

III/2017

# NISHAAN

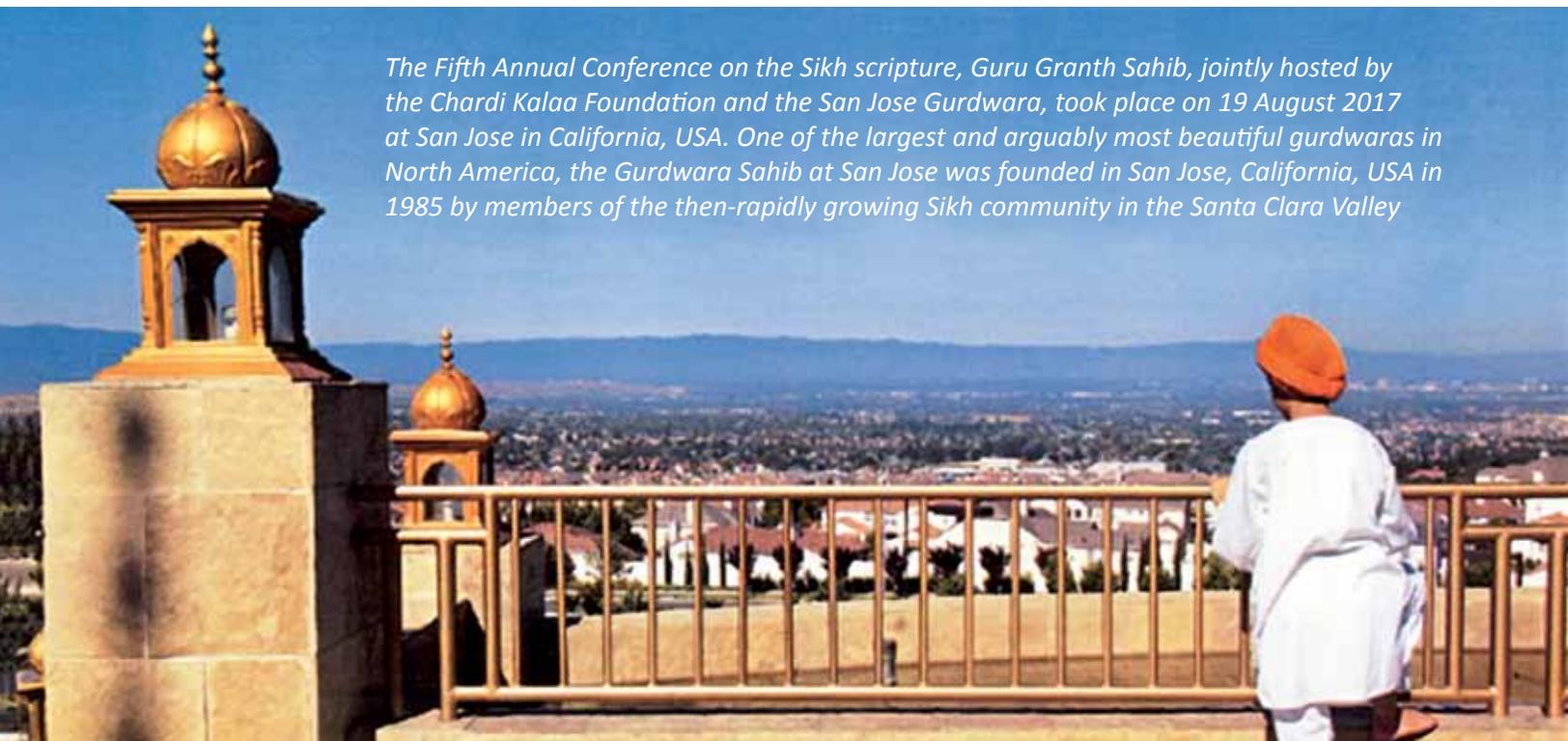
NAGAARA



**The Next-Gen Sikhs**



*The Fifth Annual Conference on the Sikh scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, jointly hosted by the Chardi Kalaa Foundation and the San Jose Gurdwara, took place on 19 August 2017 at San Jose in California, USA. One of the largest and arguably most beautiful gurdwaras in North America, the Gurdwara Sahib at San Jose was founded in San Jose, California, USA in 1985 by members of the then-rapidly growing Sikh community in the Santa Clara Valley*



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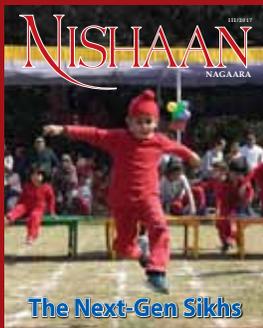


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Young Saheb Singh wins the race!  
(Photo by Prabhinder Singh)

**Editorial Director**  
Dr IJ Singh

**Managing Editor**  
Pushpinder Singh

**Joint Editor**  
Bhayee Sikandar Singh

**Editorial Board**  
Inni Kaur  
Monica Arora

**Distributors**  
Himalayan Books  
17 L, Connaught Circus,  
New Delhi - 110001

**Editorial Office**  
D-43, Sujjan Singh Park  
New Delhi 110 003, India  
Tel: (91-11) 24617234  
Fax: (91-11) 24628615  
e-mail : nishaan.nagaara@gmail.com

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## The Next-Gen Sikhs

Even though Sikhi is a relatively small religion, numbering only about 27 million in our overcrowded world, it is also a young religion tracing its origin from about only 550 years ago. Today Sikhi and the Sikhs occupy centrestage amongst mankind many of whose origins are lost in antiquity. Yet Sikhi is mature enough to have impacted on the world for several hundred years, since the time of its founder, Guru Nanak in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. And that Sikhs have influenced modern times, is a given.

I came to the United States when there were less than a handful of recognisable Sikhs in a mega-polis, the size of New York city. And then I spent years where there were even fewer. That gave new meaning to community and its psychologically meaningful absence, being a minority, sometimes of one.

The home of the Sikhs is not just the Punjab but, increasingly, the entire globe. Our language, cuisine, culture and music is not tied to Punjab alone, or the lands that the Gurus trod upon, but to neglect the latter, would be to deprive ourselves of a supremely rich treasure. *Tempus fugits*. Time passes however not without leaving its marks, its footprints forever.

This latest issue of *Nishaan* marks the passage of the ages and focusses on a new generation of Sikhs with a truly worldwide diaspora, from the Punjab to the wide world beyond. There is virtually nowhere in the world that there are no Sikhs. In North America, in the last century, they helped construct the Panama Canal and are now spread throughout this continent, engaged in every kind of profession. There are Sikhs in almost every country of Europe, including in southern Italy, where, for example, they are engaged in producing gourmet classic cheese.

I am absolutely delighted by the varied content of this issue; it is dramatically different from the usual, yet it is perennial. This Issue is really about where all in the world the Sikhs are thriving, within their own chosen professions, and otherwise. Sikhs, Punjabi or not, are no strangers to the world around them. Young Sikh men and women have been defining a place for themselves worldwide in academia and universities and in all professions from bankers, political leaders, neurosurgeons, businessmen, or in the military, as taxi drivers and construction workers and so on, carving a niche for themselves even in the political life of the

United States, Canada, Britain, Singapore Malaysia, Afghanistan and Pakistan. They define contemporary life in cities the world over. Sikhs have got their rightful place under the universal sun, around the world as we know it. This is important to note even as humanity goes through difficult times not only in the political sphere, but also economically. As Geography is made in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and History is written, the Sikhs will surely be part of it.

In this issue of *Nishaan*, writers touch upon matters that have been with us from times immemorial such as the empowerment of women. The world has agonised on these matters which have confronted us possibly since the advent of humankind. I must add that the Sikh position on such issues has remained well ahead of the world and the times.

I also look at the generation that founded and gave shape to the quarterly journal *Nishaan* and that generation is now largely grey-bearded, or close to it. Then I see the generation of Sikhs and their friends that is developing a loyalty to the *Nishaan*, and they are a much younger generation with barely a hint of grey, if any. The difference comes to me not as an oddity but something to greatly celebrate. Our day in the sun is almost done, and soon the baton must pass to a younger generation. The process is never easy; conflict is always close to surface. The young don't want to be held back; the old still want to bask in the glow of their experience and what they think was their tried and true judgement and leadership.

Yes, it is true that good judgment comes from experience but the other side of the coin says that experience itself comes from poor judgment. And many of those of my generation come with immense experience.

In an earlier essay entitled 'Young and Wired: Up from the Grassroots', my thoughts went to the founder Gurus of Sikhism. For over two centuries they nurtured a society from the grass roots. They didn't go about cultivating the elite of the day—the many rulers, noblemen, satraps and the super-rich. Nation building requires a citizenry fired by a common code of values, goals, expectation and behaviour. And developing those fundamentals is exactly where the energies of the Gurus went.

The Gurus created a society defined by shared values and ethics, with transparency, accountability

and self-governance at the centre. These are attributes that should remain supreme. That's why the emphasis of the Gurus on *sangat* — an informed citizenry. But as I said earlier, grass roots programmes often get displaced by a top heavy society in which the ordinary citizen (or the believer in religion) inevitably loses all sense of any of the things that are at the core of a just and progressive society or religion.

That is why I celebrate the young and wired of the Sikh world—young people who have created from the ground up new institutions to serve our growing needs: SALDEF, Sikh Coalition, United Sikhs, Sikh Chamber of Commerce, '1469' and the Sikh Research Institute—all outside the ambit of our dysfunctional gurdwaras.

In my lifetime of teaching in academia I have often said to postgraduate and doctoral students that much like a new edition of a book must be better than the old or else it is nothing more than a reprint, similarly a student must, in time, excel the teacher, and a child must excel the parent, or else there is no progress. The world is populated enough already and needs no clones.

But a new generation must also zeously guard the foundations of the past and use them, if possible, to support the new superstructure. If the whole wide world is my oyster then no one is a stranger and no land is alien. And that is the lesson of the first words—an alphanumeric, *Ik Oankaar*, that opens the Guru Granth Sahib, the reservoir of all Sikh spiritual heritage.

I welcome the new and young voices, but keep in mind that at birth, all of us inherit a world that has traveled eons along a time line of progress, and sometimes war and pestilence – often good and evil byways of our own creation. The technology and markers of progress that we inherit come to us from where we are at a certain time on that timeline of existence and progress. This then is a debt that we must pay before our relatively brief but meaningful lifetime is over.

To whom are we indebted and in what form do we repay? Gurbani provides the way when it poses the stark question, *Eh sareera meriya iss jug mey aye ke kya tudh karam kamayya?* p. 917; in other words, what foot prints would you leave in the sands of time? The answer is simple and direct but never easy:

*Leaving the world even an iota better would be ample.*

IJ Singh

# Sikhs of the new Millennium



In *Nishaan's* Premiere Issue, launched at the tercentenary of the birth of the Khalsa in April 1999, the lead essay clearly enunciated that "as the Khalsa moves into the next century and, with the world, into the new millennium, we stand at the crossroads of destiny, with a glorious renaissance beckoning the new generation in India and overseas." Stressed was that the "custodians of the community's temporal and spiritual order must give the overseas Sikhs, who constitute some ten percent of the community today and permanently reside outside India, the importance due and fully involve them in their diaspora for the synergised strength and well-being of the community."

As the venerable Dr Darshan Singh Maini articulated on the new generation of Sikhs, "There is an organic, inherent energy in them, and all we need is to adapt ourselves to the requirements of the

changing world without losing our true heritage and vision. How best this could be effected is a matter that requires a vigorous, insightful debate and deliberations. Assuredly, the moment of the Khalsa is best suited to give the coming generations a direction, an agenda and a machinery for action. The dialectic of the moment compels us to do so."

About the same time, on 29 March 1999, the weekly magazine *Outlook* had its cover story focussed on 'The Dynamic Sikhs' with articles by Khushwant Singh, writing on 'The Poets of Enterprise', Bhavdeep Kang's description of the "electrifying gathering of five million Sikhs at Anandpur Sahib, with five jathas converging on the gleaming white townscape... an epochal event. Five hundred years of the Sikh faith, three hundred years of the Khalsa Panth, notwithstanding the discord between rival political factions." Thereafter, a slew of writers from Britain, the

USA, Canada, Malaysia, the Philippines, Dubai, Nepal and Pakistan focused on the fact that “from Manila to New York, Peshawar to Washington, Sikhs stand out for their ability to seamlessly blend in anywhere.”

Thirteen years later, the journal *g files* had its cover emblazoned with the title ‘Raj Karega Khalsa’, as to “why Sikhs are so successful? How have they risen to the top? This is the story of a community that never gives up!” The Editor articulated that it was no mere co-incidence that Sikhs were at the helm of affairs of the country “at a time where most governance tools are blemished with one allegation or other... the Sikh community appears to be above suspicion.” Various personalities included then Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, economist Dr Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Chief of the Army Staff General JJ Singh, Head of Intelligence Nehchal Singh Sandhu, Ambassador Navtej Singh Sarna, Chief Justice Jagdish Singh Khehar and many others in governance, the armed forces, railways, business, industry, sports, the arts...

Dr Darshan Singh Maini, who was first Editorial Director of the *Nishaan* succinctly summed this up in his essay ‘The Moment of the Khalsa’: “There is, in most cases, a moment of moments when the gathered energies, ordeals and ideas reach the point of criticality, to borrow a convenient concept from nuclear physics. It is then that the dream nursed over a period of time and travail comes of the age of annunciation and song. It is the moment of epiphany and illumination, of beauty and poetry, a moment whose hour has come at last. In short, a moment of sovereignty.”

However, there was also need for sober introspection on where matters had gone off somewhat on a tangent. Dr Sangat Singh, author of ‘The Sikhs in History’, wrote (which was reproduced in *Nishaan’s Issue IV/2001*): “We have briefly spoken of Sikhism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Those of the people who are born now in the beginning of this millennium shall certainly reach the last decade of this century, some of them even crossing it. Those who were born in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century shall be there around the second quarter of this century, if not reach the middle of it. Those who are in their sixties or seventies, shall play their role in the first quarter of the present century; and so on. It is important to keep this in mind when reviewing the state of Sikhism among the present generations, and the type of teaching they should be imparting to their offspring.”

“I have mentioned about the state of Sikhism in the Punjab, the extent of apostasy in rural and urban areas, the sorry state of religious, cultural and political leadership which is so enmeshed in its material problems, and pondering to self or ego, that Sikhism for them counts for nothing. There is an urgent need for placement for right type of persons both in the SGPC and the so-called clergy including Jathedars. This is not yet in sight. Also, the quality of Sikh leadership has deteriorated from the 1950s to reach its nadir in the 1996-97 elections to the SGPC and Punjab assembly. These have gravely hurt Sikhism.”

“The position in other parts of India, where the community is confined to urban areas is fortunately much better. But impact of the ignomious events of 1984 and the aftermath is visible all around. The situation in Madhya Pradesh where the Sri Guru Singh Sabha movement is strong, however is encouraging. So is the situation in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka or Maharashtra. In Calcutta, the Sikh Federation has done a good job with emphasis on student culture. It must be understood that Sikhism, which was confined mainly to the Punjab-Delhi region before 1947, has spread out to other parts of India after partition. This was so except in North eastern India where Sikh community has continued to exist for the last two centuries, without much interaction with the SGPC.”

“Nowadays, Gurbani is being telecast, thanks to the mushroom-like growth of TV stations from Darbar Sahib, Hazur Sahib (Maharashtra), Gurdwaras Bangla Sahib and Sis Ganj in Delhi and from some other Gurdwaras such as those in Mumbai. There are also some telecasts from Sant-Baba elements. A common complaint heard from the youth is the lack of knowledge about Gursikhi and Gurmat among parents, and their failure to impart it through *sakhis* during their growing up years. The religious hierarchy is concerned simply with performing of their duties with emphasis on the collection of funds. There is general absence of pre-1947 type of *dharmak*, religious education via dedicated teachers and *granthis*.”

“The practice of youth camps, prevalent in Madhya Pradesh or West Bengal, has got discontinued in the Punjab. The *All India Sikh Students Federation* as a nursery of Sikhism has virtually ceased to exist. There is no sign of movements for religious revival. Only a few institutions are there to look after Sikhism, and these, though welcome are not sufficient.”

“In urban and semi-urban areas, the Sikh youth is indulging in inter-religious marriages and there is likely to be further decrease amongst Khatri and Arora segments. Caste has taken Brahminical roots among Jats who look down upon Mazhabis. There is stand-off between these two sections both urban and ruralites, which has got accentuated. The Mazhabis are also likely targets of the Bahujan Samaj Party, and schedule caste partisans who too have a negative approach in misrepresenting Sikhism.”

“My estimate of apostate Sikhs in the UK, Canada and USA is about 40 per cent of the population. Of course, there are second and subsequent generations of Sikhs in Britain and North America while the USA and Canada too, at the moment have first-generation Sikhs. Fortunately, the institution of gurmat camps during summers has had a strong position impact. Such camps are playing a very useful role in keeping the youth in harness. Such elements have also developed a strong connection with white Sikhs of the 3HO in USA and one of the direct impacts of such gurmat education or training is the dropping of caste or village names by some of these young Sikhs.”

“As the 21<sup>st</sup> century advances, we shall see the coming of a new generation of Sikhs in the UK or North America who have little interaction, unlike their elders, with ‘back home.’ They are likely to act independently. They shall have no emotional links with the Punjab. The Jathedar Sahib of the Akal Takht and President SGPC shall need to be men of wider vision for which there seems little chance at the moment because of continued subservience of Sikh leadership of all hues, the activity of forces of Hindutva and of certain intelligence agencies who have infiltrated with the Sikhs in the UK and Canada, though not to that extent in the USA.”

“Sikhism is under attack at the hands of the Brahminical juggernaut and history has shown that no where including the case of once powerful Buddhism,

has it been successful. The juggernaut came into violent conflict with the followers of Kabir who was a bitter critic of Brahmanism and a powerful factor at one time. In the post-Kabir period, Brahmanism forced them to fall within its framework. The Brahmins were not much bothered about Kabir’s teachings or philosophy because it itself is such a humpty-dumpty rigmarole consisting of so many hotch-potches of contradictory doctrines including agnosticism and nihilism that it did not mind the existence of another digressive sect.”

“Some such signals from India, from various types of forces of Hindu resurgence with state support, putting Sikhism on the defensive world prompt the Sikhs in the diaspora to assert their individuality and independence to emerge as the leadership of Sikhism. This is not idle talk: some people talk of some devices for the present leadership in India to see reason and look towards the diaspora for real Sikhism.”

This then reinforces the The clear aim of the *Nishaan Nagaara*, launched in April 1999 as a specialist publication, to continually focus on aspects of the community’s success, perpetuate traditions and thus re-inforce the faith. The Journal particularly seeks to inspire those who are wavering in their confidence of belonging to this special order as also to project aspirations of the community in the coming millennium.



# Chardi Kalaa!

## Sikhs of the World, Australia to Zimbabwe

According to various census, there are some 27 million Sikhs of the World, which makes them a mere 0.40% of the world's population but because of their unique status, they stand out most distinctively, not the least because of their larger than life attitude of 'Chardi Kalaa' (Ever Buoyant). In any event, they truly believe that each Sikh is equal to 125,000 of the rest and so are equivalent to 3.375 billion, or constitute some 50% of the world's population !

Approximately 83% of Sikhs live in India, with 76% of them in the Punjab. Other Indian states where Sikhs have substantial population are Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Maharashtra, Uttaranchal, Assam and Jammu & Kashmir. Of course, they also pioneered settlements in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

Outside India, Sikhs are virtually everywhere. Sikhs have emigrated to countries all over the world - especially to English-speaking and East Asian nations. In doing so, they have retained, to an unusually high degree, their distinctive cultural and religious identity. The existence of Sikh communities throughout the world presents a fascinating story of an immigrant community which originated in the Punjab more than five hundred years ago. As everyone knows, male Sikhs are easily recognised by their turbans and intact beards (but all men wearing turbans are not Sikhs). Over the centuries, they have acquired a reputation for being sturdy, hard-working and adventurous;

they are a people who have earned the reputation for being extremely brave and loyal citizens in whichever countries they have made their home.

