Singh Karamjot Sen Sec School, Baba Bakala**: a Sukhmani Sahib prayer was performed by staff and students and life episodes of Guru Har Rai were shared with students. A ceremonial tree was planted by school Principal.

- **Nankana Sahib Public School, Ludhaina**: students held an eco-assembly presented by EcoSikh in partnership with Sukrit. The students sang hymns on nature, did an *Ardas* for well-being of mother earth and read the Sikh Environment Day pledge forms. Check them on Flickr.
• **Akal Purakh Ki Fauj**: ‘Public School Kalla’ a CBSE school run by this organisation at Kalla, shared precious information about trees and fruits in Sri Guru Granth Sahib and names of Gurdwaras on trees and fruits which reveal that Sikh Gurus admired the trees and nature. Students were also given saplings to carry home.

• **Gurmat Gian Missionary College, Ludhiana**: more than 50 parcharaks or Sikh missionaries prepared themselves to advocate environment preservation in their respective villages in Punjab during a lecture by EcoSikh.

• **Kalgidhar Senior Secondary School, Ludhiana**: this school carried out their annual Akand Path in their campus and performed a lecture, pledges and ardas for environment on the final day after bhog. Many students brought plants and pots to school on March 14.

• **Pothohar School, Ludhiana**: This school performed eco-assembly, prayers and pledges on March 14.

• **Bhai Maha Singh Poly Technique College, Muktsar, Punjab**: Over 200 students from more than 10 Polytechnic colleges gathered took pledges and performed prayers to protect their environment and plant trees in a camp organized by the Sukrit Trust. Check their pictures on [Flickr](#).

• **Mansa, Global College for Information Technology and Management, Nangal Khurd**: students and staff planted 101 saplings in their campus to mark the day under the leadership of their worthy Principal and Convener of Environment Society Mansa, Ashok Sapolia. He inspired the students with his words.

• **Moga, Thulewal Government School**: This school celebrated the Wet Land day and Sikh Environment Day with seminars and nature march in their village under
the leadership of Surjit Singh. Check them on Flickr.

**West Bengal**

- **Khalsa High School, Kolkata:** organized various programs such as; eco-assembly, ‘sit, draw and exhibit’ competition, speeches, plantation in school and a cleanup drive in a park nearby jointly with Gurdwara Behala Sangat. The duo included Muslim and Sikh sangat with school kids who cleaned trash and dead bushes etc from the park and left it remarkably cleaner and greener. [Flickr](http://Flickr) link.

- **Khalsa English High School, Kolkata:** the students and staff organized a week long cleanup drives till 13th March, a few students came to streets with very strong environment messages in their hands while the rest actually picked trash in the streets (See YouTube and FaceBook). On March 14th they had Kirtan, Katha, tree saplings on campus and environment lectures. Checkout their pics at [FaceBook](http://FaceBook) or [Flickr](http://Flickr) and clean up drive on [YouTube](http://YouTube).

**Business Organizations**

- **AIPL, a Sikh business group:** the urban housing and development business group, AIPL under the leadership of Daljeet Singh and Harinder Singh engaged all their plot owners in the Dream City Amritsar Project to plant mature trees in their area during the week of Sikh Environment Day. Bibi Inderjit Kaur from Pingalwara appeared on this occasion. The festival announcements for this week long celebrations were made in collaboration with Coca Cola, through two large hoardings installed in prime areas of Amritsar, via FM 92.7 radio, calls and emails etc. The AIPL has also created Rain Water harvesting projects in all their project sites. This is one such example where urban developers can pay their bit for the sake of mother earth. Check pics at [Flickr](http://Flickr).
• **Hotel Aroma, Chandigarh:** The hotelier and art lover Mr. Kohli advertised about 1007 organizations participating in Sikh Environment Day at the front gate of his famous hotel and restaurant in the city beautiful. Check out [Flickr](#).

• **Hot Breads, Ludhiana:** a food chain at Ludhiana helped with spreading the Sikh Environment Day news by their SMS sewa as last year. Other youngsters Navjot Singh, Jasmeen Singh did SMS sewa at Ludhiana.

