

ISSUE II / 2023

NISHAAN

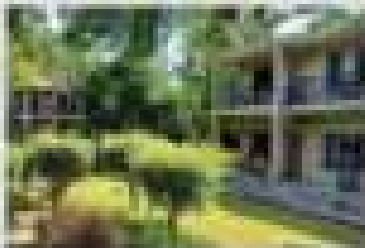
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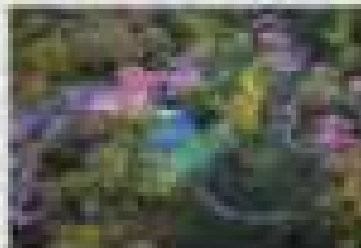
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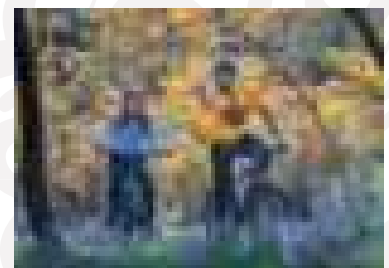
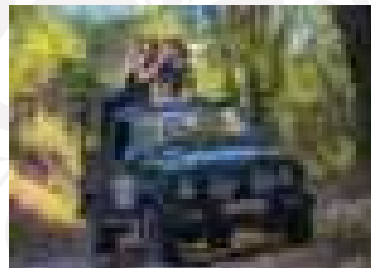
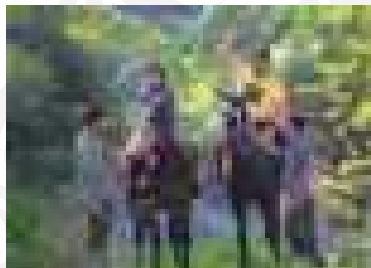
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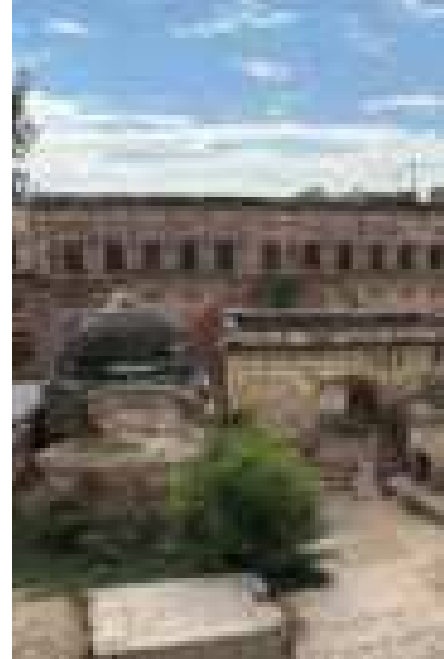
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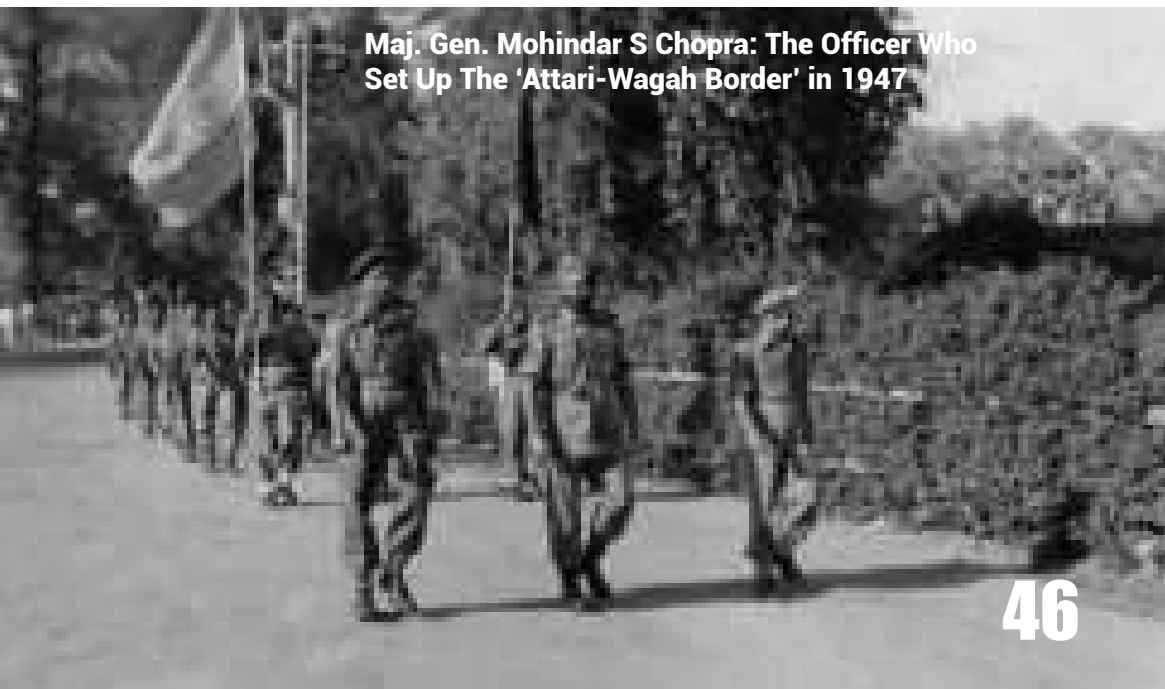


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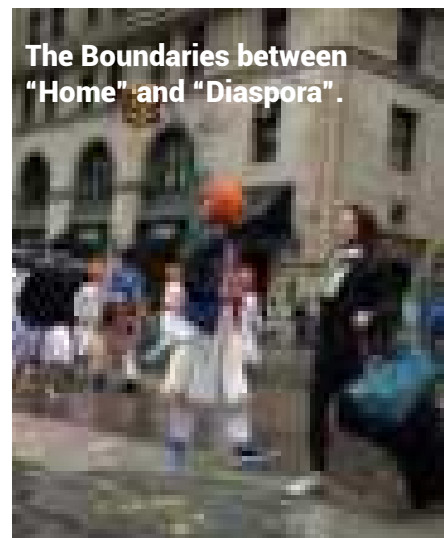
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**Sikh Gallery of Art & Culture
at The ROM, Canada**



**Maj. Gen. Mohindar S Chopra: The Officer Who
Set Up The 'Attari-Wagah Border' in 1947**



**The Boundaries between
"Home" and "Diaspora".**

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New Delhi 110 003
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Printed and Published by

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16-A, Palam Marg,
Vasant Vihar
New Delhi 110 057, India

Associated with

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San Jose, USA

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EDITORIAL

Sikh Americans: A Lament or Delight

After close to 60 years in the US of A. two thoughts drive me today: a Sikh American's lament ... or delight, and some ideas towards a more perfect union.

Over 25 million Sikhs around the world celebrate the day in 1699 that Gobind Rai, the 10th Founder-Guru of Sikhi, appeared at a massive conclave of Sikhs, flashed a naked sword, and demanded a head.

After some trepidation, one Sikh offered his head. The Guru took him into a tent. Moments later, the Guru reappeared alone with a bloody sword and demanded another head. Surely, many looked away or slunk away. The process was repeated until five volunteers had materialised.

The Guru then initiated them into the final form (Khalsa) of the Sikhs and then they initiated Gobind Rai, transforming him into Guru Gobind Singh. Doesn't this remind you of the idea of "servant-leader" that finds much currency and resonance in management schools today? It was the final step in the evolution of the Sikh movement started by Guru Nanak in the 15th century.

From this modest beginning, a nation was formed: an egalitarian community transcending divisions along caste, class, color, gender, race, or nationality.

A slew of scholars and critics have elaborated on this skimpy outline over the past 300 years, and many will continue to do so till the end of time. I come to you from a radically different direction today. I am an American who is also a Sikh. My goal here is to largely sidestep much of our journey as Sikhs but more to define a place for Sikhs and Sikhism within the larger framework of contemporary American society.

Beards were rare in America then. I guess many on the street overlooked my turban. I suppose it did not register on most Christians that Jesus always appeared to be long-haired and bearded. Since then, I have spent time in situations in this country where racial or religious identity was a potent determinant of acceptance or bewilderment, even rejection.

In 1960, when I came here, there are perhaps three recognisable Sikhs in New York. I went to graduate school in Oregon where I was the only one for years. Now there are a tad less than a million in North America.

Home is where the heart is. At times, the heart is caught betwixt and between; one never knows when or for how long. Remember that it takes a lot of living to transform a wedding into a marriage, or a house into a home. A mind at peace is at home anywhere, any time. The whole world is alien when the mind is not at peace (*"Munn pardesi je theeyae subh des paraaya"* Guru Granth p.766).

To understand the meaning of diversity, we need to see "us" in "them" and "then" in "us".

Unity of faiths and peoples is created by the Creator, but cultivating this unity and its awareness is not the craft of heaven – it is our sacred duty here on Earth.

I.J. SINGH

Perspective of Enlightened Souls

Bhupinder 'Bo' Singh

Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS) is a repository on numerous topics, where somehow, we fail to comprehend the depths after reading it, hearing commentaries and even after using exigencies to understand them. It is not just a predicament for an average layman, but also the intellectuals with pristine academic credentials.

What is the reason for this disconnect?

It is because our consciousness level has not evolved high enough from where this thought process is emanating. So, the result is a high academic advancement or a total lack of it as with an illiterate, does not make a difference as both don't get very far. This comprehension challenge needs an additional exploration. Let us investigate it with a quote:

“ਜਿਸਿ ਤੇ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਸੇਈ ਫਿਰ ਹੋਆ ॥੨॥”

“Jis te upajiaa naanakaa soiee fir hoaa. 2.”

(SGGS, Pg. No. 1193)

Translation: *And the One, from whom we came, O Nanak, into Him we merge once again. ||2||*

Without that personal experience of reemergence, we cannot authentically relate to it. In order to enable us to relate to this statement our consciousness level needs to soar higher.

When our consciousness approaches those heights then such perspectives of an enlightened soul will become relatable. When the reemergence is experienced, the person becomes enlightened, which is the pinnacle of human evolution. The perspectives of the enlightened is different than the worldly perspective.

Let us take a shabad by Sant Kabir in SGGS, to get a perspective of an enlightened soul:

“ਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਮਾਨਸੁ ਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਦੇਉ ॥
ਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਜਤੀ ਕਹਾਵੈ ਸੇਉ ॥
ਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਜੇਗੀ ਨਾ ਅਵਧੂਤਾ ॥
ਨਾ ਇਸੁ ਮਾਇ ਨ ਕਾਹੂ ਪੂਤਾ ॥੧॥
ਇਆ ਮੰਦਰ ਮਹਿ ਕੈਨ ਬਸਾਈ ॥
ਤਾ ਕਾ ਅੰਤੁ ਨ ਕੇਉ ਪਾਈ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥
ਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਗਿਰਹੀ ਨਾ ਓਦਾਸੀ ॥
ਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਰਾਜ ਨ ਭੀਖ ਮੰਗਾਸੀ ॥
ਨਾ ਇਸੁ ਪਿੰਡੁ ਨ ਰਕਤੂ ਰਾਤੀ ॥
ਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਬ੍ਰਮਨੁ ਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਖਾਤੀ ॥੨॥
ਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਤਪਾ ਕਹਾਵੈ ਸੇਖੁ ॥
ਨਾ ਇਹੁ ਜੀਵੈ ਨ ਮਰਤਾ ਦੇਖੁ ॥
ਇਸੁ ਮਰਤੇ ਕਉ ਜੇ ਕੇਉ ਰੇਵੈ ॥
ਜੇ ਰੇਵੈ ਸੇਈ ਪਤਿ ਖੇਵੈ ॥੩॥
ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਮੈ ਡਗਰੇ ਪਾਇਆ ॥
ਜੀਵਨ ਮਰਨੁ ਦੇਉ ਮਿਟਵਾਇਆ ॥
ਕਹੁ ਕਬੀਰ ਇਹੁ ਰਾਮ ਕੀ ਅੰਸੁ ॥
ਜਸ ਕਾਗਦ ਪਰ ਮਿਟੈ ਨ ਮੰਸੁ ॥੪॥੨॥੫॥”

Transliteration:

“Naa ih maanas naa ih deo. Naa eh jatee kahaavai seau.
Naa ih jogee naa avadhootaa. Naa is mai na kaahoo
pootaa. 1.

Eiaa mandhar meh kauan basaiee. Taa kaa aant na kouoo
payee. 1. Rahaau.

Naa ih girahee naa odhaasee. Naa ih raaj na bheekh
mangaasee.

Naa is pindd na rakatoo raatee. Naa ih brahamaan naa ih
khaatee. 2.

Naa ih tapaa kahaavai seikh. Naa ih jeevai na marataa
dhekh.

Eis marate kau je kouoo rovai. Jo rovai soiee pat khovai. 3.
Gur prasaadh mai ddaagaro paiaa. Jeevan maran dhooou
miTavaiaa.

Kahu Kabir ih raam kee ans. Jas kaagadh par miTai na mans. 4. 2. 5." (SGGS, Pg. No. 871)

Translation:

It is not human, and it is not angelic. It is not called celibate, or a worshipper of (god) Shiva.

It is not a Yogi, and it is not a hermit. It has neither a mother, nor it is anyone's son. ||1||

Then what is it, which dwells in this temple of the body? No one can find its limits. ||1||Pause||

It is not a householder, and it is not a renouncer of the world. It is not a king, and it is not a beggar.

It has no body, no drop of blood. It is not a Brahmin (priest caste), and it is not a Khattri (warrior caste). ||2||

It is not called a man of austere self-discipline, or a Sheikh.

It is not born (to live), and it is not seen to die.

If someone cries over its death, that person loses his credibility. ||3||

By Guru's Grace, I have found the Path. Birth and death have both been erased.

(Now) Kabir says, it is formed of the same essence as the Lord. It is like the ink on the paper which cannot be erased. ||4||2||5||

Here, Kabir Ji has declared that he has found his true SELF.

It can be termed as enlightenment, Self-Realization, Atam-Gyan, Brahm-Gyan, Mukti, Moksha, etc. Kabir Ji has actually shared something very unique, the unexplored aspects of soul with us. Only very rare have its authentic experience, so not much written about it is available.

That rarity of written account makes the verbalization of his own experiences by Kabir Ji very captivating. In the Rahaao lines, he poses the question first, which he wants to address.

He queries who resides in this temple of human body, whose boundries are not known to anyone?

In the first three stanzas he shares what soul is not, and finally in the fourth stanza he declares that he found the path, which resulted in his erasing the cycles of births and deaths. He further realized that his true being is a part of God, thus divine, which cannot be effaced exactly like its source God.

Let us walk through the imagery used by Kabir Ji after his revelation:

- Kabir Ji realized that I am, or my true self is neither human nor angelic.
- Neither it is a celibate, nor a worshipper of Shiva.
- Neither it is a yogi, nor a hermit.

- Neither it has a mother, nor it is anyone's son/child.

Wonderstruck he questions, then who is inside the body? Kabir Ji has encountered something which is a mystery and will ever remain a mystery. He has expressed that mystery which defies description as "No one can find its limits."

It is this mysterious experience that fills one with unimaginable joy, ecstasy, peace, calmness, and thrill.

After this experience, a yearning to unfold the mystery evaporates completely, replaced with awe as deeper experiences ensue. He continues:

- Neither it is householder, nor a renouncer.
- Neither it is a king, nor a beggar.
- Neither this self has a body, nor a drop of blood.
- Neither it is a Brahmin, nor a Khattri (Chettri).
- Neither it can be called austere, nor a sheikh.

Kabir Ji's endless dive into this bottomless ocean of experiences unfolds as:

- Neither this lives, nor has anyone seen it dying.
- If someone weeps thinking that it has died, will be held in contempt because a regression of thought process has taken place (the eternal soul has been called as dead).

Finally, Kabir Ji reveals how he arrived at such high state of evolution and gained this new perspective of his own authentic reality:

- By fully conforming with the guidance and thus earning the Guru's grace, I found the path. The result was cessation of cycles of rebirths and deaths.
- Kabir Ji makes an extremely profound statement with an absolute clarity. He says that self is part of Divine and cannot be separated from it. Just as ink on paper is inseparable from it, similar is the relationship between individual and Divine – Inseparable and forever.

The idea of sharing this shabad was to bring out the eyewitness account of an enlightened imagery of the experience. Although such experiences's are rare, but these cannot be labelled as fiction. As we have not personally experienced it, relating to it is difficult.

The human journey got completed in the process, with its purpose accomplished. The source from which the mortal

began the human journey immersed back into it, thus life's journey got completed.

Guru Arjan Ji has expressed that experience in these words:

“ਸਫਲ ਸਫਲ ਭਈ ਸਫਲ ਜਾਤ੍ਰਾ ॥ ਆਵਣ ਜਾਣ ਰਹੇ ਮਿਲੇ ਸਾਧਾ
॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ਦੂਜਾ ॥੧॥੩॥”

“Safal safal bhiee safal jaatraa. Aavan jaan rahe mil
saadhaa. 1. Rahaau dhoojaa. 1. 3.”

(SGGS, Pg. No. 687)

Translation: My Yatra, my life pilgrimage, has become fruitful, fruitful, fruitful. My comings and goings have ended since I met the Holy Saint (Guru). ||1||Second Pause||1||3||

That essence is part of Divine and once it merged back in it, the soul was enlightened and liberated from the life cycles of births and deaths. Reabsorption is a recurring theme in the body of Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

The essence of the message is to realize that real thing within us, which is neither a body or nor its any constituents, but soul.

Below are few additional quotes to reinforce the same theme are being shared:

“ਜਿਸ ਤੇ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਤਿਸੁ ਮਾਹਿ ਸਮਾਨਾ ॥”

“Jis te upajiaa tis maeh samaanaa.”

(SGGS, Pg. No. 285)

Translation: He is absorbed into the One, from whom he originated.

“ਜਿਸ ਤੇ ਉਪਜੇ ਤਿਸੁ ਮਹਿ ਪਰਵੇਸ ॥”

“Jis te upaje tis meh paraves.”

(SGGS, Pg. No. 898)

Translation: I have entered into the One, from whom I originated.

The above two statements are declarations of the accomplishments of the enlightened soul. Such declarations are rare, while the rest of us whether laymen or accomplished with our worldly education have not experienced it. This means that we have not yet evolved to the apex of the evolutionary heights to appreciate Kabir's own experience. It is evolution to the level from where no further evolutionary growth is possible. That experience is successful completion of human journey, which puts an end to the cycles of births and deaths.

But what about failure to achieve this experience? This is a conundrum that begs an answer to the consequences of failure.

Consequences of failure

As per Gurbani the consequences are catastrophic:

“ਮੂਲੁ ਨ ਬੂਝਹਿ ਆਪਣਾ ਸੇ ਪਸੂਆ ਸੇ ਢੋਰ ਜੀਉ ॥੩॥”

“Mool na boojheh aapanaa se pasooaa se ddoor jeeau. 3.”

(SGGS, Pg. No. 751)

Translation: They do not understand their own roots; they are beasts. They are just animals! ||3||

“ਬਿਨੁ ਬੂਝੇ ਪਸੂ ਕੀ ਨਿਆਈ ਭਮਿ ਮੇਹਿ ਬਿਆਪਿਓ ਮਾਇਆ ॥”

“Bin boojhe pasoo kee niaaiee bhram moh biaapio maiaa.”

(SGGS, Pg. No. 1300)

Translation: Without realizing this self, one is no different than the beasts, engrossed in illusion, doubt, emotional attachment and Maya.

“ਬਿਨੁ ਬੂਝੇ ਤਨੁ ਮਨੁ ਫੀਕਾ ਹੋਇ ॥”

“Bin boojhe tan man feekaa hoi.”

(SGGS, Pg. No. 158)

Translation: Without understanding, (both) the body and the mind become tasteless and insipid.

“ਬਿਨੁ ਬੂਝੇ ਤੂੰ ਸਦਾ ਨਾਪਾਕ ॥੪॥”

“Bin boojhe too(n) sadhaa naapaak. 4.”

(SGGS, Pg. No. 374)

Translation: Without understanding, you shall be forever impure. ||4||

“ਬਿਨੁ ਬੂਝੇ ਕੇ ਥਾਇ ਨ ਪਾਈ ॥”

“Bin boojhe ko thai na payee.”

(SGGS, Pg. No. 412)

Translation: Without understanding, he is not approved.

“ਬਿਨੁ ਬੂਝੇ ਵਡਾ ਫੇਰੁ ਪਇਆ ਫਿਰਿ ਆਵੈ ਜਾਈ ॥”

“Bin boojhe vaddaa fer piaa fir aavai jaiee.”

(SGGS, Pg. No. 511)

Translation: Without understanding, one must wander around in the cycles of reincarnations, and continue coming and going.

“ਮੂਲੁ ਨ ਬੂਝਹਿ ਸਾਚਿ ਨ ਰੀਝਹਿ ਦੂਜੇ ਭਰਮਿ ਭੁਲਾਈ ਹੇ ॥੩॥”

“Mool na boojheh saach na reejheh dhoojai bharam
bhulaiee hae. 3.”

(SGGS, Pg. No. 1024)

Translation: The mortal does not know self and have no interest in finding the True-Self. He goes on wandering in illusion of other (besides True reality). ||3||

“ਮੂਲੁ ਨ ਬੂਝੈ ਆਪਣਾ ਵਸਤੁ ਰਹੀ ਘਰ ਬਾਰਿ ॥”

“Mool na bujhai aapanaa vasat rahee ghar baar.”