Sikh migration from the Indian sub-continent actively began from the second half of the 19th century, after the Anglo-Sikh wars of 1845-46 and 1848-49, when the British had completed their annexation of the Punjab. The British Raj preferentially recruited Sikhs into the Civil Services and, in particular, the British Indian Army, which energised migration of Sikhs to different parts of British India and the British Empire. During this era, Sikh artisans were also transported from the Punjab to British East Africa to help in the building of their nascent railways.

Sikhs were predominant with the Allied Forces during the two World Wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, 1914-18 and 1939-45, re-confirming their great reputation as indomitable warriors. After World War II, many Sikhs emigrated from the sub-continent, particularly after the partition of 1947. Most went to the United Kingdom but also to North America. The main impetus for Sikh migration has been economic spurred by the community's spirit of discovery and quest for challenging opportunities. Significant Sikh populations now reside in the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, Malaysia, East Africa, Australia and Thailand, while there are springs of Sikh communities even in Latin America and the Pacific islands.

### World Cities with large Sikh population

Sikhs exist on every inhabited continent, with the largest emigrant population being in Canada and United Kingdom. The 10 top cities having a sizeable number of Sikhs are:

Surrey, in Canada - 42% (the largest Sikh (settlement outside Punjab)

Richmond Hill, in USA - 38 %

Millibourne in USA - 36%

Brampton, in Canada - 24%

Abbotsford, in Canada - 19%

Slough, in UK - 12%

Yuba City (California) in USA - 11%

Wolverhampton, in UK - 10.2%

Hounslow, in UK - 10%

Ealing, in UK - 8.5%

Glasgow, in Scotland - 4%

Leicester, in UK - 4%

London has the highest Sikh population in the UK at 1.5%

Metropolitan areas with large number of Sikhs in Canada are Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, Ottawa, Edmonton, Quebec City, and Winnipeg.



# Khalsa Day in Canada

In certain quarters of New Delhi, at least among those who are engaged in bilateral dialogue between India and Canada, a curious question may have lately arisen: Who knew helmets could be so dangerous? That veiled reference is to motorcycle helmets. The Canadian province of British Columbia offers an exemption from wearing helmets to a person “who practises the Sikh religion” and “has unshorn hair and habitually wears a turban composed of five or more square metres of cloth”.

That facility, though, is not yet provided in the province of Ontario, agitating Sikhs, bikers or otherwise. Ontario’s premier, Kathleen Wynne, is not still willing to concede ground but, with elections due in another year, the community required some

pandering to. As a result, a young MPP (Member of the Provincial Parliament), Harinder Singh Malhi, part of the ruling Liberal Party of Ontario caucus, moved a motion in the Assembly in April, terming the 1984 anti-Sikhs riots as ‘genocide’. That motion was carried with 34 ayes, in a House of 107 members, since the majority, including Wynne herself, absented themselves from the vote; a convenient separation from an issue that has stung and surprised India. As one Indian official said, “All of us thought this was a dead issue. But this is that politics of election dynamics.” [Await Nishaan next issue]

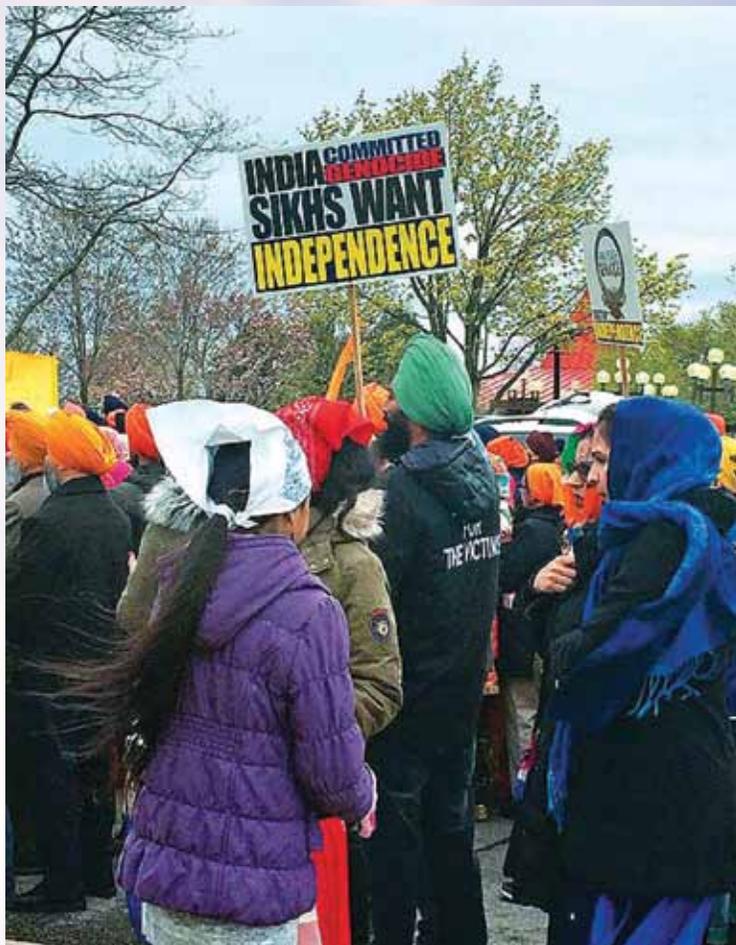
That was marked as a spring of discontent for India, even as Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau appeared at a Khalsa Day celebration at Toronto’s Nathan Philips Square; the first sitting PM to attend

the annual event since 2004. While this seemed innocuous on the surface and part of Trudeau's approach on signalling the virtues of diversity, that event routinely features a parade with floats honouring Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale with fluttering Khalistani flags. Its 2017 iteration was no different. Additionally, even after the Indian Ministry of External Affairs had reacted angrily to the Ontario Assembly motions, its mover, Malhi, was formally feted by the Ontario Sikhs and Gurdwara Council, the Khalsa Day event's organisers, as was Jagmeet Singh, the charismatic young MPP from the New Democratic Party (NDP), who had moved a similar motion in 2016, which was defeated by the Liberal Party (see separately). That fact couldn't have escaped Trudeau's schedule-framers, since both figured prominently on posters flaunted by the organisers. As a senior Liberal Party politician said in an email, "Could one not argue freedom of expression and at the same time argue that Trudeau doesn't have to associate with them? It is Trudeau's choice to associate or not, not about other's freedom of expression."

Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, legal advisor to the hardline activist group, *Sikhs for Justice*, predictably welcomed Trudeau's presence at the event: "It's very important and we are glad that he made an appearance."

Of course, by April 2017, Wynne was getting seriously singed politically. As the polling firm Angus Reid Institute noted on 24 March 2017, "...the provincial Liberal leader now holds the endorsement of just 12 per cent of people in her province".

At the other end of the spectrum, Jagmeet Singh's fortunes are northward bound. A Canadian politician, before which he was a trial lawyer, Jagmeet Singh has represented Bramalea—Gore—Malton in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario since 2011 and served as deputy leader of the Ontario New Democratic Party from 2015 to 2017. He is the first turban-wearing Sikh to sit as a provincial legislator in Ontario, as well as the first to hold a deputy leader position in Canada and announced his intention to run for the leadership of the federal NDP in May 2017 (he has since won).



He also has the dubious distinction of being perhaps the sole elected representative from a Western democracy to have been denied a visa to travel to India, the Indian Consulate in Toronto having turned down that request in December 2013. Speaking during the Ontario Assembly motion in April



2017, Jagmet Singh fulminated: “This is a country that continues to use visa denial as a form of silencing its critics.”

This trifecta of troubling developments has, unfortunately created potholes in the path of progress of bilateral ties between Canada and India, even after Mr Modi became the first Indian PM since 1973 to make an official visit to Canada in 2015. The Canadian High Commission in New Delhi has stated that ministerial visits from Canada to India were “a reflection of the importance of Canada’s relationship with India”. In mid-2017 Canadian Minister of National Defence Harjit Sajjan made a 10-day trip to India, including formal meeting with the Indian defence minister and obeisance at the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

Indian politicians are somewhat uneasy that even after much groundwork to pacify a section of Canada’s pro-Khalistani elements, there is still some unease in relationships. The government of India has initiated several measures, including the pruning of a ‘blacklist’,

giving visas to some who were earlier on such a prohibited list or had arrived in Canada as refugees, back-channel talks with some Canadian Khalistanis, while diplomats made forays into gurdwaras once considered bastions of separatism.

Cultivating the vociferous brigade also comes at a time when the Khalistan movement in Canada appeared to be heading towards a natural demise. Support for separatists has dwindled. For instance, at the Toronto Khalsa Day, there were fewer than two dozen of that persuasion, though they made their presence prominent.

The Canadian position on Khalistanis has been consistent. During a conference call with media in Canada during his India visit, Defence Minister Sajjan asserted that “if there was any evidence, any type of intelligence, our security forces would be looking at this immediately”, juxtaposing it with another oft-cited position, “Canadians have the right to express (viewpoints), it’s called freedom of speech.”

*Anirudh Bhattacharyya*



# Jagmeet Singh: future PM of Canada?

**J**agmeet Singh, a 38-year-old Sikh lawyer, became the first non-white politician on 2 October 2017 to head a major political party in Canada after being elected as the leader of the country's New Democratic Party (NDP) to lead it into the 2019 election against Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberals.

Born in 1979 at Scarborough, Ontario, to immigrant parents from the Punjab, Jagmeet Singh obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in biology from the University of Western Ontario in 2001 and a Bachelor of Laws degree from York University's Osgoode Hall Law School in 2005. His first tryst with politics was during his law school days, when he campaigned against rising tuition fees. He was called to the bar in 2006, where he began working as a criminal defence lawyer in the Greater Toronto Area.

Jagmeet Singh has often spoken about being bullied and targeted for his "funny sounding name, brown skin, and long hair. I also realised I wasn't alone. I saw kids around me—kids no less capable, no less worthy of respect and dignity—who were not in a position to follow their dreams, simply because their families couldn't afford it. That struck me as incredibly unfair," as per his statement on his website. He spent years defending refugees and immigrants, and entered politics in 2011 by running as an MPP with the NDP in Bramalea-Gore-Malton, Ontario. He has also served as the Deputy Leader of the Ontario NDP.

In September 2017, Jagmeet Singh gained global attention after a video from his campaign event, 'Jagmeet and Greet', went viral on social media. The video showed a woman heckling him about the Muslim brotherhood and the Sharia law, after interrupting his speech. Singh ignored the racial comments hurled at him and tried to diffuse the situation saying, "We are not going to be intimidated by hatred." He countered the woman with his campaign motto of 'love and courage'.

Earlier this year, on Canada's Multiculturalism Day, Jagmeet Singh had tweeted about how he felt "there



was something wrong" with him and how his "turban and beard evoked a reaction in every room" he went. Known for his sharp dressing style, Jagmeet Singh talked about fashion becoming his "social armour", which insulated him from some of the negativity he faced.

In an interview in February this year, Jagmeet Singh elaborated on how his personal style—his colourful turbans and tailor-made three-piece suits—became a part of his political brand. Jagmeet Singh, who led the fundraising campaign of the party since joining the race last May, won the decisive first-ballot victory over three other candidates by receiving 53.6 per cent of the vote. Supporters trust him as someone who could bring new life to NDP, which has struggled since its former leader Jack Layton passed away in 2011. In the general election of that year, the party had made historic gains, but lost almost a million votes—mostly to Trudeau's Liberals—four years later.

After the victory, Jagmeet Singh tweeted, "Thank you, New Democrats. The run for Prime Minister begins now," officially launching his campaign "to be the next Prime Minister of Canada."

*Extracts from: The Indian Express*



# The Sikh Motorcycle Club of British Columbia



**T**his unique Club was established in 2002 when a Surrey Radio Broadcaster, Harjinder Singh Thind, invited a small group of motorcycle enthusiasts to make a documentary film on Sikh motorcyclists who wore turbans. *The Sikh Motorcycle Club* is the only one of its kind in Canada and in the Province of British Columbia, Sikhs are 'legally' allowed to ride motorcycles while wearing a turban, according to the Provincial Motorcycle Act.

The mission of the club is motorcycle safety, helping injured motorcyclists in cooperation with AIM (*Association of Injured Motorcyclists*), and enhancing the communication with mainstream societies to bring awareness about Sikhs and their turbans. The Club has a commitment to participate and outreach to other

community organisations. Also, the Club holds annual family gatherings to encourage cohesion of the Club members.





Singh Mooker, Bhupinder Singh Uppal, Jaspal Singh Bahga, Harjit Singh Sihra, Amritpal Singh Randhawa Kulwinder Singh Khangura, Ranjit Singh Garcha, are some of the founding members of the club.

The Club regularly participates in community events, such as Canada Day Parades, the British Columbia 9-11 Memorial Ride, and Surrey's annual Vaisakhi Day Parade. Their popularity has grown, and has even inspired riders around the globe. Similar Sikh motorcycle clubs have popped up in the US, Australia, New Zealand, the UK, Dubai and even India, most of them with ties to the original club in Surrey.

*Courtesy: sikhchic.com*

It is to the credit of Sardar Avtar Singh Dhillon who campaigned single-handedly to earn the right to ride a motorcycle without a helmet but with a turban in BC for Sikhs. In the summer of 2003, Avtar Singh Gill, Harjinder Singh Thind, and Malkiat Singh Rai started meeting on a regular basis to ride motorcycles as a group under the name, *Royal Enfield Riders*. A few months later, a large number of Sikh motorcyclists held a meeting and inaugurated the *Sikh Motorcycle Club* under the leadership of Avtar Singh Dhillon. Azadwinder Singh Sidhu, Baldev



# 'Sadda Kaneda'!

## Annual Sikh Parade at Squamish

The annual Sikh Parade to commemorate the martyrdom of Guru Arjan, fifth Guru of the Sikhs, drew thousands from all over the Lower Mainland to downtown Squamish in mid-June 2017. Local businesses, in accordance with the Sikh tradition of langar, set up food stalls for the purpose and people thronged in long queues to sample from the various dishes served, which included samosas and jalebies.

The event was hosted collectively by the Squamish Sikh community, and was open to the public. Though

the event traditionally celebrates Guru Arjan's martyrdom by the Mughals in 1606, the event also marks the Sikh warrior tradition, which began soon after the Guru's execution. Thus, visitors were treated to displays of Gatka, or traditional sword fighting, as well as Dhol drumming, both of which were put on by schools from Abbotsford and Surrey. The event drew performers from most sections of the Lower Mainland Sikh community, including Dhadi Jatha musicians, who performed ballads in Punjabi, accompanied by the Sarangi fiddle and Dhadi drums.

One of the most popular stalls was that set up by the Sikh Motorcycle Club of Vancouver, which added to colour of the day, tying saffron turbans onto any eager participants. "Saffron is meant to symbolise sacrifice," one member of the club explained. "That is the theme of the day."

The parade, began with *Nagar Kirtan* ("street hymn singing") and the floats made their way from the Gurdwara to the end of Cleveland Avenue, where the crowd gathered in the O'Siem Pavilion to listen to speeches by community leaders and musicians, as well as to watch thrilling stunts by martial artists.

Amidst the food, music, displays and laughter, there was an underlying sense of communal unity throughout the day. The festival has not only become a day of celebrating Sikh culture and identity throughout the Lower Mainland, but also serves as a platform for sharing this culture and its festivities with the larger Squamish community. Inclusivity as well as celebration seemed the central themes of the day.



Photo: Steven Chua

Steven Chua

# Sikhs in American Civic Life



Baisakhi in LA, Photo KP Singh

Ever Since they first arrived in the United States of America well over a hundred years ago, Sikhs have been active participants in American life, holding positions in which they make decisions about the greater American good and supporting rights and causes they believe in, such as the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. They have become involved in nearly every aspect of American life, and many have taken a place in the public eye, such as the Californian

Sikh Dalip Singh Saund who served as the first Asian American Congressman in 1956. Today, there are some half a million Sikhs living in the United States, pursuing many different careers and participating as active members in their communities.

After the terrorist attacks of September 11th, the Sikh community experienced hate crimes and bigotry because of their physical appearance. Sikh men and some women wear the *dastaar*, or turban. In the Sikh faith, a turban is considered symbolic of their faith, part of their



Suneet Singh, CEO of DataWind Inc, on being Sikh and successful with the Mai Bhago spirit

'uniform'. Very unfortunately, and particularly after the American public saw images of terrorists on television, the Sikh turban has been misunderstood as Muslim or as the mark of a terrorist. The beards that most Sikh men keep have also been confounded with those of terrorists as seen in the media. Through these acts of misunderstanding, it became apparent that Sikhs are still an unfamiliar group to many Americans.

In response to this and to encourage non-Sikhs to understand the Sikh American perspective and experience, many Sikh organisations have actively pursued a prominent place in the public eye, planning events and contacting government officials to help Sikhs to be seen and correctly portrayed in an American light. In the past three years, there have been many examples of this increased involvement and participation in US civic life resulting from the efforts of both Sikhs and non-Sikhs.

### United States Postal Service Recognition

Though recognition from the United States Postal Service may seem minor, commemorative stamps and memorial post offices are ways the United States honours the commitments and contributions of various individuals and communities. In the past two years, Sikhs have been recognised by the United States Postal Service as being members of the greater American community. In September of 2004, the United States Postal Service issued a postal stamp to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the first installation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the sacred text of Sikhism, in the Golden Temple. The stamp has a picture of the Golden Temple and is the first Sikh-themed postal stamp in the US. In addition, in early 2005, a California post office was named after the first Asian American Congressman, Dalip Singh Saund, a Sikh from India who served in Congress from 1956 to 1962. This commemoration marked an important step for Sikh's noticeable involvement in US civic life.

### Religious Contribution and Recognition

Ever since the attacks of 11 September, the US administration has been active in supporting Sikh Americans and acknowledging them as contributing citizens and an active religious presence in the US. For example, then US President George W. Bush had invited Sikhs to participate in the National Day of Prayer, established in 1952 by an Act of Congress and held that year on 5 May 2005. Manjit Singh, Vice Chair

## US Vice President applauds Sikhs



*US Vice-President Mike Pence with Indian-American Sikh leader Gurinder Singh Khalsa*

In an event hosted by US Vice President Mike Pence in June 2017, he lauded the contribution of Sikhs in America and asked them to continue to give back by serving in the military and public offices at local, state and federal levels. "Sikh Community and its issues are always close to my heart and I always admire the contribution of Sikhs in Indiana and across the US," he told a Sikh delegation in Indianapolis.

During the meeting with the Sikhs Political Action Committee (Sikhs PAC) led by Gurinder Singh Khalsa, Pence said that he was fully aware of Sikh issues since his days as Governor. Main topic of discussion with the delegation was introduction of Sikh History in public history curriculum through federal department of education. The 58-year-old leader also admired the efforts of Sikhs PAC for encouraging Sikh Community for its participation in the main stream politics, the statement said. During the meeting, Pence reaffirmed his commitment to the Sikh community and encouraged it to continue to give back in the form of serving in the military and public offices at local, state and federal levels, it said.

Mike Pence was the first sitting Governor who attended a Sikh Parade and bestowed the highest Civil award to a Sikh in 2015. Thereafter, the US state of Indiana passed a resolution recognising Sikhs' "significant contributions" to America.



Photo by Cynthia P Stewart

of the Sikh American Legal Defence and Education Fund (SALDEF), then remarked on the event: The presence of a Sikh American illustrates a commitment to religious diversity...By attending such events, we hope government officials at the highest level are gaining a better understanding of Sikh Americans and the contributions our community has been making to this nation for over a century."

