

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY DR. RAMI RANGER MBE ON**  
**30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER AT THE THE BRITISH SIKH ASSOCIATION DINNER**  
**ONBOARD HMS VICTORY**

Your Excellency the High Commissioner of India Mr Ranjan Mathai, Mrs Gita Mathai, First Sea Lord Admiral Sir George Zambellas, Lady Zambellas, Commodore Beecha, Mrs Beecha, distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is an honour for me to be speaking on board Her Majesty's illustrious ship HMS Victory.

Needless to say, we are privileged to be invited on board the ship which helped shape our nation's history.

From this ship, Admiral Lord Nelson with his brave men defended our country with extraordinary courage and commitment.

As a result, their names will remain in the history books forever and we are here to salute them.

If I may move from one remarkable Admiral to another, Sir George has the rare quality of connecting with people from every walk of life and that too instantly.

Anyone who comes to know him becomes his admirer due to his charming persona.

The credit this must go to Lady Zambellas.

Sir George we are indebted to you for extending us this unique honour.

We will cherish this evening with fond memories forever.

We are conscious of the fact that we are receiving this honour because of the bravery of our fathers and forefathers who stood shoulder to shoulder with the Brits in two great wars and distinguished themselves for their loyalty and bravery.

Who can forget the battle of Saragarhi where just 21 brave Sikh soldiers made their last stand and defended a British post against 10,000 Afghan tribesmen.

They died fighting and thanks to their bravery two crucial forts, Lockhart and Gulistan, on the North West Frontier were saved.

We believe we too have to leave a legacy for our children and grandchildren so that they too are respected like we are today.

Thankfully, we Indians are the product of a secular and democratic country and as a result, we have integrated in Britain easily and quickly.

This is because we share similar values like the rule of law, tolerance and respect for all and as a result we feel at home in Britain.

The British Sikh Association members are proud to be Indians, Sikh and also very proud to be British.

We find there is no contradiction in being loyal to both countries.

**One from where we originate and the other where we have made our homes.**

**We are fortunate to have had Gurus who were ahead of their time.**

**They dedicated their lives in the empowerment of individuals.**

**Human freedom was very dear to them.**

**They believed in equality for all regardless of race, religion or gender.**

**There is a famous saying, “ I may not agree with what you say, but I will defend to death your right to say it”.**

**Freedom of speech and freedom of religion are intertwined and it is the core of Sikh philosophy.**

**Our Gurus firmly believed in the right of people to connect with their maker as they deemed fit.**

**For the religious freedom in India, they paid supreme sacrifices and defended it at all costs.**

**They established the Brotherhood of Khalsa to liberate those who were being oppressed and suppressed in the name of religion.**

**They felt that if people were suppressed by religion or state, then they could not develop wholesomely.**

**As a result, such people would not contribute to society except to behave subserviently.**

**It is no wonder that the Sikhs, as a liberated community, excel in every field of life.**

**The record shows that this tiny community of less than 2% in India punch well above their weight for their motherland and adopted country, Britain.**

**It is matter of pride that in Britain 82% of Sikhs own their own homes which is more than any other faith group.**

**Those who own their homes receive less state benefits and pay higher taxes.**

**I would like to acknowledge all the members of the British Sikh Association.**

**They are successful in their own rights and lead very busy lives, yet find time to pay tribute to their Gurus by promoting their philosophy of peaceful coexistence.**

**I am indebted to them for their help and support in projecting our community for what we are, a positive force doing good for mankind.**

**Each one of us is an ambassador for our Gurus and we all must live up to their ideals of social and political justice in the world.**

**Finally, I would like express our gratitude to our High Commissioner and Gita Ji for sparing their valuable time to be with us this evening.**

**We are aware that nearly 2 million of us put an enormous demand on your time.**

**You are always there for us and often at very short notice in order to build our self-esteem.**

**If I may say so, you make us proud with your commitment and love for us.**

**Your Excellency and Gita Ji we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.**

**Thank you.**