(SGGS, Pg. No. 56)

Translation: The mortal does not experience the very essence, which is within him unexplored.

“ਬਿਨੁ ਬੂਝੇ ਕੈਸੇ ਪਾਵਹਿ ਪਾਰੁ ॥”
“Bin boojhe kaise paaveh paar .”

(SGGS, Pg. No. 84)

Translation: *But without understanding, how can they cross over to the other side?*

Guru Ji is saying without this understanding one is an animal at consciousness level and cannot crossover. But that statement should not dishearten us, as in SGGS we find reassurance that we the humans are ordained to come back to the source. The Sender as the Divine being within us, is calling upon us to return by saying:

“ਜਿਨਿ ਤੁਮ ਭੇਜੇ ਤਿਨਹਿ ਬੁਲਾਏ ਸੁਖ ਸਹਜ ਸੇਤੀ ਘਰਿ ਆਉ ॥”

“Jin tum bheje tineh bulaae sukh sahaj setee ghar aau.”

(SGGS, Pg. No. 678)

Translation: *The mortal is being called into his real, everlasting abode. Go back in total bliss and utmost poise.*

Besides inviting, the divine is also removing the hurdles and struggles from the path, making those things of the past as:

“ਤੁਮ ਘਰਿ ਆਵਹੁ ਮੇਰੇ ਮੀਤ ॥
ਤੁਮਰੇ ਦੇਖੀ ਹਰਿ ਆਪਿ ਨਿਵਾਰੇ ਅਪਦਾ ਭਈ ਬਿਤੀਤ ॥
ਰਹਾਉ ॥”

“Tum ghar aavahu mere meet. Tumarae dhokhee har aap nivaare apadhaa bhiee biteet. Rahaau.”

(SGGS, Pg. No. 678)

Translation:

Come back to your home, O my friend. The Lord Himself has eliminated your enemies, and your misfortunes are past. //Pause//

Once the reemergence in source has taken place, poise and bliss has been experienced than it can be said that consciousness has evolved to its pinnacle. The understanding and experience of soul is transformative, then comprehending the depths Guru's words will cease to be a challenge, instead they will become relatable through own personal experiences. After all the soul completed the journey in merger with Divine, which is also called enlightenment.

Bhupinder 'Bo' Singh is a Houston based businessman & an engineer by profession. He hails from Myanmar & was educated in India. He is passionate on Sikh history, motivation and spirituality and is an author of seven books.

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SIKHI, THE BIG BANG, THE BLACK HOLES AND BEYOND

PART-3

Dr. Hardial Singh Dhillon

‘ਖੇਲੁ ਸੰਕੋਚੈ ਤਉ ਨਾਨਕ ਏਕੈ॥’

(Windup the play, O, Lord! Only thou remain)

So far, we have seen that while science is busy in exploring this universe and the organisms on other planets, Sikhi is already adamant about both. Our existence on this earth may be accidental, but SGGS says, it is an expression of the will of the Lord.

While science has no idea why we are here, SGGS says that the acquisition of this body has only one meaningful purpose – to unite with the Lord. The narrative continues...

The doom's day scenario, the black hole/s and beyond?

Looking at the doom's day scenario (when it would all end in trillions of years later), the events leading to blackholes (BHs) need examining. Some background would suffice: BHs are holes in the fabric of the universe; although a physical part of nature, there both time and space vanish.

They present the most profound challenge to science; answer to its finding, lies in the void. One such BH is called Sagittarius A - (SA), which played a major role in the evolution of our galaxy, including formation of stars and planets. In 1999 – Chandra X-ray Observatory, detected hot clouds of gas from a dark empty space in the universe, as a flash of

light some 10,000 km wide, some 26 000 light years away.

It was an asteroid destruction in our galaxy by SA, becoming 4 million times the mass of our sun.

It can shrink to a subatomic size, becoming lost from universe, producing a black hole in the fabric of the universe. Closer to the BH, space and time behave very differently; they almost flow into it.

The river of space flows faster and faster, than a speed of light into SA, and can't escape out of it, becoming totally dark and dense in the centre, and creating a ring of light on the edge (circumference) – this is the point of no return.

Einstein had taught us that time and space merge together; stars and galaxies can curve and distort space and time into the fabric of the universe. Closer to BH, the time becomes slower; on the event of horizon, the time stops. Trillions of years from now, SA will engulf everything, leading to a singularity, all time and space would end. SA would give one massive flash of light before dying, followed by a period of total darkness for almost like an eternity. So, it sounds very depressing; what a waste of all the progress made by nature and its distant galaxies that would become just one heap of ashes. Does SGGS agrees with that?

Just like the evidence from science above, we need to examine the findings of SGGS from several aspects:

1. Are the planets, stars, galaxies and our universe/entire cosmos heading towards dooms day?
2. What does SGGS has to say about material death?
3. What does SGGS has to say about spiritual demise?
4. Can the entire system be recovered, after the dormancy period?

Answer to Q 1:

ਘਟੰਤ ਰੂਪੰ ਘਟੰਤ ਦੀਪੰ ਘਟੰਤ ਰਵਿ ਸਸੀਅਰ
ਨਖੁਤ੍ਰੁ ਗਗਨੰ॥ ਘਟੰਤ ਬਸੁਧਾ ਗਿਰਿ ਤਰ ਸਿਖੰਡੰ॥
ਘਟੰਤ ਲਲਨਾ ਸੁਤ ਭ੍ਰਾਤ ਹੀਤੰ॥ ਘਟੰਤ ਕਨਿਕ
ਮਾਨਿਕ ਮਾਇਆ ਸ੍ਰੂਪੰ॥ ਨਹ ਘਟੰਤ ਕੇਵਲ
ਗੋਪਾਲ ਅਚੁਤ॥ ਅਸਥਿਰੰ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਧ ਜਨ ॥੯॥

(Sahiskriti Shlokes, M: 5, SGGS/1354)

Perishable (diminishing) are the countenance (the beauty), the (seven) islands, the Sun, the Moon, the stars and the sky; perishable are the sky-high mountains upon the earth and the trees; perishable are the wife, children, brothers and next of kin, including the gold and pearls, and all forms of maya.

O, Nanak! Only the nourisher Lord and its sadh-sangat are devoid of mortality II9II

ਸਿਰੀ ਰਾਗੁ ਮਹਲਾ ੧ ਘਰੁ ੨॥...ਦਿਨੁ ਰਵਿ ਚਲੈ
ਨਿਸਿ ਸਸਿ ਚਲੈ ਤਾਰਿਕਾ ਲਖ ਪਲੋਇ॥ ਮੁਕਾਮੁ
ਓਹੀ ਏਕੁ ਹੈ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਸਚੁ ਬੁਗੋਇ ॥੮॥ 17॥

(M:1, Shiri Rag, SGGS/64)

Shiri Rag Mahala 1, Ghar 2 II...O,
Nanak! Say the immortal words –
the day and the Sun are perishable,
perishable (too) are the night and
the Moon; the countless (visible)
stars shall perish too; only the Lord
is an eternal (entity) II8II17II

Answer Q 2 & Q 3:

According to Sikhi, nothing ever

Neither anything takes birth nor
dies; (this transmigration of birth
and death) is a mere melodrama that
the Lord plays. This entire world -
arrival (birth), departure (death),
the visible and the invisible, the Lord
has subjected to its divine command.
Within all beings, it is only the
Lord itself; by creating (the world)
through numerous ways, the Lord
then subjects it to destruction too.

The Lord is immortal, imperishable;
it alone creates and sustains the
universe. The splendour of the Lord
is a mystery, beyond description. O,

(In essence), no soul demises, this
is for certain. The Gurmukh who
becomes deeply acquainted with
the Akal Purakh, one may seek and
discuss this with such being (without
hesitation); (in fact, the birth and
demise) is like a melodrama II1II
Pause II (O, brother!) When we
think that someone has died, what
happens is that its breath escapes
(from its five-elemental body) and
blends with the air, the ashes (of
the body), mix with the dust (of the
Earth), and the soul merges into the

ਘਟੰਤ ਰੂਪੰ ਘਟੰਤ ਦੀਪੰ ਘਟੰਤ ਰਵਿ ਸਸੀਅਰ ਨਖੁੜੁ ਗਗਨੰ॥ ਘਟੰਤ ਬਸੁਧਾ ਗਿਰਿ ਤਰ
ਸਿਖੰਡੰ॥ ਘਟੰਤ ਲਲਨਾ ਸੁਤ ਭ੍ਰਾਤ ਹੀਤੰ॥ ਘਟੰਤ ਕਨਿਕ ਮਾਨਿਕ ਮਾਇਆ ਸ੍ਰੂਪੰ॥ ਨਹ ਘਟੰਤ
ਕੇਵਲ ਗੋਪਾਲ ਅਚੁਤ॥ ਅਸਥਿਰੰ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਧ ਜਨ ॥੯॥

(Sahiskriti Shlokas, M: 5, SGGS/1354)

Perishable (diminishing) are the countenance (the beauty), the
(seven) islands, the Sun, the Moon, the stars and the sky; perishable
are the sky-high mountains upon the earth and the trees; perishable
are the wife, children, brothers and next of kin, including the gold
and pearls, and all forms of maya.

O, Nanak! Only the nourisher Lord and its sadh-sangat are devoid of
-mortality II9II

dies; even physical/material death
is nothing more than a material
rearrangement by the Lord.

ਨਹ ਕਿਛੁ ਜਨਮੈ ਨਹ ਕਿਛੁ ਮਰੈ॥ ਆਪਨ
ਚਲਿਤੁ ਆਪ ਹੀ ਕਰੈ॥ ਆਵਨੁ ਜਾਵਨੁ ਦ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ
ਅਨਦ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ॥ ਆਗਿਆਕਾਰੀ ਧਾਰੀ ਸਭ ਸ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ॥
ਆਪੇ ਆਪਿ ਸਗਲ ਮਹਿ ਆਪਿ॥ ਅਨਿਕ ਜੁਗਤਿ
ਰਚਿ ਥਾਪਿ ਉਥਾਪਿ॥ ਅਬਿਨਾਸੀ ਨਾਹੀ ਕਿਛੁ ਖੰਡੰ॥
ਧਾਰਣ ਧਾਰਿ ਰਹਿਓ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੰਡੰ॥ ਅਲਖ ਅਭੇਵ ਪੁਰਖ
ਪਰਤਾਪ॥ ਆਪਿ ਜਪਾਏ ਤ ਨਾਨਕ ਜਾਪ ॥੬॥

(Gaurhi M: 5, Sukhmani, Ashtpadi 14,
SGGS/281)

Nanak! Only if the Lord induces the
beings to engage in its recitation that
the beings do II6II In fact, it raises
question for the intellects to say,
what is dead?

ਰਾਮਕਲੀ ਮਹਲਾ ੫॥ ਪਵਨੈ ਮਹਿ ਪਵਨੁ
ਸਮਾਇਆ॥ ਜੋਤੀ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਰਲਿ ਜਾਇਆ॥
ਮਾਟੀ ਮਾਟੀ ਹੋਈ ਏਕ॥ ਰੋਵਨਹਾਰੇ ਕੀ ਕਵਨ
ਟੇਕ ॥੧॥ ਕਉਨੁ ਮੂਆ ਰੇ ਕਉਨੁ ਮੂਆ॥ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ
ਗਿਆਨੀ ਮਿਲਿ ਕਰਹੁ ਬੀਚਾਰਾ ਇਹੁ ਤਉ ਚਲਤੁ
ਭਇਆ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥...॥੪॥੧੦॥

(M: 5, SGGSJ/885)

Ramkali Mahala 5 II O, brother!

(all-pervasive) effulgence. The one
who wails (upon demised-person)
does so in illusion II1II...II4II10II

Why doesn't anything die?

...ਜਬ ਦੇਖਉ ਤਬ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਮੂਲੁ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੋ
ਸੁਖਮੁ ਸੋਈ ਅਸਥੁਲੁ ॥੫॥

(M: 5, Gaurhi, Sukhmani, Ashtpadi
14, SGGS/281-282)

O, Nanak! (I too have been blessed by
the Guru, now) when I see, everything
(appears to be a manifestation of the
Lord) – the foundation of all; this

visible world is the manifestation of the Lord itself, as well the effulgence that is pervasive within all II5II

Answer to Q 4 which science now gives is:

There is new belief that even BH dies too (i.e transforms).

In 1975, Prof. Steven Hawking, published a scientific paper that showed that even black holes are NOT completely black; they faintly glow and have temperature (T/°C), given by the following equation:

$$T/°C = hc^3/8\pi GK_b M,$$

where h = Planck's constant, c =

speed of light, π = constant, G= gravity of the BH, K_b = Boltzmann's constant and M= mass of the BH.

If something has a temperature (T/°C), it would radiate, so SA would eventually, some billions of years later, evaporate, so hawking radiations would erode too. The BH emits sub-atomic particles until they exhaust their energy and then explode. In principle, if every atom within the ashes of something that burns out could be collected, it could be reconstructed. Is this true for BH? If so, BHs aren't tombs, they are gateways to other universe/s. So, all that falls into BH, remains in

its memory as information, in ashes of the BH. When BH evaporates to half of its mass, the interior (of BH) becomes same as the distant hawking radiation that were emitted some eons ago in the universe.

It appears that the space and time opens up inside the BH as the distance part of universe that allows us to read information in time.

It sounds weird; no one really agrees on physical picture, but what everyone agrees upon is that BH is telling us that our picture of space and time is wrong.

Idea that this space is close to this space and that time sits along is wrong. There is a deeper reality in which time and space do not exist. Ep 4, BBC 2, 24/11/21. The fact that time and space do not exist prior to the event of the BB, is very similar to what SGGs describes (when only Akal Purakh would persist).

For science to be consistent with SGGs, the events leading to BH (a doom's day - a total destruction) would also need to match with the state of mind that is described of the Bhagats in SGGs, because both the Gurus and the Bhagats perceived the Akal Purakh.

They describe the same path (the shabad Guru, via which the essence of Nam is acquired, that unites with the Akal Purakh) and therefore, their description of the state of union with the Akal Purakh should also match.

Many examples are available with varying descriptions (that state where the Bhagat's mind admires the creation and sees planets, stars and galaxies unending, that state where it admires the entire creation serving the Lord, and that where it all ends and becomes absorbed within the Lord itself (I have chosen the latter here, as others are examples of

The eternal Lord has enacted (this world) to be its melodrama and dispersed/impregnated it with (the concepts of) birth and death...II7II...II8II2II

Wind up the melodrama, only the Lord remains

ਆਪਨ ਖੇਲੁ ਆਪਿ ਕਰਿ ਦੇਖੈ ॥ ਖੇਲੁ ਸੰਕੋਚੈ ਤਉ ਨਾਨਕ ਏਕੈ ॥ 7
॥...॥21॥

(Gaurhi M: 5, Astpadi 21, SGGs/291)

...O, Nanak! The Lord, having enacted its own melodrama, is beholding it all; when it binds up the play, it remains all by itself II7II...II21II

...ਏਹੁ ਪਰਪੰਚੁ ਖੇਲੁ ਕੀਆ ਸਭੁ ਕਰਤੈ ਹਰਿ ਕਰਤੈ ਸਭ ਕਲ ਧਾਰੀ ॥ ਹਰਿ ਏਕੋ ਸੂਤੁ ਵਰਤੈ ਜੁਗ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਸੂਤੁ ਖਿੰਚੈ ਏਕੰਕਾਰੀ ॥ 7 ॥...॥ 8 ॥ 1 ॥ 7 ॥

(M: 4, Goojari, SGGs/506-507)

... (But, O, brother! The beings are helpless, what can they do?). This entire cosmos melodrama is Lord's own creation, and itself empowered it with its own stature.

state/s when universe is thriving). Some examples would suffice:

Bhagat Kabir Ji, describing the state of equipoise – where realisation of the Lord becomes plausible – (SGGS/333)

ਗਉੜੀ ॥ ਤਹ ਪਾਵਸ ਸਿੰਧੂ ਧੂਪ ਨਹੀ ਛਹੀਆ
ਤਹ ਉਤਪਤਿ ਪਰਲਉ ਨਾਹੀ ॥ ਜੀਵਨ ਮਿਰਤੁ ਨ
ਦੁਖੁ ਸੁਖੁ ਬਿਆਪੈ ਸੁੰਨ ਸਮਾਧਿ ਦੋਊ ਤਹ ਨਾਹੀ ॥
੧ ॥ ਸਹਜ ਕੀ ਅਕਥ ਕਥਾ ਹੈ ਨਿਰਾਰੀ ॥ ਤੁਲਿ
ਨਹੀ ਚਢੈ ਜਾਇ ਨ ਮੁਕਾਤੀ ਹਲੁਕੀ ਲਗੈ ਨ ਭਾਰੀ
॥ ੧ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਅਰਧ ਉਰਧ ਦੋਊ ਤਹ ਨਾਹੀ
ਰਾਤਿ ਦਿਨਸੁ ਤਹ ਨਾਹੀ ॥ ਜਲੁ ਨਹੀ ਪਵਨੁ ਪਾਵਕੁ
ਫੁਨਿ ਨਾਹੀ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਤਹਾ ਸਮਾਹੀ ॥ ੨ ॥ ਅਗਮ
ਅਗੋਚਰੁ ਰਹੈ ਨਿਰੰਤਰਿ ਗੁਰ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਤੇ ਲਹੀਐ ॥
ਕਹੁ ਕਬੀਰ ਬਲਿ ਜਾਉ ਗੁਰ ਅਪੁਨੇ ਸਤ ਸੰਗਤਿ
ਮਿਲਿ ਰਹੀਐ ॥ ੩ ॥ ੪ ॥ ੪੮ ॥

Gaurhi II The equipoise state of human mind is so (unique) that it has no other parallel, (consequently) its real format is beyond narrative.

(This state is incomparable even with the best possible comfort; there is no other comfort in the world with which it could be mapped, to say that it is less than or equal to this).

It is impossible to say that in comparison to the best that equipoise is better or worse, low or high quality, than this comfort (i.e no other worldly comfort is comparable to it) II1II Pause II

(Such is this state of equipoise that), once reached, (the being is no longer yearning for the so called) various 'puries' (according to the Hindu scriptures, they are) Inder puri - (the imagery dwelling of god of rain), Vishnu puri – (the imagery dwelling of god of sustenance – in an ocean of pudding, according to Puranas), Suraj-lok – (the imagery dwelling of the people of the Sun – a source of energy), Chander-lok – (the imagery dwelling of the people of the Moon – a source of coolness and shade), Braham puri – (the imagery dwelling of god of creation, according to Vedas) and Shiv puri – (the imagery

dwelling of god of destruction, according to Vedas).

There is no (longing for longer) life, or (fear of) death; there is neither (fear of) pain nor (yearning for) pleasure, none (of these) perturb (the being's) state of equipoise. It is such a state of mind that there neither remain any thoughts about vices nor any partiality II1II Upon reaching the state of equipoise, the partiality between high and low vanishes; (here, the being's mind) neither (experiences) a mesmerisation (i.e an induced sleep/subconscious state of mind), nor (wanders in) pursuit of maya, (because) in that state, there remains no trace of the vices, the wavering of mind and the greed of enviousness.

At that time, (in the heart of the being), there is only Satguru dwelling and Satguru alone II2II

Then, the inaccessible and inapprehensible Lord (too) always remains, constantly blossomed (in the heart of the being, but) the Lord is attainable only through the mercy of the Satguru.

O, Kabir! (Thou too) say it – that I am ever grateful to my Guru; may I always remain united (with) the graceful sangat of (my Guru) II3II4II48II Second evidence comes from Bhagat Beini Ji:

ਦੇਵ ਸਥਾਨੈ ਕਿਆ ਨੀਸਾਣੀ॥ ਤਹ ਬਾਜੇ ਸਬਦ
ਅਨਾਹਦ ਬਾਣੀ॥ ਤਹ ਚੰਦੁ ਨ ਸੂਰਜੁ ਪਉਣੁ ਨ
ਪਾਣੀ॥ ਸਾਖੀ ਜਾਗੀ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਜਾਣੀ ॥੨॥
...॥੯॥੧॥

(Ramkali, bani Beini jeo ki/974)

(If someone asks as to) what are the signs of when Lord dwells (within the mind, the answer is that) in such state, the shabad of the Satguru, the bani of Lord's praises exalts (the heart of the being); (such elation is more powerful to dispel the darkness of the mind compared with the

competency of) the Moon and the Sun (together to dispel darkness of the world, both the elements like) the air and water together can't (impart the same level of comfort to the world, as much as this elation lifts the mind of the being); through the guidance of the Guru, the conscience of the being awakens, attaining realisation II2II... II9II1II

So, if nothing ever dies or takes birth, what is it that disappears?

It is the physical material world that transforms into energy, eventually everything ending in Nam, which, prior to creation, abides, in the form of shabad/waves/spirit, with Akal Purakh. Viz:

[Science now acknowledges the existence of energy, but does not say what it was attached to, or abiding with (since it would be beyond the domain of science to test this)].

The falling of objects into BH has led to a profound conclusion. Space and time concept, which are the foundation of our existence, are not the fundamental properties of nature. They merge into deeper reality in which neither exists.