• **Singh Sons India:** This business group has informed us that it has taken the initiative to install solar LED lights and heaters of 1000 LPD in various Singh Sabha Gurdwaras and old age homes in New Delhi. They have involved environment lovers from community for funding these projects and pledged to install such projects in at least 100 more Gurdwaras by next March 14. They began their action since last Sikh Environment Day. [Flick](#) their pics.

**Gurdwaras**

**Andhra Pradesh:**

• **Gurdwara Ameerpet, Hyderabad:** the ladies jatha organized week long Sukhmani Sahib Prayers in the Gurdwara for the well being of nature. And sangat brought ornamental plants in the overall Gurdwara premises.

• **7 other Gurdwaras:** With dazzling efforts by EcoSikh volunteer, Bhai Swaran Singh Nishanchi 7 other Gurdwaras introduced environment day celebrations in their Gurdwaras by planting trees around Gurdwara corners. These Gurdwaras included; **Central Gurudwara Saheb (Gauliguda), Gurudwara Saheb Singh Sabha-Ashok Bajar (Afjal Gunj), Puratan Gurudwara Saheb Barambala (Sikh Chavni, Attapur), Puratan Gurudwara Saheb Aasa Singh Bagh-(Sikh Chawni Kishanbagh) and Gurudwara Saheb Sangat Saheb (Sangareddy Medak), Gurudwara Saheb Karimnagar-Gobind Nagar (Karim Nagar), Gurudwara Saheb Nijambad (Nijambad).**

**Haryana**

• **Mangiana Dabwali:** SGPC member Jagseer Singh contacted 50 local Gurdwaras to engage them for celebrating the day to bring awareness at grounds.
- **Sirsa**: SGPC member Bhai Gurmit Singh from Sirsa contacted over 100 local Singh Sabha and other Gurdwaras for introducing katha and kirtan on Sikh Environment Day.

- **Rasida**: SGPC member Amir Singh Rasida managed to contact over 100 local Singh Sabha and other Gurdwaras for katha, kirtan and planting trees in their Gurdwaras.

- **Gurdwara Sant Prem Singh, Barara, Ambala Cantt** reported to have planted 49 trees in total by sangat and management committee around in their surroundings.

- **Ravidas Mandir, Ravidas Colony, Barara, Ambala Cantt** participated by planting 9 trees, lectures were given by Ravidas community leaders.

- **Gurdwara Sahib, Barthali, Kurukshetra** sangat and Gurdwara committee planted 25 trees in and around Gurdwara premises in honour of Guru Har Rai Ji.

- **Gurdwara Bani Badarpur**: The SGPC manager Sukhdev Singh and villagers together helped in creating a [Guru Ka Baag](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=) in their village. Baba Sewa Singh’s organisation planted 70 fruit and shade bearing native trees in total land which is now maintained by SGPC. This [story](https://www.ekosikh.org/) has been published on EcoSikh website. Watch the plantation video [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=).

- **Gurdwara Manji Sahib, Shahbad**: in collaboration with 3 more Gurdwara committees planted 40 trees to create awareness about planting trees in their regional sangat. Watch on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=).

- **Gurdwara Lakhnor Sahib, Ambala Cantt**: this is Guru Gobind Singh Ji’s nanka village, where 67 trees were planted (watch on YouTube) with the collective sangat and Gurdwara committee action. Trees were planted in Gurdwara premises, around Mata Gujri’s historical well and in the surroundings. A special kirtan program was organised as well with this plantation drive.

- **Gurdwara Mardoun Sahib, Ambala Cantt** supported this global celebration by planting 145 trees with major sangat action. Lot of open land near the Gurdwara was utilized for plantation. Watch on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=).

- **Gurdwara Gendsar Patshahi 10, Bhano Kheri, Ambala Cantt**: this is the place near Lakhnour Sahib, where Guru Gobind Singh used to play stick and ball with his friends at a large playground. There is a lot of open space around this ground, in and around the Gurdwara where 45 more trees were planted. Check this on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=).
• **Gurdwara Ichha Purak Sahib, Mugla Wale**: the Gurdwara committee invited the team for plantation around their premises on March 14.

• **Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha (Chhota Model Town), Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha (Nehru Park), Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha (Laxmi Garden), Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha (Vishnu Garden), Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha (Arjun Nagar), Gurdwara Sudhal Sahib, Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha (Dushehra Ground)** and more Gurdwaras in the areas planted trees and plants in pots as well.

