

REFLECTIONS AS A SIKH POLITICIAN (KANWALJIT SINGH BAKSHI)

Kanwaljit Singh Bakshi

YSPN and so much interest with your, today's even that I don't have words to explain what I'm taking back with me to New Zealand. Before then I would like to acknowledge Satwant Singh for your vision. What Sikh leadership is lacking today? Not only in Australia or New Zealand or India. Is the lack of vision, what we want to get today. And the presentation given by Anand and Parvyn I think, yeah together has answered a lot of questions and we have a lot to take back and think about how we are going to achieve it. The statistics which have been produced are mind blowing. You need to understand how much we contribute. But, one of the stats which I was really concerned about was only 70% of our workforce is in, is employed. Still we have got the potential of 30% how we are going to make sure that those 30% also get some employment, some kind of employment. And for that we have got people who can really help in that. We have talked about startups. We have talked about so many things which can be achieved and gives some kind of employment to those 30%. But I want to say today, I know after having me, nobody wants to have a big lecture. And what, actually I was going to speak that was taken by a Tarandeep Singh from Singapore and spoke everything. So I just, [laughter] I told her this, come up with some of the things which I have learnt done today from the presentation by all the learning people who were here today.

First thing, which I would like to emphasize on is we need to be connected to our roots, that is the most important thing and in those roots I want to emphasize on religion that is Sikhism and the second is language. The study says that by the third generation, normally people will lose their religion and language. If you lose your language, definitely you will lose your religion. So those two things I would like to emphasize upon that please remain connected to the roots. The whole day we have been talking about so many things even I spoken English, but I would prefer that this kind of gathering should also have a section where the speakers should speak in Punjabi also. [Speaking Punjabi] That is the most important thing, [00:03:32 inaudible] mentioned it because he got [00:03:32 inaudible] speech parliament is that the thing. [Speaking Punjabi] Or parliamentary rule can that, I have to translate that also translate into [Speaking Punjabi] Even though Australia and New Zealand [00:04:02 inaudible] connection. [Speaking Punjabi] Or as he [00:04:13 inaudible] via YSPN we created the [Speaking Punjabi] That is again a vision. It is not just for the Australians, but you are looking globally. You have included the youth of New Zealand. I give credit to Karan for this vision and his team who started this whole project and Sofia is here to read some reasons for that, yeah and she has come all the way to participate in this grand event which is the first one but I'm definitely sure that there will be many more such events to encourage other people to ensure that we continue on this road so that we succeed. Second thing which I would like to touch upon is Pentacle's mentioned on another of occasions, wellbeing. Wellbeing is equally important sort of [Speaking Punjabi] How strong we are. How well we are, how healthy, I am that is the starting point. [Speaking Punjabi] But actually I need to get my son fixed before I can go out and talk about. Some topics were touched upon domestic violence. That is the biggest increase in New Zealand among the Indians due by 70% and we don't realize it is it happens whether it is physical, global, financial, sexual, there are many kinds of domestic violence which happened in the family but we don't realize and we don't speak about it because our ego gets in the way. We need to go out and take the help and if someone knows there is a problem we should come up with a solution or so.