We do not fully understand and are long way from fully understanding the secret of BH. But reality is beginning to lift its veil. Far from being a mere abrasion, SA is a part of our history and our future.

Even with such similarities, there are differences of emphasise and opinions.

We shall look at three things:

1. Our approach to the problem
2. The 'imprints'
3. Space and time model being incorrect.

"The way to understand universe is to observe it. We are ripples in the most ancient light that were laid

down before the event of the BB. (In the last 30 years) we have seen billions of galaxies written across the sky, the stars and planets on a cosmic scale. These are worlds beyond our imagination. The lesson is clear: we won't answer the questions by being introverts, we would answer them by lifting our gaze above the horizon, looking outward into the universe, beyond stars. We used to look into the night sky with only questions, now we are beginning to see the answers.'

(Ep 5, BBC 2 - 1/12/21)

SGGS would never disagree that one should not acquire knowledge about one's surroundings or well-beings, but has fundamental differences with science as to why it would say, 'search within'? Because

ਜੋ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੰਡਿ ਖੰਡਿ ਸੋ ਜਾਣਹੁ ॥ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਬੂਝਹੁ
ਸਬਦਿ ਪਛਾਣਹੁ ॥...॥ ੧੫ ॥ ੩ ॥ ੨੦ ॥

(Maru M: 1, SGGS/1040)

The Lord who pervades all the cosmos, know it to be present within thy body too; realise this mystery through the sanctuary of the Guru: recognise this truth by uniting with Guru's shabad.

The Lord, who rejoices all worldly goods, is relishing all by pervading all entities, and yet remains detached II14II...II15II3II20II

ਸੂਹੀ ਮਹਲਾ ੩ ॥ ...ਕਾਇਆ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ
ਵਸੈ ਖੰਡ ਮੰਡਲ ਪਾਤਾਲਾ ॥ ਕਾਇਆ ਅੰਦਰਿ
ਜਗਜੀਵਨ ਦਾਤਾ ਵਸੈ ਸਭਨਾ ਕਰੇ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਾਲਾ
॥...॥ ੨ ॥ ਕਾਇਆ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਆਪੇ ਵਸੈ ਅਲਖੁ ਨ
ਲਖਿਆ ਜਾਈ ॥ ਮਨਮੁਖੁ ਮੁਗਧੁ ਬੂਝੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਬਾਹਰਿ
ਭਾਲਣਿ ਜਾਈ ॥...॥ ੩ ॥ ...ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਸੁ
ਕਾਇਆ ਖੋਜੈ ਹੋਰ ਸਭ ਭਰਮਿ ਭੁਲਾਈ ॥...॥
੬ ॥ ਕਾਇਆ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਬ੍ਰਹਮਾ ਬਿਸਨੁ ਮਹੇਸਾ
ਸਭ ਓਪਤਿ ਜਿਤੁ ਸੰਸਾਰਾ ॥ ਸਚੈ ਆਪਣਾ ਖੇਲੁ
ਰਚਾਇਆ ਆਵਾ ਗਉਣੁ ਪਾਸਾਰਾ ॥...॥੭॥...॥
੮ ॥ ੨ ॥

(Suhi Mahala 3 II SGGS/754)

...O, brother! Such body acquires every comfort of all parts, spheres

and the nether regions (i.e the entire world/cosmos), in which the benefactor Lord, the lifeline of the world, becomes immanent, who provides sustenance to all the beings...II2II O, brother!

The Lord itself resides in this body but is (generally) invisible, not apparent. The self-centred foolish being is not aware (of this mystery, instead), it goes out searching (the Lord) out there ((in the forest etc)... II3II

The being who seeks the sanctuary of the Guru, such being (for the attainment of Lord's Nam) searches within its own body...II6II

O, brother! Dwelling within this body is the Lord, from whom stemmed Brahma, Vishan and Shiv (the instruments of creation, sustaining and destruction), and the creation of the entire cosmos.

The eternal Lord has enacted (this world) to be its melodrama and dispersed/impregnated it with (the concepts of) birth and death...II7II... II8II2II

Wind up the melodrama, only the Lord remains

ਆਪਨ ਖੇਲੁ ਆਪਿ ਕਰਿ ਦੇਖੈ ॥ ਖੇਲੁ ਸੰਕੋਚੈ ਤਉ
ਨਾਨਕ ਏਕੈ ॥ ੭ ॥...॥੨੧॥

(Gaurhi M: 5, Astpadi 21, SGGS/291)

...O, Nanak! The Lord, having enacted its own melodrama, is beholding it all; when it binds up the play, it remains all by itself II7II...II21II

...ਏਹੁ ਪਰਪੰਚੁ ਖੇਲੁ ਕੀਆ ਸਭੁ ਕਰਤੈ ਹਰਿ ਕਰਤੈ
ਸਭ ਕਲ ਧਾਰੀ ॥ ਹਰਿ ਏਕੈ ਸੂਤੁ ਵਰਤੈ ਜੁਗ
ਅੰਤਰਿ ਸੂਤੁ ਖਿੰਚੈ ਏਕੰਕਾਰੀ ॥ ੭ ॥...॥ ੮ ॥
੧ ॥ ੭ ॥

(M: 4, Goojari, SGGS/506-507)

... (But, O, brother! The beings are helpless, what can they do?). This

entire cosmos melodrama is Lord's own creation, and itself empowered it with its own stature. Within the entire cosmos, it is the thread of empowerment of Lord that is dispersed; when the Lord hauls this tread (then the entire cosmic melodrama crumbles, and) the only Lord remains, all by itself II7II... II8II1II7II

ਸੋਰਠਿ ਮਹਲਾ ੪ ਚਉਥਾ ॥ ਆਪੇ ਅੰਡਜ ਜੇਰਜ
ਸੇਤਜ ਉਤਭੁਜ ਆਪੇ ਖੰਡ ਆਪੇ ਸਭ ਲੋਇ ॥ ਆਪੇ
ਸੂਤੁ ਆਪੇ ਬਹੁ ਮਣੀਆ ਕਰਿ ਸਕਤੀ ਜਗਤੁ ਪਰੋਇ
॥ ਆਪੇ ਹੀ ਸੂਤਧਾਰੁ ਹੈ ਪਿਆਰਾ ਸੂਤੁ ਖਿੰਚੈ ਢਰਿ
ਢੇਰੀ ਰੋਇ ॥ ੧ ॥...॥ ੪ ॥ ੨ ॥

(M: 4, Sorath, SGGS/605)

...O, brother! It is the Lord itself who is (the four main mines/sources of creation, namely) the eggs, the placenta, the binary fission and the seeds; itself (the nine) continents (of the world), and itself all the worlds (of the cosmos). It is the Lord itself who is the (empowered) thread, and itself manifested into (infinite organisms, like) numerous pearls. It is the Lord itself, who being empowered, (threads) the whole world (i.e keeps them orderly), and itself holds the thread in its own hand (i.e administers the order).

When it pulls the thread (from the world) - (i.e exercises its prerogative) then, (the entire world) collapses (bringing the creation to an end) II1II...II4II2II

Science's assertion that the universe can repeat itself has been long stated by SGGS, as

...ਕਈ ਬਾਰ ਪਸਰਿਓ ਪਾਸਾਰ ॥ ਸਦਾ ਸਦਾ ਇਕੁ
ਏਕੰਕਾਰ ॥...॥ ੭ ॥

(M: 5, Gaurhi, Sukhmani, Ashtpadi 10, SGGS/276)

The Lord has enacted the world many times, (and by winding it up again) it always remains a solo entity...II7II... II10II

However, misconception between science and SGGs still exists. Prof. Cox says: 'Sun lies at the bases of all religions, as an activity of worship.

Therefore, we don't need 'an imaginary God' to explain the universe; we can replace it with the real Gods, the stars.' Ep 1, BBC 2, 30/10/21

It doesn't seem that Prof. Cox has read anything on Sikhi, although he seems to be familiar with the religions that engage in Sun-worship. Sikhi is much deeper than this.

The so called 'imaginary God' by Prof. Cox, is so real in Sikhi that the SGGs advocates the worship of no other, except the Akal Purakh, the one who empowers the suns and the moons, for worship of any other is not only a waste of time but a total ruin, an anguish, from which there is no escape.

ਭੁਜੰਗ ਪ੍ਰਯਾਤ ਛੰਦ ॥ ਨਮੋ ਸੂਰਜ ਸੂਰਜੇ ਨਮੋ ਚੰਦ੍ਰ ਚੰਦ੍ਰੇ ॥ ਨਮੋ ਰਾਜ ਰਾਜੇ ਨਮੋ ਇੰਦ੍ਰ ਇੰਦ੍ਰੇ ॥ ਨਮੋ ਅੰਧਕਾਰੇ ਨਮੋ ਤੇਜ ਤੇਜੇ ॥ ਨਮੋ ਬ੍ਰਿੰਦ ਬ੍ਰਿੰਦੇ ਨਮੋ ਬੀਜ ਬੀਜੇ ॥੧੮੫॥

Jaap Sahib (Prof. Sahib Singh), Nit-Name Steek, pp167-8

Bhujang pryat Shand II O, Lord! Salutation to thee, thou are the imparter behind the brightness (i.e the rich source of hot illumination) of the sun, and the soft illumination of the moon (i.e thou are the Master of jalal and jamal – the source of splendour of brightness

and softness). Thou are the King of kings, and the Master of the supremacy of the deities.

O, Lord! Salutation to thee, thou are the pitch darkness as well as the grand brightness of illumination; salutation to thee, thou are the cluster of beings as well as their miniature manifest (i.e both this infinite visible world as well as the invisible miniature form are thy manifestations) II185II What about time and space concept being wrong?

Prof. Cox made the following bold statement in Ep 5 'but what everyone agrees upon is that BH is telling us that our picture of space and time is wrong. Idea that this space is close to this space and that time sets along is wrong. there is a deeper reality in which time and space do not exist'. In the light of SGGs, this statement has a weight and value.

When SGGs says all along that this world is an illusion, the only reality there is, is the Akal Purakh, no relations are real, they are images in time, we became siblings,

fathers and mothers and families and friends, by the command of the Lord which dictates union and departure of us all.

...ਜਗ ਰਚਨਾ ਸਭ ਝੂਠ ਹੈ ਜਾਨਿ ਲੇਹੁ ਰੇ ਮੀਤ ॥ ਕਹਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਥਿਰੁ ਨਾ ਰਹੈ ਜਿਉ ਬਾਲੁ ਕੀ ਭੀਤਿ ॥ ੪੯ ॥ ...ਜੋ ਉਪਜਿਓ ਸੋ ਬਿਨਸਿ ਹੈ ਪਰੋ ਆਜੁ ਕੈ ਕਾਲਿ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਹਰਿ ਗੁਨ ਗਾਇ ਲੇ ਛਾਡਿ ਸਗਲ ਜੰਜਾਲ ॥ ੫੨ ॥

(M: 9, Shlokas, SGGs/1429)

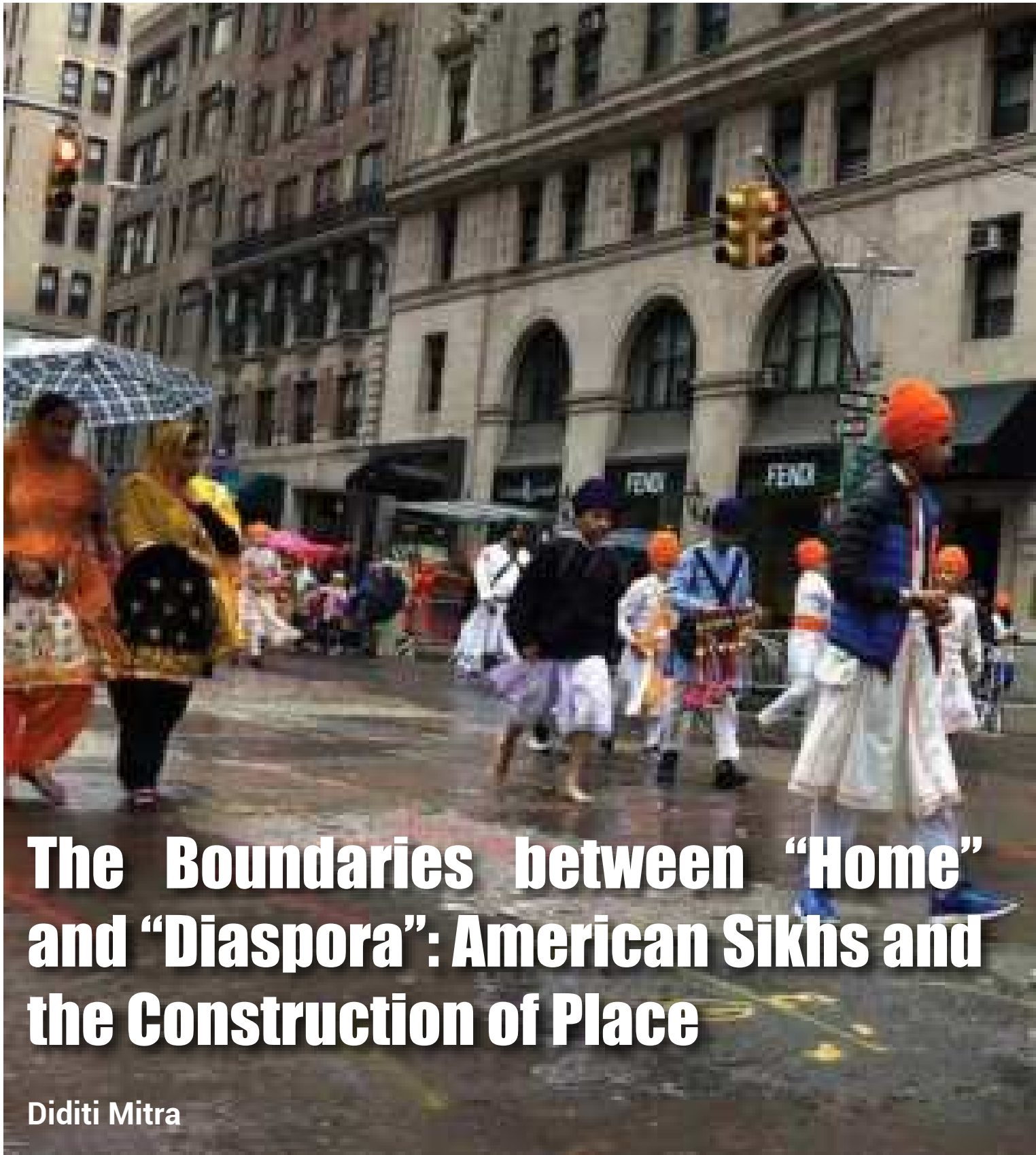
O, Nanak! (Say, O, brother!) (So far, I) continued to witness the world as of mine, (but) no one (here belongs to anyone) forever. (Only) Lord's devotion is eternal.

O, brother! Continue to enshrine this (devotion of the Lord) in (thy) mind II48II Says Nanak: O, (my) friend! Know this for certain that the entire world enactment is mortal, like a wall of sand, nothing is to remain (in the world) forever II49II

...O, Nanak, (say: O, brother!) Whosoever has born into the world will (certainly) perish. Sooner or later (everyone) is to leave (from here). (Consequently) by relinquishing all ties (with enticement of maya) continue to sing the praise of Lord's virtues II52II

The individual journey began and shall end for each one of us by being absorbed within the Lord, until then, the show/melodrama of creation and destruction continues.

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The Boundaries between “Home” and “Diaspora”: American Sikhs and the Construction of Place

Diditi Mitra



On November 10, 2015, a delegation of five representatives from various Sikh organisations in North America located in Stockton, California participated in the Sarbat Khalsa, held in Amritsar. Notably, the meeting in Amritsar was not called to discuss matters concerning the diasporic Sikh experience. The purpose was to consider issues of decision-making and leadership within the Sikh religious order in Punjab. The diaspora Sikh community thought necessary to participate in the discussion on this controversy. The question is why? And what does Sikh interest in Punjab say about the group's attachment and thus, construct of a homeland?

In this essay, I build on the scholarship on citizenship, homeland, and diaspora with the case of American Sikhs to question neat divisions of "homeland" and "diaspora" for this group. Specifically, to ascertain American Sikhs' idea of a "homeland," I focus on research that illuminates the various ways in which the group remains connected to Punjab, the place of origin for the immigrants and/or a place with which all Sikhs share a deep ancestral and spiritual bond.

The questions that I ask are: a) What does the continued participation in affairs of Punjab say about the Sikh American construct of "homeland?" and b) Is this attachment to Punjab related to the Sikhs location as non-whites and non-Christians in American society. I begin by noting several key points from the discourse on citizenship, homeland, and diaspora, followed by a brief overview of Sikh immigration to which are linked questions of "homeland" and "diaspora;" subsequently, I look at American Sikhs, from their arrival to America in the early twentieth century through today, to shed light

on the question of Sikh immigrants and "homeland."

"Homeland" and "Diaspora"

The scholarship on "homeland" and "diaspora" offers a complex analysis of the relationship between the two. An important challenge to this discourse has been from scholars who have questioned the clear demarcation between them. As people move back and forth from one place to another, they identify with multiple homelands. People's sense of belonging can be such that different aspects of one's identity are split across many nations. Drawing from Yasemin Soysal's perspective on citizenship more specifically, groups can legally belong to one nation and continue to be emotionally attached to another. The pioneering work of Basch, Schiller and Blanc also direct attention to the overlapping spaces of "home" and "abroad" and the associated multifaceted identities of people who move back and forth between multiple societies. Binaries are, thus, unhelpful because clear separation of "homeland" and "hostland" is difficult*.

From Punjab to the World: Evolution of the Sikh diaspora

Seeds of the Sikh diaspora were sown when Punjab encountered British colonialism, and especially after Punjab was annexed to the British colonial territory in 1849. Recruitment of Sikhs in the British colonial army and the development of canal colonies in areas of western Punjab to encourage farming and settlement catalyzed emigration. Sikhs were also hired in the police force in the British imperial territories in East Asia and the Far East. Additionally, although to a far lesser extent, export of indentured labor to the British colonies contributed to emigration as well*.

Economic push factors sometimes overlapped with these various reasons for exit from India and contributed to the development of the Sikh diaspora during that time. This group of immigrants were primarily peasants from rural Punjab. They had left one home in Punjab to make another one in America.

Over the years, the Sikh diaspora has expanded, for reasons that converge and diverge from the group's international migration earlier in the twentieth century. Economic struggles continue to be a factor in motivating emigration in the contemporary era. Adding to it have been aggressive policies towards Sikhs, especially Sikh youth, to curtail "terrorism" by the Indian state in the 1980s and through the early 1990s. Historically, the group's route to America has not always been straightforward. Since the early period, Sikhs who had immigrated to America have lived in other parts of the world. Post-1980s, we see a similar patterns of "twice migrants." My own work supports this pattern of multiple routes taken by rural Sikh immigrants that eventually led them to New York City where they worked as taxi drivers. Many of the respondents had first reached destinations in Europe; a few had even traveled to parts of the Middle East before settling down in America. Sikhs comprise the flow of professional immigrants too. Like other groups from India, Sikhs had arrived to fill a shortage in professional work since the 1960s.

The formation of the Sikh diaspora is, therefore, a product of people from diverse socioeconomic and spatial backgrounds who decided to immigrate to America, and elsewhere, confronted with socio-

political and economic adversities. It is in this context that the meaning of homeland for Sikhs must be situated. Where is “homeland” for American Sikhs and why?

American Sikhs and the Construction of “home:” Involvements with Punjab:

Politics

American Sikh immigrants have been involved in Punjab (and Indian) politics since their initial arrival in the early twentieth century. Faced with racism, the immigrants recognized that their work of antiracism in America would have to be a transnational one, where the aim would be to overthrow British rule in India too, because racism “here” was connected to racism “there.” The Ghadr Party, previously known as the Pacific Coast Hindi Association, was formed in 1913 to realize that goal. A majority of its members were Sikhs. In this period, the immigrants did not mobilise against colonialism and racism around a Sikh identity. They were all “Indians” oppressed by the imperial power, seeking freedom for their “motherland” *

But their efforts to overthrow British colonialism failed. In fact, they were punished for catalysing the movement. Those who participated in anti-British organizing faced severe punishment after returning to India, including execution for some of them*. Efforts to eradicate racism in America also turned out to be futile. Eventually, immigrants from India as nonwhites, along with all other immigrants from Asia, were barred from immigrating to the United States by the 1924 immigration act. It was only post passage of 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act when immigration from India to America resumed. The Act lifted explicit racial barriers to



*(Above)
Gurdwara
Sikh Centre in
Flushing, Queens,
New York (Photo:
Jim Henderson)*



*(Right) Always in
the forefront and
ready to help.
Sikh Volunteers
offer free food
and medicine to
anyone in need.*



(From left) Tajdeep S Rattan, Maj. Kamaljeet S Kalsi and Lamba are the only three observant Sikh men currently serving in the U.S. military.

immigration from India, and other Asian countries. This time, contrary to the previous group, Sikhs could immigrate with their families. They were also emigrating from an India emancipated from British colonial rule. Yet the Sikh struggle for dignity, emancipation and self-governance did not come to an end. Now, the quest for justice and freedom had shifted from British colonisers to the Indian nation state, partly motivating the contemporary group to remain engaged with politics in India. Apprehension at being part of Hindu majority India after British departure incentivized that emergent voice. According to Robin Cohen*, Sikh immigrants in America, along with those in Canada and Great Britain, supported a separate Sikh homeland as early as the 1950s and the 1960s. In fact, Dr. V.S. Bhatti was the first to formally articulate a call for a Sikh state in 1940*. Later, that the Indian government did not honor the Anandpur Sahib Resolution of 1973, in addition to renegeing on promises of self-determination made to Sikhs who remained in India at the time of independence.*

The attack on Harmandir Sahib in 1984 was viewed as another assault

on the dignity of Sikhs and a reminder of the group's subordination in India. Toward that end, new organisations emerged, old organisations were revived, and still other organisations re-formulated its goals to fulfill the imagination of a Sikh nation-state*. Interestingly, the "enemy" in the early twentieth century, i.e., America, was now perceived as an ally in the struggle. Thus, immigrants lobbied the American and the Canadian governments and the United Nations for creation of a "home" for Sikhs*.