• **Gurdwara Singh Sabha (Sant Baba Gajja Singh Ji), Kaserla, Kurukshetra** informed to have planted 52 trees in surroundings after prayers. Check out at [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com).

**Jammu & Kashmir**

• **Gurdwara Chatti Patshahi, Srinagar, Gurdwara Chatti Patshahi Baramulla and Gurdwara Sri Guru Nanak Charan Choh, Beeru, Badgam, Srinagar**: with the efforts of SAVE organization, this year Sikh Environment day was a special attraction for Sikhs at Baisakhi Mela in the Kashmir valley. Shabad Vichars based on environment conservation and historical contribution of Sikh luminaries towards environment was specifically highlighted in association with the Parcharaks of Sikh Missionary College at all the above Gurdwaras. Mega Plantation drive was also initiated on the day at Gurdwara Sri Guru Nanak Charan Choh, Beeru, Badgam. Likewise a large number of plant saplings were planted at other community places like Shamshan Ghat, Karan Nagar, Srinagar, Hr. Secondary school Baramulla, Eco-Park, Salamabad, Uri, which is very near to Pakistani border. Dept. of Environment & Remote sensing actively contributed by providing two thousand saplings of Deodar, Conifer, eucalyptus, willow etc. Check their pics [here](https://www.gurdwara.org).

**Punjab**

• **Amritsar**: on the eve of March 14 a katha and kirtan diwan was organized at Manji Sahib Diwan Hall, in the **Golden Temple Complex**. Thousands of pilgrims attended this program at Amritsar and millions watched it live on PTC channel, a famous Punjabi TV channel which is aired in 68 countries across the world. Kathawachaks explained the significance and love for environment in Sikhism and appealed to plant trees and not wait for the authorities to save the mother Earth.

• **Gurdwara Nauvi Patshahi, Baba Bakala, Amritsar**: ceremonial tree was planted here at Gurdwara Garden to begin the plantation drive. Many youth
organisations and other SGPC members were invited to attend the program.

- **Gurdwara Shaeedan and Nanhi Chhanh, Mahilpur, Amritsar**: Nanhi Chhanh and SGPC collaborated to begin SGPC’s plantation drive from this spot, over 5000 trees were gifted by Nanhi Chhanh organization to be planted on SGPC premises and to be distributed to door to door.

- **Takhat Sri Kesgarh Sahib, Anandpur Sahib**: a plantation drive begun from this takhat on this day. Jathedar Giani Tirlochan Singh, Gurdwara managers and staff took part in this drive.

- **Gurdwara Bauli Sahib, Goindwal**: An Akhand Path (non-stop recitation of complete Sri Guru Granth Sahib scripts) was organized at the Chubara Sahib in the premises and a special kirtan and katha darbar was organized and shady trees were planted in the Gurdwara garden, under the guidance of SGPC.

- **Gurdwara Patshahi Nauvi, Bahadargarh, Patiala** around 200 trees were planted by SGPC managers and staff to celebrate and create awareness about Gurugaddi diwais of Guru Har Rai Sahib.

- **Gurdwara Dukh Niwaran Sahib, Patiala**: an Akhand Path was recited on the Gurgaddi Diwas and the ex-president of SGPC, Kirpal Singh Badungar addressed the sangat and trees were planted around the Gurdwara.

- **Gurdwara Chohla Sahib, Taran Taaran**: Many SGPC members and sangat organized a plantation drive around the Gurdwara complex to celebrate this day.

- **Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Ludhiana** Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha arranged a flower show and contest and, art and painting contest for kids at their Gurdwara premises on March 4th. Hundreds of families from Bhai Randhir Singh Nagar, Sarabha Nagar, Model Town, MT Extension, Rajguru Nagar and other parts of Ludhiana took part in this program. Over 500 kids from 6 to 15 years of age group used their color brushes to paint to express the association of Sikh and environment. About 60 Sikh families signed the EcoSikh Sikh Environment Day Pledge form to plant a tree on 14th March in honour of Sri Guru Har Rai Sahib. There was a kirtan darbar on Basant Raag on the same evening. Check pics at Flickr.

