Vaheguru ji Ka Khalsa, Vaheguru ji ki Fateh

It is an absolute honour and a huge pleasure to be invited to co-host this with my neighbour in Wolverhampton, Pat. Firstly, I need very little excuse to spend time with my local Sikh community or to indulge in any Indian food whatsoever. It is a huge thank you to all of you for coming. I am going to keep a few more thank yous to the very end of my remarks.

I just wanted to share with you on this auspicious occasion celebrating Vaisakhi my experience and my thoughts about growing up in Wolverhampton, which I am very proud to have been born and raised in. I can’t imagine Wolverhampton without its Sikh community playing such a prominent part. My mother was a deputy headteacher and Headteacher of a majority Sikh school, Valley Park, which was in Whitmore Reans and it is a great pleasure to me now to meet some of the children she taught as some of our very successful business people in Wolverhampton, who are adding so much to our economic life as well as our cultural fabric of the city.

My memories of my childhood visiting the Sikh community were of warmth and generosity. I still remember my mum coming home with a basket of home-cooked food every week from parents who wanted to share their culture with the teachers of the school. That is typical of Sikh generosity and service and I will never tire of embracing that warmth that I always feel at the two Gurdwaras that I am proud to represent.

I’m even prouder to have the Saragarhi monument which we unveiled last year at the Wednesfield Gurdwara. It is the most beautiful statue. If you haven’t seen it please come visit Wolverhampton it is absolutely magnificent, it is a fabulous part of our city's respect and admiration of the Sikh community and the bravery and service over many, many decades.

Now in Wolverhampton, we saw through the pandemic that sense of service and Seva. Cannock Road Gurdwara, Guru Nanak Satsang Gurdwara gave food at the front gate when the Langar hall had to be closed for a time. They supported so many people throughout the pandemic and continue to do that with a focus on fitness. It also does a lot around men’s mental health. I have become the world’s biggest Kabaddi fan in the last three years and we are looking to become the national Kabaddi centre behind the Gurdwara.

So it is a fantastic honour to be invited to so many gorgeous events. I want to thank you all for coming here today. I have a list of Thank yous I’d like to say. Firstly, Mr Speaker for lending us his sitting room and he’s tidied up for us and it’s pretty nice in here. The British Sikh Consultative Forum, thank you so much and you are so welcome into Parliament and we hope to see you next year. To Amrit Mann and the Punjab restaurant for providing such delicious food and Nishkam Nursery school for the amazing music and they looked so fantastic. What a great memory for the very small people to have sung in parliament.

To all our guest speakers especially to Eve Navias in Pat’s office and Bubbles, Gurinder White for their work. We know that these evenings take such a lot of planning, all the details that need to be considered, so I want to say a special thank you to you. Finally thank you to Pat, and all of you for coming this evening. It is my immense honour to have been here and spoken and I hope to see you next year.

Vaheguru ji Ka Khalsa, Vaheguru ji ki Fateh.