

Sikh march carries message of peace, unity

By Cynthia Hubert - chubert@sacbee.com

Last Updated 12:13 am PDT Sunday, October 12, 2008
Story appeared in OUR REGION section, Page B1



Photograph: MICHAEL ALLEN JONES / mjones@sacbee.com

The Sikh religion's Five Loved Ones of the 10th Prophet march in a celebration of peace to the north steps of the Capitol on Saturday. Sikh temples in Sacramento were celebrating the 300th anniversary of their Holy Scripture, which calls for interfaith understanding.

As much of the rest of the world roiled with tension, thousands of people marched the streets of Sacramento on Saturday in the name of peace and unity.

Downtown residents in jeans and sweat shirts peered from their balconies and porches as men in turbans and women in colorful saris made their way from Southside Park to the state Capitol.

The occasion was a celebration of the 300th anniversary of the Sikh Holy Scripture, 1,430 pages of poetry in 31 different meters that calls for interfaith understanding and harmony.

"We want to show the world that this is the way that we all can live. The world needs this kind of unity," said Darshan Singh Mundy of the Interfaith Bureau of Sacramento, which

sponsored the event along with the Sikh Gurdwaras, or temples, of the Sacramento Valley.

Sikhism, which originated in India, is the world's fifth largest religion. About a million Sikhs live in North America, more than 40,000 of them in the greater Sacramento Valley, said organizers of Saturday's event.

Sikhs believe in one supreme God and preach public service and religious accord.

The message resonated quietly Saturday as Sikhs and a smaller contingent of other religious groups from Jews to Scientologists shared a breakfast of vegetable samosas and other ceremonial foods.

"It's deep-fried. That's why it smells so good," joked Simer Mashiana, as she shared a meal with family members and friends.

After breakfast, the crowd clasped hands in prayer, then wound through the downtown streets, chanting songs of peace and praise.

Older participants climbed into the back of flatbed trucks decorated with bright flowers and bunting and rode along the route to the Capitol. Others walked, some pushing strollers and some holding signs with such slogans as "Love Begets Love," "God is One" and "God Bless the Whole Humanity." Many waved small American flags.

A Sikh friend at work encouraged Elaine Novak to come. At a time of global unrest, the event uplifted her.

"I have always been fascinated with different cultures and religions, and from what I can see, the Sikh religion is universal," she said, standing on a street corner as the march began. "It's very gentle and accepting."

Bob Fossgreen, who held an Interfaith Service Bureau banner as he trekked along Fifth Street toward the Capitol, had a similar assessment.

"I have made many Sikh friends through the bureau, and it's been a very enlightening kind of thing in my interfaith journey," he said.

"So often we don't even try to understand other faiths. All of us need to overcome our ignorance and respect all people."

About the writer:

Call The Bee's Cynthia Hubert, (916) 321-1082.

Source: Sacramento Bee, <http://www.sacbee.com/101/story/1307204.html>