Like the freedom struggle from British colonialism and American racism by the early waves of Sikh immigrants, the contemporary movements to create a Sikh "homeland" also failed. Yet, immigrant voices demanding greater freedom have not died.

Some American Sikh groups want the Indian government to hold a referendum on the matter*. To that aim, American Sikhs have sought redress from U.S. Congress for violation of human rights of Sikhs committed by the Indian government.*

Tatla also writes that Rajiv Gandhi, when he visited the United States in June of 1985, was met with protest

from various Sikh groups. Reagan, who was the sitting President, while having promised Gandhi support for India's territorial integrity, did not issue any official response on the issue of Sikh "extremism." At the time, India's geopolitical alliance with the Soviet Union, including India's policy of nonalignment, was a sore point in Indo-US relations* – something that proved beneficial to the Sikh lobby. The immigrants' "western power," thus, proved useful in lobbying the American government to support the Sikh struggle for self-determination.

Free Akal Takht movement is one of the most recent initiatives among immigrant Sikhs in America, and Canada in fact, to attain sovereignty for Sikhs that does not involve carving out a separate nation. The initiative, led by first and second generation immigrant Sikhs, aim to free Akal Takht from the governing power of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, or SGPC. Distrustful of the SGPC, which the group views as an arm of the Indian government, they seek to obtain governing powers over Akal Takht – a "throne" that holds central authority for Sikhs. At a webinar offered by the Free Akal Takht organisation through Sikh Research Institute on February 6, 2016, Santbir Singh who is designated as a Public Service Worker on the organisation's website, equated the efforts of the organisation with building a nation for Sikhs. He presented the Akal Takht as an institution accessible exclusively to Sikhs much different from Harmandir Sahib, which is open to non-Sikhs as well. Santbir Singh compared this plan for the Akal Takht to the American Pentagon, a space where one cannot enter without having made a commitment to the Guru. Although it was clearly stated that this goal of political

control is not to mobilise support for Khalistan, comparison with the Pentagon suggested that the control being sought is of immense political significance for Sikhs. Arguably, it represents a nation.

Previously, a similar argument in favor of influence by diaspora Sikhs on the Akal Takht was made by California-based Dr. Tarlochan Singh Nahal. In "Selection of the Jathedar Sri Akal Takhat Sahib and the Role of Sikh Diaspora," Nahal maintained that diaspora Sikhs should unite as one group and rally to have a say in the selection of the Jathedar for Sri Akal Takht Sahib.

Similarly, the aforementioned delegation of North American Sikhs that attended the Sarbat Khalsa in November of 2015 in Amritsar had sought inclusion of overseas Sikhs in the decision-making that affects Sikhs worldwide. They were part of the group that supported the resolutions drafted at the plenary meeting, including the demand for Vatican-status of the Golden Temple*.

Furthermore, Shruti Devgan* has shown the ways in which diaspora Sikhs use the internet to remember the violence around 1984 pogrom. Although Devgan includes American, Canadian and British Sikhs in her analysis, she makes the larger point that virtual commemoration through creation of websites dedicated to 1984 "provides them with a sense of belonging both in India as well as transnationally". By so saying, Devgan suggests that the immigrants carve out an identity for themselves as Sikhs in their places of settlement as well as assert a place for themselves in India as Sikhs through narratives countering the silence around 1984 and the voices favoring separatism.



"The Five Beloved," a ceremonial honor guard, move along Madison Ave near the front of the Sikh Day Parade in New York. (Photo: Craig Ruttle)

Additionally, American Sikhs remain linked with Punjab, and India, via involvement in Punjab electoral politics. Political figures, the journalists note, have begun taking trips to America to solicit diaspora support. Captain Amarinder Singh is one such figure who, as well as his wife who was in the ministry of External Affairs in the government of Manmohan Singh, campaigned in America in April of 2016. The financial support from immigrant Punjabis is important for wooing those who live in India. For this reason, some believe that non-resident Punjabis exert influence over election results. More importantly, the decision for Punjabi politicians to pursue votes among the immigrant community plays a role in preserving ties between the immigrants and Punjab. Presumably, such political strategies invoke the imaginary of "home" among immigrants and nurture a sense of belonging.

A question that arises, I believe, and something that future scholars should explore is whether there is a link between being "othered" in America with at least American Sikhs pursuit of a homeland where the group feels

belonging, much like the earlier wave of immigrants' confrontation with racism in America that is linked with mobilising against British colonizers. Instances of racism faced by Sikhs, even in post 1965 America, are abundant. My own work on immigrant Sikhs shows that racism was a routine part of driving taxis in New York City, even before 9/11.

Religion

Research shows that diaspora Sikhs make most financial contributions towards matters of religious interest* has noted this to be the case since the time of the early arrivals. It is thus unsurprising that SGPC, as the protector of Sikh religion, has been one of the biggest recipients of money from American Sikhs, as well as diaspora Sikhs overall. Building gurdwaras or reviving the ones decaying have been an important mission for American Sikhs. One of the many examples that Maan and Maan* offer is that of a gurdwara in Takhar patti in the village of Shankar in the Doaba region. This was Gurdwara Berrian Wala that was renovated in 1965 by American Sikh, Kartar Singh Takhar. Takhar contributed most of the two and a

half million dollars on this place of worship. A gurdwara constructed at Majaari near Belachur by an American immigrant named Mehar Singh Thekedar is another example. Others like the well-known Tut Brothers have invested in cleaning up the sarovar in Harmandir Sahib. Tut Brothers helped install a water purifying system that cost 1.5 million dollars. Donations to the construction of Hazur Sahib, a gurdwara located in the southern part of India*, is yet another example of the same. Indicating a syncretic religious identity are contributions made towards Sufi shrines and dharamshalas as well. Immigrants also organise religious events, like akhand path, which is the continuous reading of the Guru Granth Sahib, when they visit their villages.

Caste identities of the immigrants, however, continue to be influential in the distribution of remittances for religious purposes in Punjab. Gurdwaras identified as Ravidass and Lobana in New York, for instance, indicate the significance of caste in the lives of Sikh immigrants at least in America. It should, therefore, come as no surprise that immigrant followers of Ravidass would contribute regularly to Dera Sachkhand Ballan in the Doaba region of Punjab. Recently, North American followers of the Dera, along with those from Europe, donated 15 kilograms of gold to build a palanquin for Guru Ravidass. Similarly, overseas funds have been remitted for Balmik mandirs by its followers. Maan and Maan* mention America based Kartar Singh Takhar who donated 50,000 dollars to Bhagwan Balmik Mandir in the village of Shankar. Such financial contributions are a sign of the group's growing economic strength, Maan and Maan assert. The researchers further suggest that it

allows the group to create a separate space and shelter themselves from caste prejudice. Donations like these, which are a display of wealth, allow them to negotiate their lower caste status in their villages. Overseas donors of other sectarian groups like the Radhasoamis and Namdharis – and not just American Sikhs -- are also known to make contributions to their specific places of worship. In this way, caste-based immigrant donations keep the immigrants tethered to Punjab, reinforce caste identities, and raises questions regarding Sikh immigrants' meaning of "home."

Here again, I ask whether preservation of ties with Sikhism by supporting religious projects in Punjab is possibly linked with the immigrants' marginalisation as Sikhs in American society. As the minority religion, Sikhism is not reflected in the larger cultural imagination, including aesthetics and celebration of religious holidays. Nurturing Sikhism in Punjab is perhaps a way for the immigrants to create a space where the group can imagine belonging. Is this "reactive transnationalism?" That is, the idea that experience of exclusion in the place of settlement only serves to strengthen participation in transnational activities by immigrants. Future research will have to explore such questions. But do note that research has shown Sikh immigrants to have used resources obtained overseas to enhance izzat in their village community in Punjab. Thus, philanthropy in Punjab may not all be a result of exclusion in places of settlement. Yet another question that the scholarship must pursue.

Development

Sikhs have shown interest in the betterment of Punjab since their

arrival to the North American continent in the early twentieth century. The areas that have received the greatest attention, following interest in religious initiatives, are education, healthcare, and infrastructure. Of these three areas of development, education has historically ranked first. The efforts to promote education in the villages in Punjab range from setting up schools to establishment of trusts that support local libraries to scholarships for students to donation to even fundraising from immigrants for Punjab. Some of the initiatives led by American Sikhs even have global ties, like the Dhaliwal Academy in the village of Rakhra that is affiliated with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. American Sikhs have financed construction of hospitals in their natal villages and/or established medical trusts for villagers. America based immigrant, Hoshiar Singh donated money to the Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital run by Shahid Kartar Sarabha Charitable Trust in the village of Sarabha. Dr. Raghbir Singh Basi, an academic at Alaska Pacific University, developed a plan to promote basic ground level changes in water supply, hygiene, sanitation, and computer education. Dr. Basi, and Dr. Gurdev Singh Gill from Canada, also funded parks, treated the sewerage system, installed streetlights powered by solar energy, covered pavements in the village of Kharaudi in the district of Hoshiarpur. Still others, like American immigrant, Dr. Amarjit Singh Marwah, have supported construction of low cost housing as well.

Interestingly, American Sikhs, as well as Sikhs who have immigrated elsewhere, were not always as

involved with the health sector (and other development projects), Satnam Chana* asserts based on a survey administered in 2002. But when that same survey was administered in 2007, a significant increase was recorded in investment in general social development projects. Perhaps the increase is attributable to incentives offered by the Indian government when the country was forced to accept foreign competition. Availability of dual citizenship, financial stimuli, setting up of political offices to address the needs of overseas Sikhs (and Indians) are some of the ways in which the Indian government motivated its emigrants to undertake progress in Punjab (and India overall). Such strategies to solicit funding from overseas Sikhs have been adopted as the state retreated from its responsibility, including financing the education system, in the era of economic liberalisation and likely to have inadvertently reinforced the idea of the Sikh "homeland" in Punjab.

Discussion

American Sikhs construct of "homeland" is multidimensional. This fight for a separate Sikh state pre-dates India's independence and found support in the American diaspora as early as the 1940s. Disappointment with the treatment of Sikhs by the Indian government in the post 1984 period is when the movement gathered renewed support among American Sikhs. This "homeland" that the American Sikhs, along with Sikhs elsewhere, supported was intertwined with political aspirations, a home where Sikh voices would not be suppressed by Hindu-dominated India. Much later, one sees a similar movement for "home" in the Free Akal Takht organisation. The objective here is

to get control over Akal Takht, sever it from the authority of SGPC, and have a say in decision-making that impacts Sikhs everywhere.


But American Sikhs' engagement with Punjab is more than realising Khalistan and power over Akal Takht. The immigrants also invest in philanthropic endeavors by constructing gurdwaras or sponsoring religious events in Punjab. Such involvements are suggestive of a spiritual relationship with Punjab. Punjab is the birthplace of Sikhism, although Nankana Sahib where Guru Nanak was born is in today's Pakistan. Nonetheless, the Golden Temple, Akal Takht and the broader Indian nation's association of Sikhism with the state of Punjab make the two – Punjab and Sikhism – inseparable. Quite likely, Sikh concepts of *dan*, or charity, *seva*, or selfless service, provide additional impetus for engagement in specifically Sikh religious matters. Perhaps, giving back to one's ancestral village is a way to give back to one's "own" community, or a place that one identifies as "home." Intertwined with Sikh religious values of charity and selfless service that incentivises the immigrants to contribute to Punjab is the concept of *izzat*, or honor, as suggested by Verne Dusenbery, with his research focused on the United Kingdom, put forward a similar connection between *izzat*, diaspora and Punjab. He argues that the construction of homes in Punjab is demonstration of wealth and assertion of *izzat* by nonresident Indians. For American Sikhs, then is the importance of asserting a higher social status in Punjab through religious contribution an indication of their connection to Punjab as "home," a place where they are "seen" and thus experience a sense of belonging? I say the answer is yes

– the same reason for contributions toward development projects in Punjab.

As well, this essay showed that American Sikhs desire *izzat* from the immigrant transnational community. Demonstration of success through material contributions, be it for religion and/or development, points in that direction. Steve Taylor certainly maintains that the houses built by the British Punjabi NRIs in their villages "are signifiers of belonging to, and inclusion within, not only Punjab as a region and India as a nation but also the non-resident Indian community in Punjab/India and the global Punjabi diaspora/transnational community". That means, it is important to consider the extent to which the contributions made toward gurdwaras, or religious events as well as money invested for village improvement projects are suggestive of competition within the Sikh transnational community. Then, that transnational space is also "home" for the immigrants. Contrary to the imagination of a "homeland" bounded by territory in the form of Punjab, the boundaries of the transnational space as "home" (without land) is a flexible one; fluid because it shifts to fit the flexible boundaries of the transnational space.

This brings us to the next question, i.e., to what extent is this identification of "homeland/home" with Punjab and/or the transnational arena intertwined with Sikh location as racial minorities in America? Giorgio Shani contends that marginalisation in the immigrants' place of settlement as racial minorities is indeed connected to the group's quest for a "homeland" or a separate nation. Pursuit of a Sikh "homeland" will protect the interests of the group,





and that, in turn, will make it possible for those like the American Sikhs to wield power in their place of settlement. Thus, the belonging is sought in the place of settlement but with the tools made available by an exclusively Sikh nation.

The struggle for greater independence in the diaspora the Akal Takht movement can be viewed through this lens. Certainly, the Ghadr movement of the early twentieth century in which American Sikhs, along with fellow Indian immigrants, fought to free India from colonial rule was connected to the racism experienced by Sikhs, and other South Asians, who had immigrated to America. Of course, the Ghadarites fought as Indians to free India, a “homeland,” from British imperialism. But, of greater direct relevance to the issue at hand is that their struggle was linked with their experience of racism in America. And even when the goal is not for a separate “homeland” or for liberation from the Indian government necessarily, participation in Punjabi electoral politics is indicative of that belonging and bond that the group continues to share with Punjab – a bond that might be linked with being non-white in America. Furthermore, the quest for a ‘homeland’ by diaspora Sikhs is likely connected with the dominant

association of “Indian” with Hindu which excludes Sikhs, and Indians of other non-Hindu religions. It is an identity that is promoted by “Indian” immigrants. Therefore, pursuit of a “home” where immigrant Sikhs can imagine complete belonging is empowering for the group.

Having said all this, it would be inaccurate to clearly demarcate “diaspora” and “homeland” between America and Punjab. The Sikh immigrants with their patterns of involvement, including philanthropy, do imagine complete acceptance in Punjab.

But some of the values that guide this engagement with Punjab in the ways discussed here are suggestive of a Sikh identity that is influenced by America as well which, in turn, makes it imperative to not identify America as purely a diasporic space (that is away from the “homeland” in Punjab).

Verne Dusenbery puts forward the argument that “diaspora Sikhs are influenced not only by Punjabi cultural understandings and social practices but also by those of the respective countries to which they have emigrated” and then speaking specifically about migration to Western nations, Dusenbery continues: “Given their international migration patterns, the majority

of Sikh emigrants have experienced some form of Western modernity". An aspect of that modernity is the absorption of values that support charity, religious or secular, which is supported by the state through tax deductible donations (Dusenbery) – types of engagement with Punjab that is evident among American Sikhs. There is moreover another aspect of western modernity identified by Dusenbery that is noteworthy, i.e., a "sense of progress and of bringing 'development' to those 'less developed'. The preference for a "globalised education" that emphasises instruction in English, technical education, private ownership of institutions and projects for improvement in their natal villages show the ways in which American Sikhs attempt to bring progress. One thus sees that the group's "Sikhness," "Punjabiness" and "Indianness" gradually meld with an emergent American conception of self.

What it also indicates is that the Sikh identity stretches beyond a mere instrumental relationship with America as suggested by Soysal's understanding of immigrant citizenship mentioned earlier in the essay, i.e., merely to ensure political rights or citizenship. The attachment is a cultural one as well where American Sikhs are shaped by the values of the place where they have settled. Here, one might want to note that the Sikh immigrants arrive from a nation previously governed by the British that is likely to have already shaped their identity in favor of a western view of. Thus, postcolonial identity, which immigrates with them to the west, shows that they were primed to absorb western modernity to begin with. Sikh immigrants create home in the "diaspora" as

they create home in Punjab as well. The sense of self is impacted by ancestral, spiritual, and natal ties with Punjab, as well as shaped by the experience of western modernity. Hence, a binary of "homeland" and "diaspora" is difficult given these various components of the American Sikh identity.

More work is needed in four other areas of the American Sikh experience:

- a) scholarship should further examine with empirical research the ways in which caste hierarchies within the American Sikh community, that migrate along with the immigrants are re-configured and influence the community's construct of home. The presence of caste identified gurdwaras, like the ones in the New York and New Jersey areas show that the Sikh community is not a monolith. How do those intra-group differences shape American Sikh identity and their sense of belonging?
- b) the American Sikh community is also differentiated on the basis of social class and rural versus urban backgrounds; how do socioeconomic and spatial differences, along with caste, shape the boundaries of the Sikh community in America and shape the people's view of "home?"
- c) more light needs to be thrown on gender by those invested in theorizing about the immigrant Sikh construct of "homeland." The Khalsa identity of Sikhs, which embodies the male and/or masculinized body as representative of Sikhism, receives much support in the diaspora.
- d) more empirical, and specifically, qualitative work, is needed on American Sikhs to assess how intragroup differences shape the

experience of race in America and thus, also inform the group's construct of home.

Conclusion

Within the parameters of the information presented here, it can be argued that the patterns of commitment of American Sikhs, namely in the areas of politics, religion and development, show continued attachment with Punjab. Yet the immigrants identify with the country of immigration as well. Further, attachment with America is not just on the grounds of political rights and privileges, or citizenship, but also because there is a likely absorption of its cultural values which is suggestive of being "from" America as well.

Perhaps "homes" are many for immigrant Sikhs. More scholarship is needed on Sikh immigrants' understandings of "homeland" and "diaspora" with sustained focus on postcoloniality and the ways in which intra-group divisions and the racism experienced influence constructions of "homeland" and "diaspora."

****The complete article along with credits can be found on <https://nishaannagaara.com>.**

Diditi Mitra is Associate Professor of Sociology at Brookdale Community College. Her research focuses on race and immigration. Diditi has authored Punjabi Immigrant Mobility in the United States: Adaptation through Race and Class & co-edited Race & the Lifecourse: Readings from the Intersection of Race, Ethnicity & Age, along with having published academic articles. As well, Diditi currently serves on the editorial board of Sikh Research Journal as the book review editor. Diditi is also a Kathak dancer.

The Let's Share a Meal Journey: Feeding Humanity in the name of Guru Nanak across the USA

Sneha Pherwani



In the spirit of “*Kirt Karo; Naam Japo; Vand Chhako*” the profound tenets of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, Let’s Share A Meal (LSM) has emerged as a beacon of hope and compassion, dedicated to serving Humanity through acts of selfless service.

This noble initiative traces its origins to 2012 when it was born as a dream nurtured by a handful of dedicated Sikh volunteers at Gurdwara Nanak

Naam Jahaj in Jersey City, New Jersey. Their vision was simple yet powerful: to feed over a million needy people.

From humble beginnings, where they initially served around 1500 meals, LSM has grown into a global force of compassion, orchestrating meal drives in all 50 states of the US. They will soon surpass an incredible milestone of nearly 50,000+ meals in 2023 under the “50 States: 1

Mission” banner. As November 18th approaches, the Jersey City Chapter of LSM is gearing up to extend its heart-warming service by preparing and delivering more than 15,000 meals to underprivileged individuals across the Tri-states over that weekend.

In the spirit of inclusivity, on October 28, LSM’s Boston Chapter will step up to serve regions with low or no Sikh

population, such as New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Maine. This underscores our mission's universal essence, emphasizing that Humanity knows no bounds and transcends all barriers.

Let's Share a Meal's Signature Initiatives:

1. **Mega Food Drives:** In April and November each year, LSM conducts Mega Food Drives to coincide with Vaisakhi, Sikh Awareness and Appreciation Month, and the auspicious occasion of Guru Nanak Dev Ji's Gurburab and Thanksgiving.

2. **Tasty Tuesdays:** Monthly Food Drives at Newark Penn Station, known as 'Tasty Tuesdays,' consistently bring sustenance and hope to those in need.

3. **International Aid:** The LSM reach also extends to conflict zones. They have shipped medical aid and daily essentials to war and earthquake victims in Ukraine, Turkey & Syria, offering a ray of hope in their darkest hours.