In addition to participating in this event and in many interfaith conferences and dialogues, Sikhs have been actively pursuing government funding for the

outreach and community programmes that are run by gurdwaras throughout the country. In June 2005, Dr. Rajwant Singh, National Chairman of the Sikh Council on Religion and Education (SCORE), most visible and active of Sikh organisations, and other Sikhs met with White House officials to discuss federal funding to support the programmes of various Sikh organisations through the faith-based and community initiatives of the Bush administration. They talked about how Sikhs can apply for federal grants for the programmes that serve not only the Sikh community but also the greater American community. Jennifer Sullivan, Deputy Associate Director of the White House Office for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, had said that as the Sikh community was already active in providing crucial services through community centres and gurdwaras, it would be easier for them to receive federal funding. The meeting secured a commitment from Jennifer Sullivan and Jim Towey, Director of the Office, to aid the Sikh community in receiving federal financial assistance for particular programmes, thus assist Sikhs give more to the greater community and become more visible both locally and nationally.



Indeanapolis Festival parade, May 2011, (photo by KP Singh) Unity in real diversity!



*Karah Prasad following Hartford seminar 'Religious leadership in an interfaith World' (photo by Ruth Broyde)*

## White House Events

The White House has often honoured Sikhs and their heritage through a variety of special events. In August 2004, the Bush Administration invited 90 Sikhs from across the country to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Guru Granth Sahib.

The White House has often honoured Sikhs, for increase in May 2005, when Yogi Bhajan, a well-known Sikh leader, was placed in the ranks of Martin Luther King Jr., Pope John Paul II, and Mother Theresa as one of very few religious leaders to be honored by a Congressional Resolution passed by the House and the Senate. Yogi Bhajan started a movement in the 1960s that led to his international recognition as a spiritual, community, and business leader.

Perhaps the largest event honouring Sikhs at the White House was the Sikh American Heritage Dinner organised by SCORE on 17 May 2005. Then Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, Congressman Tom Davis, and Congressman Jim McDermott were among the speakers at the event, which over 225 people attended. Information was passed out regarding the Workplace Religious Freedom Act introduced by Senator John Kerry and Senator Santorum. Awards were given to an actor, a lawyer, and individuals in the military service, to commend Sikh involvement in all aspects of American life. In addition, the FBI received a special award for promoting Sikhs, particularly through a commercial aired during the Super Bowl that depicted a Sikh man with a turban talking about the agency. "Tonight we saw the diversity of how

Sikhs are serving our great nation. Whether it was in the arts, law, military, or intelligence, it is easy to see how integrated Sikh contributions are to our society. If anything, one thought was continuously relayed throughout the night by both Congressional and Sikh speakers—that the Sikhs of this nation are indeed as American as anyone else, and they stand proud of it." The events hosted by the White House in conjunction with Sikh organisations like SCORE have made Sikh involvement in and commitment to American life more visible to the American public and provide an opportunity for Sikhs and others to celebrate Sikhs' ongoing contributions to the United States.

## Government Involvement

Sikhs have taken steps to become more involved in the political sphere by putting members of the community in office. In September of 2003, Tim Goeglein, director of the Public Liaison Office at the White House, met with Sikh leaders to discuss their involvement in civic life, national issues such as hate crimes, and how Sikhs can be better understood and recognised in the United States. A key component of this meeting was a discussion of the benefit of putting a Sikh in a high-ranking governmental position. This would demonstrate the United States government's acceptance of Sikhs and help to dismantle stereotypes that peg Sikhs as terrorists.

While Sikhs are currently absent from high-profile government positions, Sikh Americans are involved in public office throughout the country. For example, South Carolina State Assembly woman Nikki Haley nee Randhawa is the first Indian-American in the South Carolina state assembly. Mrs. Haley nee Randhawa is a Sikh woman born in South Carolina to Indian parents; she is also married to a Methodist. Her children were baptized in the Methodist Church, but they attend both the church and the Sikh gurdwara. Despite slurs and confusion about her religion, she won the election with the support of even incumbent Rep. Larry Koon's own precinct. Her sister, Nita McMahan, a local supporter of Mrs. Haley nee Randhawa, commented on her win: "Isn't it something," she marveled, "that a person whose parents are from another country can portray America better than you and I can? They can teach us a lesson of what it means to be an American." Involvement of Sikhs in politics on every level is increasing, helping Sikhs become more visible as active contributors to American society.

## Cultural Recognition

Sikhs have increasingly become more visible in the cultural realm as well. In July 2004, the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC opened a permanent exhibit entitled 'Sikhs: Legacy of the Punjab.' Though this exhibit did not directly portray the Sikh American experience, it provided visitors with an understanding of the religion, culture, history, and contemporary practices of Sikhism.

A year later, in 2005, Sikhs participated in Washington DC's Fourth of July Parade for the first time. For over 300,000 spectators, the participating Sikhs performed Gatka (Sikh martial arts), and 35 Sikh men and women representing gurdwaras across the country walked along the float carrying American flags. Youth played a large role in the performance. Miri Piri Sikh Gatka Dal, a Sikh community in Houston, Texas participated in many public events in the Houston area and throughout the country and was instrumental in securing Sikh participation in the parade. Gursharan Singh, leader of the Miri Piri Gatka Group, explained, "This was a great chance to show that Sikhs are part of the mainstream America and that we are equally joyous in the 4th July celebrations. This provided an opportunity for our youngsters to feel pride in being Sikh Americans." As Amrit Kaur, secretary of GGSF, said, "Sikh men and women walking alongside American bands and floats celebrated not only the 4th of July but also displayed their distinct identity that drew hostility after the events of 9/11. This is our way of asserting that we are Americans and we will continue to educate others about ourselves."



Nikki Haley (Randhawa)

## UNITED SIKHS UNITE ALL !



UNITED SIKHS began in 1999 when a group of Sikhs from the New York metropolitan area banded together to assist in the socio-economic development of immigrant communities in Queens, New York. Today, UNITED SIKHS have chapters in America, Asia and Europe that pursue projects for the spiritual, social and economic empowerment of underprivileged and minority communities.

"UNITED SIKHS endeavour to transform, alleviate, educate and protect the lives of underprivileged, individuals and minority communities impacted by disasters, natural or man-made, suffering from hunger, illiteracy, diseases, or from violation of civil and human-rights into informed and vibrant members of society by fostering sustainable programs regardless of colour, race, religion or creed."

UNITED SIKHS has sought to fulfil its mission not only by informing, educating and uplifting fellow beings but also by participating in cross-cultural and social dialogues to ensure that the promises and benefits of democracy are realised by all peoples. UNITED SIKHS is also an avenue for networking between like-minded organisations to establish and nurture meaningful projects and dialogues - whether social, cultural or spiritual-to promote harmony, understanding and reciprocity in villages, towns and cities. To achieve its objectives, UNITED SIKHS also participates in coalitions that share a common vision based on the belief that there is no greater endeavour than to serve, empower and uplift fellow beings. The core of our philosophy is an unwavering commitment to civic service and social progress on behalf of mankind's common good.

## First Sikh Mayor for New Jersey

Ravi Singh Bhalla emerged victorious in the six-person mayoral race, becoming the first Sikh mayor of the Mile Square City and the state of New Jersey on 8 November 2017. Ravi Singh is an Indian-American born in New Jersey and has served on the City Council. As he said, "Thank you for having faith in me, for having faith in our community, faith in our state, and faith in our country; this is what America is all about," he stated. "We've been through a bruising campaign... but now is the time we come together and see who we can work with to bring this city forward."



## Manka Dhingra wins Washington's 45th Legislative District state Senate seat

Manka Dhingra defeated her rival Jinyoung Lee Englund in the 45th District state Senate race at Seattle on 7 November 2017. She received 55.4 per cent votes as compared to the 44.6 per cent received by Englund. "We were pleased to endorse Senator-elect Manka Dhingra and we celebrate her victory," Shekar Narasimhan, the chairman and co-founder of the AAPI Victory Fund, said. "Investing in mobilising the local Asian American and Pacific Islander community yielded concrete results, and the AAPI Victory Fund will continue to support candidates that recognize the importance of our community and stand for our values."



## Satwinder Kaur elected Kent City Council

Satwinder Kaur, who worked as an executive assistant with the City Council in 2012 and 2013, had a close win in one of three Kent City Council elections. She grew up in a modest home in Kent where her father instilled Sikh values of selfless service and graduated from Kentridge High School in 2004. In 2005, she found herself as a young, single mother with no job. With her parents support, she started working hard at rebuilding her life by working at a local warehouse while attending Highline Community College in Des Moines.



While working for the city, she earned her bachelors in business administration specialising in supply chain management with a minor in accounting. She also earned a master's in business administration in technology management in 2014 from the University of Washington. She works as an Information Technology professional for a large IT firm pioneering solutions for current and future technology problems.

Kaur is actively involved in local events and cultural programmes. She chairs the city of Kent Cultural Communities Board, helps organize the Kent International Festival and is on the steering committee for Living Well Kent. She is a member at large and social media coordinator for Sikh SOCH, is on the Board of Trustees for the Greater Kent Historical Society and a board member for East Indian Connections. Kaur also finds time to be involved in the PTA at Sunrise Elementary, where her son, born in 2005, attends school.

# California Sikhs host Key event



At the end of August 2016, the American Sikh Public Affairs Association (ASPAA) hosted two major events featuring state lawmakers, local elected officials, and Sikh civic leaders from across California. A programme at the State Capitol afforded legislators and their staff an opportunity to learn more about their Sikh constituents and a dinner programme with close to three-hundred guests highlighted the accomplishments and goals of the American Sikh community.

The evening Inaugural Civic Engagement Dinner, held at the Mirage Banquet Hall in Sacramento, featured keynote presentations from Sacramento Mayor-Elect Darrell Steinberg and Republican National Committee for Women's Harmeet Kaur Dhillon. Mayor-elect Steinberg offered encouraging remarks on the accomplishments of Sikh leaders in California. "It is efforts like the American Sikh Public Affairs Association that help break down barriers and uplift the young men and women in our communities," said Steinberg, who succeeded Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson in December 2016.

Additional congratulatory comments were made by Assembly member Jim Cooper, Sacramento Sheriff Scott Jones, Former Assembly member Mariko Yamada, State Senator Ted Gaines, and a representative for Assembly member Susan

Eggman. Republican National Committee for Women's Harmeet Kaur Dhillon's remarks emphasised the importance of Sikh leaders in all levels of civic leadership from the local planning commission to running for political office. Dhillon herself ran for State Assembly, she previously served as Chairwoman of the San Francisco Republican Party, and was the first female Vice Chair of the California Republican Party. Today, she serves as the RNC National Committee for Women and made international headlines by offering Sikh prayers at the 2016 Republican National Convention in Cleveland.

A slideshow showcasing the one-hundred year history of Sikhs in American public life was delivered by ASPAA board member Bhajan Singh. "It is important for this next generation to understand the challenges our parents have overcome to establish their identity as both Americans and Sikh," he said. The slideshow and event programme featured information commemorating Dalip Singh Saund the first Indian, first Asian, and first Sikh Congressman elected in 1957, and Bhagat Singh Thind who challenged American citizenship laws that barred Indian immigrants.

ASPAA thereafter introduced a list of Sikh civic leaders throughout California including Preet Didbal, Yuba City Council Member; Kash Gill, Yuba City Council Member; Amarpreet Dhaliwal, San Joaquin Mayor; Parveen Tumber, West Sacramento Planning Commissioner; Mandeep Grewal, Modesto City Council Member; Gary Singh, Manteca City Council Candidate; Sarb Takhar, Chair of the Sutter County Republican Party; Mikey Hothi, California Democratic Party Delegate; and Amar Shergill, California Democratic Party Delegate.

Community leaders from other faith organisations also joined the event including Jon Fish from the Sacramento County Interfaith Council, Basim Elkarra from the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), and Father Joshua Lickter from the Anglican Church in North America. Dr. Tom and Felicia Bhe noted their gratitude for leadership of the Asian Pacific Islander American Public Affairs Association and the Organisation of Chinese Americans.

Closing remarks were offered by Darshan Singh Mundy, ASPAA board member and public relations officer for the West Sacramento Gurdwara Sahib.

Earlier that day at the State Capitol, ASPAA hosted a seminar at the California State Capitol with the office of Assembly member Jim Cooper who has remained a strong ally of the Sikh community after leading an effort that led to California's recognition of the 1984 genocide against the Sikh community in India. His district office is also led by the only Sikh district director in the State Assembly, Mikey Singh Hothi, who had helped facilitate the capitol event which featured Assembly member Cooper and guest speakers Amar Shergill from the American Sikh Public Affairs Association, Winty Singh of the Sikh Coalition, and Deep Singh from Jakara, a Sikh youth organisation.

"This Sikh seminar is the first of its kind," said Amar Shergill. "It is the first step in truly embracing California's diversity and empowering minority communities like the Sikhs in the legislative process." Shergill, who serves as a board member for ASPAA is also a delegate for the California Democratic Party and hopes to partner with legislators to create Capitol internships and voter registration programs that engage the Sikh community in the civic process.

The American Sikh Public Affairs Association works to empower members of the Sikh community in civic and public affairs through education, active participation, and leadership development.

## Get SMART!

Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund, formerly known as SMART (Sikh Mediawatch and Resource Task Force), aims to "empower Sikh Americans through legal assistance, educational outreach, legislative advocacy, and media relations." Their website contains resources not only for Sikhs but also for educators, employers, law enforcers, attorneys, and the media, to help individuals and organisations learn about Sikhs.



*Sikh school student Jj Singh Kapur winning original orator contest in US*

Through education, advocacy, and protection, The Sikh Coalition, another civil rights organisation, seeks to "advocate cultural diversity and stand against racism while advocating social justice, equality for both sexes, and human rights for all peoples, to foster organisation and civic engagement within the Sikh community to enable local empowerment and activism, [and to] provide Sikh organisations, Sikhs, and others with the skills and resources necessary to help organise, coordinate, and implement an effective and sustained Coalition effort," among other things. Some of its current projects include workshops for youth, establishing good relations with Congress to make progress in the acceptance of Sikhs in the United States, and working with employers such as the New York Police Department to help prevent discrimination against Sikhs. Through the efforts of these organisations, government representatives, and individuals like Amanda Gesine, increased Sikh participation and visibility in the United States are beginning to dispel some of the misconceptions about Sikhs that were voiced after September 11th and are helping the Sikh community become recognised as an important and active participant in American society.



THE SIKH COALITION PRESENTS

# SIKH

TURBAN AND IDENTITY BY AMIT AND NAROOP

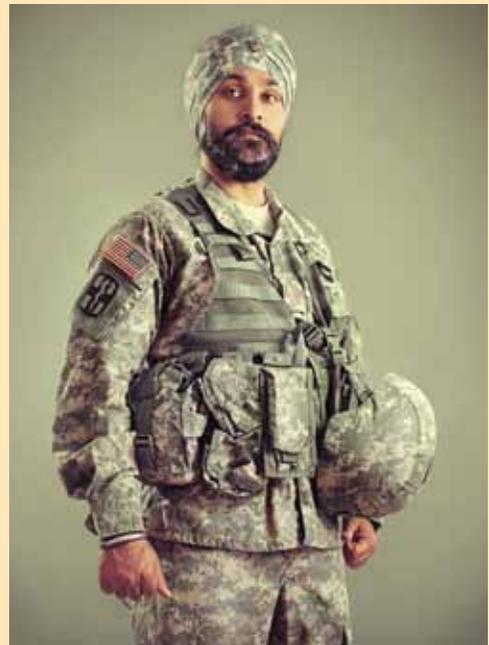
SEPTEMBER 17-25, 2016  
530 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, NY 10012

FREE PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION

For 15-years, the Sikh Coalition has led the fight for Sikh civil liberties and human rights across the United States. The Sikh Coalition partnered with British photographers, Amit and Naroop, to develop a landmark photography exhibition that features 38 Sikh American portraits embodying the beauty, resilience and perseverance of Sikh men and women 15 years after 9/11. The exhibition was launched in New York City in September 2016 to critical acclaim and featured unique and overwhelmingly positive stories about Sikhs in America.



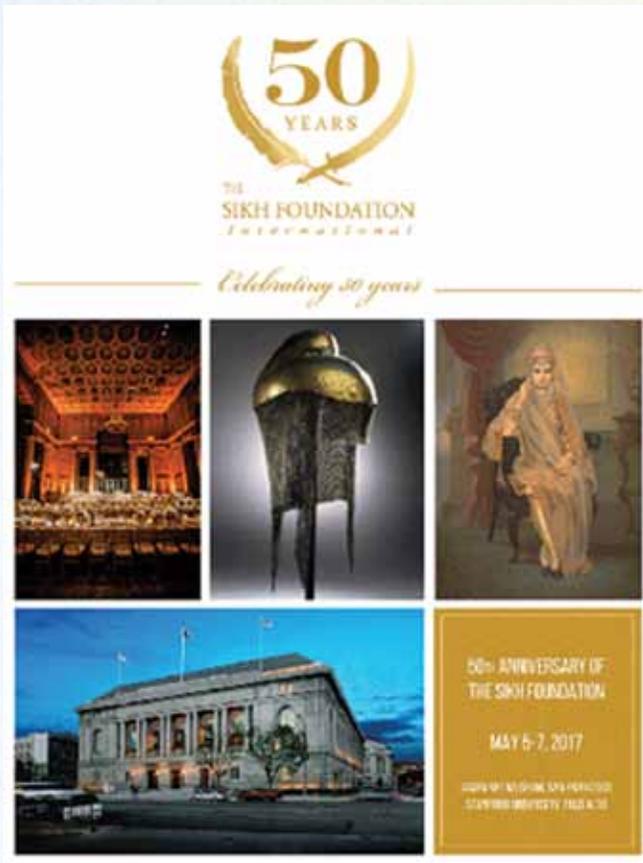
Over the course of eight days, nearly 6,600 visitors visited The Sikh Project exhibition. For many, it was their first experience with the Sikh American community. For others, it was a chance to learn more about the religion and community.



*Major Kamaljeet Singh Kalsi was the first Sikh-American to be granted a religious accommodation to serve in the US military since the ban on Sikhs in the 1980s*

Extracted from: 'The Pluralism Project 2006'

# Half Century of The Sikh Foundation, USA



Established on 27 December 1967, the Sikh Foundation has been “dedicated to passing on the Sikh heritage to the diaspora in the West, and to create the space and resources for the academic and artistic study of the culture.” For 50 years, the Foundation has been a champion for the recognition of Sikh heritage and values among audiences around the world. Dr Narinder Singh Kapany, widely known as the “father of fibreoptics”, is the founder and chairman of the Sikh Foundation along with his wife, Satinder Kaur Kapany.

Kapany’s achievements encompass the worlds of science, business and entrepreneurship, academics, art and philanthropy. “We live in a time when it is easy to forget the value of the past,” he says. “We are

surrounded by the lure of modernity and bombarded by incessant messages about the value of almost anything new. As a result, the works of our cultural and artistic heritage often languish due to the benign neglect or simple lack of attention.”

Amongst the Foundation’s many achievements have been the creation of galleries and exhibits of Sikh art at prestigious museums, endowment of several chairs at California universities for Sikh and Punjabi language studies, and publications aimed at both Sikhs and the world at large.

The Sikh Foundation began its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations on 5 May 2017 with hosting *The Pride and Promise*, a Gala at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, which houses one of the most comprehensive Asian art collections in the world. Among its prized galleries is the Satinder Kaur Kapany Gallery – the first permanent Sikh Arts exhibit in North America.

For their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the museum displayed its finest collections of Sikh art in a special exhibit *Saints and Kings: Arts, Culture, and Legacy of the Sikhs*, featuring treasures like the ornate helmets and armour worn by the Sikh royals, miniatures, textiles and so on.

Following a tour of the Sikh Exhibit and Gallery, a grand banquet was held, where guests mingled with distinguished members of the community, including filmmakers, former heads of state and business leaders, while partaking of an elegant sit-down dinner featuring regional cuisine. Vibrant performance pieces by artists-classical, contemporary and fusion were among the many highlights of the banquet. The evening also featured the launch of their newest publication *Sikh Arts in the Kapany Collection*, a joint publication with the Smithsonian Institute, a splendid volume featuring over 300 gorgeous, full-colour representations of Sikh art.