The Gurdwara management committee organized another bicycle rally on 14th March. Many teenagers and elders embraced the newest city program which planted trees on their way. Bhai Pritam Singh a famous 85 years old Sikh cyclist was the chief guest at this event.
• **Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha E-Block, Baba Deep Singh Ji and Singh Sabha Sarabha Nagar, Ludhiana:** a group of boys Jasmeen Singh, Chetanpal, Jeevanjot, Raspreet and Jaskirat Singh outreached sangat for full week of Sikh Environment Day in these 3 Gurdwaras in Ludhiana and had 145 families signing the pledge form to plant one tree in honour of the Guru. The young Sikhs also went for a nature walk to celebrate this Green Gurpurab to revive energy after a lot of sewa. Watch this group on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com).

• **Tajpur and Sahibana villages, Ludhiana:** Twenty families from Tajpur and Sahibana villages, adopted 22 trees with tree guards to be taken care by the. These families are proud to take such an initiative for their beloved Guru, Sri Har Rai Sahib Ji. The organizers and leaders from these villages convinced them to do so and they will be organizing Katha darbars and lectures every month on Sangrand, to inspire the rest of the 3,000 villagers in these two locations. The organizers are determined to invite environment activists to their villages to motivate their villager residents. Check their pictures [here](https).

• **Bhai Randhir Singh Nagar:** a retired B.Ed college lecturer Manjit Kaur, from Block B of the area outreached over 50 families to sign environment pledges and plant one tree and take care reduce water wastage and cleanliness in the area and spreading the newest effort by Sikhs round the globe.

• **Chamkaur Sahib:** SGPC in partnership with Forest Department of Punjab planted fruit and shady trees at **Gurdwara Damdama Sahib**. An **Ardas** was performed before planting these trees for their wellbeing. The Forest department chairman was invited as chief guest on the occasion. Many members from local organisations and clubs also participated in plantation drive.

• **Villagers from Hoshiarpur:** group of Sikhs; Pavitar Singh, Gurcharan Singh and Kulwant Singh organized Gurbani Kirtan and Katha diwans in village Sloh and Basiala in Hoshiarpur. The group planted trees various at cremation grounds and school grounds in their villages. Their action reminds us how trees help us during the last phase of humans’ journey of life by providing their wood for cremation. Check pics at [Flickr](https).

• **Gurdwara Nankiana Sahib, Sangrur:** this Gurdwara celebrated the day by planting a variety of shady trees. An Akali-BJP leader along with Gurdwara committee planted a tree and addressed the sangat as well.

• **Gurdwara Guru Ramdas, Moga:** Guru Har Rai’s life history was highlighted during a katha and kirtan diwan at the Gurdwara after a **Sehaj Path.** Sangat gathered in hundreds at this occasion.
• **Gurdwara Gangsar, Jaitu, Faridkot**: the Gurdwara Jathedar began the plantation drive with a ceremonial tree and sangat and staff members planted trees at various spots.

• **Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Canal Road, Ferozpur** celebrated Sikh Environment Day by kirtan and katha darbar.

**West Bengal**

• **Gurdwara Behala, Kolkata** organised a katha session by the famous Sikh teacher Giani Pinder Pal Singh Ji, in the main hall. Giani Pinder Pal Singh Ji led an inspiring lecture at the Gurdwara that was broadcasted on Punjab Television Channel. The talk focused on three main areas: the life of Guru Har Rai Ji and his passion for environment; how Gurbani can inspire us to preserve nature; and how Sikhs can contribute in saving Mata Dharat for future generations. The Gurdwara sangat also organised a cleanup drive in the park nearby involving other communities as well. Check their pics at [Flickr](https://www.flickr.com).

**Pakistan**

• **Nankana Sahib and Karachi, Pakistan**: Celebrations in Pakistan commenced at Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of our beloved Guru, Guru Nanak. According to the President of the Pakistan Sikh Council, Ramesh Singh, Sikhs and followers of many other religions, especially Sindhis and Muslims gathered at Nankana Sahib Gurdwara. The communities together raised a new orchid with 101 fruit bearing plants, at Nankana Sahib Gurdwara Janam Asthan in the memory of Muslim Saint, Pir Buddhu Shah who was very close to the tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh. The Gurdwara committee uploaded a moving video on YouTube. The additional touch in the video is to discover how men and women from different faiths have such a deep regard and devotion in Guru Nanak, as they get together.
and celebrate the Sikh Environment Day, 2012. Similar interfaith celebrations were also observed in Karachi where faith and government leaders from Hindu, Christian, Sikh, and Muslim communities all vowed to plant trees and keep their streets and localities clean. Read the full article in the Express Tribune.