4. **Global Outreach:** Beyond borders, LSM has made an impact by distributing 117 high-end 10-liter oxygen concentrators during the first wave of COVID-19 in India, supplying motorized wheelchairs to physically disabled seniors in Northern India, and providing essential support to COVID-impacted villages in India.

5. **Housing and Meals:** In an extraordinary display of compassion, LSM provided all-day-long meals and housing to recent refugees from Pakistan who have settled in India.

According to Onkar Singh Ji, the driving force propelling Let's Share A Meal, "We've ventured into regions where sightings of the Sikh



Volunteers from Gurudwara Nanak Naam Jahaj in Jersey City, New Jersey distribute food to the needy.





community or even Indians are a rarity. Yet, when people resonate with the names 'Guru Nanak Dev Ji,' 'Guru Ka Langar,' and 'Seva,' individuals, regardless of their religion, caste, or gender, eagerly come forward to support us in bridging the last-mile gap, ensuring our mission reaches those in need."

Let's Share A Meal is not just an initiative; it is a testament to the power of selfless service, a manifestation of the Sikh community's doctrine, *Vand Chako*.

It's making a profound impact on a global scale. It is a beacon of hope, a testament to unity and compassion, and to the teachings of Guru Nanak Devji.

*Article contributed by Sneha Pherwani on behalf of Let's Share A Meal
(Marketing & Communications)*

*For more information, visit:
<https://letsshareameal.org/>
Instagram @letsshareameal
Facebook @letsshareamealorg*

Discovering The Forgotten Heritage Of The Panjabs with Peter Bance

Interview by Artika Aurora Bakshi

I have walked the streets of Amritsar, awestruck by the intricate jaaliwork of the jharokas in the old mansions, the carvings on the entrance pillars, and the dates written on the facades. This feeling is always followed by a deep sadness at the state these havelis lie in. Panjab, both sides of the border, is dotted with monuments from the times of glory, but they lie in ruin, with very few being taken over by the authorities or private organisations. Restoration, and conservation are issues that are close to our hearts, and we at Nishaan have been highlighting these. In our endeavour to create awareness, and bring these issues to the forefront, here is another feature, hoping that those who can make a difference take note before the forgotten history, manuscripts, artefacts, and monuments are lost forever. For the Anglo-Panjab History enthusiasts, Peter Bance is not a new name. His Instagram account is fervently followed by many, with each of his posts generating thousands of engagements.

It all started with a trip, around twenty five years ago, when after a conversation with my parents, I wanted to visit the resting place of Maharaja Duleep Singh in Thetford. While there, I was pointed towards a small museum by an elderly lady.

The museum had been started by the late Maharaja's son, and showcased memorabilia connected with the lives of the Maharaja and his children. Further intrigued, I asked the curator if there was any literature dedicated to his family, old records etc.

The answer in negative prompted me to place a series of adverts in the local papers, asking if anyone had known or had any information about the family. Over the next six months, I received close to three hundred replies from people.

Some had known the children, some, whose grandfathers had worked for the Maharaja, and some who had things that had belonged to him, like diaries, hunting boots, photo albums etc. I spent that year visiting these people, collecting information, and even buying some of the memorabilia. Some of the people just gave the things they had, because they saw how appreciative I was of the history associated with the items.



Duleep Singh's second son Prince Frederick was the founder of Ancient House Museum and took a keen interest in local history.

To understand Maharaja Duleep Singh, and trace back his life when he was a child in India, Peter travelled to Lahore in 2004, and this led him further to discover the splendour of the Sikh Darbar through the monuments that stood witness to the Sikh Empire of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The state these monuments were in, was another story.



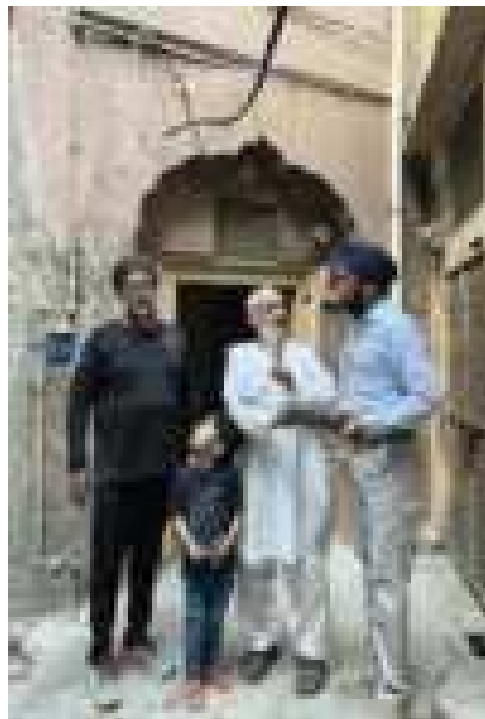
Since all the children had died without any heirs, a lot of their things were taken away by the locals, or the people who worked for them.

So many years later, the descendants had no attachment to those items, and this enabled me to build up a collection, fuelling my interest to record and preserve the history of the Sikh Darbar and Maharaja Duleep Singh, and how he and his descendants had lived in England.

It took me almost two years to come up with my first publication.

My family has its roots in what is now Pakistan, just like the family of the Maharaja I was researching. My grandfather left Sialkot in 1936 to come to England. The first thing I did was to visit my grandfather's house, and then further to Gujranwala, Lahore, and all the other places associated with Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Maharani Jind Kaur, and Duleep Singh. From then on, I regularly visited India and Pakistan, realising that a major chunk of monuments relating to the Sikh Empire are in Pakistan, in the Panjab there.

To understand nineteenth century Panjab, one has to visit Pakistan, to see the monuments, which are a prime example of Sikh architecture.



(Left)
My Grandfather's house in Daska Sialkot, owner giving me a nanakshai brick from the house

(Below)
Baba Bhuman Shah was a prominent sadhu of Udasi Sikhs born in 1687. Following Partition, the haveli was divided between different families who were unable to maintain it due to lack of resources. The haveli is about 150kms from Lahore.



The first reaction on seeing the monuments is despair, at the state they are in. Looking at them in a wider context, one feels glad that they still exist, though it is sad that in the region where most of the Sikhs live, as opposed to the region across the border, in the name of restoration, many monuments have lost their originality.

The old ones have been demolished, new ones, modeled on the Sikh architecture having taken their place. The historical character of the building gets lost, the Nanakshahi bricks, which were the trademark of architecture from that period, replaced by marble and gold.



Chillianwala monument



Gurdwara Beri Sahib Sialkot, before restoration



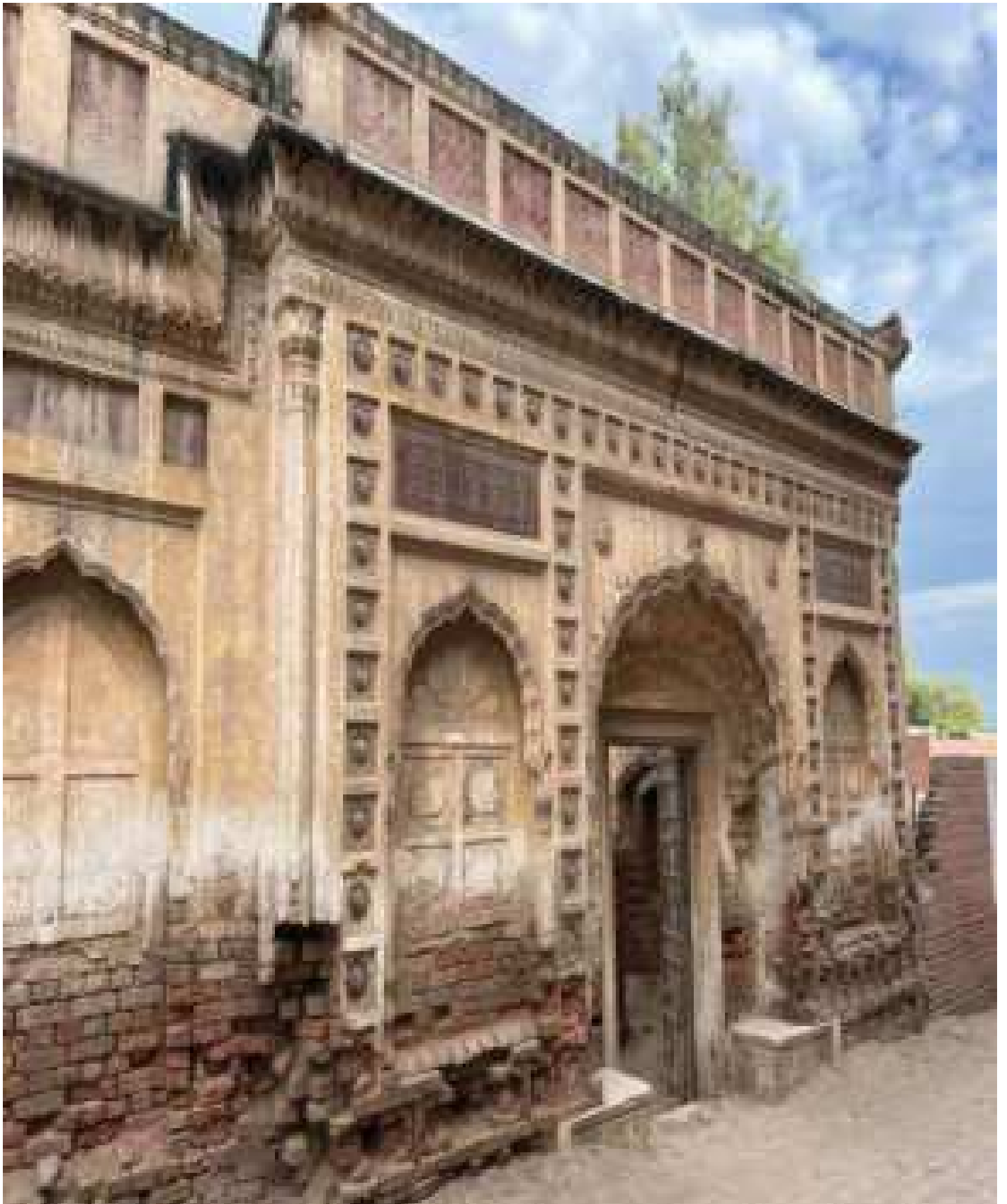
Gurdwara Beri Sahib, Sialkot after Restoration



Gurdwara Tibba Nanaksar - before Restoration



Gurdwara Tibba Nanaksar, Mandi Bahuddin



THE WAY FORWARD? MAKING OUR VOICES HEARD...

It's heartening to see the restoration of the Sikh Gallery in the Lahore Fort, and the preservation of buildings in the walled city of Lahore. It seems that there are voices being heard. A team from Europe, specifically from Hungary has been hired to restore the paintings of August Schoefft.

August Schoefft (1809 – 1888) was a Hungarian painter of the 19th century. He spent more than one year in the Sikh Empire, arriving in 1841, where he painted portraits and scenes of the surrounding area. His best known works include *The Court of Lahore* and *Maharaja Ranjit Singh at Darbar Sahib*.



Ranjit Singh at Harmandir Sahib August Schoefft Vienna 1850 Princess Bamba Collection Lahore Fort

I want to see more work done in India. Since the Sikh population in India exceeds that of Pakistan, there is awareness about who Maharaja Ranjit Singh was, and how grand the Sikh style of architecture was. Funding is not the issue. For historical preservation to gain momentum in India, it is important that private enthusiasts and governmental bodies work together. The awareness needs to spread to the grassroots.

On my visits to Lahore, I met a few historians who were researching and cataloging artefacts, documents, and buildings of the Sikh Darbar. This is one way of creating awareness. They actively share their work on the digital platform, hence the new approach to preservation there. The way forward is by networking, and using technology to spread awareness, share research, and by doing so, adding to archives. This also encourages tourism, which further encourages preservation and restoration. While we are talking about monuments, let's not forget the historic gurdwaras. The prime example is Kartarpur Sahib. Sikhs from all over visit, and take pride in the history of the gurdwara.

Using his Instagram account, Peter Bance is bringing these forgotten and neglected monuments into the limelight. Awareness created through online engagements, is his way of sharing his passion for Sikh history.

By pure accident, I started creating awareness. It all started with me wanting to know more about the Sikh Darbar. The lack of archives prompted me to document my findings, and my visits to Pakistan and India, mainly the places connected with the Sikh Darbar, gave birth to my Instagram account. and people started approaching me about restoration. I had to tell them that I was not a restorer, but because of the power of digital technology, people who were

interested in taking this forward could connect. People have reached out and brought places to my attention.

Every week I get hundreds of messages from people on both sides of the border, asking me to let them know next time in the area, to show monuments which lie forgotten. These people sadly are not in positions of power to take up such projects. I am hoping that those in seats of power take these causes up, the governments, different organisations involved in heritage restoration and conservation.

Every individual with a passion for history speaks sadly about what is lost. While disheartened, with voices not being heard, they still carry on in their own way, trying to make a difference. How many more monuments do we need to lose before

we wake up? We talk about bringing back the museum pieces from the U.K. and Europe, about the Koh-i-Noor, the throne of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the jewels and the tapestries which adorn the walls of museums outside the historical region, but sadly, what was left behind has not been cared for.

Let's not forget, not all the things in museums abroad were stolen from India. Emissaries were showered with gifts by the monarch when they visited the darbar, the same way as the maharajas were honoured with gifts from abroad. The sad thing is that while these things were looked after by the British, the gifts that came to Lahore for example, were not kept in the same way.

Hence, we see that more artefacts are found in Britain than in India and



Order of Merit, presented to Lord Auckland by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1838. Enamelled gold, set with diamonds.



The Golden Throne of Maharaja Ranjit Singh by Hafez Muhammed Multani, Lahore, c.1818. Wood and resin core covered with sheets of embossed gold. (V&A Collections)



*Princess Bamba's grave
in Lahore*

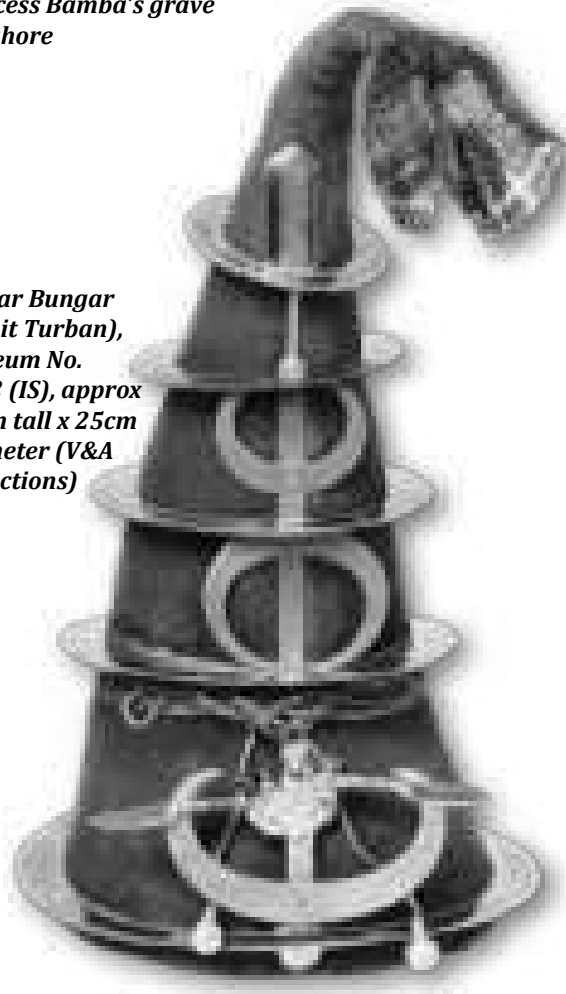


*The Court of
Maharaja Ranjit
Singh V&A
Collections*

Pakistan. Many of these high-value items, which were owned by some of the princely houses of Punjab, have been auctioned. After 1947, when many of the royal houses should have handed over their treasures to the government, they sold their possessions privately to generate funds.

Private collectors, and museums abroad, like the Victoria and Albert, are ensuring that they look after their collections, most of it obtained through proper auctioning processes. Museums in the U.K. also ask the collectors to lend their collections for specially-curated exhibitions.

*Dastar Bungar
(Quoit Turban),
Museum No.
3462 (IS), approx
43cm tall x 25cm
diameter (V&A
Collections)*





Peter Bance's endeavour, and his commitment is awe-inspiring, and by showcasing passionate individuals like him, those who are proud of their heritage, we at Nishaan can only hope that the voice we raise does not fall on deaf ears.

Peter Bance is an independent researcher, author and historian, emphasising much of his work around Anglo-Punjab History.

He operates a London-based property business, but has a deep affection for history, strongly believing in the restoration, preservation and

recording of historical events and data.

Peter is a UK-born Sikh, whose family was among the early Sikhs to migrate to Britain in the 1930s. As a third generation UK Sikh he has great affection for his ancestral homeland and annually visits the West and East Punjab to research its rich and colourful history.

His research has allowed him to locate and acquire the largest collection of memorabilia and artefacts associated with Maharajah Duleep Singh and his family, which he has built over the last two decades. Amongst his collection is original

clothing worn by the Maharajah, his personal diaries, his bible from Fatehgarh and personal family photo albums.

He has written a number of books on Anglo-Sikh subjects with major publishing houses, and contributed to countless publications with his research and photographic archive. He regularly contributes to BBC Radios Suffolk, Norfolk and London.

He is currently part of a British Film Institute film on a joint British-India production which covers the Suffragette life of Princess Sophia Duleep Singh.

Sikh Gallery Of Art and Culture at The Royal Ontario Museum, Canada

Suresh Pal Singh Bhalla & Senator Sarabjit Singh Marwah



V&A Exhibition at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in Toronto, Canada.



**Suresh Pal Singh Bhalla,
Director & President Sikh Art & Culture
Foundation of Canada
Interview by Nishaan**

We are pleased to share with *Nishaan's* readers an update on our endeavour for "By The Five Rivers" that has enjoyed modest success so far, attendant with excitement, inspiration, and some disappointments. After signing a Memorandum Of Understanding with the ROM on March 31st, we successfully committed 60% of the ROM's financial requirement for the Gallery of \$25.0 million. Individual pledges from some thirty supporters ranged from \$5.0 million to \$50,000 each. We continue to aspire for diversity of support from countries where the Sikh diaspora has enjoyed success.

The Sikh Gallery, to open in about five years, will be of Global significance as impressively stated in the MOU signed with the ROM. In this vein our current supporters include non-Sikhs, aggregating \$450,000 in support - our objective is to get to five each of non-Sikh supporters (Muslim, Hindu, and Caucasian) in Guru Nanak's spirit of Universality. We are confident of delivering the remaining \$10.0 million within the next 12-18 months, well before our commitment to provide the same in up to five years. A most encouraging donor support momentum, supplemented by our efforts to get some Federal and Provincial grants, encourages us to believe of an early delivery of the total \$25 million to the ROM. But we are not there yet! We continue to seek potential supporters who we believe may have the resources, sensibilities, understanding, and the will to support this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the Sikh Community.

A Sikh presence at Canada's largest Museum, amongst the five most renowned in North America, we believe, will be quite a unique and formidable achievement. We sincerely hope that you can consider joining us in this journey that other fellow Sikhs, deserving and conspicuous examples of the Sikh spirit of generosity and Chardikala, have allowed us to get to where we are.

We can be contacted at sureshpsbhalla@gmail.com.

The project has taken its time from the initial idea, planning, funding and so on. You must be delighted that it is finally coming to shape. Please tell us something about this incredible journey.

In the year 1999 the Victoria and Albert Museum in London mounted an iconic Sikh Exhibition “The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms” – to mark the 300th anniversary of a transformative event in Sikh history, the founding of the Khalsa. It was amongst the most comprehensive Exhibition of Sikh art ever held, with artifacts drawn from museums and collections across the world. In the months that followed, Sikh sponsors in Canada partnered with the two museums to stage the landmark V&A Exhibition at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in Toronto, Canada.

The ROM Exhibition, augmented with works of Sikh art from private collections in Canada, was warmly endorsed by the V&A as the final incarnation of “The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms”. The huge success of the ROM Exhibition generated a groundswell of interest in Sikh art and heritage. It got expressed in a broad range of initiatives, many centred in Toronto: lectures, seminars, performing and visual arts in museums, galleries, universities, and other institutions, private and public.