Education is a very important part of the Sikh Foundation’s mission, and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary



*Dr NS Kapany and Harjit Singh Sajjan, Hon' Minister for National Defence, Canada*

celebrations also featured a conference titled *Advancing Sikhs with Education* at Stanford University on 6-7 May 2017. Attendees at the conference witnessed talks on a wide range of topics such as Innovation, Public Service, Entrepreneurship, Arts and Literature by distinguished authors, artists, entrepreneurs, and business and political leaders from around the world.

During the dinner, the Sikh Foundation *Nirbhau* (which means 'without fear') Awards were given to five women who have made a huge impact in the world, all the while promoting Sikh heritage, arts, culture and religion, because, in spite of all odds – they persisted! After the awards ceremony, Harjit Singh Sajjan, the first Sikh to become Minister of Defence in Canada and a Member of Parliament, gave an inspiring keynote address, addressing the values of and the need to pay attention to our youth. Later there was a fabulous musical performance by the Raj Academy, a violin and tabla performance by Raginder Singh and Shobit Banwait, a sitar and tabla performance by Tej Anand and Jasprit Singh and another dance performance by the *Dholrhythms*.

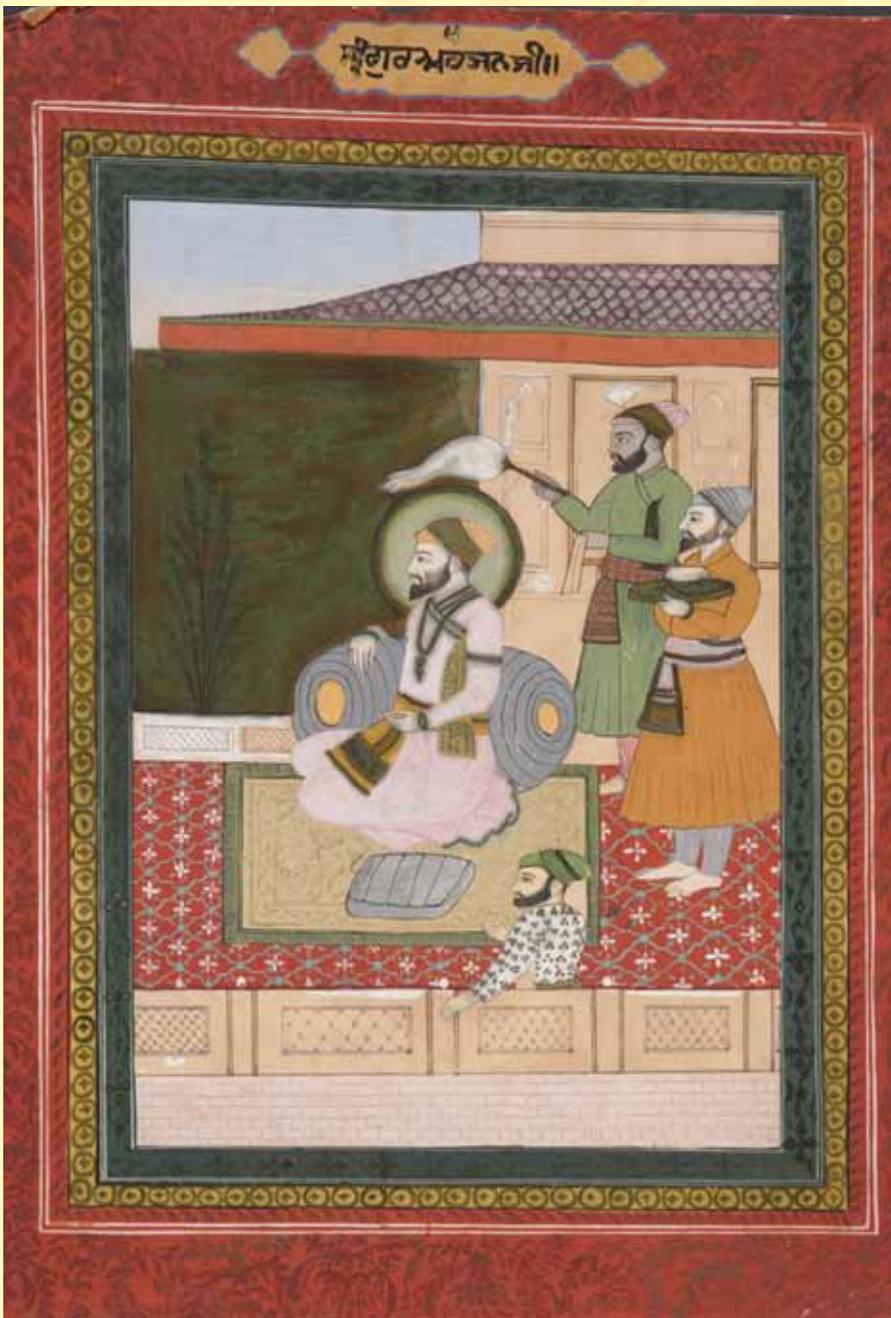
A two-day conference was also held at the Li Ka Shing Centre at Stanford University, attended by more than 30 distinguished speakers and 200 guests. On the first day of the conference were presentations on 'Sikh Studies - past present and future'. The afternoon session featured a discussion on 'Sikh Arts and heritage' by well-known authors, historians and professors, the senior curator of the Victoria and Albert Museum, the directors of Asian History and Culture Programme at the Smithsonian Institute and the Sikh Foundation. Several Sikh doctors practicing in the US

spoke on the field of medicine. There was a panel discussion about public service as a role model for change by a former Parliament member and a former Planning Commission Vice Chairman from India, a Senator from Afghanistan, and a Chairperson from the International Khalsa Council. Later five prominent Sikhs in the high technology world spoke about innovation and entrepreneurship as "a driver for progress."



*Some of the distinguished participants at the Gala event*

# "Virtue and Valor": Sikh Art and Heritage Exhibition at Phoenix, Arizona



Organised thematically, the exhibition *Virtue and Valor: Sikh Art and Heritage* explores key aspects of Sikh religion and history, held at the Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, Arizona and features a broad swath of objects from The Khanuja Family Collection. Portraits of the gurus, reflecting the meticulous style of traditional Indian painting are shown alongside photographs recording the Sikh military presence in British India and beyond, as well as a more contemporary image of the Sikh diaspora in North America. Various implements of war are also on display, including swords, medals, and a helmet and shield, as well as religious texts with images painted by both Indian and European artists.

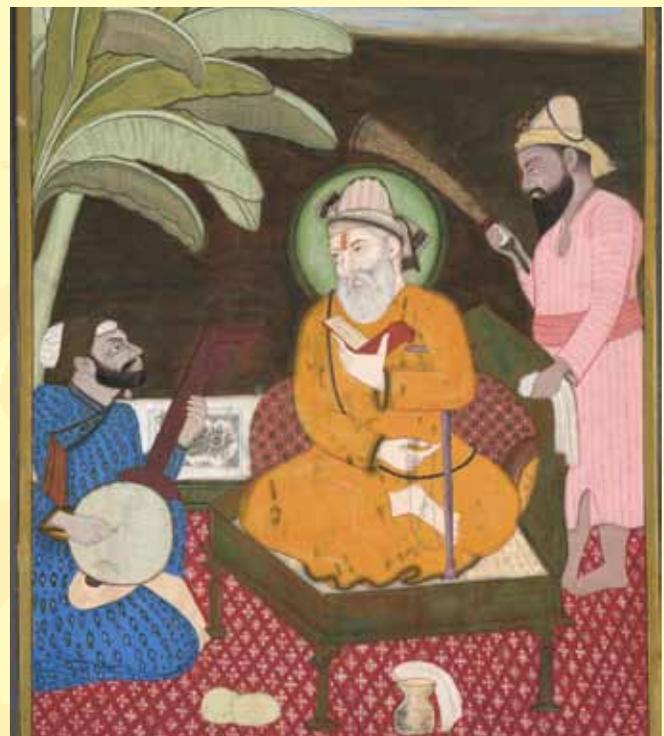
The founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak (1469-1539) lived in the Punjab region of India, which includes today's north India and

Portrait of Guru Ramdas, the Fourth Guru (1574-1581), 19th century. Ink and color on paper. (The Khanuja Family Collection)



Pakistan. Sikhism set out the devotional path that God is One and all creation being equal, without distinction by caste, creed, race, gender or station in life. Guru Nanak was succeeded by nine gurus; the Tenth Guru decreed that no individual would succeed him but spiritual guidance would be drawn from the Holy Book (*Guru Granth Sahib*).

Since its founding, Sikhism has grown to include followers on all inhabited continents. Sikhs have played important roles throughout world history. Sikhs were an integral part of the British Empire in India, especially as *Khalsa*, the pure and saintly soldiers of righteousness ordained by the Tenth Guru. The British government embedded Sikh military prowess in the Armies of India and other British Commonwealth territories. In the 1870s, some Sikhs moved to Malaysia and Hong Kong to serve as city policemen. During World Wars I and II, Sikh troops, including a women's auxiliary corps, participated in various campaigns, in North Africa, Ethiopia, Italy, Burma and elsewhere. From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Sikhs became immigrants to the USA and Canada and have since integrated into many Western countries.



Portrait of Guru Arjun, the Fifth Guru (1581-1606), 19th century. Ink and color on paper. (The Khanuja Family Collection)

## ‘Mistaken Identity: Sikhs in America’

In November 2003, a television programme called ‘Mistaken Identity: Sikhs in America’ was screened at major universities and community centres across the country and the UK and proposed to be aired on major networks. The programme, which started as an idea of Georgetown University student Amanda Gesine, is the first of its kind and is aimed mostly at the younger generation, who are considered to be the main perpetrators of bigotry and hate against Sikhs post-September 11th. “The objective is to inform and educate mainstream Americans and non-Sikhs in the USA and worldwide—*Who are Sikhs, What is Sikhism, and the economic contribution of Sikh Americans since 1889, when the first immigrants arrived in California—over 100 years ago.*”

In this initiative, Amanda Gesine, who hosts the programme, talks with young Sikhs about their experiences post-September 11th. The programme, which was supported by many Sikh organisations and has been sent for review to many other countries, is part of an ongoing effort to educate the American population about Sikhism and Sikh Americans. In conjunction with Sikh involvement in US civic life, it will help Americans learn about their fellow citizens and develop a working understanding of the Sikh culture that exists here.



# The Master Player: Ajay Singh Banga

Ajaypal 'Ajay' Singh Banga, born in 1960, is the current president and chief executive officer of MasterCard since 2010. In 2015, then US President Barack Obama appointed him to serve as a Member of the President's Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations. Presently, he is also the chairman of the US-India Business Council (USIBC) representing more than three hundred of the largest international companies investing in India and is also a member of board of directors of the Dow Chemical Company; member of the Council on Foreign Relations; and member of International Business Council of the World Economic Forum. The Government of India awarded him the Padma Shri in 2016.

The first thing you notice about Banga is the full beard on his face and the elegant black turban atop his head. Banga was raised in Pune, India, the son of a retired Indian military general, but is a rare sight in US boardrooms. In a graduation speech at New York University's Stern School of Business in June, Banga conceded as much: "I tend to stand out in a room," he said. "Turbans and beards will do that to you." He joked that being randomly searched at airports is his "part-time hobby."

The next thing you notice about him is his humour. He teases colleagues and makes fun of himself frequently; he talks candidly and swears for emphasis. But that frankness and ability to disarm earn him respect. "Ajay is the most intelligent person I've worked with in my life," says one senior colleague who did not want to be quoted for fear of looking obsequious. "It comes down to his confidence; he is deeply at ease with himself." When he first joined the company, Ajay Singh Banga walked the halls and struck up conversations, asking people who they were and what they did. Employees weren't used to it. One alum, who worked at MasterCard for more than a decade, says the culture was "extremely conservative" before Banga took over.

Financial analysts say Banga is succeeding in his mission. "There are many times where I see MasterCard

make headlines first," says Barclays analyst Darrin Peller. "I think that's their culture now. They are trying to be extraordinarily innovative." In spite of his globetrotting, he has not abandoned his Indian heritage. On the 30-minute drive from his Manhattan home to MasterCard's IM Pei-designed headquarters in Purchase, New York, he tunes in to Sikh radio, which airs traditional hymns. Yet he is also thoroughly Americanised. He loves baseball (the Mets), listens to Quincy Jones and Lady Gaga and "owns practically every Elvis Presley album that you could think of".



Photograph by Mackenzie Stroh

After receiving a bachelor's degree in economics from Delhi University and an MBA from the India Institute of Management, he joined Nestlé in 1981 as a management trainee. Thirteen years later, he signed on as director of marketing for PepsiCo Restaurants in India. He then accepted a job with Citigroup, where he briefly served as a debt collector as part of his training before going on to become head of marketing for the consumer bank. Although banking was an entirely different industry, he saw similarities to the restaurant business. By the time he left in 2009, he had been promoted to chief executive of the Asia-Pacific division and around this time Ajay Singh Banga started to think seriously about what he wanted to do with the rest of his career. He considered teaching but couldn't resist the urge to run a public company.

The rest as they say is history: his stint at MasterCard in 2010 turned out to be a gamechanger. At a time when compensation has come under scrutiny, his \$13.5m pay package means he is earning more than the heads of Goldman Sachs and Bank of America. And although success runs in the family – his older brother Vindi was a former Unilever executive who now works for the private equity firm Clayton, Dubilier & Rice – Ajay does not take it lightly. "To join Citi 14 years ago as a lower-level executive in India and end up as one of the top people at the company, that's pretty good," he reflects.

*Extracted from SikhNet and Financial Times*

# The multi-faceted Waris Singh Ahluwalia

**W**aris Singh Ahluwalia, born in 1974, is a Sikh American designer and actor based in New York City. His company, House of Waris, has collaborated with a number of other designers and artists. His acting career has included roles in major Hollywood productions such as *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, *The Darjeeling Limited* and *Inside Man*. In a rare honour, New York City declared 19 October 2016 as 'Waris Ahluwalia Day' in recognition of the Sikh-American actor and designer for his "powerful" message of countering ignorance and advocating for religious understanding and tolerance.



New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio honoured Waris Singh at a special reception at his official residence Gracie Mansion to celebrate the festival of Diwali and presented a proclamation that declared 19 October 2016 in the city of New York as 'Waris Ahluwalia Day'. Lauding Ahluwalia's talents of being a fashion designer, writer, actor and model, de Blasio said Mr. Ahluwalia "wears his *dastar* (turban) wherever he goes and so he sends a powerful message to our city to our country of countering ignorance, celebrating inclusion and advocating for religious understanding and tolerance in everything he does." Addressing a gathering of over 300-400 Indian-Americans and other people from the South Asian community, Blasio extended a special greeting to his "Sikh brothers and sisters" and underscored that an attack on any community and individual because of their faith is an attack on all of us. "We believe that when any... any individual is attacked because of their faith, because of where they come from, the attack is... on all of us." Ahluwalia thanked the Mayor for the "incredible honour" and said that while Diwali has been celebrated for centuries, this year its message of triumph of good over evil is "more important and relevant than ever".

Following an unpleasant episode in 2016, when the airline Aeromexico asked the Indian-American actor and designer Waris Ahluwalia off a flight after he refused to remove his turban during a security screening, the airline and the Sikh celebrity accepted an apology from the airline. "We apologise to Mr

Waris Ahluwalia for the bad experience he went through with one of our security personnel," Aeromexico said in a statement. But Ahluwalia said those who wear turbans shouldn't face discrimination. Travellers should be taken into a private area if they're asked to remove their turban, he said, as required by the policy of the US Transportation Security Administration.

"Really, this is about education, about education of the Sikh religion, but also of other religions, and this is not just about me or Sikhs," Waris said.

Waris Ahluwalia drew attention to his plight on social media. According to him, "Sikh men have worn turbans since 1699 when the last living guru bestowed a unique Sikh identity based on five articles of faith. Among them were a steel bracelet signifying a reality with no beginning or end, a sword representing resolve and justice, and unshorn hair as a gift of God and a declaration of humility. Some Sikh men don't wear turbans and beards; others say they stopped after being mistaken for Muslims and being targeted after 9/11."

Ahluwalia said he has had brushes with bigotry before. In 2013, his Gap holiday ad drew widespread attention after someone defaced it in a New York subway station. "Make Love" was crossed out to read "Make Bombs." Beneath that, someone scrawled, "Please stop driving TAXIS." The company was quick to replace the ad and double down on its campaign, making the photo its background image on Twitter and Facebook and releasing a statement saying Gap "is a brand that celebrates inclusion and diversity."



That "was a great example for corporate responsibility," Ahluwalia said, "but this is the exact opposite of that. I didn't ask to be a public face or voice of a religion. Sikhs have been in (the United States) for over 125 years," he said. "I just want to make and create art."

*Mariano Castillo and Moni Basu*



# Butter Chicken in New York!

**N**ew York may be studded with Michelin-starred restaurants, but there is something more that makes this city a paradise for food aficionados, which are scores of street food spread across the city. Run by a quite a few Punjabi expats, these sunshine yellow food carts are offering authentic Punjabi *chicken-tikka*, butter chicken and tandoori-murg, ten thousand miles away from the land which is world famous for this fare. Not only this, many of the food cart owners have customised their entire menu to meet Punjabis' taste.

"Visibly Punjabis outnumber any other expat community on the streets of New York. Therefore, business-wise it ensures very good ROI (return on investment) if our products are tailor-made to suit their taste buds. I have nothing to do with Punjab, but my Punjabi *chicken-tikka* is famous in the whole New York and I have a loyal clientele of both walk-ins and takeaway," said Julien Javier from Mexico City who mans a food cart on the Sixth Avenue, in New York's Manhattan.

Paramjit Singh, from Nabha in Patiala district, who won the US green card lottery and moved to New York with his family in 1995, said, "Punjabis are fond of well-cooked food, marinated well with an assortment of spices. Therefore depending on the order, we offer chicken and lamb made in true Punjabi style. We are also planning to add *Amritsari naan* and *chole* to our menu."

"Even to New York's iconic hot dog, ring-shaped bagels and roasted peanuts, we have added a tinge of Punjabi *tadka*. It's like running a business in mini-

Punjab in the heart of Manhattan," said Paramjit Singh, who stay in Flushing area, dominated by Punjabi community.

Roadside food carts is one of the most economical options to dine out for local residents as well as for tourists. Variety of mouth-watering dishes ranging from hot dogs, tandoori-chicken, Punjabi naans, creamy curries, lamb-briyani, bagels, falafel, kababs, dumplings and frozen yoghurt delicacies are available at these carts.

For 42-year-old Supreet Sehgal, from Jalandhar, running his food cart gives him a sense of freedom and entrepreneurship. He had reached New York in 2002 after illegally crossing the Canadian border and is currently operating his cart at 39th Street.

"I had worked at the docks for nearly 12 years before getting the US Green Card. During that period, I worked at meagre wages and stayed indoors most of the time. Now, I am running my own food cart and offering the best Punjabi street food. It is satisfying, both monetarily and psychologically," he added.

These food carts are certainly satiating the food cravings of Punjabi expats even in neighbouring districts. Saurabh Nanda (35), a pharmaceutical professional from Amritsar and a resident of New Jersey, said that he came to New York every weekend, specially to enjoy some street food made of chicken. "It gives me the feeling of being at home, and eating out in the bylanes of Amritsar."

Alkesh Sharma

# Promoting the Principles

## The Sikh Chamber of Commerce, New Delhi



Samir Singh, Founder TSCC

**F**ounded in 2013 by Samir Singh, the Sikh Chamber of Commerce (TSCC) is based in New Delhi, and is “a non-political and completely secular body which is open to all.” The TSCC organises a myriad of events and uses technology to propagate its message of working towards promoting Sikh values in the spheres of business, education and philanthropy. Focus is on the principles of “Honesty, Integrity, Equality, and Sewa”.