**DIASPORA INVOLVEMENT**

**Australia**

- **Melbourne**: Talented singer Dya Singh wrote a moving article from Melbourne on the website of Sikhchic.com. He spoke on the importance of celebrating Gurpurab by addressing a social problem; “A day, which otherwise used to pass off as ‘just another’ Gurpurab, within the year has suddenly become one of the most significant days in the international Sikh calendar.” Dya Singh also wrote on the long-term implications of this day in the Sikh calendar for years to come. “Can this army of 30 million then also turn into eco-warriors?” he asked.

- **New South Wales**: Glenwood Gurdwara marked the day with an essay competition for Sikh youth: “The Guru’s message for Nature and Preservation.” The gurdwara hosted presentations and an awareness drive on the environment, and a talk by the local Green MP and local council members on how a single community can make a tremendous difference.

**Canada**

- **Toronto, Ontario**: Seva Food Bank Participated this year by first, recycling. Since there is no official recycling program in the building, during the month of March, Seva Food Bank decided to do it themselves. After assembling recycling bin across the food bank volunteers will take all the recycling to our homes (where there is a program in place). Hopefully this will redirect a bunch of paper, plastic and cans that would otherwise head to the dump. During the March 14th shift, Seva Food Bank volunteers all going to bring in ceramic coffee mugs from home for clients to use instead of styrofoam cups. The facility have a washing station setup to rinse them after each use in hopes of reducing garbage for that day.

- **Malton, Ontario** The Khalsa Community School in Malton participated with
assistance from the Punjabi Community Health Services organization. Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS), a long-running institution saving elderly, adults and youth. The groups will host a community cleanup drive, and a seminar on environmental protection based on Gurbani, a community. PCHS is also home to the Sahara Garden project, a local garden that enables elderly in the Punjabi/Sikh community to share their farming skills and stay physically active. The groups conducted a community garden (tree) planting and cleanup with students from the school and members of the Malton and Brampton community. The group also used Gurbani as an inspiration for environmental action.

- **British Columbia:** Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara, one of the largest Gurdwaras in the greater British Columbia region organized weeklong celebrations around Sikh Environment Day. This included a youth kirtan darbar, a tree distribution, and an environmental cleanup with the City of Surrey. The Gurdwara also allotted CAD $3,000 to spread the word via diverse media networks about the celebrations in Surrey/Vancouver, engaging one of the largest Sikh diaspora communities outside of South Asia in the celebrations. This included another broadcast celebrating the Gurpurab of Guru Har Rai to nature on the region’s Sikh television station, Ik Onkar TV. One of the major aims of Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara will be to restore a nearby creek and connect concern for rivers and lakes to Gurbani.

**Malaysia**

- **Kuala Lumpur:** The Sikh community of the Sikh Naujawan Sabha, Titiwangsa, organised Sikh Environment Day on March 24, which also included a march for the environment. Also, following the initial Sikh Environment Day celebrations in Kuala Lumpur, Sikh Naujawan Sabha Malaysia and Oh My Guru organizations will be taking ideas for environmental action to be implemented in other Malaysian states.

**Peru**
• **Piura**: Partap Singh’s family celebrated Sikh Environment Day with their Peruvian friends. They focused on reducing waste and recycling in their office and distributing plants.

United Kingdom

• **Southall, London**: The Sikh Community of Gurudwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Southall, celebrated Sikh Environment Day by planting five fruit trees at the newly acquired green at Norwood Hall. This also marks the sangat’s participation in the biggest community eco-food growing project in West London. The “Community Feeding the Community”, involves organic and sustainable principles, with water from rain-water harvesting and compost from the Gurdwara’s bio-waste. This is the largest Gurdwara in Europe. Also in Southall, Amanroop Kaur and her husband both teach kirtan and on March 18 will combine celebrations for Sikh Environment Day and the regular Mothering Sunday holiday and sing kirtan with friends and family about mothers and the environment, and give seeds to the sangat to take home.

