Sikh Foundation of Virginia: "Visiting the Sikh Foundation of Virginia"

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On October 18, 2015, I decided to go to a Gurdwara, Sikh Foundation of Virginia, located at 7250 Ox Road, Fairfax Station, VA 22039. This is where people who follow Sikhism go to pray and show respect to their lord. It was around 9:30 AM when I got to the Gurdwara, I had done some research beforehand about their religion and place of prayer and found that it’s respectful to be fully clothed with minimal skin showing. Women would wear a scarf that should cover a majority of their hair, and men also have their heads covered with either a bandanna wrapped around or a turban so I wanted to be respectful and did the same. The presiding official was Guru Gobind Jai Singh, usually known as a “Pardhan”.

Once I had got there I was a bit confused because it resembled a single family home. However, as I walked up closer to the building I noticed the outside appearance was more appealing than the Mosque that I had previously visited. The Gurdwara had gold trimming around the roof with a very pretty gold dome on the roof. The building inside was a little smaller than I had expected. As I walked in there was a little entrance area with shelves on the sides that were strictly designated for shoes, after I had taken off my shoes and placed them on the shelf I noticed there were sinks where everyone was washing their hands. I had asked a young lady as to why they were doing that and she said it was to get rid of any dirt on our hands from removing our shoes. Although everyone was very friendly, I was a bit skeptical about leaving my shoes with the fear that someone might steal them. Luckily, it was a common thing to leave shoes unattended and everybody was very honest. Everyone was welcoming me even though I was an outsider and it was my first time, they were friendly and comforting, allowing me to adjust pretty quickly.

Once I walked through the beginning entrance area there were two hallways. I went through the left side first and walked into a large room with people sitting on carpeted floors eating food that they had gotten from a large table that had a different arrangement of ethnical foods from their background. I had noticed behind the table there was a door leading to the kitchen, in the back and volunteers would cook food for everyone who attends the Gurdwara.

After observing the left side, I decided to check out the right side of the building. The right side was a prayer room, everyone was sitting on the floor, men and women were split. Female would sit on the left and men have to sit on the right side. This was fairly similar to the way the mosque that I attended previously was set up. In front of everyone there was a large thrown in the middle, where they had a holy book called “Guru Granth Sahib”. Behind the thrown there was a large photo in a gold frame with a picture of their Lord. The frame was decorated with colorful...
comfortable, the few people I asked questions to also were very respectful and willingly answered everything. There was one lady who I sat next to during the prayer and she assisted me a little bit at the end of each prayer but everyone was very quiet so it was disrespectful to ask during the prayer session. The emotional tone was joyous on the left side of the building where everyone was eating and socializing as to the right side it was more calm and serious. Comparing this to the mosque that I previously visited, The Gurdwara was a bit more welcoming and I enjoyed the atmosphere more than the Mosque. The chanting and narrations as well as the prayer were so rich in culture and tradition, making me very happy. It was definitely a fulfilling experience and I'm glad I got the opportunity to meet the warm and welcoming Sikh people. •

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