That is the second point which I want to touch upon is that the building is very important of us training is a, once again I would like to quote in the GCG you mentioned that the biggest space has been allocated for the sick community in Singapore to put up a old age home. That is another challenge we have aging population whether it is India, Australia and New Zealand. That is another challenge which we have to start looking at that how we are going to address. Our population is aging and we have to make sure that we look after our elders, grandfathers, grandmothers, how we are going to make sure they are well and safe wherever they are. Another thing which I would like to touch upon is when I talk about the grassroots that we have to connect to the good ones. Guru Bani is big source of encouragement and guidance, [00:07:46 inaudible] I remember I was talking to one as a historian in India and he said that the time and lifespan was reducing and Guru Sahib saw that people can't refer to the Vedas and all those things because the lifespan is so short. That's why Sri Guru Granth Sahib was compiled, fourteen hundred and thirty pages. You can go through the whole group [00:08:28 inaudible] if you do a size part within a year you can complete the whole process. And group and time is just of all those readers. And of those fourteen hundred and thirty pages we have bought Jyotishya. Jyotishya has got everything whatever you want to think about, what to answer just refer to Jyotishya. And a request if you don't do at least do, do one part of Jyotishya everyday and you will find a lot of answers to the problems. We were talking about the problems and Jyotishya has got a lot of answers to those problems. Then when we talk about our religion language, we also should consider our legacy what are Gurus have done in their lifetime what they have achieved. We are sons and daughters of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, tell Guru Nanak Ji. Every Guru gave us a message. People were talking about the women's right in this age, but Guru Nanak Dev Ji talked about that five hundred years ago. He gave the respect the woman deserved five hundred years ago. Red Cross was established in 1900s by [00:10:13 inaudible] was there three hundred years ago. Sikhism is the youngest religion in the world and has got answers to every question. Just think about it for example. [inaudible] I have given you the respect to the women and the Red Cross where did that three hundred years ago, five hundred years ago. And people are talking today what these things are. So Sikhism is one thing that is a legacy you're carrying on from your roots, from your parents and you have to continue with that. You have to be proud of being a Sikh. Unless you are proud of that you won't be achieving what you are trying to. I'm very proud that I sit in New Zealand's parliament with a turban on and people respecting. So there are so many things when we talk about the saver, which happened as law maker, which you can do. I gave an example in the morning that I heard someone who was staying in New Zealand for 29 years and I was able to get her status that gave me a very satisfying sleep that night.

Similarly, when I went to parliament, there was a challenge that being a undervalued Sikh how I'm going to carry my turban because turban wasn't allowed in parliament. I went to the speaker, I gave my logics why I need to wear turban parliament and the visitors were coming to visit me. They might be wearing a turban, so I need the permission that every citizen visiting parliament should be able to come with the turban which was actually granted and any Sikh who is coming to New Zealand in parliament can wear the turban. Then with the changing times, we saw that a lot of restrictions were coming up of wearing turban in day to day work. I convinced my team, my co-workers that we should amend the crimes like we're only totally Sikh with some restrictions can wear the turban on day to day basis and the prime minister then prime minister agreed that if we formed the government in 2017 the Crimes Act will be amended to make sure they [00:12:51 inaudible] Sikhs can wear turban. Unfortunately we could not form the government then I drafted my private members, which is on the ballot to make sure that crimes is amended so that Sikhs can wear headband in the work. And a little

challenge came in recently that with the change in the health and safety law every person working at a work site, construction site has to wear hard hat. So I started educating on that and had a meeting just before Christmas with the authorities to give them the why the, some of the areas where heavy machinery is not being used. The Sikhs should be allowed to wear it other, and do the work without wearing the hard hat. So hopefully that will also be clarify in near future and make sure that the Sikhs are allowed to wear head, hat, sorry. Another issue which came up which was the wider issue not just related to the Sikh religion was that our priest in the temples and movies in the malls and guarantees in the Gurbirs because we don't have a proper qualifications for them. They are mostly trained on the job or they carry on from their families. So there was a big challenge that they were not being granted to visa to come and work usually. So I managed to get that inquiry into that whole process and that process was checked up about eight years ago. We're now by Gs in priest and the movies had come to New Zealand without any restriction and it's an easy process. So that is also a saver which I think the board wanted me to do. So when we are talking all to all those things I think I would like to conclude. I think I've taken my time about 10 minutes I was given. But as I mentioned that politicians love to speak a lot once they get the microphone. So another thing which is important for us is uniqueness. Guru Gobind Singh ji said that you know the story Guru Tegh Bahadur was martyred in Delhi in how many Sikhs were there. [Speaking Punjabi] I can't remember who mentioned that a [Speaking Punjabi]. I don't believe in that. [Speaking Punjabi] But once they realize that [00:16:22 inaudible] can merely soft drink or juice generally provision of the cap and they respect [Speaking Punjabi], they make sure can merely soft drink [00:16:31 inaudible] So it is totally irrelevant socializing [00:16:39 inaudible] a glass of liquor [00:16:41 inaudible] you're socializing me, that's all excuse my language, it's all bullshit. We can achieve a lot be remaining a unique [Speaking Punjabi] don't believe [00:17:09 inaudible] socializing video, a totally different aspect that I got to see naming [00:17:16 inaudible] to see society's move [00:17:21 inaudible] I will recommend don't take that step we've been unique. I'll go to see been there already [Speaking Punjabi] [00:17:37 inaudible] met Jerry she's old [Speaking Punjabi] but he let them on an electronic guitar to see again miracle i owe. I will look after you that goes for group paper as you said [00:18:30 inaudible] K-Jello the Indian independence lead accusing movement. Other which the maximum JD's Sagai your fancy they locate their [00:18:45 inaudible]. Ninety five percent I think many of the other guys- [Speaking Punjabi]