The Chamber has been holding knowledge sharing and networking events every month in New Delhi, taking up topics pertinent to its audience comprising businesses, institutions and professionals. It has also hosted Leadership Workshops with leading experts from various fields sharing insights on the chosen topics.

TSCC conducts its monthly business networking dinners on the last Saturday of every month, which have become very popular. Alongside a keynote speaker, members of TSCC make business presentations and an NGO is also invited every time and given the opportunity to connect with members and other attendees. The presentations are usually followed by a discourse with the attendees, these networking dinners assuredly enabling people in generating new business and also build new friendships and bonds.



Angad Singh Ranyal – stand up comedian at the TSCC Conclave in 2015

While such events usually take up an evening, the conferences and workshops can be a day or two long. The Chamber has always taken care to conduct all events keeping values, morals and the Sikh way of life in mind.



Gulraj Singh Shahpuri, leadership coach at the TSCC Conclave 2017

Recent keynote speakers at the TSCC Conclaves have included Baba Iqbal Singh, Founder, The Baru Sahib Trust, Dr Mohinder Singh, Director, Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, K T S Tulsi, Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India & Rajya Sabha MP, Talwant Singh, District Magistrate, Tees Hazari Courts, Harinder Sikka, Producer, 'Nanak Shah Fakir' (2015) a film on the life of Guru Nanak, Chef Manjit Singh Gill, Corporate Executive Chef, ITC Hotels, Manjit Singh GK, President, Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee, Dr Gurcharan Singh, Economist, Indian Statistical Institute, Dr Ravinder Kaur, Prof of Sociology, IIT, New Delhi, Dr Neelam Kaur, Principal of Akal Academy, Baru Sahib and so many more.

The Chamber recently organised the 'Wealth of Women (WoW) Conclave', a full-day meeting of minds on the International Women's Day. Various panel discussions were organised with women leaders from different industries and walks of life, including Inni Kaur, CEO, Sikh Research Institute (SIKHRI), Manisha Jha, National Award Winning Artist, Jyoti Mayal, Entrepreneur, Council Member, TAAI, CII, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sumann Sharma, Defence and Aerospace Journalist, Monica Jasuja, Head of

Digital Payments, MasterCard and Gurpreet Wasi, Founder, Super Sikh Run.

As Samir Singh said, "It has been my belief that Sikhism is not a religion, but a way of life. The times we live in... I felt a need to promote its values and principles in business. With most of us spending a significant part of our day at our work/businesses, if we start fully practicing these values at work, I feel its effect will trickle down to whatever we do in the rest of the day. From a humble start in 2013, TSCC has come a long way, and, I give entire credit for this to the team which has supported the vision and mission of the Chamber. I feel fortunate to be working such a great team comprising highly educated, experienced, passionate and like-minded individuals in the last four years, who despite their hectic schedules have given *tann* (hours), *mann* (heart and soul) and *dhann* (money), which has helped TSCC blossom."

"For me the biggest reward is the time I get to spend with some of the most forward-thinking visionaries. The learnings from my conversations with them, the bright future that we see together and - most importantly - the talks about the Gurus and Gurbani are themselves the most fulfilling aspect of my work with the Chamber and the people I work with. TSCC is a family. The bonds and associations being formed here are to be cherished for a lifetime."



'Wealth of Women' (WoW) Conclave, 2017

# Ode to Woman

Commodore Dalbir Singh Sodhi of the Indian Navy and a resident of J&K, has written an emotional account of his sister, Nirlape 'Nimi' Kaur's struggle for honour, dignity and commitment towards her children in his book 'Woman of Substantial Character'. Reproduced is an extract:



*" The woman is at the heart of the home.*

*Let us pray that we women realise the reason for our existence:*

*To love and be loved and through this love become instruments of peace in the world."*

*- Mother Teresa*

**E**very religion has enunciated on the status of women as also their contribution in making this society a livable one. I have given some references from holy books and available literature to remind readers about the importance of a woman in our lives. When I think of defining a woman, there are so many things that come to my mind (a mother, a sister, a daughter, a goddess, etc). Is it so simple to define a woman? Women are constantly defined in

relation to men. A woman is a female human being. A woman carries a child, so she bears the greater physical burden but she cannot create the child without the masculine energy. Traditional roles for men and women in most cultures have relegated women to primarily working in the home. Women all over the world are affected by social injustice. Although in many countries laws have been or are being put in place to ensure equal treatment to women, and protect

the rights of women, still much needs to be done. One of the most significant things and provisions introduced by the new Companies' Act of India is the mandatory inclusion of at least one woman Director on the board of every prescribed class of companies in India.

In Islam there is absolutely no difference between man and woman as far as their relationship to Allah is concerned, as both are promised the same reward for good conduct and the same punishment for evil conduct. The Quran admonishes those men who oppress or ill-treat woman. "O Mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women and fear Allah through whom you ask one another, and the wombs (fear Allah in regard to relations of kinship). Indeed Allah is over you as an Observer." Holy Quran- Surah AN-Nisa -4

(The Women)

"O you who believe! You are forbidden to inherit women against their will, nor should you treat them with harshness, that you may take away part of the dowry you have given them, except when they have become guilty of open lewdness. On the contrary live with them on a footing of kindness and equality. If you take a dislike to them, it may be that you dislike something and Allah will bring about through it a great deal of good."

(Surah Nisa-4:19)

The woman as mother commands great respect in Islam. The prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) states emphatically that the rights of the mother are paramount. Abu Hurayrah reported that a man came to the messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) and asked: "O Messenger of Allah, who is the person who has the greatest right on me with regards to kindness and attention?" He replied, "Your mother". He said "Your Father".

The Bible (English standard Version Proverbs 3: 15-18) states, "She is more precious than jewels and nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed." Prov 12:4, 14:1.

"A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones:

Every wise woman buildeth her house but the foolish pluketh it down with her hands." Prov 31:30-31

"Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise in the gates." Prov 11:16. A gracious woman gets honour, and violent men get riches.

Buddhism is widely regarded throughout the world as a religion of peace and kindness. The woman in Buddhism has been approached from varied perspectives including those of theology, history, anthropology and feminism. The founder of Buddhism Gautama Buddha accepted women to join his monastic community and fully participate in it, although there were certain provisos or Garudhammas. Buddha described the respective duties of husbands and wives: "in five ways should a wife be ministered to by her husband by respect, by courtesy, by faithfulness, by handing over authority to her, by providing her with ornaments. Her duties are well performed by hospitality to kin of both, by faithfulness, by watching over the goods he brings and by skill and industry in discharging all business." (DN 31). The Buddha on learning of King Pasenadi of Kosala who was displeased that his queen had just given birth to a daughter rather than the desired son, reassured the King with these words:

"A woman", O Lord of the people, may turn out better than a man.

She may be wise and virtuous, a devoted wife, revering her mother-in-law (SN 3.16).

The position of women has been a subject of considerable interest in recent decades. In all societies, there has been a rethinking of the position accorded to women in all spheres of activity. This has resulted in a significant change in the role played by women in social, economic and political life. In tantric iconography of the vajrayana practice path of Buddhism, female Buddhas do appear. Sometimes they are the consorts of the main Yidam of a meditation mandala but Buddhas such as Vajrayogini, Tara and Simhamukla appear as the central figures of *tantric sadhana* in their own right. Vajrayana Buddhism also recognises many female *yogini* practitioners as achieving the full enlightenment of a Buddha.

"The basic Buddhist stand on the question of equality between genders is age-old. At the highest

tantric levels, at the highest esoteric level, you must respect women: every woman."

Dalai Lama

As per the Bhagavad Gita, existence of men and women, souls, atoms and mother earth was essential for life to continue in the cosmic system. In absence of one, the other simply carried no value. As women held special status in society, men making a mockery of them was an absolute sin that carried no pardon. Any human being, any man who sinned against women was never forgiven by God Almighty. One must always learn to respect women, no matter what their fault if any. Life on mother earth in absence of women carries no meaning. All women of mother earth must always be treated as equal in all respects.

In Hinduism, on one side women are objects of worship of saints and seers and yet on another side, women are treated in a secondary role. Srila Baldev Vidya Bhushan, one of the great Acharayas who in his commentary on Bhagavad Gita explains that there are so many feminine personalities who are presiding over different qualities and among all these feminine deities, seven of them are especially conducive for spiritual advancement and they are also conducive for the mode of goodness. Krishna says that these seven deities represent "me". Among women, He says I am Intelligence: which means that among all the women of this world, the feminine deity who presides over memory, Smriti is a representative of Krishna. So again the fact that learning and wisdom are represented as women, Saraswati Devi, that should make us a bit cautious about not misapplying or misunderstanding the idea that women are less intelligent.

The lady is supposed to be the jewel of the house. A lady who is devoted to her husband is greater than all the saints and celestial beings and is referred to as Pathivrata.

In 'The Kitab-i- Aqdas', The most Holy book of Bahai Faith, it has been stated that men and women differ from one another in certain characteristics and function and this is an inescapable fact of nature and makes possible their complementary roles in certain areas of the life of society. Abdul'-' Baha has stated that in this dispensation "Equality of men and women, except in some negligible instances, has been fully and categorically announced". Similarly, the laws of personal status (that affect a woman) on marriage,

dowry, divorce and inheritance have been well defined.

The stages in a woman's life cycle can be broken down into three main parts; the Maiden, the Mother and the Crone. Because hormones play such an integral part in the woman's growth and development, a woman's psyche goes through a lot of changes as she grows up. These hormones affect the emotions, the experiences and the feelings that a woman contains at that time of the transition. The maiden is the young girl who is unaware of the ways of world. She is curious and playful. She feels the need to explore the world and find out its various ways. There are no inhibitions and no one stopping the girl to get what she wants. She is ready to explore and set out on the various wonders that life has to offer to her. The second stage is that of the mother. She is wiser and more mature. Her priorities are better defined. The third stage is that of the crone. This is the wisest of all stages. A crone has lived a full life and has the wisdom to choose from right to wrong. She is self-empowered and does not perform any action without thinking. She has honed her intuition skills perfectly.

*So Kyon Manda Aakhiye,  
Jit Jamme Rajan.*

- Guru Nanak Dev

Men and women are equal and therefore women cannot be considered socially, or spiritually inferior "Of woman we are born, of woman conceived. By woman is the civilisation continued. It is by woman that the entire social order is maintained. Then why call her bad? From her the kings are born."

(SGGS P-473)".

Sikhism made a radical departure from certain facets of how Hinduism as a religion was being projected by demolishing the iniquitous barriers that the Hindu society had erected between man and woman. The Sikh Gurus laid the foundations of a healthy, egalitarian and progressive social order. They advocated the principles of universal equality and brotherhood as the only true basis of social relations. In an often quoted sermon, the Guru tries to show the folly of treating woman with respect:

*From the woman is our birth  
In the woman's womb are we shaped  
To the woman are we engaged  
To the woman are we wedded*

*The woman yes is our friend  
 And from the woman is the family  
 If one woman dies. We seek another  
 Through the woman are the bonds of the world  
 O why call woman evil who giveth birth to Kings  
 From the woman is woman  
 Without the woman there is none  
 Nanak, without the woman is the one True Lord Alone*  
 (SGGS-P 473)

Sloke:  
*Pavan Guru, Pant Pita, Mata Dharat Mahat (Banc of Guru  
 Nanak Dev Ji).*  
 (Japji Sahib)

Air is the Guru, Water is the Father, and Earth is the Great Mother of all. These are three top most relations in the world other relations begin from these

relations. When the Almighty who created all these has not differentiated in providing air, water and earth to mankind, animals, birds and other creations then who are we to differentiate between a male and a female gender?

*Awal Allah Noor Oupaaeya, kudrat Kae Sab Bandey  
 Aik Noor Te Sab Jag Oupjeya, Kaun Bhale Ko Mandey.*  
 (Bani of Bhagat Kabir)  
 (SGGS- P 1349)

“First Allah created the Light, and then by his creative power he made all mortal beings. From One Light the entire universe welled up. So who is good and who is bad?”

Guru Hargobind Sahib the sixth Sikh Guru called woman “the conscience of man” without whom moral living was impossible.



# 'Putri Pathshala': The Tugalwala Way



**H**arpreet Kaur, 18, of Udowal village in Punjab's Gurdaspur district, first heard of the Baba Aya Singh Rearki College at Tugalwala from her cousin. Recalls Harpreet, "My cousin who studied here would tell me stories of the happy and simple life there and of the great values learnt through education. So I longed to go there." Harpreet eventually joined the school after her matriculation and is currently doing her Bachelor's degree. "I would like to stay on here as a teacher after doing my BA; and then do my Masters in English Literature," says the enthusiastic student, who is also the secretary of her class.

The college is an exceptional experiment in education for rural girls in the districts of Gurdaspur and Amritsar, which adjoin the border with Pakistan. Its far-reaching impact on women's education and empowerment can be gauged from the fact that the college is located in a state where female foeticide has been rampant and where the sex ratio is amongst the lowest in the country.

The college, which functions as a Trust, dates back to 1934 when a social worker called Baba Aya Singh established a small 'putri pathshala' (girls' school) at Tugalwala and also set up the SKD High School in 1939. The college, however, really began functioning in 1975, which was celebrated as the International Year of Women.

Principal Swaran Singh Virk, 64, recalls the early challenges the college faced in a society reluctant to grant its daughters an education. "After campaigning from village to village on the importance of education for girls, I was promised 34 students. Twenty backed out and so we started with a batch of 14. These girls sat for the exam of Prep (equivalent to Class XI) and Giani (a Punjabi language examination) and secured excellent results. Today, the school has the requisite number of teachers and is affiliated to the Punjab School Education Board. The college students appear



privately for their graduation and post-graduation examinations. Today, there are around 3,500 girls here—both boarders and day scholars – who are enrolled from Class VI to the Masters’ level.”

Amazingly, the tuition fee is just Rs 800 a year and boarding and lodging comes for an annual fee of Rs 5,500. In the absence of any grants, the college displays excellent management of limited means and innovative self-sustaining measures. Homespun rugs, or ‘durries’, are used for the students to sit on. Desks and benches are used only for the examinations. The college has six teachers, who teach the senior classes, the remaining classes taken by senior students through the ‘each one, teach one’ approach. This not only cuts down the cost of hiring another teacher, but also inculcates a sense of responsibility and confidence in the ‘student lecturer’.

As Swaran Singh Virk explained, “We would rather do without aid. We save on electricity by using solar lighting. We have no fuel bill as we have our own biogas plant.” The co-operative store for stationery and the general store in the college offer around 50% discount to students and also manage to save about Rs 150,000. The savings are used to sponsor around 150 orphaned students who study at the college.

The pupils are taught the dignity of labour and advantages of self-help:

everything from cleaning the campus to cooking meals in batches of 12 to tending to the kitchen garden is managed by the students themselves.

A visit to Tugalwala is mesmerising: hundreds of girls and young women dressed in white uniforms. The tall gates of the institution are ‘wo-manned’ by two students, who note down the names and addresses of visitors, even as one group of girls is busy preparing the midday meal. Sukhmeet Kaur, 18, a BA Final student and secretary of her class, elaborates, “We are having curry for lunch. The girls decide the menu by consensus. We use most of the vegetables and grain grown here on the eight-acre school farm.” The girls are provided with wholesome meals and their day begins with a full glass of fresh buffalo milk – from the in-house dairy – boiled with some tea leaves.



The high standards of excellence extend to the classrooms, as well. The college is proud of its unblemished record when it comes to examinations, as there has not been a single case of copying. Harsharan Singh, an examiner, explains, "The examiners and invigilators are posted here but are required to do nothing more than hand out the papers." The school has a cash prize of Rs 21,000 for an examiner who can spot a case of copying. The award goes unclaimed every year. However, the real reward for the school is the near 100-per cent pass rate, with at least 50 per cent of these students getting first divisions.

In a state known for its attachment to hockey, the latest excitement on the campus is a new hockey field in the school. Explains Virk, "We will train the girls to take part in national and international hockey tournaments."

While religious study on Sikhism is part of the curriculum, children are taught to respect all faiths and the school corridors are lined with sayings from various scriptures. As of now, the institution offers only Humanities but hopes to include diverse streams in time. "We will spread our wings on our own if we can. Affiliation would bring in more money, aid and grants but it would turn us into one of the many run-of-the mill institutions which we don't want to be," says Virk. For now, the college falls under the jurisdiction of the Guru Nanak Dev University (GNDU) but is not affiliated to it, as it is not a conventional institution. The students appear for their exams as private candidates.

Every afternoon, students are all over the campus playing 'kho-kho', merrily running around, or singing folk songs. Some practise for the various inter-class music, painting and public speaking competitions; others are busy making handmade charts and invitations for various events. These events are held in the school and are very often inter-school. The Tugalwala college girls go out for inter-school events as well.

The campus seems to exude a tremendous sense of confidence and happiness, and all the students – whether they are boarders or day scholars who bus down to school every day from their village or town – participate enthusiastically in school activities.

Reveals Sukhmeet Kaur Baupuria, 18, a BA Final student, Recently Manpreet Kaur, a student of Plus II, told a filming crew from a popular national news channel that she had given up the practice of copying, which she did in a previous school. When the anchor retorted that she should be ashamed talking on camera about having cheated, Manpreet promptly replied, "I should have been ashamed when I was cheating and not when I am confessing!" This is the confidence imparted by the Tugalwala way.

The school gets endorsements not just from its students but from senior educationists. As Jai Roop Singh, Vice Chancellor of GNDU, observes, "Visiting the Tugalwala College for me was a new and unique experience. Students study here as well as work. Other institutions need to learn from this one."

*From : The Alternative*



# The Kaur Project

## Celebrating Diversity of Sikh Women

**S**aji Kaur Sahota and Jessie Kaur Lehail, a photographer-writer duo from British Columbia, Canada, have been asking Sikh women as to what being a Kaur means to them. Their series, called the 'Kaur Project,' aims to highlight this common heritage while celebrating the diversity of women's experiences. "We have seen a lot of feminist theory incorporated into mainstream media, but there's been nothing specifically for and about Sikh women," Lehail, the writer behind the project opined. "So we thought why not create something ourselves."

Lehail and Sahota decided the only parameter for the project would be that the women must identify as Sikh and use the name Kaur. Thus far all the women featured in the project are in the British Columbia area, though Lehail said they were hoping to expand to other areas in the near future.

For every woman featured in the 'Kaur Project,' Sahota does a photo shoot and Lehail conducts a 20-minute phone interview. The benefit of talking over the phone, the writer said, is that it allows the women to share things they might not otherwise share in person.

Lehail asks two simple questions: "How do you identify yourself as a Kaur" and "What has your journey been so far." The women take their answers in many different directions, addressing topics like marriage, divorce, having children, losing children, struggling with depression or abuse, managing relationships with parents and in-laws and balancing all the many roles life places on them.

Some of the themes of the interviews are specific to Sikh or immigrant communities, Lehail said, "but a lot of what's discussed is applicable to any community and almost all women."

*Extracted from The Huffington Post*



Paaras Kaur



Karen Kaur

# Inni Kaur on 'The Kaur Project'

"Being a Kaur was a gift that came late in my life. At the age of 19, when I saw my name (Inni Kaur) printed on my wedding invitation I was upset. I didn't identify myself as a Kaur. I didn't know what it meant...I didn't connect with it.

It took me years to arrive at this stage...to fall in love. My journey began with questioning whether there is more to life than eating, drinking, and procreating. I started exploring various faiths. Sufism held me the longest. But after 1984, I had a shift in consciousness. I was drawn to Sikhi. Even then the paradigm being presented was too much for me to take in wholly. To say that I toed the line immediately would be an outright lie. I had one foot in and the other out. However, I was willing to look inward. And what I found was ugliness...and many demons I needed to sort out. Somehow, Shabad chiseled (my thoughts) and I began to feel connected with my inner self. Chiseling is painful for it is constant, but it is needed to unearth a beautiful sculpture.