• **Slough, Berkshire**: Slough Sikh Scouts, a youth group in the greater London area with a high concentration of Sikhs lead an eco-friendly commuting initiative, focused on reducing waste and recycling in the office and conducted a community cleanup drive.

• **Derby, United Kingdom**: The children of the Gurdwara Ramgarhia Sabha in Derby will begin to cultivate Khalsa Garden, a plot of land that will grow organic vegetables for the Guru Ka Langar as well as flowers.

• **Panjab Radio**: Panjab Radio focused a whole program on Sikh Environment Day: many listeners from the British Sikh Community called in to show their support.

• **British Armed Forces**: The annual Chardi Kala Sikh weekend for Sikhs in the British Army will have one of the days themed on Sikh Environment Day and how to make the world’s environment better by taking inspiration from Guru Har Rai Ji. The weekend runs from April 20 to 22 at AFCC, Amport House. There are around 200 Sikh serving members of the British Armed Forces.
United States

- **San Francisco, California:** Sikhnet, has posted two wonderful stories for Sikh Environment Day written by Harijot Singh Khalsa. The first story was about Guru Har Rai, preserving gardens around the city of Kiratpur Sahib, and would hunt animals only to give them medicine and free them. The other is a story about Guru Har Rai as a little boy, who was moved to tears when he removed petals from a flower. The stories are available as audio files as well, downloadable from the website.

- **San Jose, California:** The San Jose Gurdwara marked the day with enthusiasm for a second year in a row. The sangat celebrated the grand opening of the expanded Gurdwara sahib in April 2011 with two major commitments to the environment. (1) The new langar hall has pledged to be eco-friendly with stainless steel plates and a complete ban on Styrofoam. (2) The Gurdwara is one of the few gurdwaras in North America sourcing energy from the sun—with the parking structures on one side of the Gurdwara sahib covered with solar cells.

- **Pacioma, California:** The Khalsa Care Foundation in Southern California prepared a garden in effort increase vegetation around the Gurdwara premises. After laying the basic foundation of the garden on the Gurdwara premises, the sangat was looking to expand, beautify and properly take care of the rest of the land. Youth from the area gathered on March 3rd for a cleanup and March 10th for the planting.

- **Santa Rosa, California** The Santa Rosa Gurdwara celebrated Environment Day by focusing kirtan and katha on environment, introducing eco-friendly features in the Gurdwara, plant distribution, a ceremonial tree plantation, and by showcasing environment focused Gurbani phrases in Gurdwara premises.

- **San Jose, California:** The radio talk show “GupShup with Kaurista” on Punjabi Radio USA hosted a show dedicated to the environment during their Sunday night weekly segment. The show included a series of tips in Punjabi on how individuals could reduce their impact on the environment, a serious of Punjabi songs on environmental issues, and an interview with EcoSikh Program Manager Bandana Kaur on Sikhs’ responsibility to the environment in light of the present day environmental issues facing Punjab.
• **Southington, Connecticut**: Guru Nanak Darbar will officially be celebrating its switch to solar energy on March 14, Sikh Vatavaran Diwas this year. The Gurdwara installed solar panels last year for the main Gurdwara Hall, the Granthi’s house, and an old Gurdwara building, and officially turned on the power in February 2012 in a soft opening. Costs for solar installation in the main Gurdwara building were fully reimbursed by the State of Connecticut, and the sangat chose to pay for the other buildings.

• **Bridgewater, New Jersey**: The Sikh Research Institute hosted an Ecotheology lecture, titled Kadir-Kudrat: Inseparable Creator-Creation at the Garden State Sikh Association on March 11, 2012. The Gurdwara has taken a number of key steps towards sustainability by getting rid of disposable materials in langar and powering the gurdwara with solar energy under a new committee directive. The Khalsa School also participated through a planting with the following message written on the seedlings: “We planted each seed with love, whispering Waheguru as they fell to the soil. As our seed grew, so did our love for Guru Har Rai Ji who taught us to love the world we live in. By growing these plants, we honor Guru Har Rai’s Gur Gaddi and celebrate Sikh Environment Day on March 14th. We hope that as they grow, so will our love for our Guru and our Environment.”