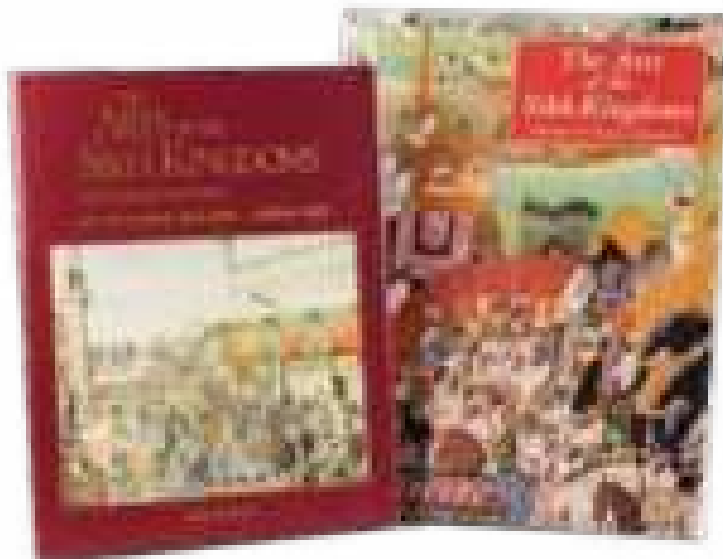
Collectors in Canada and elsewhere recognised the need and value for the safe custody of Sikh art and historical artifacts and a venue for showcasing and exhibiting that heritage. That formed the genesis of our dialogue with the ROM, some three years ago, for the Museum to consider a permanent Sikh Gallery of Art and Culture. It would provide confidence to sponsors to consider supporting



Painting of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Maharaja Kharak Singh



Painting of a Sikh soldier with his horse



Books on display at The Royal Ontario Museum



the venture. It would also give an assurance to Collectors who may consider entrusting priceless objects of heritage. ROM is the largest and most comprehensive museum in Canada, exploring the country's artistic, cultural, and natural heritage. For more than a century, the Sikh diaspora has been a vital part of the fabric of Canada, contributing to the economic, political, and social life of the country. As Canada's world museum, ROM signed an exciting and inspiring Memorandum of Understanding on March 31st 2023 with the Sikh community to establish a permanent Gallery of Sikh Art and Culture. The Gallery is expected to open within the next five years.

The new Gallery of Sikh Art, Culture & Heritage exhibition at ROM will be the first of its kind in Canada. What we can expect to see at the exhibition ?

The Gallery of Sikh Art and Culture at the ROM will comprise of hundreds of artworks and artifacts, rivalling those of the Victoria and Albert Museum, British Museum, and the Royal Collection. It would include rare works of art, vintage photographs, arms and armour, ephemera, maps, prints, rare books, coins, and textiles.

The display at the Gallery will be brought to life by a proficient curator who specialises in the Sikh arts. The scale and depth of these artworks and artifacts could inspire other institutional and private collectors around the world to contribute their long-hidden treasures to the Sikh Gallery at the ROM.

From your perspective, what makes Sikh art unique and distinguishable from other artistic traditions?

Sikh art is a product of its history, religion, people and culture. While Islamic and Hindu traditions may have had some impact on Sikh art, it remains distinguishable from them in its unique history of upholding human rights, equality amongst the sexes, tolerance, conflict, and the universality of mankind (Guru Nanak).

A large part of the Sikh history revolves around our struggles and sacrifices. Unfortunately, these sacrifices are rarely discussed at home, nor are they included in our history books. Has this been adequately covered at the future Gallery of Sikh Art, Culture & Heritage at ROM ?

The Curator of Sikh art will decide on a balance between the history, culture, religion and politics of the Sikh people to ensure that the Gallery provides a broad perspective. The Curator will be guided by the sponsoring Committee to designing the Gallery and arranging periodic specific



Exhibitions highlighting the historical struggles in sacrifices and other aspects of the Sikh culture. It is our sincere hope that the Gallery and supportive programmes will adequately reflect all aspects of our history, culture, and religion.



Suresh Pal Singh Bhalla

Can you discuss any technology or interactive elements such as multimedia presentations, virtual reality, or even interactive displays being used in the exhibitions design to enhance visitor engagement and understanding of Sikh art and culture?

While it is a little premature to discuss these aspects in any detail for a Gallery that is scheduled to open in five years, we are aware of how technology can increase the range and scope of the Gallery. Multimedia presentations and virtual displays will “enhance visitor engagement and understanding”. We contemplate Holograms of the Sikh scriptures that may be difficult to display physically. We are in contact with a major Museum-technology company in New York that will work on proposals for the Sikh Gallery.

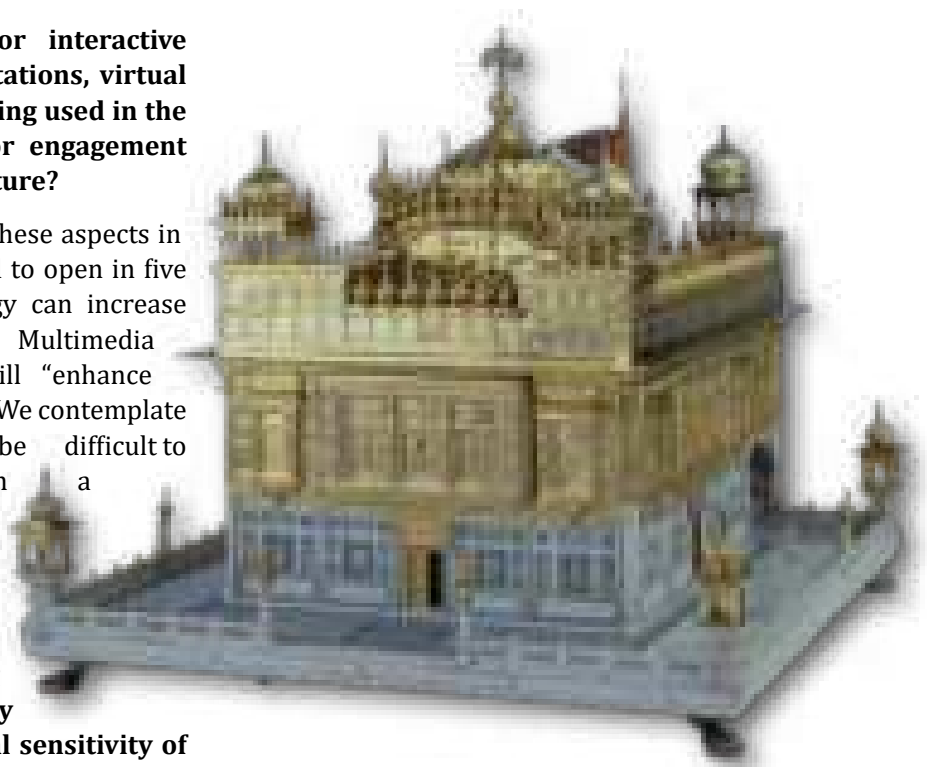
Can you discuss any specific challenges you encountered while putting together this exhibition, especially considering the historical and cultural sensitivity of the subject matter?

With the challenge of raising \$25.0 million committed to the ROM, there are likely to be others. Finding an appropriate Sikh Curator based on an international search, building an appropriate Sikh collection at the ROM through purchases, loans, and donations, and developing an efficient Gallery design acceptable to all, may be some anticipated anxieties.

What is the current status of your dialogue with the Royal Ontario Museum?

We are currently keen for the ROM to commence its search for a Curator of Sikh art, that is likely to take some time. The search will be professionally conducted, based on an international search process, as per the ROM’s policies and procedures. We are also engaged with the ROM in our efforts to obtain Federal and Provincial government grants. Lastly, the ROM has offered to support our “Sangat Initiative” directed at raising \$1.5-2.0 million from small donors on the website(s), social media, etc. for donations between \$100-\$500. We are keen for the ROM to mount a Sikh Exhibition in early 2026, in anticipation of the Gallery opening in 2028.

We are also contemplating a Gala Dinner event at the ROM in April 2024 to add to an existing awareness of the Sikh Gallery, amongst other things.



Model of the Golden Temple of the Amritsar, early 1870s



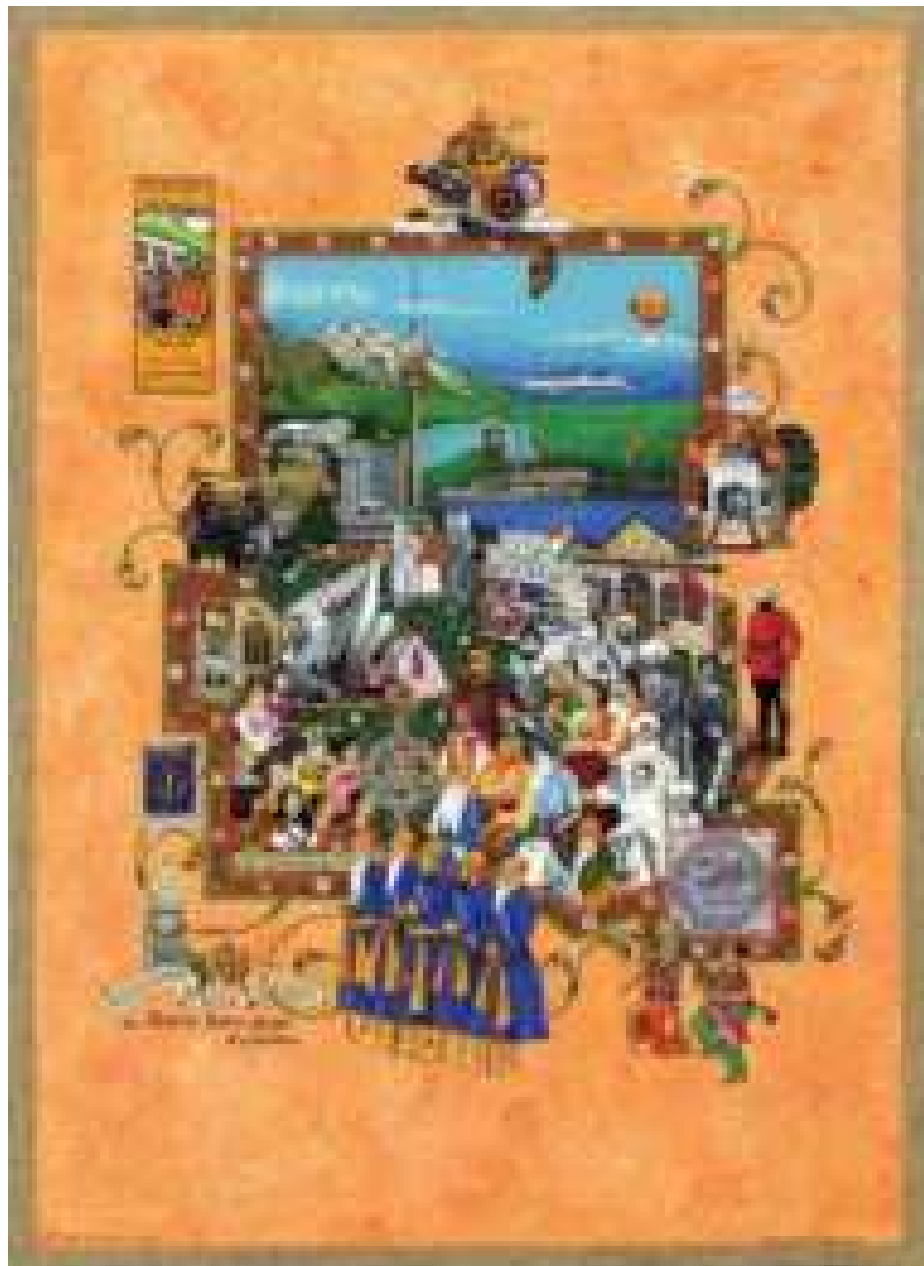
Painting of Sikh Akalis at Amritsar

What significance does the exhibited items hold in terms of reflecting Sikh history, culture, spirituality and heritage ?

The Exhibited items, with relevant explanations, will speak to themselves about reflecting Sikh history, culture, spirituality, and heritage.

Collaboration often extends beyond the exhibition itself. Are there any plans for sustaining the partnership between museums & institutions beyond the confines of the ROM?

Most definitely, as indicated earlier, the Sikh Gallery endeavour will undeniably lead to a collaborative and participative effort with other museums and



Sikhs in Canada, The Singh Twins, watersolour on board, England.

institutions. The ROM contemplates arranging travelling Sikh Exhibitions to other venues that do not have the capacity to mount their own Exhibitions.

How will the specific Donor expectations be fulfilled by the Royal Ontario Museum?

The ROM will arrange to enter into specific “Gift Agreements” with each individual Donor that will spell out mutual expectations of actual payments, timing, donor recognition, etc.. The organizing Committee will ensure that Donor expectations do not conflict with overall expectations of the Committee for the Gallery.

Will the Gallery be accessible globally to those interested in Sikh Art and Culture?

It is intended that the Gallery will be supported with an elaborate website to allow global access to its contents, events, and current news on Sikh arts and culture. Knowledge of the website will be disseminated and promoted to all locations with a significant presence of the Sikh diaspora. Use of ethnic media, including magazines like *Nishaan* are contemplated for the dissemination.

Will visitors be able to buy Sikh art and memorabilia at the ROM museum store ?

Yes, of course, visitors will be able to buy books, memorabilia, and high quality reproductions of antiquities and paintings, but unlikely any real Sikh art. The ROM’s merchandising department will determine what to offer in their elaborate shopping area.

Finally, is there a tentative date for the launch of the Sikh art, culture and heritage?

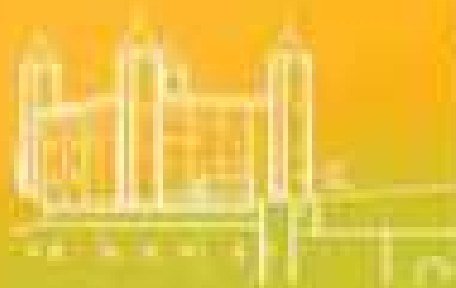
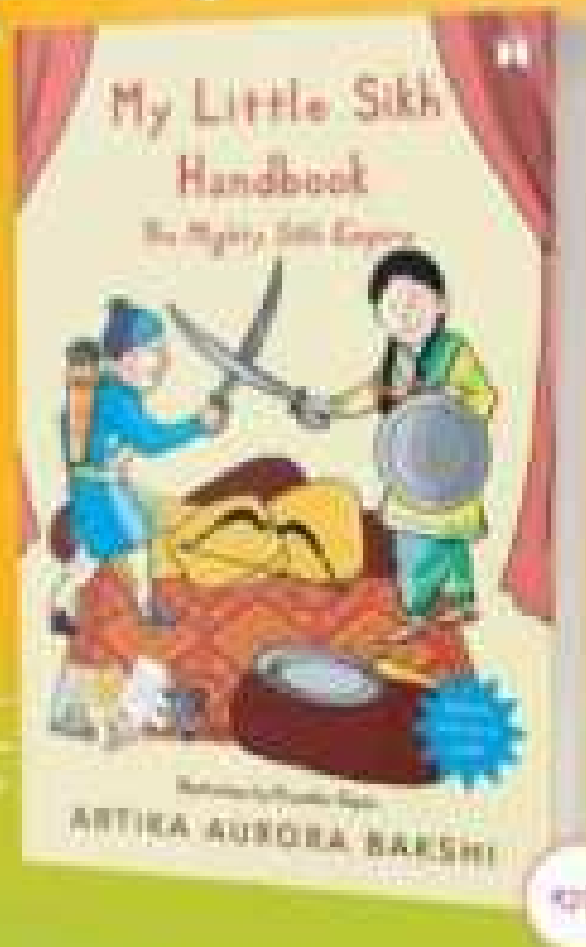
The tentative date is April 2028, hopefully on Vaisakhi date!

Available at all leading bookstores & online!

History

Fun Facts

Maps



Turn the pages and revisit the history of
The Mighty Sikh Empire.
Himmat and Nanaki are back, exploring the wondrous world
of the Sikhs. Read about Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the
glory of the Khalsa Army. Journey along the Koh-i-Noor,
as it finds its way to the Tower of London.





MAJ. GEN. MOHINDAR S CHOPRA

THE OFFICER WHO SET UP THE 'ATTARI-WAGAH BORDER' IN 1947

On August 15, Independence Day, a huge crowd will throng the Attari-Wagah Joint Check Post (JCP) on the Indo-Pak border near Amritsar. Most of them will be unaware that for two months after the Partition there was no designated border between the two countries on this road connecting Amritsar and Lahore.

It was Brigadier (later Major General) Mohindar Singh Chopra – who took over the 123 Infantry Brigade at Amritsar in October 1947 – who put up a sentry post at the border which later turned into a JCP.

Having organised a referendum at Sylhet in Assam before taking up his present assignment, Brig. Chopra was aware of the enormity of the task at hand, given the precarious situation of sectarian clashes when he took over the brigade in Amritsar.

In his Order of the Day issued on October 11, 1947, after assuming command of the brigade, Brig. Chopra emphasised the need for peace in Amritsar district without delay. “Be an enthusiast, and go forward with the task of restoring



peace and tranquility and foster brotherly relations, remember the only way to ensure safe evacuation of your kith and kin is to allow Muslim convoys to go untouched...,” he wrote in the order to the rank and file of the brigade. In the initial days, there was no thick white line in the middle of the Grand Trunk Road dividing the border of India and Pakistan.

A barrier with two drums on either side was put up along with flagstaffs.

Brigadier Mohindar Singh Chopra leads 123 Brigade in a flag march through Amritsar, October 1947.

Forced-Landing Of Plane Near Lucknow



The following Indian Army officers and crew members of an I.A.F. de Havilland Devon aircraft were rescued after the aircraft crashed on landing near Lucknow. The plane crashed from the air. The officers are from left to right: Brigadier (Retired) D. K. Chatterjee, Brigadier (Retired) R. S. Chatterjee, Brigadier (Retired) R. S. Chatterjee, Brigadier (Retired) R. S. Chatterjee, Brigadier (Retired) R. S. Chatterjee, Brigadier (Retired) R. S. Chatterjee, Brigadier (Retired) R. S. Chatterjee, Brigadier (Retired) R. S. Chatterjee, Brigadier (Retired) R. S. Chatterjee, Brigadier (Retired) R. S. Chatterjee. The plane crashed near Lucknow.

4 GENERALS IN PLANE WHICH FORCE-LANDS

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Images of the crashed de-Havilland Devon aircraft of the Indian Air Force that had crashed outside Lucknow

Emotional scenes have been recounted by refugees from India and Pakistan upon reaching this visibly marked border as they fell down and kissed the land of their respective countries, relieved at having made it across the border alive. A discerning visitor can still see a plaque at the bottom of the flagstaff on the JCP which bears the words: "Foundation stone of this flag staff was laid by Brig. Mohindar Singh Chopra on 11th Oct 1947".

As per details provided by his grandson, Major General Chopra was from one of the first batches of King's Commissioned Indian Officers of the Indian Army, having graduated from the Royal Military College at Sandhurst in England in 1928. Born in 1907 in Amritsar, he did his schooling at the Prince of Wales Royal Indian Military College at Dehra Dun before being selected for Sandhurst. After first attachment with the 1st Royal Fusiliers in Ambala and Kasauli, he was transferred to the 1st Rajputs. In 1932, he became the first Indian officer to join the famous 6th Royal Battalion of the 13th Frontier Force Rifles at Hanguin. In 1941, he graduated from

the Staff College at Quetta and served with the Iraq-Persia (Paiforce) and in the Burma Theatre during the Second World War. Chopra was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in 1946 and took over as the first Indian Commanding Officer of the 1 Assam in Shillong. He was appointed Commander of SYLFORCE in July 1947 to maintain law and order during the conduct of

the referendum in Sylhet on whether the district in Assam would join India or Pakistan. After the Partition, he took over the command of the 123 Infantry Brigade in Amritsar in October 1947 and was entrusted with ensuring the safety of the refugees travelling in and out of Amritsar district. In 1949, he was promoted to Major General and was



Plaque on the flagstaff at the Joint Check Post at Attari. Pushpindar S. Chopra (Maj. Gen. MS Chopra's son) stands alongside the plaque.



Above: Maj. Gen. Mohindar Singh Chopra inspecting his troops during a ceremonial parade.

Below: Pushpindar Singh Chopra, son of Maj. Gen. Mohindar Singh Chopra stands atop of a destroyed Pakistani tank.



tasked with resurrecting the famous 5th Infantry Division, then scattered along most of north and eastern India. In 1950, Maj. Gen. Chopra was appointed Colonel of the 5th Gurkha Rifles (Frontier Force) and three years later, he took over as GOC 20th Infantry Division, the last division to have troops stationed in Tibet.

In February 1952, Maj. Gen. Chopra survived an air crash which would have wiped out the entire senior leadership of the Army.

After his retirement in 1955, Maj Gen Chopra became India's first Ambassador to the Republic of the Philippines until 1959. On returning to India, he was appointed the director of the National Institute of Sports in Patiala. He held that post until 1968. Maj. Gen. Mohindar Singh Chopra passed away in 1990.

Man Aman Singh Chhina

Soul Strokes

Interview by: Artika Aurora Bakshi

Rupy C. Tut is a painter dissecting historical and contemporary displacement narratives around identity, belonging, and gender. As a descendant of refugees and a first generation immigrant, Rupy's family narrative of movement, loss, and resilience is foundational to her creative inquiries. Her work engages in strict practice of traditional materials and methodology associated with traditional Indian painting as she continues to add contemporary images and characters to a centuries old visual language. (www.artbyrupy.com).

While the viewer can interpret a work of art as per his or her own mood, mindset, and inclinations, understanding the artist's thought process throws a different light on the work, giving depth, and creating a soulful bond between the two. Rupy's art speaks of the many influences that have shaped her life, shaded with the richness of the land she left years ago.

Becoming An Artist:

Having been brought up in a family where artists are respected and considered valuable contributors to the world, contrary to most of the perspectives that I have encountered in our community. Because I had been brought up with such a beautiful understanding of creatives, the need to create, and the purpose of art, I have always had this engrained value for art, and maybe I always was an artist. Professionally, I was able to transition from my degree in Biology and Public Health, to being a full time artist, because of certain success that I encountered while showing some work that I had just done out of a personal interest.