At the age of 44, 'Kaur' was bestowed on me. It was a life-changing experience that I relive nearly every day. I am in gratitude for being graced with Kaur. It is not tied to my familial or husband's name. I adorn myself simply with Inni Kaur. No other titles are needed. I look beyond gender and focus more on character and actions.

My turning point was at the age of 50, when I decided to celebrate the entire year doing things to grow myself and expand my horizons.



I have found the beauty of living and finding the joy in between. Women are creators and our path is different than men and we need to honour being creators. For me this means, creating poetry, painting, writing and everything that I touch. Every year...I challenge myself to learn something new, and my fears have tapered.

Awakening to my connection as a Kaur has provided me with an incredible freedom. I fell in love...in the purest of sense.

It took a while to fall in love, to embrace; to surrender. We are scared of surrender, thinking it is weakness...it is not. We rise in love. It is when we rise in that love, we experience true love...the one that gods and goddesses yearn for...which humans have the capacity to experience, though rare are the ones that do ... this is revealed in Japji Sahib.

In this love, I have discovered the wings to fly and the belief that I can do anything. I want to live every moment, feel everything and grow.

Challenging moments will always be there. For that is life. But we are rivers... we must gush and flow. At times we may trickle, but we must never stop flowing nonetheless."

**Inni Kaur** is on the editorial board of *Nishaan*, the journal celebrating Sikh heritage and culture and is an active board member of the Interfaith Council of Southern Connecticut. She also serves on the boards of the MBSK Foundation, the Namaskaar Foundation, and the Sikh Research Institute, as well as on the Advisory Board of the Sikh Family Centre and the daily online magazine Sikhchic.com. She teaches at the Guru Gobind Singh Academy in Norwalk, and has also been an instructor at various Sikh youth camps.

Born and raised in Kuwait, Inni Kaur lived in New Zealand, Australia and Greece before moving to the United States in 1982. She now lives in Fairfield, Connecticut and is active in Sikh community affairs, raising awareness on many key faith and women's issues. She has been a speaker at seminars at Yale and Fairfield Universities and has made presentations to the Connecticut State Board of Education, as well as to local police departments and area schools.

# Kaur Strength



## Empowering Women Fitness

**I**t is not always easy for a turbaned Sikh in the Western world. And, Beant Kaur, or “Kaur Strength” as she is known as, is a turbaned Sikh woman who ventured into the fitness field to share the benefits of holistic health and daily exercise.

The family of this Vancouver-born woman is originally from Moga in the Punjab but moved to Canada in 1968. She has been a fitness freak right from childhood. “I grew up with two elder brothers who were always very active and into sports. During childhood, I was always outside playing with my brothers and never let the fact that I was a girl get in the way of trying to compete with them. I was in the high school basketball team for four years. During university, my brothers introduced me to weight training and I joined a Muay Thai-MMA gym, where I learned how to fight and defend myself. This progressed to Olympic style weightlifting and I have continued this journey since. I truly enjoy the challenges that come with weightlifting which enables

me to evolve both physically and mentally and stay disciplined in my workout regimen.”

Beant Kaur says the history of amazing Sikh warriors also played a huge part in inspiring her to pursue physical fitness. She feels wearing a turban is a duty bestowed upon her. “I experience a sense of responsibility because I am wearing the Guru’s crown, the Dastaar. But on social media, I have to be conscious of my content and how I portray myself as I am aware that the Dastaar comes with values that are directly connected to Sikhi and these make me who I am. I receive messages from women all over the world on how I have helped or inspired them into making better lifestyle choices and that is a by product of me sharing my journey on social media.”

Her work has taken her on global travels and Kaur Strength Fit Camp and Kaur Strength Fit Club were established to empower other Sikh women to change their lifestyle. “I was invited to California and England to attend Sikh camps for the youth where I discussed how a healthy lifestyle can empower us as individuals and as a community. I have developed many friendships and gained many opportunities to give back to my community.”

However, she also runs into negativity. “For the most part I just laugh it off ...I remain focused on my goals and vision as I know how important the message of living an empowered, healthy and fit lifestyle is.”

She can’t emphasise enough on the importance of visibility of women in the fitness sector. “I think women in general tend to gravitate towards traditional careers and academic routes...I actually get messages

from Punjabi women whose families actually discourage them from working out and want them to focus on house work. Exercise is a great tool to empower oneself, once you empower yourself, you can empower the world.”!

*Image courtesy: The Kaur Project*

*Jasleen Ghura*



# First Sikh is headed for Mars

## The 2030 Mission

**W**hile Kalpana Chawla made history by being the first Indian woman in space in 1997, Jasleen Kaur Josan will be the first Sikh woman in space and the first Indian female astronaut to be selected by NASA for the epic mission to Mars. The Orion Mission is going to be the first human mission to Mars, which is on track to take place in 2030. "NASA is really working on amazing research on this," says the fresh-faced twenty four-year old Josan, who looks like she's barely out of high school let alone a woman who was chosen last year to be a researcher for NASA's Orion Mission. "I do feel very proud to be part of such a mission. Technology is booming and things are going to change in another 15 years. It all depends on my capabilities and



determination and how I take to these changes. I'm not nervous exactly, but just really excited and looking forward to what the future brings," she said.

While the 2020 Mars Mission is a one-way mission — the group will habitate on Mars and not return — Josan is part of the two-way mission which is planned for 2030. "It basically means that the astronauts will go to Mars and come back," Josan says. "It will take nine months to reach there, three months to stay there, and then another nine months to return. So it's a 21-month mission in total." Certainly not nervous, Josan says her family is very excited about her getting the incredible chance to go to Mars.

Currently based in Huntsville, Alabama where she is pursuing an integrated degree of Masters and Ph.D in space science from the University of Alabama, Josan was born in Kurukshetra, and travelled to many parts of the sub-continent for her schooling. "Kalpana Chawla [who first flew on the Space Shuttle in 1997] was my inspiration for as long as I can remember."

Inspired by Chawla, Josan wanted to become an astronaut and study space technology. She did her bachelor's degree in aeronautical and aerospace from Sathyabama University in Chennai. "When I was in the second year of my bachelor's, I proposed my research on a Mars Mission to NASA and was selected for an international conference at the ASSE (American Society of Safety Engineers), so I was invited to give an oral presentation in Orlando at the Kennedy Space Centre, where along with getting selected for a Mars mission programme, I got the best presentation award."

Josan did her training and internship at the Kennedy Space Centre and then went back to India



Josan at Nasa's US Space and Rocket Centre in Huntsville Alabama.  
Photo Credit: International Space Education Institute

to continue her degree. "I was called by NASA for second phase of the competition where five students were selected among thousands of applications to work on this mission. After going through many selection rounds and training I finally started working with the Marshal Space Flight Centre at NASA." In 2013, Josan was named by NASA in collaboration with ISEI (International Space Education Institute) as an International Space Ambassador.

Josan agrees that there is not much awareness about astronautics in India. "It's true that there isn't much awareness and education especially in northern India about aerospace. In fact, my parents suggested I do an engineering degree in electronics or telecommunications (like her brother who she adores and considers her mentor). They didn't want me to take a risk and get into something that doesn't have much scope." Josan's grandfather was an ex-army man; her dad is an agriculturist and businessman and her mother (whom she talks to every morning no matter where she is), runs an educational institute. "I actually used to skip my classes to go to the library to read about space research.

Finally after a year I just decided to drop the engineering courses altogether as I couldn't continue on with something in which I had no interest." While she is encouraged by the progress of the ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) in the past few years, she's hoping to see a lot more advancements in the near future. For her part, Josan is trying to raise aerospace awareness in India: "I try my best to conduct



*Jasleen with astronaut and physicist John M Grunsfeld  
Photo Credit: NASA*

various classroom projects, online seminars and guest lectures to help people from India get more education and interest about aeronautic science and technology."

In December, Josan will be conducting 'Let's MAP 2030', a Map Mars awareness programme directed at youth. She encourages people to connect to her on her Facebook page — *Astronaut Jasleen* — where she'll be uploading details to the event soon. "My goal isn't just to be an astronaut, but to contribute to space technology as a whole and help future generations."

While her spare time is very limited, Josan loves poetry and reading books. "Sometimes on weekends I go to a rehabilitation centre to spend time with the elderly and learn about their experiences and adversities. I love hearing how in every story there are silver linings." And even her personal dreams tread along outer space.

Josan reveals that she has a secret Bollywood aspiration on her bucket list: "I want to work on a biography on Kalpana Chawla whereby I play her in a film," she admits. "We have seen many true-story based films where the actors themselves have connections to the real-life stories. How amazing would it be to see someone acting in a film who is going to space in the future? I'm sure many Indian girls would get a lot of inspiration from it."



*Kalpana Chawla  
Photo Credit: NASA*

# Jasreen Kaur of the US Air Force



## An Interview

Senior airman Jasreen Kaur of the US Air Force 69<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Group, Grand Fork Air Force Base, North Dakota, recently re-enlisted in the Air Force and these are excerpts from an interview with her:

**Please tell us about yourself. Why did you join the US Armed Services?**

I was born and raised in the Punjab, India to Jasbir Singh and Paramjit Kaur. My father moved to the United States when I was just 4 years old, and my brother was about 6 months. I eventually moved to the US in 2006 when I was 17 years old. I finished high school and started college. I was unsure as to what I wanted to do during my freshman year of college. I wasn't satisfied by just going to school. I needed to do more, and wanted to be completely independent. Since I grew up seeing my grandfather's picture in his (Indian) Army uniform, military was always on the back of my mind. I finally thought about it, spoke to a military recruiter and felt like this was something I definitely wanted to try out. I discussed this opportunity with my parents, but they weren't too happy about it. They wanted me to finish my bachelor's degree first. After a lot of convincing, they finally agreed to let me join the Air Force on terms that I will continue school (which I was going to do anyway).

**Several of your family members have previously served in the armed services in other countries. Please tell us more about that.**

My grandfather Major Kartar Singh was the first in his family to branch out and do something other than farming. I don't know much about his career except the fact that he retired in Ladakh as a Major. Following his footsteps, three of my uncles joined the Indian Army and retired as Majors as well.



**You were an athlete before moving to the United States. Did that influence your decision to join the US armed services?**

I don't believe that being an athlete influenced me in any way for joining the US military. However, it did prepare me physically and mentally for the upcoming challenges I was about to face in the basic military training.

**Do you have any stories from basic training?**

Oh, there are so many stories, however, I can never forget the first night away from home, in a new room, new bed, and with having strangers as your roommates. On my first night, my heart was racing and I was missing my family. Just when I settled into bed, I was startled by a powerful female voice asking me to read over the instructions, for the next morning. I looked at the white piece of paper with all the instructions and then looked at the instructor (she was half my size and had to get on top of a bed in order to speak to me). At that moment, there was a voice in my head that told me, "You need to go back home and forget everything about the boot camp and Air Force."

It was the loud and authoritative behaviour of the instructor that frightened me, but during my graduation from the boot camp, it was the same instructor that congratulated everyone on our achievement. Everyone giggled thinking about their first day and their scary experience with that particular instructor!

**Can you please tell us about your current role?**

I deploy, sustain and repair standard voice, data, and video network infrastructure systems, IP detection systems and cryptographic equipment. I perform, coordinate, integrate, and supervise network design, configuration, operation, defence, restoration, and improvements.

I am also responsible for analysing capabilities and performance, identifying problems, and taking

corrective action. In summary, you can call me a computer network hardware and communication equipment specialists for the US Air Force.

**What's been your biggest learning experience since joining the armed services?**

“Learning to live on my own” is definitely the greatest learning experience because I went from being dependent on my parents to being independent within few hours. Although I missed having my family around, especially my mother, I learned that being independent was something I may have never learned if I had not joined the US Air Force. I have been doing everything myself, and had to polish my time management skills. I recently adopted a dog (her name is Willow), and she has taught me to be more responsible, patient, and a lot calmer.

**Please share your thoughts on the ongoing campaign to increase the number of Sikhs in the US military.**

I think it's a great platform and I couldn't be happier to see the efforts of my fellow brothers and sisters to raise Sikh awareness including assisting *sabat surat* (practicing) Sikhs with the process. Sikhs have been living in the United States for centuries now, and I believe that just like any other Americans, Sikhs have the right to serve. They have contributed in every other sector of our nation so why not the uniformed services?

**Do you experience any issues being a Sikh woman in the armed services?**

I personally have never experienced any hardships. People I work with are very understanding, and are always willing to lend a helping hand, and provide good advice.

**Please tell about your role as 'Victim Advocate' in the US Air Force.**

Victim Advocates (VA) provide essential support, liaison services and care to a sexual assault victim. VAs provide crisis counseling, ongoing non-clinical support, information and referral to assist with decisions about the case. A victim advocate can also be present for any interview or appointment at the request of the victim.

**What advice do you have for our young men and women who are interested in joining the military?**

Military isn't for everyone, but if you are a committed and hardworking individual then there is nothing that can stop you. Signing that contract is a



huge deal, and not only are you going to be responsible for yourself but for your peers and civilians. Good research is crucial, and especially being able to talk to someone who has served, or is currently serving, would assist you when you are unsure. Everyone has a different experience and emotions about joining, so it never hurts to speak to more than one person. My experience has been positive because joining has taught me patience, self-discipline, resiliency, self-confidence and assisted me in becoming detail oriented person.

**How do you practice your Sikh faith while being away from your family and community on extended missions?**

I have a Gutka Sahib with me which I brought from Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple). Gutka Sahib keeps me same when I am having gurdwara sahib and family withdrawals. Internet and technology are some great inventions!! One can listen to Gurbani anywhere at any time of the day. I tend to listen to Japji Sahib in my car on days when I'm running late to work.

**Please share your hobbies, interests and passions.**

I enjoy 'do-it-yourself' projects because it allows the artist in me to be creative. Recently, I have been making flower vases out of empty bottles which have been appreciated by friends and family. The next few things on the list are to re-paint my dresser myself, and learn how to knit. I love reading and hope to have a library of all the books I have read (at the moment it's just two shelves in my bookcase). Dancing and music have been my passion for the longest time. You will always find me dancing and singing in my apartment whenever I have some free time.

**What do you see yourself doing ten years from now?**

My goal is to work with the FBI, and that is what I see myself doing in ten years!

# The Indispensability of Fitness

**G**uru Angad Dev ji, second Guru of the Sikhs, took keen interest in sports and physical training. He was sanguine that one has to be physically and mentally strong to achieve anything in this world or on spiritual grounds. "One has to be powerful outside to remain powerful inside

because a strong soul abides in a strong body." He encouraged people to take part in physical activity after morning prayers. For this, Guru ji created special wrestling arena or 'Malakharas' where people used to train themselves. There was no discrimination between the rich or poor. All were treated equally. People, especially children, used to perform in the arena under the Guru's vision.

And later, the Sixth Guru Hargobind Sahib ji introduced two swords, 'Miri-Piri'. Miri means political or worldly power and Piri means spiritual power. The concept of Guru ji was to make the Sikh panth strong and fearless. A person should be a devotee of the Almighty as well as a warrior on earth. A Sikh should be strong from inside out to fight for his rights. To serve humanity, to look after weak people, to live a righteous life according to Gurmat. For all this, one needs to be physically and mentally fit. Where 'Miri' makes us fearless outwardly, 'Piri' makes us fearless inwardly. If someone is taking benefit of your silence, humbleness or innocence, then wielding a sword and fighting for our own right is *dharma*. And for wielding a sword or any other weapon one has to be physically strong and fit.

Once, Guru Gobind Singh ji was invited by Bahadur Shah





**American Sikhs display martial arts**

Zafar, who was emperor of India and offered him his own seat as a mark of respect. After seeing this, the 'Pir' or spiritual teacher of Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar became very jealous because he had never been accorded such honour. And this Pir came forward in distrust and asked Guru Gobind Singh ji to show some *karamat* or spiritual power. Guru ji tossed his coin and said one *karamat* is this. And that pir said, "No, I am not convinced by this."

Guru ji then grabbed his sword and said, "What if I behead you in front of your king?" The Pir began shivering and said, "No, no. I understand your power." Guru Gobind Singh ji wanted to convey a message that money or power itself is a powerful thing and that is called 'Miri'. Later Guru ji established the Khalsa panth in 1699 and propagated that a Sikh Khalsa is a spiritual warrior

who does not lack in anything, be it spiritualism or worldly power.

Likewise, in this modern world fitness plays an indispensable role in our lives. When we perform any kind of physical activity, we not only burn our calories but our mind too becomes calm and soothing. We feel very relaxed after it. It has been scientifically proven that exercise reduces anxiety and depression and stimulates hormones in our body.

Exercise naturally plays a very important part in our lives. We drink, we eat, we sleep regularly. Similarly, workout or physical activity is also very important. If we stop eating or getting enough sleep, we expect negative results. Thus, fitness must be stressed upon for mental and physical well-being.

**Jameet Singh**  
(SikhNet)

# Sansarpur

## The cradle of Hockey

**I**t may be just a 100-yard stretch of land on the outskirts of Jullundur Cantonment in the Punjab, but the village of Sansarpur has a very special place in the history of Indian hockey having produced as many as 14 Olympians over the years; Sansarpur remains proud home to some of India's finest hockey exponents, even if of the past.

It all started in the 1920s with a certain Subedar Thakur Singh of Sansarpur flying to New Zealand to play under the leadership of the legendary Dhyan Chand. The saga reached its pinnacle in 1968, when seven sons of Sansarpur's soil participated in the Mexico City Olympics at the same time – five of them playing for India and two for Kenya.

Dhyan Chand, the magician himself, hailed Sansarpur as the 'Mecca of



*Harbinder Singh breaks through the Ceylon defence during the Asian Games in Bangkok in December 1970*



*The wizards in action!*

Hockey'; he was particularly enamoured by the fact that the player he believed to be the most complete hockey player of all time, Babu Mohan Singh, had his roots in the village. Sardar Atma Singh was another great whom Chand could never upstage with his dribbling skills, and for whom he had much admiration.

For a village that has just some 5,000 inhabitants, having so many hockey players rising through the ranks together from their childhood and going on to representing their state Punjab and then India at the highest platform in the world, is an incredible fact. Lacking the basic facilities required for practising the game, the youngsters had to make do with sticks prepared out of mulberry tree branches while the balls used were woven from cotton threads. Such was the



*2nd World Cup in Amsterdam in 1973. India's Surjit Singh vies with Netherland's Jeroen Zweeta and Wouter Leefters in the final (Photo Morley Pecker)*



*Avtar Singh (Kenya Captain), Resham Singh, goalkeeper Amarjeet Singh and Indian forward Rajwinder Singh in the Mexico Olympics*

passion for hockey amongst the people of the village that they soon trumped against all odds to carve out their own niche in the sporting world during the golden era of Indian hockey.

Then suddenly there was not a single player at the Olympics from the village of Sansarpur and there is not much promise offered by the foreseeable future either. Why has the scenario changed so drastically? How did the most fertile nursery of hockey in India suffer such a sad decline?

There perhaps are many causes, including India's fascination, nay obsession, with the game of cricket with all its glamour – and money! Compounding this was perhaps, India's failure to qualify for the Olympics after the 1980 Moscow Olympics which shocked many, except a few lovers of the game. "No one has cared for the national sport. Even people have become indifferent to such losses. They only want to watch cricket on TV," rued village elder Jagir Singh.

Still, a few young pairs of legs have not let the dust settle in this Punjab village as they try to keep hopes alive for the country's national game - hockey. But they are just a handful. For Sansarpur, it has been a freefall from being universally recognised once as a cradle of the best hockey players internationally to being just another village ground where some boys also play hockey. In the 21st century when schools and unknown clubs flaunt their own private astroturf, in tune with changes in the way hockey is played internationally these days, Sansarpur has not been left in the past—it has got lost.

