

Birmingham Policy Commissions  
Healthy Ageing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

**The Role of Faith in Stabilising the Mental State/ Wellbeing in the Elderly  
from a Sikh Perspective**

Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh

*Dharam*, the word we use for religion or faith, frames life in a wider, overarching context, stressing our humans' amazing potential and inevitable mortality, urging us to make the most of the opportunity of human life. As spiritual travellers; the root and goal of our existence being the same, one is prompted to seek out and fulfil one's life's purpose, by kindling one's latent divinity. As far as is possible, one should live in God's image and presence. One must serve creation and leave behind a good legacy for others. Life is an opportunity to sow good seeds, inside and around us, and reap a good harvest. This process involves overcoming the negative tendencies associated with '*haumai*', or the selfish ego, and recognising and strengthening our positive 'Godly' attributes. For this, the Sikh teachings and historical spiritual luminaries provide guidance and inspiration to harness the power of the mind, body and the spirit.

The positive role of faith, providing trust and hope together with lived experience for nurturing inward stability and wellbeing should not be ignored. It provides illumination and guidance to reform oneself for the best, preparing the way for ultimate departure of the spirit from this earthly life. Faith's role in bringing into focus core virtues and providing opportunities to practice them helps one to transform themselves over a lifetime, generating qualities which help one to respond with dignity, avoiding being engulfed with worry and fear. A well-lived virtuous life may see death as a joyous opportunity to meet up and fuse with its Maker and Creator. The concept Sikhs believe, is that the physical body is like a garment for the indestructible spirit or soul, which gets discarded before a new life is adopted.

Towards the very end of life, when one's physical health, material existence and social relationships' importance progressively ebbs away further and further into oblivion, Sikhs are drawn towards the positive support or companionship of '*Shabad*' or Guru's message, which evokes trust, hope, gratitude and peace.

In caring for the elderly, it is important to make them feel trebly comforted, physically, mentally and spiritually.

**Notes to Editors:**

1. Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha (GNNSJ) is a multi-faceted, faith based organisation practicing and propagating the Sikh Dharam (faith) in the name of Guru Nanak Dev Ji (1469-1539). It has been involved in selfless intra-faith work in Kenya and India informally since 1950, and formally in the UK since 1978 as a registered Charity through five centres for excellence in the inner-city area of Handsworth, Birmingham, where its Headquarters are based. GNNSJ also has sister organisations in Leeds and London (UK) and branches in Kericho (Kenya) and Amritsar (India). Significant achievements have been made by GNNSJ in the conservation and restoration of historical Sikh shrines.

Chaired by Bhai Sahib Dr Mohinder Singh, it aims to serve and uplift society through the practice of core values – nishkamta, or the spirit of selflessness, being one of them. Inspired by Dharam (religion) GNNSJ has generated a flourishing culture of volunteering, which has contributed immensely to transforming visionary projects into reality. For his services to religious faith propagation, community service, education and research, Bhai Sahib has been awarded two Honorary Doctorates from Birmingham's Universities. Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh was also created a knight by the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI in recognition of his dedicated work for Roman Catholic-Sikh relations and for his enthusiastic commitment to working for peace among people of all faiths. He is passionate about values-based education and is the Patron of the Nishkam Education Trust which has set-up Nishkam Nursery (2009), Nishkam Primary Free School (2011) and Nishkam Secondary School with 6<sup>th</sup> Form (2012).