I saw that people were interested, and wanted to know more about how I painted, and I enjoyed talking about art. The question I asked myself was whether I would work 24x7 as an artist, and whether I would be able to give my hundred percent, as

I was also brought up on the idea of excellence. Since childhood, I have been told that everything should be done in the pursuit of excellence.

It was not as if a switch could be turned on. It was a transition, with layers and layers of thought provoking moments into the different aspects of what it means to be an artist. It required training, and a deeper commitment and understanding of how art is made, and creating art which is traditionally rooted. Just like with everyone else, you don't become what you are, overnight. It takes time. It's a transition.

Influences:

The beauty is that there is not just one person I can credit with my exposure to art. Generally, in every family, it's the mother who nurtures the ability to understand the family's history, paraphrases the daily happenings, and encourages the children to talk about the extraordinary and the

mundane. It was the same with me. My father is a hobbyist painter, and we had his paintings all around our home. My grandfather was a poet, and I had aunts and uncles who were playwrights and actors.

It was a beautiful space to grow up in. By the time I was eleven, and that's when we moved to the USA, I already had a very strong sense that art was something beautiful, and that to be an artist, you had to be chosen.

Even when we moved from Chandigarh, and didn't see some of the family members who were involved in art, my mom always spoke of them.

My grandmothers were also creatively inclined, and when it's all around you, you notice creativity and art. Art was part of the curriculum, and nobody had to push me. I felt proud that my artwork was something I, as a child, could be proud of.

Roots:

I took art for granted, like everyone does, until it became my job to investigate it, and when I professionally entered that space. My way of staying connected to my roots was through language, that took me further into exploring calligraphy, and script used in art.

I was deeply connected to poetry and stories, and to my grandparents. This was my way of staying connected

to my roots. My grandparents had moved from Sialkot, and we knew that the way we spoke the language was different. In the effort to preserve that, we as a family stayed connected to the dialect.

I found that very beautiful, that language was something I was trying to protect. It kept me connected to my identity, history, and heritage, as a Punjabi woman.

Rupy's art showcases the human stories of displacement, migration, and settlement, delving deeper, and dissecting the historical and contemporary perspectives on gender roles and identity. Amalgamating the traditional and the modern minimalistic style of art, each painting illuminates a landscape from the multicultural society we live in. Rupy wears many different hats - of a mother, a woman, an artist and like most women around the world, tries to create a balance, while holding on to her strong identity. Her paintings are a reflection of who she is, her observations, and the knowledge she carries within her.



Tut Leaving Home:



Focal Points:

- Landscape of water, divided by borders.
- Borders separating loved ones
- Displacement.
- A child being separated from a parent.
- Hands joining together to find resources.
- A hand of authority, pointing fingers.

“My narratives are influenced by the Partition, because I grew up with those stories. I was always fascinated by the home which was left behind. Amazingly, as a child I wasn't focused on the tragedy of it, but by the fact that there was another place that my family called home. But as I became older, and after I moved to the U.S., I understood the value of what it means to belong, and what home meant. That's when the investigation in my work became more focused on the idea of leaving, making this a recurring theme in most of my work.

In this particular painting, hands are used to portray the gestures and emotions of what people feel, because generally, something as hard as displacement, is not expressed. There is a lot of trauma associated with it, and there is a lot of silence. Displacement can be felt by anyone in the world, irrespective of where they are from, and I felt that hands are a beautiful way to explore the silence that accompanies it.”

Finding Roots:

Focal Points:

- Hands holding up the burden.
- Hands pointing fingers, blaming, and othering the immigrants.
- Hands juggling identity, language and the mother tongue (the sphere on the left), time and the time difference (the sphere in the centre), and dreams, some that are left behind, and some that change (the sphere on the right).
- The broken ghara (water pot), showing loss and resilience, encapsulating the giving nature of women, here, the immigrants (inspired by Amrita Pritam's poetry, "ve main tidke ghade da pani, kal tak nahi rehna").



“ This painting is about finding roots, once you have left home. Leaving home was an encapsulation of the experiences which my grandparents had, as do so many others who leave their homes. Finding roots is about my parents moving to the U.S. with an eleven year old me. For me the lines are blurred, whether I am an immigrant or first generation child.

This work speaks of the experience of how we settle in a new place, a place we are trying to make home. At the same time, we carry our trauma of settling in a new place with us, and that of our earlier generations. There is also the trauma of being othered, and the fear of whether we will be accepted. The label refugee, which my grandparents had, or that of an immigrant, as so many who come to the U.S. have even today, comes with a stigma of being othered. The experience is layered, as you see in this work. ”

Power Trip:



Focal Points:

- The woman in a central placement.
- The focus on power in different spheres of a woman's day.
- Armoured protection-suit, shield, parachute.
- A baby's bottle, birthday hat, pots and pans.
- The sphere of dreams in her hand.
- A needle to fix and create her life.

“ Besides trying to tackle and unravel displacement and identity, womanhood and motherhood plays a very important part in how I approach my work, and I think I am lucky that I get to unfold and look deeply into these roles as well it.

It also makes me a more conscious woman and a more aware mother. As in this painting, one thing I want to consistently do is bring in aspects which are not seen otherwise, especially in traditional style.

Everyday women don't usually find a place in artwork, but for me, it's these women who are heroic, and they need to be showcased more.”

A Recipe for Brown Skin, which actually is New Normal:



“ This triptych is currently in the de Young museum collection, and is going to be shown next year at the de Young in California. It’s called the New Normal, and any work that I do, I try to comment on climate change, and the role we play in the breakdown, and what we do collectively to combat this issue.

The changing environment is also causing displacement. We tend to ignore the fact that the generations before us have noticed this, and the other trending topics from today, like politics, identity, etc. The women in this piece are in the position where they can view the breakdown of the world.”

Focal Points:

- The world on fire, literally and metaphorically.
- The two observing women, from the generations before, encompassing.
- The ocean and the forest.
- The covered heads of the matas (mothers).





Heroine:

“ The woman in this painting encompasses all the inspirations, and the different ways of operating, for me as an artist. This woman is based on the character of Sohni, from the legend of Sohni Mahiwal.

In general, women were accepted when they chased love, either that of a man, or Divine Love, but not when they chased self-love. In today's scenario, this Sohni chases self-love. She goes into the water, maybe because she loves water, or she might be a marine biologist, or whatever else the viewer may want to think.

She is a woman who knows herself and is moving forward. She didn't die like Sohni.”

Focal Points

- The confident swimmer.
- The dagger to defend herself.
- A helmet signifying her breathing space and boundaries.
- The monsters lurking around.
- The broken gharas (water pots), standing for the experiences she carries with her.

Jaswinder S. Chadha

Punjab to New Jersey: Laying Roots of Family, Faith, and Business

Harsabreen Chadha and Noor Kaur

The Sikh diaspora, spanning across the globe, is not of a single story. Jaswinder Singh Chadha presents one facet of the journey of an immigrant. Upon speaking with him, he gave us a fascinating insight into his religious and cultural identity as a Sikh-American and how these fuel his success as a leading entrepreneur and CEO in data science and AI technology.

Now based in New Jersey, Chadha grew up on a university campus in Amritsar, Punjab, where his mother was a professor and his father was an officer in the Indian Army. The surrounding community was strong, as there were as many Sikhs as Hindus in Punjab then. His

father's position allowed him to interact with the other officers and their families, many of whom were Hindu, Muslim, and Christian. In this way, he describes his upbringing as relatively secular. The differences in the community's religion were not a focus because the diversity was something they were used to.

As a result, Chadha grew up knowing he was a Sikh. "I never thought I was any different," he explains. Being in Amritsar, positioned near major Gurdwaras, including the Harminder Sahib, significantly influenced the creation of an environment rich with culture and history. For Jassi, this made his understanding of the Gurus more real. As far as his

education, however, the curriculum lacked attention to Sikhi. His schooling reflected the secularity of his community. When learning about culture, religion, and history, the Sikh angle was excluded.

Education certainly played an essential role in Chadha's life, from his mother's occupation to his knowledge of Sikhi to his immigration. Jassi came to the United States in the early 1990s to pursue graduate studies at the University of Texas at El Paso. With the support of his parents and brother, Jassi set off to achieve a graduate degree, find a job, and settle in the US. Once he got past the disappointment that there were no men riding horses as



the American Western films had led him to believe, the main challenge that presented itself was finding new roots. He was in a new country with no family and as few Sikhs as there were cowboys. He found solace in his friends and roommates; in the meantime, his brother joined him a year later.

While building new roots, Jassi began to develop a new relationship with his religious identity. He found that being in the US, he was a minority working against the cultural grain, which “made me aware of how unique and different I am.” He was now visible in a way he was not used to. An early experience of this new visibility occurred in the context of the first Gulf War in 1991 when Jassi was beginning graduate school. Americans were intensely aware of the Middle East at this time and would identify him as Iraqi. Then, as a Saudi. As a turban-wearing Sikh, Chadha has experienced this misrepresentation since he arrived in the US.

Despite some of these challenges, Chadha asserts that he has never felt unwelcome anywhere as an immigrant or an avid traveler. While he has seen “ignorance in pockets,” he has had good interactions in his immigration to the US and in his travels. Most of his experiences with discrimination took place pre-immigration back in India. There was a lot of bullying and stereotyping against Sikhs, especially for young Sikh boys. And as a high schooler during the Sikh Genocide of 1984, he saw the perception of Sikhs go down completely across the country. Chadha remembers that it was during this time of media

censorship and communication cut-offs that, at a young age, he realized just how powerful the government could be.

The people were trying to dodge the government-controlled radio and reading between the (literally) blacked-out lines of the newspapers. To be in the United States post-Gulf War and post-9/11, he says his experience of marginalization and persecution was not the same as in his home country, as that helplessness his family felt during those 20 days in Amritsar. For him, the discrimination by Indians, by people who know

The Sikh community in the United States, on the other hand, has progressed. Jassi finds that there is much greater awareness of who Sikhs are than when he first arrived here. The number of Sikhs has grown, and Sikh visibility in the community, ranging from business to politics to media, has increased.

precisely who Sikhs are, weighs far more heavily than the discrimination born out of American ignorance. He felt that he experienced more bullying and racism in his childhood than his sons had experienced here in the United States.

His perception of India now, as a frequent visitor with a semi-removed view, is that things seem similar. Stereotyping and politics have evolved with the times but are still there. The Sikh community in the United States, on the other hand, has progressed. Jassi finds that there is much greater awareness

of who Sikhs are than when he first arrived here. The number of Sikhs has grown, and Sikh visibility in the community, ranging from business to politics to media, has increased. This development manifests the Sikh spirit to be visible and remain engaged in the community. It also reduces ignorance-backed discrimination. For Jassi, this is especially true for the New Jersey area.

Chadha moved to New Jersey in September of 1995 and immediately felt the cold northeast’s culture shock. While there were initial doubts about his move, he eventually grew to love his new home. How did he get past these growing pains? He realized he couldn’t take things such as family, food, music, and culture for granted. Being out of his comfort zone made Chadha put more effort into connecting with and strengthening his roots, now stretching from Amritsar to Texas to New Jersey.

Jassi started to appreciate what each place had: the beauty of the Garden State, the excellent schools, and the connectedness of his geography. The things that he has grown to love about New Jersey are things that helped extend his old roots to his new home. And as his roots have evolved, so has his relationship with Sikhi. He says, “When I came to the US, I would probably describe that I was a Sikh because I was born in a Sikh family.” This, he notes, is because the education aspect of Sikhi was not present in his childhood.

Only after moving to New Jersey did his identity’s religious piece strengthen. He once again found

himself living in close proximity to a Gurdwara, and watching young people engage with their Gurudwara inspired him. He remembers growing up with the perception that Sikhi, in practice, was reserved for the Bhaïs. But here, people were making an active effort with their children to have actual knowledge about the gurus, kirtan, and Sikhi. The value of Khalsa School and, later, the Kaur and Singh Academy was apparent. The best way to learn is to teach, and it was getting involved in these schools that Jassi's knowledge improved. He became, in the Sikh essence, a learner alongside his children.

After arriving in New Jersey, knowing a few classmates from school and maybe one Sikh, his Sikh community now stands strong with an extensive network of friends and extended family. He intended to keep his family close, especially when settling in a new place. He credits this value to his wife, who grew up in a household with strong family ties. Her extended family tried to live close to each other, whereas Chadha grew up with his small nuclear family. These family values became a core component to nourish his roots. Jassi feels very lucky to have such a robust family ecosystem, which he feels is especially strong due to his settlement in the United States.

As a leader in the Sikh diaspora, Chadha advises embracing change by realizing that "you have a lot more learning to do." It is up to you to make an effort and build your opportunities. This advice pertains to the Sikh community, too, both in India and in the diaspora. Sikhs must organize and invest to make a lasting

community because "no community can survive without taking care of their own." For this reason, the strength of the Sikh community, Jassi feels there is a unique diaspora in New Jersey.

In a parting thought, Jassi reflects on his success in his endeavor to build a life and career in the US. As an entrepreneur, he says that in starting a company, one has to have a vision and create a culture. For him, his values and the values of Sikhi are what come through.

A core value that sets his company



apart from others is humility, a significant Sikh value. It is on the foundation of values like this that Chadha has created and built two companies. In addition to his values, Jassi attributes his success to his identity. In his youth, he wondered whether his identity was an advantage or a disadvantage. He has since learned that his identity grants him visibility. When he began in the pharmaceutical business world, it was rare to find another Sikh around, let alone another Indian, in a conference or boardroom. He would have people knowing who he was

even if he didn't know who they were. Chadha found his identity granted him a huge advantage because it made him memorable.

The entrepreneur's balance of personal, family, community, and professional growth is a big point of pride. He continues running his software and data analytics company, helping pharmaceutical companies manage their sales operations. Axtria's clients span over more than 50 countries.

From the pharmaceutical side to software and AI, Chadha represents Sikhs in the business world with a commanding presence. He was recently recognized as one of the top 50 CEOs in New Jersey and as one of the largest minority-owned businesses in the state. Globally, Axtria is the second largest company doing software and AI in the pharmaceutical industry. Jassi Chadha continues to weave his identity with his work. From here, he is in the process of achieving the first AI chatbot that can have a convo with the Guru Granth Sahib, a "crazy but conceivable" endeavor, especially with the recent popularity of AI technology. Still in New Jersey, Jaswinder Chadha lives with his wife, Anupreet, and his three children, Harsabreen, Harkanwar, and Sarban.

Collaborated by Harsabreen Chadha & Noor Kaur. Harsabreen is an Industrial Engineering Graduate from Purdue University. Noor has a double major in Psychology and Literary Studies from Bucknell University. Both are alumni of the Kaur and Singh Academy NJ.

Illuminating the Path of Sikhi Education in New Jersey

Achint Kaur and Dr. Sandeep Singh

Sikhi education in the diaspora has always been important since Sikhs migrated to America. It has been a way to stay connected with our roots through our religious traditions and social culture. Initial schooling efforts began with small group gatherings on weekends, rotating between the homes of local Sikh families.

As the community grew in numbers and prospered financially, Gurdwaras were established, and Khalsa Schools commenced within, running Sunday classes for the children of the Sangat. The usual trends were memorising the *Nitnem*, learning to read and write Panjabi, and listening to sakhis. This was imparted by adult volunteers from the Sangat, many of whom based their teaching style on how they had learned.

Time brought an understanding that children born and raised in America were learning differently in their regular schools. Perhaps there was a need for change in how they were taught on Sunday to connect better to their Sikhi education.

Two initiatives in New Jersey highlight the endeavor to evolve Sikhi education to be more relevant and create a deeper relationship between the learner and their faith: The Kaur and Singh Academy (KASA) and the Sikh Academy for Gurmat

Education (SAGE). Both have taken a tremendous initiative in introducing a more contemporary, multifaceted, and organised approach to Sikhi education.

Kaur and Singh Academy

The Kaur and Singh Academy was established in 2013 by a group of 14 families focusing their efforts towards their long-term goal of the “next level” of Sikhi teaching and learning. As their mission

statement reads, they aim towards “a Sikhi ... centric education ... with a core curriculum focused on the Sikh faith (scriptures, history, and ethos), *Gurmukhi* script and *Panjabi* language with musicology (vocal and instrumental) offered as an elective.”

The school runs each Sunday in ten classrooms and a large hall leased at a local middle school building. The content structure is based on Sikh Research Institute’s Sojhi curriculum and focuses on four areas: *Gurbani*



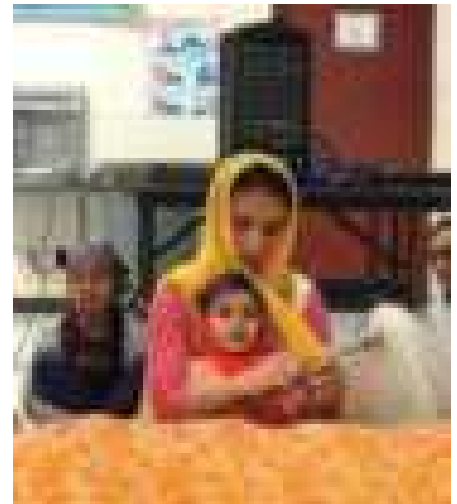
- memorising the five banis of the *Nitnem* with reflective and analytical groups for older students; *Boli* - reading and writing *Panjabi*; *Virsa* - Sikh history and culture and *Divan* - conducted entirely by the students themselves, under adult guidance. Students are encouraged to engage and make learning an individual experience instead of a purely academic exercise. To this end, the *Divan* "class" has been a focal point of KASA culture.

Students are encouraged to sing the day's shabad, take the *Hukamnama*, say the *Ardas*, and do the *Sukhasan*. Additionally, KASA offers *kirtan* classes at the end of the school day. Lessons are regularly bolstered by cultural exposure to movies like *Sahibzade* and *Bhai Taru Singh*, plays like *Kultar's Mime*, live demonstrations of *Gatka* and *Nagaras*, and visits by authors like *Gurmeet Kaur* and *Inni Kaur*.

Workshops and presentations for adults are offered regularly.

The administration and teachers are all volunteers, essentially from the parent group. Many have trained on the job, contributing four to five hours every Sunday in addition to their regular work week. They each bring their unique skill set as an additional contribution to the running of KASA, be it financial, technological, or organisational. When the COVID shutdown was implemented in 2020, the Academy could pivot to an online platform within a week, with only one Sunday off, thanks to the expertise of parent volunteers.

Beyond the core curriculum taught on Sundays, in the spirit of putting into practice what they learn in class, KASA strives to foster a sense of responsibility towards the larger community that we live in. Families regularly participate in



local community efforts, whether collections for the area food banks, meal distributions by organisations like *Let's Share a Meal*, or runs to benefit local charities. The values of *Vand Chakna* and *Sabat Da Bhalla* are constantly underscored in instruction and practice.

Encouraging social connections amongst the students has been essential as well. Relationships and forging bonds within their peer group will create future sangats. With common cultural roots, friends made at KASA are the ones that keep students connected to their faith traditions long after they graduate and move away to college. KASA plans regular family outings like ice skating, rock climbing, and archery to strengthen social connections. The school year ends with a massive KASA family picnic that lasts the entire day.

As the Kaur and Singh Academy celebrates its tenth year and in line with their motto - Igniting the Flame of Sikhi - they continue to strive to raise a generation of Sikhs that take pride in identifying with their Sikhi values and are in turn, confident ambassadors of who they are and what they represent in the larger American community.





Sikh Academy for Gurmat Education

The Sikh Academy for Gurmat Education at Guru Nanak Mission in Oakland, NJ, came into existence in 2018. The intent of creating this Khalsa school was to inspire Sikh children to actively choose the path of Sikhi as their method of spirituality.

SAGE operates within the Gurudwara premises of Guru Nanak Mission, Oakland, NJ. The children's *Divan* is held in their own *Divan* hall, which can hold 250-300 students. There are individual classrooms for *Gurmat*, *Gurmukhi*, and *Kirtan*. The 2nd floor is devoted entirely to the school, where most classes are held. There is a central, larger meeting space for various adult programs. An elective after-school program offers program coding for kids, *Gurbani* calligraphy, and sports.

The goal at SAGE is not to reinforce dates or test the recall of specific events but rather to inspire children to want to walk on the Guru's Path with their heads held high. Teachers seek to connect students to their rich history and the Gurus' wisdom by relating the Gurus' stories and supporting these with *Gurbani*. Stories that tell the tales of sacrifice, courage, compassion, and humility instill in children what our ancestors stood for and display how great their sacrifice was.

Using *Gurbani* to reinforce these sakhis, the hope is to bring kids closer to their Guru by remembering the path forged by those before us. In all classes, children engage in *Naam Simran* and the recitation of *Gurbani*. Their homework is also *Gurbani*-based. The goal is for our students to surrender their wisdom and ask for our Guru's wisdom in return.

It is our approach that the Sikh path cannot be illuminated by classroom work alone. Once the kids arrive at the school, they begin their day in their *Divaan* area, leading their *Sangat* in all aspects of Gurudwara protocol. They all have the opportunity to interact with their Guru and develop a personal relationship.

It is also critical that the children understand the concept of *Sarbat Da Bala*, which translates to "For the benefit of all." We discuss the lives of freedom fighters who fought against injustice.



Understanding the impact of leaders such as Frederic Douglass, Martin Luther King Jr., and Nelson & Winnie Mandela will help to cultivate the need to act when and where injustice exists.

