

Respected Judges,

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh

Every cloud has a silver lining. The COVID-19 has changed life for everyone and this pandemic is likely to be the biggest trial that we have to face in our lives. The absence of a vaccine to abate the virus has made the outlook gloomy and bleak for most people but I personally believe that the coronavirus has been somewhat a blessing in disguise and has steered my life towards “Chardikala.” I now have ample time to take on challenges that I have always wanted to complete. I have always been connected with Babaji and Sikhi, but the virus has allowed me to take my Sikhi background to greater heights. Guru Saheb’s guiding principles of life are helping me to get through this time rather positively as I know I can always turn to Babaji for guidance.

Over quarantine, I have had ample time to practice “Kirtan” and “Naam Simran.” I have learned a lot of new shabads from my mom in Guru Saheb’s “Nirdharit Raags” and have been able to review shabads that I learnt from my Ustad Ji- Professor Ranjit Singh of Punjab Gharana. During pre-Covid times, we used to meet at our friends house every other week to perform Kirtan, and we have now switched to a virtual platform to maintain our continuity. Through the virtual platform, I am able to interact with others, while continuing the tradition of singing shabads with my friends and family. Throughout this time, not only have I done more Kirtan, but I have also been able to recite more Paath. I already know many Paaths by heart such as: Japji Sahib, Chaupai Sahib, Anand Sahib, Tav Prasad Savaiye, Sohila Sahib, and Ardaas, but during quarantine, I have been able to practice these Paaths more regularly in my free time. I am

focusing on learning Rehraas Sahib now and I plan on learning this Paath as soon as possible.

My family and I have also been doing Sukhmani Sahib weekly, so that we can pray for “Sarbat Da Bhala,” and for everyone’s safety during these unprecedented times.

With Guru Sahib’s Blessings, I was able to navigate through four of my toughest Advanced Placement (AP) exams in my senior year during the pandemic and pass all of them in flying colors. While most students were struggling to navigate through the modified patterns of these AP exams, my conviction and faith in Sri Guru Granth Sahib made these tests feel like a breeze. In fact my admission to University of California, San Diego (UCSD) also materialized during this pandemic. The fact that I was selected to UCSD from a pool of over 100,000 students humbles me and makes my conviction towards Sikhi and Guru Ji’s teachings even deeper. At University, I plan to join the UCSD Bhangra team and the Sikh Students Association to keep me closely connected to my rich culture and Sikh heritage.

Although I have deepened my connection with Babaji immensely, I have always had a strong connection with Babaji. In 2009, with Guru Saheb's blessings, we did the Parkash of Guru Granth Sahib Ji at our house. Over quarantine, I have started doing Sukhasan with my younger sister and have also learnt how to do the Parkash of Babaji. My daily schedule includes doing Sukhasan at night, and even Parkash at times. Due to this, I have been able to pray daily for all of the people who are risking their lives for the rest of the population, and can also pray for a vaccine to arrive to put an end to the world’s troubles. Whenever I am having a hard time, I know that I can always rely on Babaji and do Paath and get out of any problem that I am facing.

I have also made some positive changes in my life during this time so that I can remain in Chardikala and make sure that I am wishing well upon others around me. I have learned that I

need to remain thankful for whatever I have, which is why I have helped my family to implement a new rule in the house. Right before any meal that my family consumes, we all close our eyes and thank Babaji for the wonderful food that we are able to eat. I also pray that people who are lacking food around the world have better access to food, as well as I make sure to pray to Babaji to remove the Coronavirus from this world. I personally believe that the amazing food that I am able to savor should be available to everyone around the world and believe that I am so lucky to be able to consume such food. This is why when I am praying, I always remember to say “Waheguru Tera Shukar Hai,” so that I can thank Babaji for whatever I have been given by Him.

I am trying my best to implement as many Sikh values as possible so that I can become a better person and help those around me as well. I have tried to follow the three main Sikh values that Sikhism has which are: Naam Japo, Kirat Karo, and Vandh Ke Chako. I have been able to remember Babaji more, as I have more and more time to do Kirtan, do Paath, and take Hukamnama. I have tried my best to use this Sikh value and implement it in my daily life, as well as help myself become a better person by taking Waheguru Ji’s name. I have also started to make sure that I am trying to earn an honest living by working as a tutor, and helping those who are struggling at school and are less fortunate. Following Guru Ji’s teachings of “Dasvandh”, I am also sharing the fruits of my labor with those around me, as I plan on making donations to people around me who need it the most. Whenever I look at any social media around me, I feel extremely proud to be a Sikh. I have seen a plethora of videos of United Sikhs, Khalsa Aid etc. in which Sikhs are helping those around them, and serving the community. I have been inspired by these videos and plan on helping those around me in any way possible. I am a part of United

Sikhs, and plan to join their tutoring program as a tutor in the near future, as I have a lot of tutoring experience both as a volunteer, and as a paid tutor.

Even though times are hard and life is difficult for many people around the world, I believe that the pandemic has taught me how to persevere and make the best out of everything. I have been able to take this difficult time and turn it into something special and memorable. Sikhi has helped me get through this pandemic rather easily. I have done more Paath, more Kirtan, and am more thankful for whatever I have. I have been able to earn an honest living, and share my fruits of labor with others. I believe that as long as I continue to live my life in this manner, I will always remain in Chardikala.

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