

## Sikh Children's Day Essay

The entire world was impacted in the turn to the new decade by the Coronavirus outbreak. More than 14 million people have been infected by this deadly virus that has spread throughout the world. However, this Coronavirus outbreak is just the tip of the iceberg so to speak of what is going on in the world, as Bakari Sellers says, “2020 is a year where the 1920s, 1930s, and 1950s to 1960s are all put together” (Spanish flu, Great depression, and the Civil Rights movement). Having basic human values does not seem to be enough, we need strength from within. However with strength comes the pain for those who have been impacted and as a result to see how to help myself along with others I have turned more to the Sikh values: the three pillars created by Guru Nanak Dev Ji, Naam Japna, keeping God in one's mind, Kirt Karna, Earning an honest living, and Vand Chakna, giving to charity and caring for others.

I expected Naam Japna to be very time consuming and tiring but instead due to Coronavirus I found it working to my schedule. Everything has been slower, finding more time for myself, I began doing more paat than I was used to, now doing all 5 banis almost every day. Along with doing paat, I have started listening to more shabads while I am doing work or doing miscellaneous things around the house such as cooking. By doing this my mind has started taking an interest in the meanings of the shabads and I will sometimes look at the video to see the English translation. By doing this it has helped me to understand more, helping me to realize the extent of Sikhi is portrayed as honest and true to not only god but to ourselves.

Summer school is still in session so, despite the world around, Coronavirus hasn't stopped me from working. Along with summer classes, I have been trying to help Khalsa Care Foundation, a Sikh Gurudwara in their partnership with the LA Mayor. Tasked by him we are preparing food to help feed the people in Los Angeles that cannot leave their houses due to either disabilities or lack of housing. Separately we are in coordination with homeless shelters to serve food to those in need. This ‘work’ speaks to me about Kirt Karna and Vand Chakna, in the fact of caring for others.

Despite Vand Chakna being shown in partnership with the LA Mayor and the shelters, I believe more Vand Chakna is being done at the Khalsa Care Food Pantry. The Pantry has been established for around 7 years. I just began going every Friday since April and it has helped me to see how privileged I am. The fact that my family and I can get through these times easier than most during this time is a blessing. Just looking at the sheer number of families who wait for hours every week for the food reminds me of the privilege I have received. Before the virus there used to be around 75 families every week now there are easily 500 families getting food every week. The families that get food are always so thankful. There is one story that whenever I think about it, it makes me recognize that we are doing the right thing within the community. Around

graduation time the Food pantry handed out cupcakes and cakes for the kids that graduated, this family of 2 adults and 3 kids had someone that graduated, as a result, they were eligible for some sort of sweet. I was in charge of giving the graduation cake and when I brought out the box, the kids' eyes lit up. Then when I handed it to the kids the parents' faces lit up just as much if not more than the kids. The words of “thank you” and “God bless all of you” were repeated time and time by this family. As soon as the car drove off we could see the smallest kid trying furiously to open the package. When I got home, we were thinking about going to help the Santa Ana food pantry however my mom was very skeptical until I shared this story. Immediately both my parents let us go as they knew it was to help and care for others.

Reflecting on what I am doing is nothing close to what the entire Sikh Panth is doing all around the world. I had an Art and religion teacher in high school who had a background in religious studies and Sikhism. One day when I needed help she didn't but instead talked to me about how she viewed the Sikh community and what grounds they are based on. In short, we had a 45-minute discussion during lunch on how the Sikh community does so much to help society be better as a whole. Starting from the conversation that I had with my teacher, I continue to have my eyes open to our beliefs. This drives me more as a person to help as much as I can and do the right thing.