I want to request you to join political parties also. You are doing very well on professional side. You are doing very well on your family's side. You are very proud people of Australia but you need to have a leader who can represent you at local government level consider we have John over there, we are proud of him. Then we need to have at state level and then we need to have at friendly level and that is very important. I have been coming to Australia every time I have gone, every gathering I've spoken at. I've always said the same, this is the right time for us to take that opportunity. And for that I know John doesn't agree with me we had a brief discussion this morning. Join a political party in which you have got similar belief. Your belief is really important to align with that political party. When I went to New Zealand in 2001 because of my father's background in politics, I just want you to have feel of politics in New Zealand. I never thought that I will be a member of parliament, never. I joined the party, I went to both the parties major parties, which were Labour Party and National Party, which is equivalent to the liberals and that found that National Party was closer to my thoughts and the joined the party. Starting from the grassroots level, I'm giving you this, I don't want to blow my trumpet and just giving you an example that how I started 2001 I arrived in New Zealand in March, in November, sorry not November sorry in July. I joined the party and started my lobbying process because I saw we had been in New

Zealand for 120 years, but we don't have any representation. I started talking to MPs, the leadership that you should have probably (?there) in fact because Lord just as Sikh I was lobbying for the names that Indian representation should be there. Then what happened in 2005 the Party was looking for a candidate and they asked me that why don't you put up your hand. I said I have been in this country for just four years. I can't do better that because I don't know the culture of a party. I don't know the issues of my community. I need to get myself established in the community before I'll put up my hand. They got a unknown person as a candidate in 2005. But he lost because I don't know, you understand the New Zealand system of parliament or not. It is a proportionate representation in parliament. You cast two votes. One is for the party, one is for the candidate, the candidate if he gets more votes first-past-the-post he wins and the party vote determines that how many MPs will be in parliament. I hope I'm more boring you. All right. So I'll continue. If you are getting bored let me know I'll stop immediately. Okay, all right. I've got the indication. So to conclude, just to let you know that forty nine MPs are nominated and seventy one are elected. So I am on that part where I got nominated in 2008 and since then I had been there 10 years representing my community and representing my people. I had been the bridge and tried to do whatever I can. And the last thing briefly that I would like to say as I mentioned, that my dad was a politician and he used to get his, he was a visionary. He used to get his thoughts in slogans. And those days, the Social Media was no there, Facebook was not there. And he used to get those slogans written on the walls of Delhi. And his most popular slogan, the people who have been in early or some time when he was alive, they still remember his slogan [Speaking Punjabi], please remember this. We have to remain United. If we will remained United, we will achieve a lot. In New Zealand my experiences that youngsters don't want to [00:24:40 inaudible] because of the petty politics over there. But over here I have seen that all the youngsters have gotten together to establish this organization and go achieve something which we should be dreaming of so these words. And thank you very much for inviting me and it has been my privilege to talk to you. I hope the thoughts which I am given will have some impact on you. And once again, YSPN. Thank you very much for inviting me. And thanks for your patience.