**Timeline of Albuquerque Sikh Gurudwara**

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Dedicated efforts by individuals are crucial to setting up a tradition. The community should recall their service with deep gratitude. Albuquerque Sikh Gurudwara (ASG) timeline begins with contributions by: Hardeep Kaur, Bhupinder Kaur, and Balwinder Singh. Hardeep Kaur appeared in Albuquerque in 1976 as the wife of my younger brother late Manjit Singh. She had a strong religious streak. For 25 years that she shared with us, she set up a tradition of community gathering at their home from time to time. She also mentored her teenage niece Bhupinder Kaur into using her musical talents and a gifted voice to do the kirtan. Bhupinder attended the Anderson Business School at UNM where my nephew Harvinderjeet Singh (aka Monty), son of my other brother late Ranjit Singh, was a student. They married after graduation and set up their home in Albuquerque, forming a Kirtani jatha with Bhupinder as the lead singer and Monty as the ‘tabalchee’. At one gathering I met Balwinder Singh (aka Bill) and his young family. He worked at the Navajo reservation and was a regular participant in these gatherings. Bill nursed a desire to help set up a Sikh Gurudwara in Albuquerque. I strongly discouraged him from pursuing this goal because of my experience in India. A Gurudwara is often plagued with infighting and politics vying for positions in its management, often resulting in police intervention. As Sikh community grew in Albuquerque, we continued to benefit from Hardeep-Bhupinder enterprise of Kirtan and sharing of Guru’s wisdom. Blessings often come to a screeching halt! The tragedy struck when Hardeep was diagnosed with cervical cancer. She waged a brave fight but lost her life on 20 February 2001. Bill was also diagnosed with lung cancer and passed away shortly thereafter, with irreparable losses to the community. Bhupinder carried on her aunt’s great work but she too fell a victim to brain cancer and passed away in 2004. Sangat met less frequently after the deeply felt losses but the Sikh population continued to grow in Albuquerque.

In 2006 sangat passed a resolution to work towards establishing a Sikh Gurudwara in Albuquerque. I was invited to join the Founders’ group (late Manjit Singh Ahluwalia, Herminder Singh Sian, Arvinder Singh Bhullar, Kulwant Kaur, Satnam Kaur, Manjeet Kaur Tangri) to help achieve this goal. Out of my deep respect for the memory of two great ladies and a dear friend, I agreed to design a framework for ASG governance. Bylaws were crafted with great care for smooth functioning of ASG. I had a great honor of leading these deliberations as the Founding President. We experimented with several management models for over three years, settling on a Board of 11 Directors (males and females) with **lifetime** appointments to ensure long-term stability of ASG governance. Upon completion of this task, I stepped down as ASG President. Today is the twelfth anniversary of the successful operation of ASG resulting from tireless efforts of a team of Directors. Also, my heartiest congratulations to sangat for their contributions and lungar sewa!

Today is Mothers’ day, an opportunity for us to show our love and gratitude for female relatives for their contributions toward enriching our lives. Women have been treated unfairly by nearly all the principal religions, in most countries of the world, for a very long time. The Sikh women acquired respect and status in the society nearly five centuries ago. It started with Nanak the first TEACHER of Sikh faith with a passion for seeking TRUTH. I quote from his hymn highlighting important contributions made to the family and the society by women.

“ Of women we are born, of women conceived, to women engaged, to women married.

Women we befriend, by women the civilization is sustained.

When a women dies, another women is sought.

It is by women that order is maintained.

Then, why call women evil from whom great men are born?

From one women another women is born, without woman none would exist.

Nanak says, only the Immortal One does not depend on Women.”

To illustrate the crucial role played by a mother in mentoring her children, I wish to pay a tribute to my own mother, late Jaswant Kaur. She belonged to a respectable family. Her father was an Inspector General of Police in Guna State in Madhya Pradesh and her older brother was the Rajah of Fatehabad in Punjab. It was customary then that a female not receive higher education. My mother was not allowed to continue beyond fourth grade. I was her eldest son (9 years old) when she was widowed at the age of 35 in the prime of her life, challenging her to raise four children (3 boys + 1 girl) following the great tragedy. It was a very difficult time for all of us. To add to our misfortunes the country was partitioned. We lost everything in migrating to India and settled in Kapurthala (Ahluwalia State), my uncle was an Excise Commissioner there. Whenever I complained of being treated unfairly by others my mother would console me by quoting shaloks from Bhagat Kabir and Baba Farid. To encourage me to pursue education as a solution to our sad predicament she related to me the story of Persu-Persa-Pers Ram repeatedly! It made a great impression on me. I held merit scholarships throughout my student life; it provided some financial relief. I did my Matric (10th grade) education at the Randhir High School and F.Sc at the Randhir College (both in Kapurthala) with high distinction. I could have been easily admitted to the Engineering College at Roorkee or the Medical School at Amritsar (my father late Sewa Singh wanted me to be a Physician) but we could not afford expenses at those institutions. Instead I chose to join the Physics Honors School at the Punjab University College at Hoshiarpur, receiving B.Sc (Honors) degree in1953 and M.Sc (Honors) degree in 1954. Thereafter, I joined the Physical Research Laboratory at Ahmedabad affiliated with the Gujarat University, as a Research Scholar, obtaining PhD degree in 1960 at the dawn of the Space age. It opened up an unexpected opportunity for my career as a Space Physicist on the international scene. I was hired as a Technical Assistance Expert in Nuclear Electronics by an Agency of the United Nations (UNESCO) with Headquarters at Paris, France. The rest is a story of an exciting career as a scientist with collaborators all over the world. This would not have been possible without the wise counsel I received from my mother in my formative years under very difficult circumstances. To express our deep gratitude to the memory of my parents, my wife and I **endowed** a Presidential Scholarship (highest honor at UNM) called *Sewa Singh & Jaswant Kaur Memorial Scholarship (*at considerable expense to us). It is for a *minority* *female* from a High School in Albuquerque / Rio Rancho area with a GPA > 3.75 to study Physics and or Astronomy at UNM. It is our earnest hope that some day a bright Sikh young lady will be the Sewa Singh & Jaswant Kaur Scholar at UNM. I am biased in favor of Sikh young females because they are potential mothers and hence mentors to a new generation of humans. I strongly recommend that responsible Sikh parents should make sure that their children (male / female) get the best education available to them to be able to partake and contribute to continuing progress of human creativity on the planet earth.