• **Norwalk, Connecticut** The Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji Foundation is working towards recycling and reducing waste in the Gurdwara. The Gurdwara also plans to partner with "Norwalk Tree Alliance" and is planning to donate and plant a tree in a public school, since the Gurdwara is located in an urban area. The Gurdwara also focused kirtan and katha on the environment on this day.

• **Guru Gobind Singh Academy (under Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji Foundation)** Reena Aurora, one of the main coordinators at the Guru Gobind Singh Academy suggested that they will include projects and a discussion on the importance of the environment. The academy is also placing a recycling bin in the Khalsa School and are going to emphasize on importance of recycling and reducing waste.
• **Dayton, Ohio:** Dayton Gurdwara celebrated Vatavaran Diwas with full enthusiasm this year by focusing kirtan and katha on the environment, holding a ceremonial tree planting by the sangat, and showcasing environment-focused Gurbani phrases in Gurdwara premises. The celebration at the Gurdwara was a strong followup to the previous year where the Gurdwara held an information exhibit on the environment.

• **New York:** The Manhattan Sikh Association a small venue serving the Sikh community living within the city of New York held a divan focused on nature, and did kirtan and katha on the environment. The association is also looking at ways of incorporating more sustainable systems into their facility, starting with the use of steel thalis and spoons last year which are all washed by hand by volunteers according to schedule.

• **Queens, New York:** The Sikh Students Association at CUNY Queens College, worked with the university’s environmental organizations to hold a discussion on the environment. The youth also coordinated a ceremonial tree planting, to start one of the areas first garden/planting projects initiated by a Sikh community group in the area, the ‘Guru Har Rai Memorial Garden.’

• **Leigh Valley, Easton and Blue Mountain, Pennsylvania:** Pushpinder Singh Puri reported plans for celebrations in local Gurdwaras and schools in Leigh Valley, Easton and Blue Mountain communities in Pennsylvania

• **Houston, Texas:** The Houston Gurdwara held karsewa on Saturday, March 10th to plant flowers, shrubs, trees around the Gurdwara lands. The Gurdwara’s kirtanees also focuses their kirtan and katha on environmental issues, focusing on our Divine connection with nature.

• **San Antonio, Texas:** San Antonio Gurdwara will be planting 41 fruit trees at the Sikh Center of San Antonio. San Antonio Gurdwara asked sangat members to sponsor at least one tree to plant at the Gurdwara. Each tree costs $50 and a total of $2050 was raised last Sunday for the initial planting. The Gurdwara also focuses kirtan and katha on the environment and is looking at the opportunity
to introduce eco-friendly features in the Gurdwara, such as a solar energy and water recycling, and increasing Green Patches in the Gurdwara and surroundings.

4. Conclusion

The Sikh Environment Day celebrations that took place during March 2012 brought in an inspiring new wave of activity on environmental issues across the Sikh world. With celebrations taking place across South Asia, from Punjab to Kerala, with the support of major Sikh institutions and committed volunteers, ordinary Sikhs across the world demonstrated a genuine sense of concern for the environment, through inspiration drawn from the Sikh Gurus to the very seeds we sow for the next generation.

This year we saw old gurdwara lands being converted to beautiful gardens, conventional energy systems that create air and water pollution and carbon dioxide being replaced with renewable energy from the sun, disposable plates and plastics being replaced with steel plates for Guru Ka Langar, and, trees being planted by the hands of Sikhs and local communities, old and young, on six continents.

With barriers being broken across South Asia and beyond, next year we hope to make Sikh Environment Day an even bigger success. Through the use of video messaging and more visual technologies to help communicate and catalogue the work of Sikhs in real time, we are certain that we can reach new benchmarks for future years. We would also be interesting in seeing, a rising number of ground level projects that continue the year as demonstrated by many historical Gurdwaras under SGPC in Haryana with so many trees planted, San Antonio Gurdwara in Texas and their community garden and the new solar energy system being installed for langar at Darbar Sahib in Amritsar, Punjab, offering long-term solutions to the environmental challenges that the Sikh community faces.

5. Contacts

April 25, 2012

Ravneet Singh, Ludhiana Bandana Kaur, New York
ravneet.singh@ecosikh.org bandana.kaur@ecosikh.org