So, Sansarpur is no longer the nursery of India's hockey greats like Thakur Singh, who was the first hockey player from this village to play an international tournament in 1926, and the famous five of the 1964 and 1968 Olympics: Balbir Singh, Ajit Pal Singh, Tarsem Singh, Balbir Singh and Jagjit Singh. All Olympians and other international players from here have used the surname 'Kullar' as all of them came from one family and one street on the village.

## Teams who played at Sansarpur

The Sansarpur Hockey Association's office today is in an old building with fading pictures of hockey players hanging on the walls. It is now headed by Colonel (retd) Balbir Singh Kullar who seems determined to restore the glory of Sansarpur. "The last 30 years have been disappointing but there's no reason why we can't promote hockey and reclaim our lost glory." The decline in Sansarpur, he feels, reflects the decline in hockey nationwide. "Many young men of the Kullar community, who were the pride and joy of Sansarpur, have moved overseas to make money and no one can really blame them," he says, sitting in his ramshackle office. "Players from the village have won eight Olympic gold medals, one silver and six bronze besides medals in the Asian Games and other tournaments," Balbir Singh said. "But now we don't even have an astro turf. How can we learn the game for the international level?" ask Varinder and Amit Singh, who practise here, almost in unison. The youngsters play on a ground that is owned by the army and is used for exercises as well. Parents of the present few young hockey players want their wards to give up the game or head to Chandigarh, where the Sector 42 hockey stadium has an academy for budding hockey players. Most of them are drawn from villages in Punjab and practise on the new Astro turf.

This sums up the plight of Sansarpur. Could it be a coincidence but the last time a player from Sansarpur made it to the Indian Olympics team was the last time India won an Olympics medal: 1980 in Moscow. Need we say more?

*Jaideep Sarin, Abhas Sharma and Tanuj Kar*



*Memories of a bygone era...*

The only stark reminder of a glorious past in the game is the Sansarpur Hockey Association's Academy that still has a few pupils - mainly those from nearby villages. "Youth in this area are no longer interested in hockey. It commands little respect. From the time when every house used to take pride in churning out a hockey player, parents now want their wards to study and go abroad. It is a sad state of affairs," rued to Guriqbal Singh, the association's joint secretary.



*Triumph in Tokyo*

# The Doughty Udham Singh: Hockey Warrior

Udham Singh, the doughty Sikh hockey warrior, symbolised not only the essence of hockey ethos of Punjab but also of the country. The inside forward, whose finesse and fluency filled the heart of innumerable hockey aficionados during the 'Golden Age' of Indian hockey, was 72 when he passed away at Sansarpur itself, which was poignant as this place is regarded as the cradle of Indian hockey.

If Roop Singh portrayed, in the pre-partition days, the sum and substance of the qualities that an inside forward should be endowed with, Udham mirrored the charm and craft for well over two decades in the post-war era. It is difficult to convey to the enthusiasts of this generation with any comparable degree of eloquence, the classicism that Udham displayed on the field. Hockey for Udham Singh was an art, an expression that filled the senses and triggered an emotional experience. The stick was to him what a paintbrush would be to an artist. It was a throbbing spectacle whenever he fashioned his stocky frame to weave its way through the rival defence and leave it in a state of inertia.

That Udham Singh played for India in no less than four Olympics from 1952 to 1964 underlines the fabric of endurance, physical fitness and determination to succeed at the higher echelons of competitive hockey. Actually Udham Singh was unfortunate not to etch his name as the only Indian to have been in five Olympics, as a finger injury came in the way of his making to the first post-war Olympics in London in 1948. He they donned India's colours in 1952 (Helsinki), 1956 (Melbourne), 1960 (Rome) and 1964 (Tokyo) and had three gold medals and a silver to cherish.



Born at Sansarpur village, considered as the 'cradle' of Indian hockey, on 4 August 1928 - the year India earned Olympic honours at Amsterdam - Udham was a product of the DAV College. At the age of 19, Udham won Punjab State colours, which he retained for 17 years without a break till 1965.

Undaunted by the injury which robbed him of the 1948 Olympics, Udham returned to the national team on a tour to Afghanistan. After that, no India outfit was complete without the redoubtable Udham, who toured Poland in 1953, played in the Warsaw International in 1955, and led

the squad for the 1959 tour of East Africa. He was also the vice captain in an international tournament at Munich.

A lesser mortal than Udham Singh would have given up after the debacle in Rome in 1960. At 32, with the fire and passion for the sport still alive, Udham regained his place in the national team for the tournament at Lyons in 1963. At the age of 36, he earned his third gold at the Tokyo Olympics in 1964.



From competitive hockey, Udham took to coaching the State and Punjab Police squads, and played a leading role in shaping the brilliant careers of Ajitpal Singh, Harmik Singh, Surjit Singh and a host of other players. It was something of a paradox that the Arjuna Award was given to Udham Singh in 1965 after it had been awarded to Prithpal Singh in 1963 and Charanjit Singh the next year.

A stickler for details and a strict disciplinarian, Udham was a hard taskmaster, not easily satisfied with achievements. He urged his wards to strive for more. A measure of his commitment cannot be better exemplified than by the fact that Udham ignored the advice of his doctor to rest and recuperate after a heart attack. He went to the playground in Sansarpur to share some happy moments with his trainees. A second attack, almost immediately, proved fatal.

The hockey legend is gone, only memories of his deeds will be there for always.

Glowing tributes were also paid to Udham Singh by his erstwhile Mumbai- based teammates Leo Pinto and Joe Antic. Pinto, the 1948 London Olympics goalkeeper, said ``the position of inside left



**A file photo of Dhyhan Chand (right) with teammate Udham Singh**

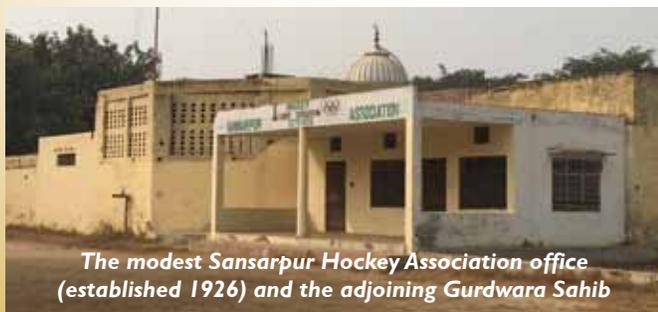
could only be filled by him with the sure knowledge that the team would benefit immensely. Defending the goal, I could see his way of functioning, his uncanny dribbling skills. We remained good friends over the years. It is a sad loss for me''.

Antic, the centre half in the Rome Olympics, said that Balbir Singh (senior) benefited from Udham's passes. "We were together on the 1958 East African tour and the 1959 European tour before Rome. He was an outstanding left inner. India does not produce players like him anymore. Balbir Singh, who was the master of the 'D', could not have become what he was without Udham's contributions", recalled Antic.

His views were echoed by another Olympian, Gurbux Singh, who was much junior to Udham and who had played against the legendary Punjab star in tournaments in India. "He was one of the coaches in the run-up to the 1968 Mexico Olympics, a thorough gentleman forever, one of the legends of Indian hockey.

*Extracts from The Hindu*

## Where the foundations were laid...and looking at next-gen...



**The modest Sansarpur Hockey Association office (established 1926) and the adjoining Gurdwara Sahib**



**Aspiring hockey Olympians of the future**

## Ajit Pal Singh – “the finest centre half in the world!”

Ajit Pal Singh was rightly acclaimed as one of the best centre forward in the world during his time. He led India to a sensational victory in the third world cup hockey tournament at Kuala Lumpur in 1975.

Born on 1 April 1947, Ajit Pal Singh learnt the alphabet of hockey in his native Sansarpur village, the bastion of hockey during the time. A number of players from this village had already represented India in Olympics and a number of international tournaments.

He first played in an international hockey tournament at Bombay in 1960. Later, he represented India in Japan in 1966. Having finished his schooling, Ajit Pal Singh joined Lyallpur Khalsa College, Jullundhar, which had spawned a number of star hockey players. His first real break happened when he was selected in the Indian team to participate in the Pre- Olympic Hockey Tournament in 1967 at London. Thereafter, there was no looking back and the following year, Ajit Pal Singh gave a dazzling show of his sportsmanship in the Mexico Olympic Games.



Ajit Pal Singh showed such dexterity and skill at his position on the field that he was included in the world hockey teams of 1971, 72 and 73. He was awarded the Arjuna Award in 1972.

He next represented India in 1974 in the Asian games at Teheran. Consequently, he was included in the Asian All-Star Hockey XI the same year.



He reached the pinnacle of glory in 1975 when he led India to the third World Cup hockey victory in Kuala Lumpur in the most trying circumstances. The Punjab Government had borne all expenses prior to the participation by organising a camp for the team in Punjab. The entire country was jubilant about the victory as for the first time the game of hockey seemed to get priority over cricket in the country.

*From: [www.sikh-history.co](http://www.sikh-history.co)*

# Is the magic back?



Now, over the last 18 months, India have come up with something new every time they have played hockey. So far, they have conjured up goal-scoring patterns with precise movement off-the-ball.

Some months earlier, after a gap of 15 years, the Indian juniors won the Junior World Cup led by the effervescent Harjeet Singh...All through the Indian team's victory lap, Harjeet Singh couldn't stop kissing the trophy, held tightly to his chest after the historic win in the hockey match against Belgium in December 2016. Later, at a chaotic press conference — which at one point had senior team captain PR Sreejesh sneak up behind the journalists to ask coach Harendra Singh

a question — the captain couldn't keep his hands off the shining trophy. However, Harjeet was not the only one who couldn't believe his eyes. Such scenes of joy and madness have not been witnessed in Indian hockey for a long time.

It took a very talented and dedicated group of boys to bring such glory to the country. What was just a target two years ago became a reality when India beat Belgium 2-1 in the final to win the Junior World Cup title in front of a roaring home crowd. This is the second title for India, the last one coming in 2001. "This means a lot to us; we worked very hard for it for a long time. Everyone in this team remained focused on one goal," said Harjeet Singh.

What makes the title win even more special is that the Indian team, being the hosts, were under incredible pressure. In the previous edition in Delhi three years ago, the team had finished a disappointing 10th. "This is a very sweet win," said Mandeep Singh, who, along with Harjeet, was part of that team. "I had said in 2014 that we would win," Harendra said. The win came at a time when the senior team is seeing a revival. But this win has raised the hopes for an even better future. "Wait and watch, this team will bring many more trophies," said Harjeet.

The euphoria over the win not only got the team but also the fans talking about medals at the 2018 World Cup and the 2020 Olympics. The team's performance, winning all their matches, raises the confidence. However, making the transition from the junior to the senior team is the hardest phase for an international player. India have been strong at the junior level — runners-up in the 1997 World Cup, winners in 2001 and fourth in 2005. But that success has never been repeated at the senior level when India even failed to qualify for the 2008 Olympics.

"The junior players need to be exposed to senior international hockey gradually — training with the seniors in national camps before getting match exposure. There's still a long time before the World Cup. The smaller tournaments should be used to give exposure to the juniors, just as the Germans do," said former international Hardeep Singh Grewal.



Despite being a junior sensation, Akashdeep Singh was a late bloomer in the senior squad. “The big change in level is unsettling at the beginning. It takes long to find your feet,” said Akashdeep.

The 22-year-old was thrown into the deep end at a very young age. So was Mandeep Singh, who was taken to the 2014 World Cup at 19. Along with the team’s performance, his was also lambasted. “Disappointments at such a big stage invite sharp criticism. It can crush a youngster’s confidence,” Grewal added.

It is again a transitional time for India. Many players of the victorious junior team will get into the senior core group, out of which some will make the team sooner than later.

But the ones who don’t make it to the core group will find it tough to catch up with the national campers later. The level of training at the national camps is much superior compared to what the players get in the domestic circuit, including in the departments they play for. Besides, they will never get the same kind of match practice, or even the same number of matches, as the national campers will. The domestic tournament circuit is haphazard, with only a few tournaments every year and the competition level is low.

As the rest of the players fall behind, the gap between India’s first and second string sides increases. The pool of probables shrinks, which then leads to

players like Akashdeep and Mandeep being hurried into the senior team and then overplayed. It can cause stress injuries; at one point, Akashdeep and Mandeep were playing in both the senior and junior teams, leading to them suffering several injuries.

At the junior World Cup, the major European teams’ coaches spoke about development squads for players who don’t get into the senior team immediately; that too despite having strong league systems. Even the players who don’t make it to the development squad get to train at their clubs and play highly competitive matches throughout the year. This is the reason why European teams don’t need long national camps, unlike in India where a camp can last for months. The German and England teams had come together only about a week before the World Cup. The need for a development squad is even greater in India, and it seems the federation has realised it. “The players who won’t be in the seniors, will be in the development squad,” Indian coach Roelant Oltmans said. Hockey India’s CEO Elena Norman recently said that the federation had approached the government for funding of the development squad but it’s been pending for two years. AK Patro, under secretary, Ministry of Sports, said that he was not aware of Hockey India’s proposal, and even if he was, he was not allowed to disclose any details. The bureaucrats are at it again!

*Extracts from ‘The Tribune’*

# Reviving the Tradition!



On 18 June 2017, at London's Olympic Park, the Indian hockey team registered a record 7-1 win over Pakistan in the Hockey World League Semifinals, this result showing how much Indian hockey has been revived, while virtually at the same time, the much vaunted (and mollycoddled) Indian cricketers were ingloriously thrashed in cricket by Pakistan!

Till a couple of years ago, India would have crumbled under such relentless pressure. The gameplan would have been thrown out of the park, resulting in a straight up, gloves off, fistfight that would end with the battle-hardened Pakistan team emerging victorious. But on this glorious match field, India absorbed pressure and did not lose their structure. This frustrated Pakistan, who had nothing to show despite making all the early moves. Gradually, errors crept into their game and the moment cracks surfaced in their shape, India pounced upon them. "We had studied them and practised

accordingly. Our aim was to execute the plans and not get excited," drag-flicker Harmanpreet Singh recalled.

After those initial 10 minutes, India played a brand of hockey that asserted their position as Asia's best and showed a streak of ruthlessness that is seldom associated with them. Harmanpreet Singh, Talwinder Singh and Akashdeep Singh scored a brace each while Pardeep Mor netted one in the 49th minute. These were field goals worked out with clockwork precision. The coordination was almost telepathic as that they did not even have to look up while passing. Talwinder's 21st minute goal and Akashdeep's one-two with Sardar Singh in the 47th minute are a couple of examples. India's team, led by Manpreet Singh included ten Sikh players in the squad of eighteen, namely Harmanpreet Singh; Sardar Singh; Mandeep Singh; Talwinder Singh; Harjeet Singh; Satbir Singh; Akashdeep Singh; Jasjit Singh Kular and Ramandeep Singh.

# The Legend of Hockey Balbir Singh (Sr.)

**A**s a child, Balbir Singh Sr. could never sit still. Almost every single hour in the day was spent playing pranks, climbing trees or just running around. But, come evening, the boisterous child would sit in silence and watch older kids play hockey near his house in Moga. That young boy in pre-Partition India grew up to be the hockey legend, Balbir Singh Sr. “She [hockey] found me at the age of five and since then, I have loved her, respected her and worshiped her,” recalls Balbir Singh Sr., whose childlike enthusiasm for the sport belies his age of 93.

Balbir Singh Dosanjh was born on 10 October 1924 to Karam Kaur and Dalip Singh Dosanjh. His father was a freedom fighter and educationist, who travelled extensively and was frequently in and out of jail. As a result, Balbir’s early childhood was spent at his maternal village, Haripur Khalsa. At the age of five, his father moved the family to the small town of Moga for the sake of Balbir’s education. Little did he know that Balbir would spend his time daydreaming about scoring goals rather than studying. “My father was strict and unshakeable in his values. But he never put a limit on *doodh* and *jalebi*, which I loved,” he says. But when he failed his Class X exams, his father sought the help of a friend who lectured at Sikh National College, Lahore. Having seen Balbir’s game, the lecturer offered him full scholarship and a place in the hockey team. Balbir’s father, with no money to afford college otherwise, agreed.

The Sikh National College team was promoted to the first division soon after Balbir’s inclusion. He was soon poached by the rival Khalsa College. Balbir became captain of the Khalsa College team, which remained all-India champions under his command between 1942 and 1945. Sir John Bennet—the inspector general of Punjab Police at the time—was impressed by Balbir’s game and commanded his officers to ensure his recruitment to the Punjab Police.

But Balbir had grown up detesting the police, which had jailed his father and other freedom fighters on multiple occasions. So he ran away to Delhi and joined the Central Public Works Department team in 1945. But one day, he found officers with handcuffs at his doorstep. He was arrested, taken to Jalandhar and presented before Bennet. “He asked me, ‘Do you



*Balbir Singh's childlike enthusiasm for hockey belies his age of 93.  
(Photo by Siddhant Kalra)*

want to play hockey for Punjab or go to jail?’ I chose hockey”. He ran away multiple times in protest, but was handcuffed and brought back every time.

The undivided Punjab team, which hadn’t won the nationals in 14 years, got lucky in 1946, when Balbir Singh joined. Playing under Colonel AIS Dara and alongside Shah Rukh—two of his closest friends from the future Pakistan team—Balbir won the national championships for Punjab again in Bombay, 1947. But the team returned only to find their homes bloodied and burning.

Just the previous year, Balbir had married Sushil, his college sweetheart from Lahore. When the team arrived at the Lahore railway station in 1947, it was the future Pakistan captain, AIS Dara, who drove Balbir to his wife in Model Town. On the way, the car was stopped by mobs a couple of times, presumably because of Balbir’s turban. Dara stepped out and spoke to them, while he sat in the car, unaware of everything. After a heart-breaking farewell to the house, Sushil came away with Balbir to Ludhiana.

In Ludhiana, Balbir resumed his duties with the Punjab Police and witnessed the horrors of Partition.

“Brothers and sisters, who lived so lovingly before, were killing each other. It was shocking how human beings can change so suddenly. Good people are those who retain their humanity even in a climate of hate,” he says.

The contours of the undivided Punjab team also changed with Partition. Many players from the team now donned the colours of Pakistan. “The same players with whom I passed every waking hour, were gone. Azam, Maqbool Hashmat, Aziz, Masood, Dara, Anwar, Shah Rukh were such great friends of mine. They all left.” Balbir would go back to Pakistan many times later in life. The most memorable visit was when he accompanied the Indian contingent during the India-Pakistan series in 2005-06. “I met Shah Rukh again and it was overwhelming. We spoke as if we had separated just yesterday. The language was the same, the person was the same,” he recalls.

When asked how many goals he must have scored in his career, Balbir chortles. “To give you an idea, the Indian team played 16 matches in Singapore in 1954. They scored 121 goals, out of which he scored 83. In the Australia-New Zealand tournament the following year, he scored 141 out of 203 in just 37 matches,” says Prof. SK Gupta, his friend and a sports historian. However, his effortless goal-scoring didn’t always ensure him a place in the squad.

In the 1948 London Olympics, the first for independent India, Balbir got his chance in the second game and scored six of nine goals. But in the following game against Spain, he was pulled back before stepping onto the pitch. In the next game against Holland, he was just about to be excluded when he was called back. Indian fans in London expressed their dismay at his unjust exclusion, which forced the management to include him in the final against hosts and former rulers, Britain. Balbir lapped up the opportunity and scored two of the four Indian goals. Britain didn’t score. “When I saw the tricolour unfurled at Wembley, I was overcome with joy. It was the greatest pleasure of my life, playing for my flag instead of the Union Jack.”