SAGE has also incorporated an anti-bullying aspect to the curriculum, where each Sunday, their elementary students engage in techniques to make them more resilient, lessening the chance of being targeted.

Students are also expected to participate in service-oriented activities that directly interact and engage with those of an underprivileged community. The belief is that while many of us lead comfortable lives without struggle, countless people in nearby communities are not so fortunate and often have to choose between



paying their electricity bill or putting food on the table for their families. As members of the Sikh faith who seek to live up to and embody the concept of *Sarbat Da Bala*, we must help those in need.

With these ideals in mind, SAGE strives to keep our children on the Guru's path, living a life of *Gurmat*, seeing the Oneness of Creation through the Guru's lens, falling in love with *Gursikhi* with such enthusiasm that the desire to ask the *Panj Pyare* for *Amrit* is adopted early on in their life journey as a Sikh.



Contributions to Kaur and Singh Academy:

Achint Kaur

Formerly Principal & Curriculum Lead at KASA

<https://www.kaurandsinghacademy.org>

<https://www.facebook.com/KaurAndSinghAcademy>

<https://www.instagram.com/kandsacademy/>



Contributions to the Sikh Academy of Gurmat Education:

Dr. Sandeep Singh, Director of Education SAGE

<https://www.gurunanakmissionnj.com/sage-mission>

<https://www.gurunanakmissionnj.com/sage-mission>

Amritsar: A City in Remembrance

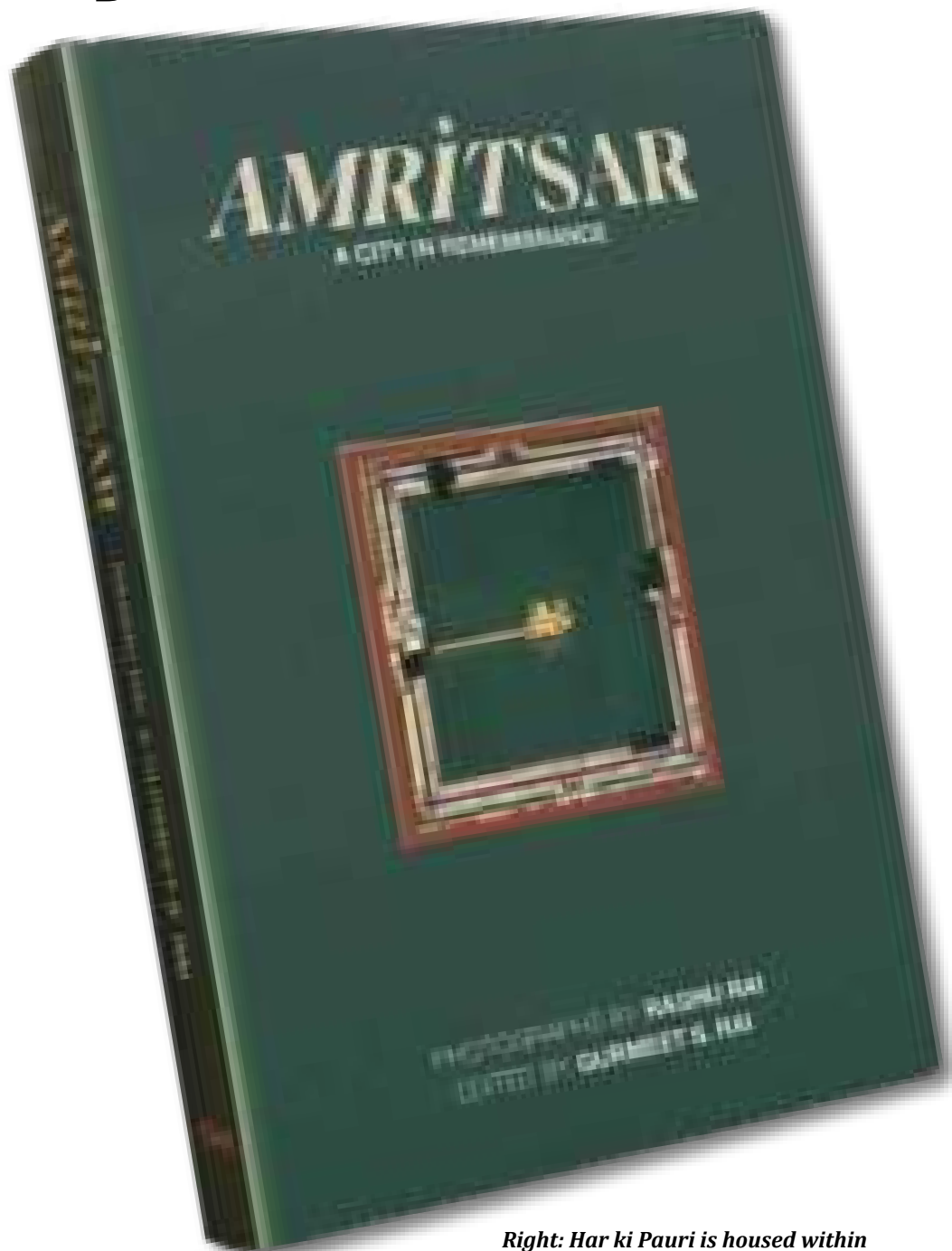
Book Review by: Nanki Kaur

A *Amritsar: A City in Remembrance*, edited by Gurmeet Sangha Rai and including photographs by Raghu Rai, was published by Om Books International in 2021.

The book is a captivating account of the multi-faceted city of Amritsar, exploring its rich and intricate tapestry in detail. With the contributions of Richard A. Engelhardt, Dr. Pritam Singh, Thomas Addyman, Antara Sharma, Sajida Haider Vandal, Pervaiz Vandal, Amandeep Singh Madra, Parmjit Singh, Nadia Singh, Urvashi Butalia, Dr. Jigna Desai, Moushumi Chatterji, and Gurmeet Sangha Rai, the book takes readers on an immersive journey of the city's significant history, spiritual soul, influential economy, and colourful culture.

This publication is a product of highly in-depth study of every aspect of Amritsar, a fact that is realised as one goes through each chapter. By providing an insight into the working of the city, both past and present, it elucidates the importance of preserving its glorious and complex fabric.

The book also contains case studies of conservation and preservation that have already been carried out by various organisations and professionals such as Gurmeet S. Rai



Right: Har ki Pauri is housed within the central bay on the southeastern side of Sri Harimandir Sahib. The shrine aligns with Har ki Pauri in Haridwar, Uttarakhand. (Image from the book taken by Raghu Rai)

and her firm CRCI India Pvt. Ltd. The firm's monumental work has been adequately illustrated and explained in the relevant chapters. Since it was primarily envisaged as a pictorial biography of the city, the most attractive and commanding features of the book by far include the iconic photographs from Raghu Rai's vast collection.

While complimenting the writings of the contributors, they also bring the city of Amritsar alive, drawing readers closer to its unique aura. When speaking about Amritsar, one cannot deny the central role commanded by its spiritual facet, particularly that of Sikhism.

This has been encapsulated in the quote used from the Guru Granth Sahib - "Amrit sar satigur satvaadhee jit naate kuooaa hans hohai" - "The True Guru, the Speaker of Truth, is the pool of Ambrosial Nectar; Bathing within it, the crow becomes a swan".

While the quote refers to the Guru or his teachings as the 'ambrosial

nectar' for one to bathe in and receive greatness; one could also draw comparisons with the city of Amritsar, whose spirit could be 'bathed in' for one to achieve spiritual, cultural, economical, and political greatness and contentment. Having worked in the documenting of Partition history, I was particularly drawn to the chapters which discussed the trauma faced by both the city and its occupants. Not only does the book reveal the suffering through personal accounts presented by Urvashi Butalia, it also shines light upon how the city was repaired in the days and years following the violent fracture of the landscape and its people. It leaves one with a sense of hope and revival rather than that of lament.

A similar string of emotions follow when one journeys through chapters covering the tumultuous 80s. While they vividly illustrate the attack on the very heart of the city, they also reiterate the key quality of resilience within the Punjabi people.

The following quote in the

foreword by Richard A. Engelhardt only cements this fact further - "Amritsar is a city that never forgets its history as it goes through cycles of destruction, restoration, regeneration and rebuilding."

The main purpose of the book is to serve as a testament to the colossal work done by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India and CRCI India to restore Amritsar's heritage as a part of the Heritage Development and Augmentation Yojana i.e. HRIDAY programme. However, it also serves as a highly visual and well-researched account of the complex, ethereal and dynamic city that is Amritsar - whether today or in the heyday of Maharaja Ranjit Singh or even at its establishment as Ramdasapur. One can feast their eyes on the stunning photographs, educate themselves on the city's numerous facets, and also stumble upon perfectly-placed verses from the Guru Granth Sahib within the text.

Overall, it is a publication that should be read by not only the vast majority of the community, but by all who wish to understand the spirit of the glorious city of Amritsar, and the ethos of the Sikh people. Whether you are a history enthusiast, an economist, a spiritual seeker, or a cultural connoisseur, this book promises to be an enlightening journey into the heart and soul of Amritsar.

A 'young heritage professional', Nanki works to create awareness of and preserve our national and global heritage. She has been exposed to the workings of numerous heritage institutions & monuments in Europe, Egypt, as well as at the Partition Museum in Amritsar and INTACH.



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In Between the Lines: Letters of Love, Hope and Reconciliation from Partition Museum

Shreyashi Bagchi

Letter writing goes back to antiquity and the letter has had a long and flourishing history, acting as a routine means for public and private communications. They are valuable windows to the past, personal and full of vivid details. They give us a fascinating perspective of past events and their impact on society.

In 1947, India gained its Independence and was partitioned into two countries. The letters in the Partition Museum's collection bear witness to this tragic event, and tell us the stories of the Partition through the eyes of individuals who lived through it. They help us understand how personal writing conveyed crucial information and acted as a source of hope and comfort. These letters are on display at the Museum, along with other paper documents including newspapers and certificates.

In this post we look at a selection of three letters from the Partition Museum's collection.

Longing

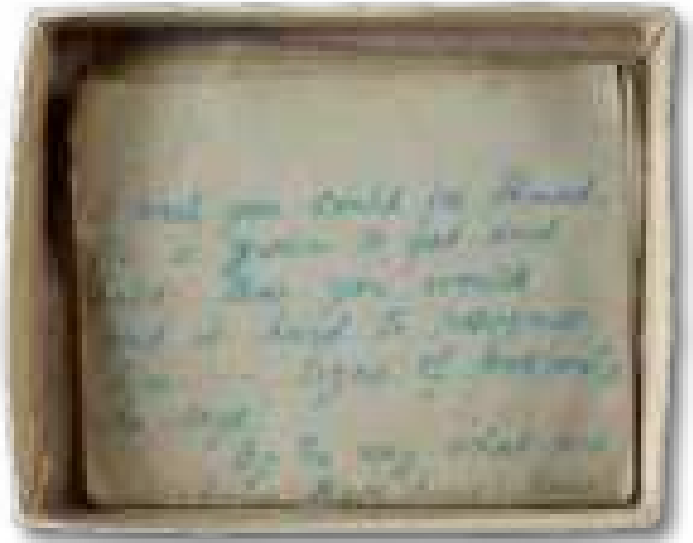
During the Second World War, two million Indians from undivided India served in the British army. They sent letters home that spoke of their homesickness and longing. These letters connected soldiers

with their families and documented the lives of Indian soldiers and officers. One such letter was written by Premindra Bhagat Singh, who was serving in Sudan and went on to receive the Victoria Cross for his military service. At the time of writing the letter, Premindra was engaged to Mohini Bhandari and wrote regularly to her.

To quote Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Letters are among the most significant memorial a person can leave behind them". Premindra wrote a heartfelt letter to his fiancée which she preserved. Premindra's letter was a source of comfort in Mohini's life while he was serving in a different continent. In his letter, Premindra talks about the uncertainties of war. He does not know when he will be able to return home.

"I do not know what I would give to be back in good old India now, especially Poona. Honestly, I miss Poona and you."

For Premindra, like many others in the battlefield, home seemed like a distant concept. For him, home was



Poona with his fiancée by his side. Eventually, they got married in the month of February, 1942. The letter has been loaned to our Museum by their daughter, Ashali Verma.

Hope

Soon after the war, the turmoil of Partition followed. In August 1947, after the British left having divided the subcontinent into two separate states, India and Pakistan, people fled their homes overnight. Families lost each other, some were even left behind.

Balwant Mehta, now aged 90, was born in Sargodha (now in Pakistan) and grew up in a joint family. She has vivid memories of childhood; playing pitthu with her friends, going to school, and attending weddings. In the summer of 1947, she came to Dehradun along with her parents and brother for her sister's operation. She took on the responsibility of caring for her sister and decided to stay with her in Dehradun. She was 16 at that time. Her parents

had hoped that the situation would calm down eventually and went back to Sargodha with her brother. As the riots spread, communication between Balwant Mehta and her parents was lost.

On 14 August, Balwant Mehta's father, Sardar Mehtab Singh, wrote her a letter from Sargodha. Below is an excerpt from the letter.

"My dear girls, I hope you have returned from Mussoorie."

"The place is quiet but people from Eastern Punjab want to foment trouble in these parts as a retaliation for what is alleged to be done in Amritsar and Hoshiarpur district. But God's mercy will save us the crisis. There have been many troubles in Amritsar and Lahore during the last 3 days and Military also is said to have shot down many people in the act of mischief. This may have a salutary effect. An express train was also said to have been stopped near Badami Bagh and many people including ladies are said to have been killed. Men have run mad and the only place for such is hell or a madhouse."

Sardar Mehtab Singh describes the disturbances which unfolded during the Partition. He talks about the difficult times they were in, how trouble was always right around the corner, and how easy it was to have men lose their humanity during this period.

"Please do not have any worry, and let us hope that peace will prevail after the 15th of August."

Balwant Mehta's father tried to provide a token of assurance to the family in the midst of the chaos of Partition. Even if he could not be there with them, he tells his daughter to not worry and to continue to have hope that peace will return. Her parents came to Dehradun in the month of October 1947.

Reconnection

While we have stories of people losing contact with each other, we also have stories of people managing to reconnect in the aftermath of the violent Partition.

This is a story of friends reconnecting 30 years after the Partition. Amar Kapur who was born in Lahore in 1923 grew up in Ajartan Road. His family was in the printing business which they resumed again in Delhi after their migration. The printing business 'Kapur R Sons' (which in Delhi became Kapur Printing Press) features prominently in this story of reuniting friends. Amar Kapur grew up with three of his closest friends; Asaf Khwaja, Agha Raza Ahmed, and Rishad Haider. They all went to St. Anthony's school and graduated together. They had shared good times together for the first 20 years of their lives.

In 1947, Amar Kapur, along with his family, left Lahore and reached Amritsar. They stayed in Amritsar for three months and later came to Delhi. Crossing the border meant losing connections as well. Says Amar, "In those days, no one came to us nor did we try to go to anyone." Amar Kapur was the only one amongst his friends who had to migrate.

Asaf Khawaja wrote a letter to Amar Kapur in the summer of 1949, two years after the Partition. "I still love that person very much", says Amar. Below is an excerpt from the letter.

"We, in Lahore, your friends and former playmates those who were in school with you and in college and whose first 20 years of life are inseparably linked with those of yours assure you with the utmost sincerity that distance has not made the slightest difference in our love and affection for you. That we remember you and we remember you very often with the same brotherly

feeling that for so long characterized our relations. We had spent good times, our grand times together. We have common memories and common experiences that bind us so closely together in the spirit that no circumstances can wrench us apart."

Asaf remembers the joyous moments spent together with Amar and his friends before the separation caused by the Partition. Amar did not reconnect with his long, lost friends from the other side until 1980 when Agha Raza Ahmed's uncle was in Delhi for work. Agha had asked his uncle to look for a printing press bearing the Kapur family name. His uncle found the telephone number of Amar Kapur's family in the directory and contacted them. Amar went to meet his friend's uncle and got Agha's address. He began to write to Agha, as well as to Asaf and Rishad.

In January 1982, Amar went to Lahore to attend Agha's son Qasim's wedding. It just felt like yesterday, Amar Kapoor had said when his friend came to meet him at the airport and hugged him. The others came to meet him from Karachi and Islamabad. They continued to remain in touch.

This blog has been written by Shreyashi Bagchi who is a Programs Assistant at the Partition Museum.

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Roar of the Lions



Our next issue will highlight the achievements of the Sikh Community of Singapore.

We invite you to share your stories, achievements and maybe your family's historical records of when they first landed in Singapore.



Do you
have
a story
to tell?



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The document can be watched freely on the website

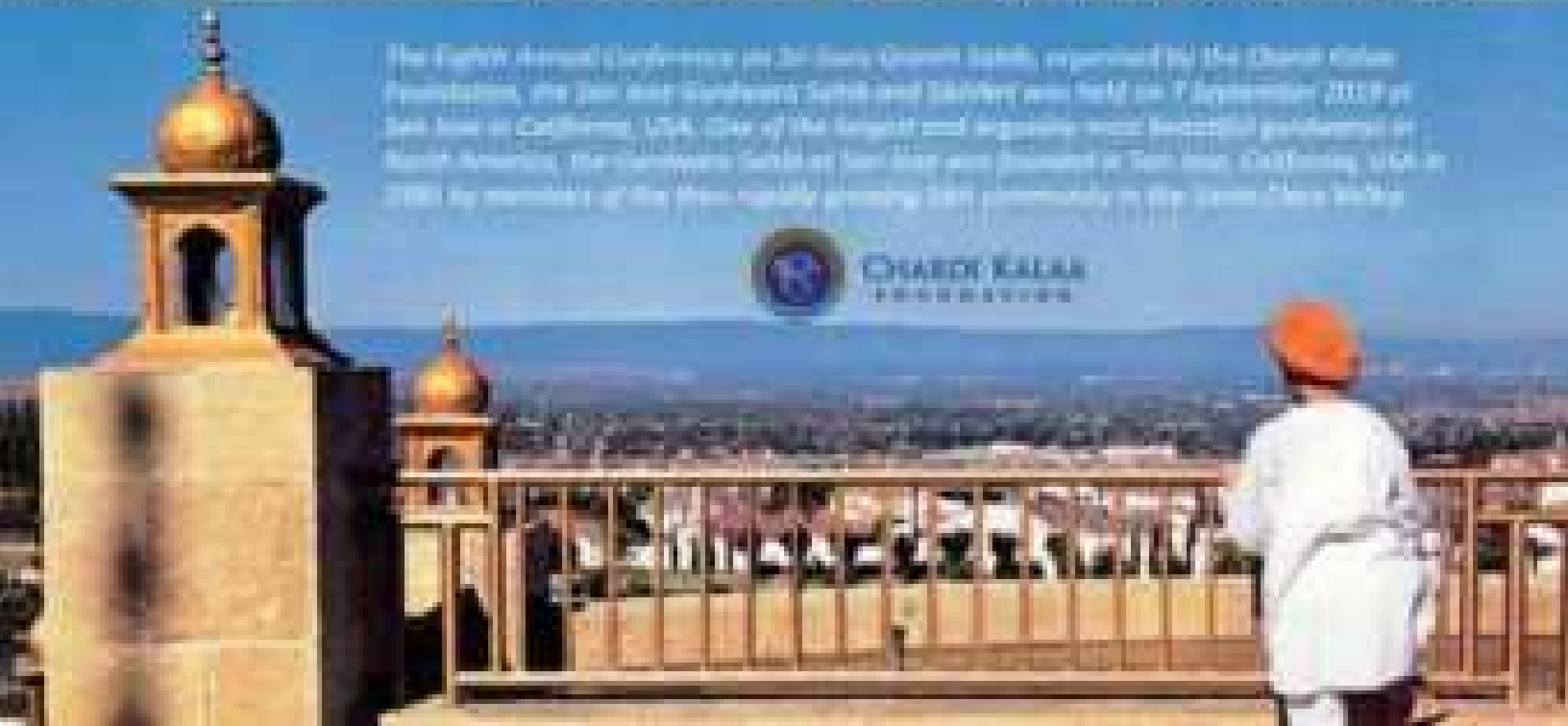
TheGuruNanak.com



The Eighth Annual Conference on Sikhism, jointly organized by the Chardh Sahib Foundation, the Sikh and Sikhism Society and Society, was held on 7 September 2009 at San Jose in California, USA. One of the largest and arguably most successful gatherings in North America. The conference, held at San Jose and organized in San Jose, California, USA in 2009 by members of the Sikh community, was a landmark event in the Sikh community.

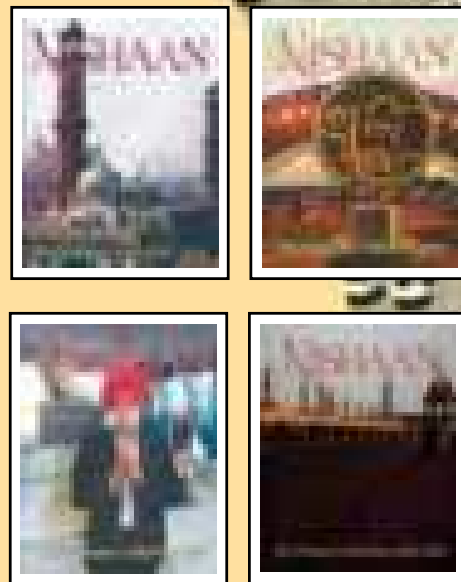


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