

In the Court and the Home of the Lord

By Gurumehar Kaur Khalsa

It is unlike any other structure occupying the land. Only its beauty and grandeur match its remarkable uniqueness. Golden domes shimmer atop scalloped arches two stories high, offering a vision of sensual shapes and brilliant radiance.



A new Gurdwara has emerged in the heart of Phoenix, Arizona to serve the seekers of the spiritual path laid down by Guru Nanak. Since its inception it has been supported by the vision of Yogi Bhajan, who gave it the name Gurdwara Sahib Guru Nanak Dwara.



The Sikh community of Phoenix is one of the largest integrated communities in America where Indian and American Sikhs alike come together to share in the lifestyle of the Sikh Gurus and the teachings of Yogi Bhajan. In 1996 the Sikh Sangat of Phoenix exceeded the capacity of its Gurdwara facility. With the help and inspiration of Dr. Jasbir Singh Saini and Dr. Jodha Singh Khalsa, the decision was made to build a new Gurdwara. Architect Jai Singh Khalsa of Massachusetts led the planning for the 20,000 sq. ft. project, which included the participation of many community members. In the winter of that same year an interfaith groundbreaking ceremony was held. Officially the building process had begun, and with every new stage of construction a Gurdwara service celebrated the raising of the Guru's home.

At 7,500 sq. ft., the vastness of the two-story main sanctuary hall is almost overwhelming, yet this expanse is necessary to comfortably accommodate the growing community. Upon entering the space, light filters in through ornamented glass doors and windows, giving the feeling of an outdoor sanctuary. Cares of the world fade away, and time seems to stop in reverence for the natural beauty of the interior. In addition to the main hall, the Gurdwara is complete with Sukhasan and Akhand Path rooms, classrooms, and a library on the mezzanine level. The kitchen and langar hall, located in the basement level, are amply large and look out onto a sunken garden.



Architecturally, the new Gurdwara combines elements of traditional Sikh Gurdwaras of northern India with modern design and technology. Yale professor, Kent Bloomer, who has been working on the project for the past two years, researched historical Gurdwaras and identified significant stylistic elements to incorporate into the ornamentation of the new Gurdwara. Guru Dev Kaur Khalsa, lifelong community member and Yale architecture graduate, has brought her talents to the project and hopes that it will set the precedent of world-class standards for new Gurdwara architecture.

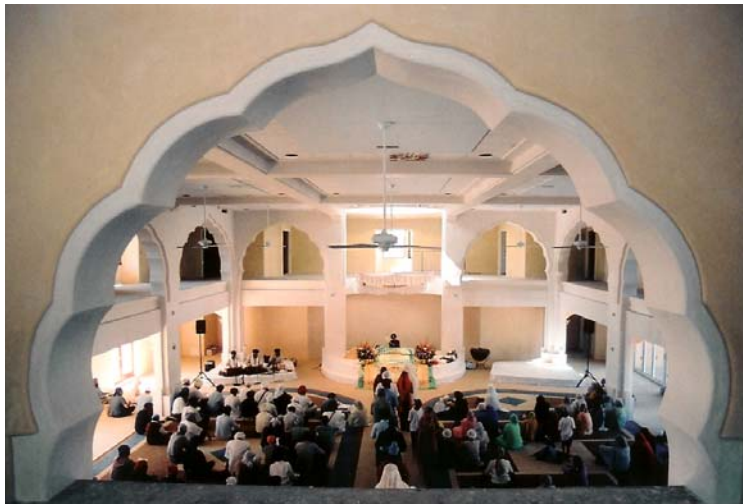
While the new Gurdwara is still under construction, it has come a long way. Special services have already been held in the main sanctuary area, such as the recent celebration of Guru Ram Das' birthday and Guru Gaddee Day. The mezzanine area is expected to open up early in the New Year, followed by the basement langar hall area.



Many members of the community, who are also involved in the building process, see the Phoenix Gurdwara as an inspiring example of harmony between culturally different communities. The united effort to build the Guru's home is a true testament to the spirit of Yogi Bhajan and Guru Nanak, who said that "God dwells in each and every heart, since the very beginning of

time, and throughout the ages." (SGGS p. 415)

Dr. Punia, who has been with the project since its conception, feels strongly about setting an example for others to follow, "of how American and Sikh communities can come together." Punia also feels that the new Gurdwara "is something generations to come can be proud of."



While the task of

completing the new Gurdwara is sufficiently daunting, it is only one key element in a larger spiritual campus. The campus plan would include such elements as a Sikh Dharma training center, yoga center, and healing center. On-site residences and guest quarters are also planned. The campus will be designed around lush meditation gardens.

The vision of the spiritual campus has, over the years, guided the leaders of Sikh Dharma of Phoenix to purchase and maintain several properties within the neighborhood surrounding the new Gurdwara. Many longtime Sangat members also live nearby and contribute to the thriving community. The growth in this community is paralleled by the

growth in the City of Phoenix, which is ever expanding its list of cultural, commercial, and civic attractions. The Sikh Dharma community is actively involved in the revitalization of the city center and has met with city planners to discuss the new Gurdwara and spiritual campus. These officials believe the Sikh Dharma Spiritual Campus will be an international attraction and a very unique asset to the city.

On Nov 20, the new Gurdwara in Phoenix will once again rise from the dust of ongoing construction and blossom in celebration of the birth of Guru Nanak. Seva Kaur



of Los Angeles, who has decorated for many Gurdwara celebrations in both India and the United States, will graciously lend her talents to prepare the new Gurdwara for the glory of this event. People from all over will come to partake in the event and show their support for the new Gurdwara and the Phoenix Sangat.* All are welcome, for the combined efforts and contributions of many are needed to bring this unique house of the Guru to its most successful completion.

By Guru's Grace, those who come and sing the Lord's praises in the company of the Sadh Sangat will find their true home within. In the words of Guru Nanak, "understanding itself, this soul becomes attuned to the Formless Lord. This mind becomes immaculately pure, in the Court and the Home of the Lord." (SGGS p. 415)



Waheguru ji ka Khalsa! Waheguru ji ki Fateh!

*The Sikhnet webmaster will also travel to Phoenix for the celebration of Guru Nanak's birthday. Look for more coverage of Gurdwara Sahib Guru Nanak Dwara in upcoming entries on mrsikhnet.com.

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