India had scored 13 goals in all in London, a number Balbir swears by. In the 1952 Helsinki games, he donned jersey number 13. He was warned by a Finnish fan that it would bring him bad luck. He promptly replied that 13, *tera* in Punjabi, was a word for God, and narrated the story of Guru Nanak

chanting *tera, tera, tera* in a divine trance. The fan didn’t make much of the story, but Balbir set the unbeaten record for most goals in an Olympics final, with five of the six goals against Holland. The Helsinki Olympics were also the 13th Olympic Games (excluding the two cancelled owing to the war).

In 1960, Balbir was in the fittest condition of his life and was still scoring goals in a flurry. But despite being in prime shape, he was appointed to the selection committee. He didn’t protest. India lost the final that year. The then chief minister of Punjab, Partap Singh Kairon (being guarded by ASP Balbir Singh at the time) was asked how India’s streak ended. He replied, “How would they have won? The man who could have won it for us is here guarding me”.

In 1964, Balbir took on the responsibility of coaching the Olympic squad. He brought the team into its finest form, but, just a night before flying to Tokyo, he was instructed to stay back in India and was replaced by a new coach. India won gold at the Olympics, but Balbir’s contribution was never acknowledged. Despite the humiliation, he responded to every request to coach the Indian team and won India’s solitary World Cup in 1975.

The gravest injustice came in 1985. He was approached by a representative from Sports Authority of India (SAI) to hand over all his medals and memorabilia for a sports museum. Unsuspectingly, he acquiesced and handed over 36 medals, his 1956 Captain’s blazer and hundreds of rare photographs. It was only in 2008 that his family realised that no museum of the sort had been set up and all his belongings were lost. Multiple inquires and many years later, there’s still no sign of them. “It felt like a part of me had died when I found out,” he says ruefully.

Looking back, Balbir says he is filled with gratitude, both for the people in his life and to hockey herself. But he finds it difficult to mask his disappointment, even through all his calmness. Asked about his most treasured accolade, he points to the smallest trophy in the room — his first ever from a local tournament in Moga. “I was 10 at that time and used to play full-back or goalkeeper. In that tournament, the centre forward spot was open in my cousin’s team and there was no one to fill it. By chance, I played there. As luck would have it, I scored lots of goals and never looked back.”

*Siddhant Kalra*

# “The Best Indian Batswoman” Harmanpreet Kaur Bhullar



**A**s a volleyball and basketball player, Harmandar Singh Bhullar always wanted one of his children to take to serious sports. On 8 March 1989 when his eldest daughter Harmanpreet Kaur Bhullar was born, incidentally the senior Bhullar bought a t-shirt that had ‘good batsman’ written on it. And 28 years later, on 20 July 2017, Harmanpreet played the knock of her life against Australia in Derby, it seemed the purchase was more than just a coincidence.

Harmanpreet’s exploits in the Women’s World Cup semifinal brought back memories of that day for the Moga-based family. “We would click her pictures with little wooden bats in her hands. Before the World Cup, she had told us that she would score a century and when she scored it today against Australia, *aapan sochya ki good batsman di jagah best batswoman di trophy toh le ke ayegi* (we thought that rather than a good batsman, she will bring home the trophy for the best batswoman),” exulted

60-year-old Harmandar, who works as a clerk with a local advocate.

As a child, Harmanpreet would often accompany her father to the Guru Nanak Stadium opposite their house to play cricket with the local boys. The youngster would also pursue hockey and athletics at her Government School teams. A chance meeting with cricket coach Kamaldeesh Singh Sodhi saw her joining the Gian Jyoti School Academy at village Tarapur.

Soon the youngster would make her way to the Moga district and Punjab junior teams. “While on a walk at Guru Nanak Stadium, I saw her playing. I was building a team and took her in our academy. The following year, Moga reached the final in the Punjab Inter-District tournament and next year we won it and have been the champions ever since,” Kamaldeesh recalled.



“During one of the matches in Patiala, she played a knock of 75 and her sixes broke the neighbouring houses’ windows. When the owners came to know that a girl has hit those sixes, they applauded her.” Brother Gurjinder Singh would often take Harmanpreet to play local matches and the younger brother would often see her sister dominate the local boys in club matches on Sundays. While he would also help their father search for better cricket kits online, Harmanpreet would later get her own kits from abroad.

“I also play cricket at the university level and initially she would smash so many sixes during the local tournaments that I would often place bets (not money) with my friends. Once she scored a 100 in a six-over club match and later she gave all of us a party at a local food joint. She has promised me to get a new I-phone 7 plus if India wins the trophy,” recalled Gurjinder.

It was in 2009 that Harmanpreet first came to the limelight when she made her mark with the bat in the Challenger Trophy before being selected for the Indian women’s team for the World T20. Harmanpreet would score only eight runs in two innings in the tournament but her first century against England in 2013 cemented her place in the XI.

Before the match, she talked with her coach and Kamaldeesh’s son Yadwinder Singh Sodhi, who recently shifted to Australia for cricket coaching. “She loves performing against Australia. I talked with her

two days ago about her stint with Sydney Thunder and she knew that her best was yet to come in the tournament. When she played her first World Cup in Australia, she hit a 110-metre six and she told us later that her bats were scanned to check if there was any additional weight. With her record knock, she has shown the world what her bat’s weight is in terms of runs. Initially in her career, she would get an opportunity to bat lower down the order but her hundred against England in Mumbai in 2013 gave her confidence and sealed her batting spot,” said Yadwinder, head coach at Port Adelaide Cricket Club.

In 2016, Harmanpreet became the first Indian woman to play in the Women’s Big Bash League and it was a tweet by former Australia wicketkeeper Adam Gilchrist which motivated her to score more runs in Australia and watch videos of other Australian players to understand their bowling.

“She still remembers the exact date and time of the tweet and it was like winning a trophy for her. She takes her wicketkeeping skills seriously and the tweet from a player like Adam Gilchrist means a lot for her. She idolises Virender Sehwag and whenever she is in Moga, imitates his batting style and says she would score a double hundred one day,” shared Harmanpreet’s younger sister Hemjit Kaur.

And with Harmanpreet always on tour, mother Sukhjeet Kaur is also worried about her daughter being injured. Earlier in the World Cup, she suffered a hand injury and mother would remind her to take medication regularly.

“When she injured her hand during the first match in the tournament, we were a bit worried. She sent us pictures. But that has been a case ever since she started playing. She won her first trophy in athletics in school and she ran like that during today’s innings. One thing which she is very particular about is keeping her pads and bats clean whenever she is at home and that’s the only homely thing she knows (laughs). She has now learnt to cook Maggi and often prepares it for her team-mates whenever she is in the camp,” shared her mother.

*Nitin Sharma, The Indian Express*

# Postage Stamps honour Sikhs in Sports

Sikh sportsmen have earned glory in many fields of sports including hockey, athletics, wrestling, golf, cycling, cricket, etc and will always be recognised as a community with heritage in sports. They have represented India in various tournaments both at national and international levels and have brought laurels for the country with their outstanding performance. The Indian government has also commemorated their achievements

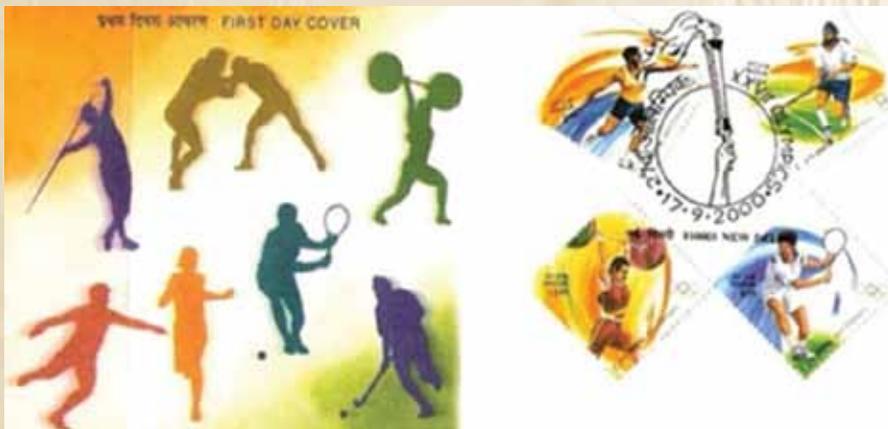


by depicting them on special stamps issued by its Department of Posts and Telegraphs.

The game of hockey which was introduced by the British soon became a favourite activity in India and later was regarded as its national game. It was played from childhood in many villages of Punjab. Sansarpur, a small village near Jalandhar is known to be the cradle of hockey players of Punjab. There was a time when out of eleven, some six players of Sansarpur comprised the Indian Hockey Team. Players like Balbir Singh, Dhyan Chand, Dilip Tirkey, and others became legends for the country.

In 1966, the Indian hockey emerged in a blaze of glory after defeating Pakistan in the Fifth Asian Games at Bangkok, when Balbir Singh scored a goal through a brilliant shot after both the teams had battled for 70 minutes without results. To commemorate this victory, the Postal Department brought out a special stamp of 15 Paise denomination.

The monochromatic blue colour stamp shows four hockey champions playing the game of hockey in shorts and t-shirts. Two of these players are Sikhs with their *juris* tied in a *rumal*, a



common way of covering the head. The most capturing part of the visual is the diehard spirit of the players to win the match. The First Day Cover shows the emblem of the Fifth Asiad represented by a full rising sun with the slogan 'Ever Onward' written within the circle. The cancellation shows a hockey stick as a distinctive mark.

The image of a Sikh hockey player appeared once again on a stamp when the country participated in the 27th Olympic Games held in Sydney in 2000. These games held once in every four years, are the greatest sporting events on the globe. The Department of Postage and Telegraph (P&T) joined the rejoicing of the country and it issued four stamps portraying different sports namely hockey, tennis, weightlifting and discus to capture the excitement of sports. India's participation in Olympic Games dates back to 1920 and the country has been participating in all the Olympic Games ever since. India has the credit of winning six gold medals consequently till 1956. Thereafter in Tokyo and Moscow Olympics, gold medals were won. The First Day Cover shows the contours of sportspersons in different colours.

India has always been proud of its cricket team. In cricket, Bishan Singh Bedi was a world-renowned bowler and the most famous Sikh ever to play the game. His left-arm finger-spin won countless glories for India. Balvinder Singh Sandhu, the pace bowler of Indian Cricket Team was also instrumental in the



World Cup but surprisingly his international career was very short lived. Navjot Singh Sidhu was a good striker of the ball and among the fast run getters left the cricket at his peak form, took retirement and joined Indian politics. Harbhajan Singh nicknamed as Bhajji and called 'The Turbanator' by many is an ace Sikh cricketer of present times.

Then Milkha Singh, India's track-and-field legend knew little about sports but went on to become the

hero of his country as an Olympian. He won four Asian Games gold medals, and one Commonwealth Games gold, ran in the Olympic Games at Melbourne, Rome, and Tokyo, and earned the nickname of 'The Flying Sikh'. His son Jeev Milkha Singh has reached new heights as a golfer in the world and today is among the leading golfers.

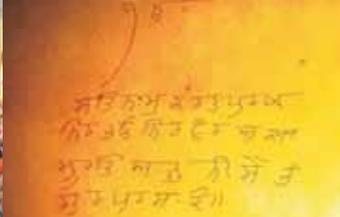
In the field of wrestling, Sri Sat Guru Partap Singh is a well-known figure. He was himself a Namdhari wrestler and prompted Sikhs to become wrestlers and are a dynamic force in Punjab in many sporting events. Dara Singh Randhawa, excelled in the field of free style wrestling.

The 11th Asian Games were held in 1990 in Beijing, the first large scale international sports event to be held in China. On occasion of the XI Asian Games, P&T issued a set of four special stamps depicting Athletics, Cycling, Archery and Kabbadi. The stamp of cycling shows a Sikh sportsman in black *patka* and beard riding a cycle. All of them are painted in bright colours. The First Day Cover shows the mascot, PanPan the Panda running with joy holding a medal in its raised arm. The background shows the bamboo trees with lush green foliage.



Sikhs have excelled in a variety of sports far beyond their numbers and proportion within the population and achieved international fame and acclaim. Today, they are to be found amongst the ranks of the very best in Britain, Canada, the US, a variety of East African and South-East Asian countries, Australia, New Zealand, and other nations. [Here it is worthwhile to mention Mudhsuden Singh better known as 'Monty' Panesar who has represented England in international cricket.]

Rupinder Kaur

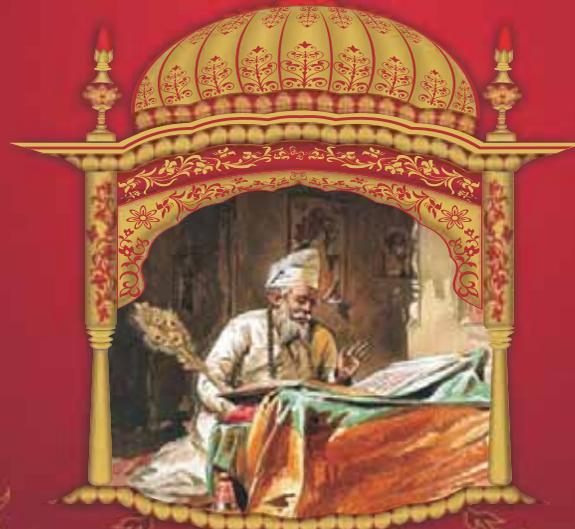


# ਪੋਥੀ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ ਕਾ ਥਾਨੁ ।।

*The Book is the Abode of God.*

# Guru Granth Sahib

THE GURU ETERNAL



With Message from Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India  
Dr. Mohinder Singh

To mark the tercentenary of the Gurgaddi Divas of Guru Granth Sahib in 2008, this volume is being brought out to highlight some distinctive features of the Sikh scripture.

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Pictures of *Mool Mantra* in the hand of Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Hargobind, Guru Har Rai, Guru Har Krishan, Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh in different rare *Birs*, *Hukamnamas* and relics of the Sikh Gurus.

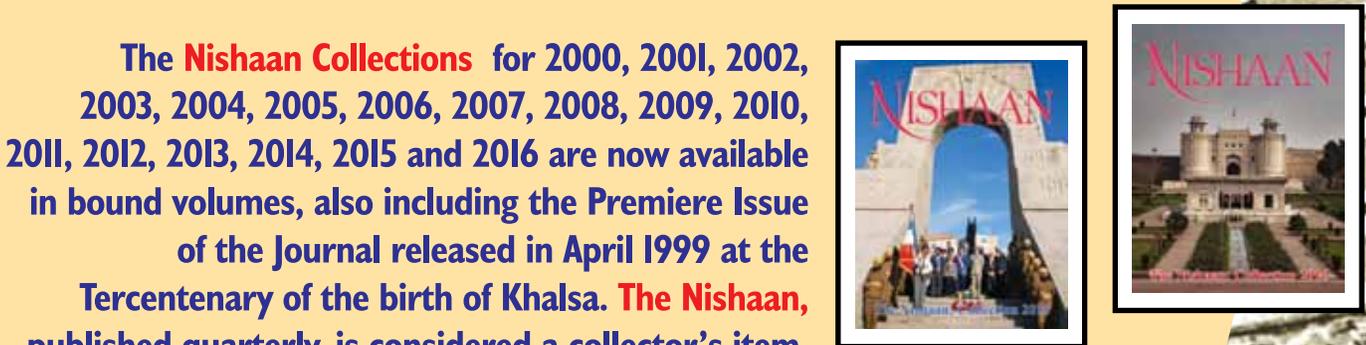
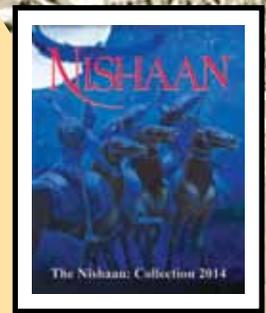
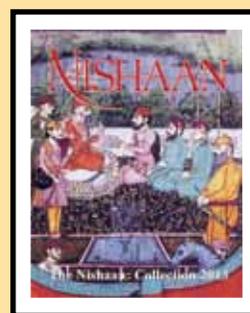
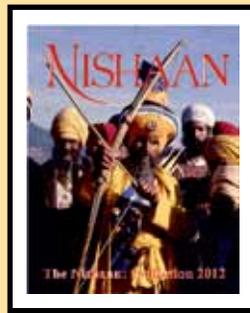
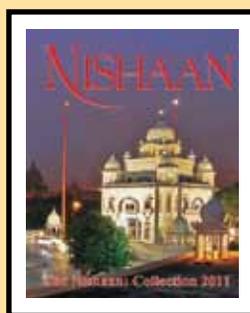
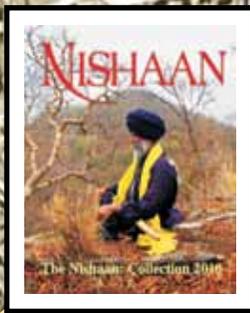
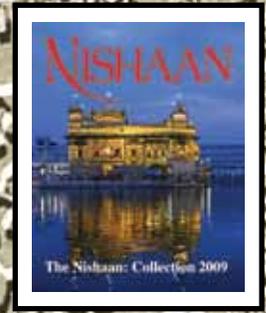
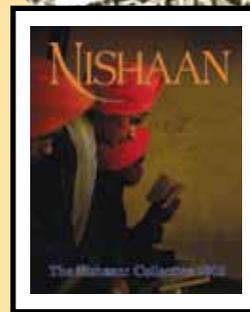
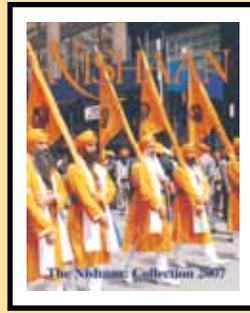
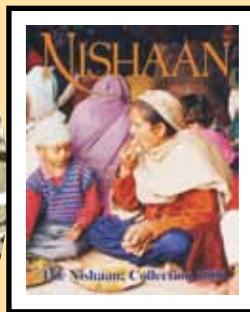
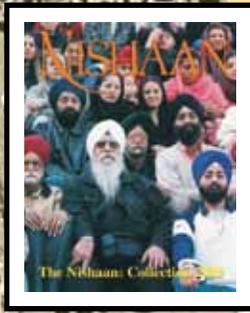
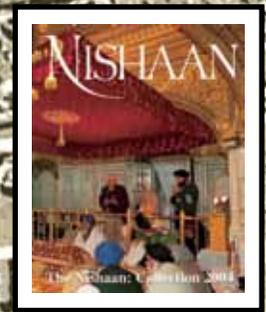
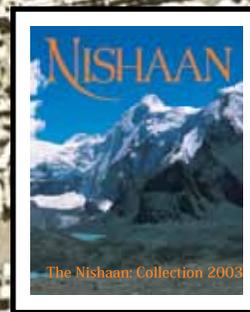
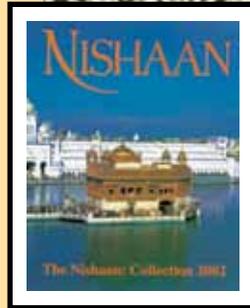
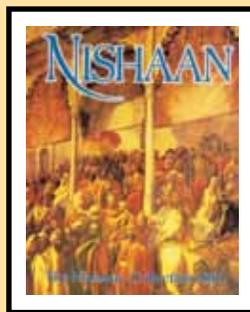
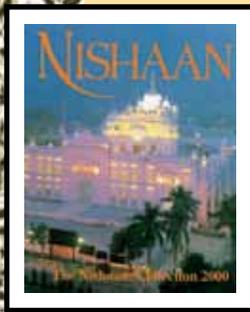


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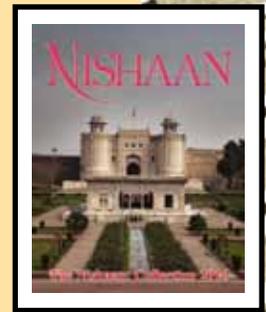
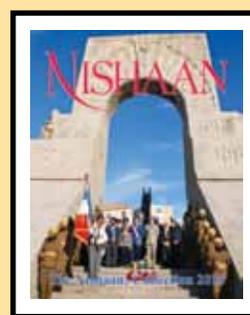
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