

## **Harmeet Singh Gill, General Secretary, Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Southall**

On this auspicious occasion of Vaisakhi, I extend my warmest greetings and heartfelt wishes to all of you.

Vaisakhi is a significant festival that commemorates the birth of the Khalsa, the creation of the Sikh community by Guru Gobind Singh Ji, and the instillation of the five fundamental values - Daya (Compassion), Dharam (Righteousness), Himmat (Strength), Mohkam (Steadfastness), that lead to the attainment of Sahib (Oneness with the divine).

Throughout the month of April, Vaisakhi is celebrated across the country with vibrant Nagar Kirtans and ceremonies within Gurdwaras. It is heartening to see the widespread participation and enthusiasm of the community in these celebrations.

The Nagar Kirtan in Southall, which is one of the largest in the country, had over 40,000 people attend. These Nagar Kirtans and other activities that take place in Gurdwaras are a testament to the spirit of Sewa or selfless service, which is a core tenet of the Sikh faith. Sewa is inspired by our Gurus and is fundamental principle, emphasizing the importance of serving humanity without any expectation of reward or recognition, and with the objective of promoting welfare and benefit to all of humanity, regardless of race, religion, belief, or gender.

The Gurdwaras serve as a hub for the community, offering a myriad of voluntary activities that cater to the diverse needs of the local populace. From afterschool and half-term revision clubs to free health clinics and workshops, lawyers running free law clinics, and support workers giving up their time to help those in need, the list of Sewa activities is endless. It is heartwarming to witness the community's overwhelming response, who willingly offer their time, skills, and resources to contribute towards Sewa.

Gurdwaras are always looking to integrate Sewa into the broader needs of current British issues. There is a tremendous opportunity for State institutions to work with community-based voluntary projects to benefit everyone. Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall and other Gurdwaras will always be willing to synchronize their tremendous voluntary work or Sewa with national needs.

Lastly, I sincerely thank the British Sikh Consultative Forum for organizing this wonderful event, the speaker for hosting it, and the MPs for joining us in these celebrations.

Thank you.