

SIKH AND PUNJAB STUDIES

University of California, Santa Barbara (1999-2004)

Following the University of Toronto (1986-92), the University of British Columbia (1987-97), Columbia University (1989-99), and the University of Michigan (1989-), UCSB was the fifth major university in North America to initiate a program in Sikh and Punjab Studies. The UCSB program resulted from a creative collaboration between the University, which funded a professorship in Sikh Studies in 1997, and Narinder Singh Kapany, Chairperson of the Sikh Foundation, Palo Alto, who contributed a generous endowment toward it.

Having established this position with a significant potential, UCSB offered me the challenging task of establishing the program, and I joined in July 1999. With firm support coming from the University administration, Mark Juergensmeyer, Director, Global and International Studies, and Wade Clark Roof, Chair of Religious Studies on the one hand and the continued support of the North American Sikh community on the other, I found myself in a unique opportunity to build UCSB as one of the leading centers in teaching, research and public information in Sikh and Punjab Studies in the Western world. The following statement summarizes our activities of the past five years.

TEACHING

At UCSB, our approach in the history and culture courses is essentially comparative, attempting to place the Sikhs in the larger socio-religious context of the Punjab, South Asia, and North America. Currently, we offer four courses at the undergraduate and graduate level, which provide unique perspectives on understanding the Sikh tradition.

Sikhism (Religious Studies [RS] 162C) is a lecture course in which we trace the development of the Sikh community from its founding at Kartarpur in the 1520s to its modern manifestation as a powerful religious minority in India and small migrant communities all over the world.

Global Diasporas and Cultural Change (Global Studies [GS] 104) is also a lecture course that uses the Sikh community as a case study. It focuses on the migration of Sikhs to different parts of the world and evaluates their contribution to the adopted lands and the impact of the move on their religious, social, and cultural life.

The Sikh Tradition (RS 213A) is a graduate seminar in which we exclusively utilize primary sources in translation to discuss the evolution of Sikh religious life from the community's inception in the 1520s to the present.

Religion and Society in the Punjab (RS 213B) is another graduate seminar in which we analyze the religio-cultural life of the Punjab from the Indus Valley Civilization to the present, while carefully examining the nature of its ties with other cultures of South Asia and the Middle East.

We also offer a set of courses in which the Punjab figures prominently. Courses such as Mark Juergensmeyer's **Global Terrorism (GS 134)**, the courses he co-teaches with Richard Hecht, **Global Religions (GS 102)**, and Roger Friedland, **Religious Nationalism (GS 200)**, have integral elements that focus on Sikhism and Punjab. Our courses on **Modern South Asia (GS 142)** also contain substantial segments on the history of the Sikhs and the Punjab. Scott Marcus of Music department has incorporated Punjabi music in his **World Music (M175F and M175G)** and **Music Cultures of the World (M 293 F)**.

Gurdit Singh, a doctoral candidate in Sociology, has been instrumental in developing a comprehensive Punjabi language program, which includes the teaching of **Elementary (RS 90A-C)** and **Intermediate Punjabi (RS 90D-F)**.

RESEARCH

Our publications relating to Sikh and Punjab Studies include Mark Juergensmeyer's **Terror in the Mind of God** (Berkeley: UC Press, 2000). This book has a chapter on Sikh militancy, and presents the first serious discussion of religious nationalism in which Sikh issues are closely woven into the main narrative. The winner of the prestigious Louisville Grawemeyer Award in Religion in 2003, **Terror in the Mind of God** has gone into several editions.

Another is G. S. Mann's **Making of Sikh Scripture** (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), which reconstructs the history of the Sikh scriptural text, the Adi Granth, from the 1530s to the present day, and also attempts to place it in the larger context of Sikh institutional developments. This book is on the web at Oxford Scholarship Online, and has also been released in both hard (2002) and soft cover (2003) by Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs in America, which Mann wrote with Paul David Numrich and Raymond B. Williams, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), has three chapters which narrates the history of Sikhs and their settlement in America and is part of the Religion in American Life series targeted for high school students in the U.S. The book was reprinted in 2002.

Mann's **Sikhism** (Prentice Hall, 2004) is published in the Religions of the World Series. Using primary sources, this book reconstructs five centuries of Sikh history and examines Sikh beliefs and practices, as well as the nature and composition of Sikh society.

Our current and past graduate students' writings have appeared in a variety of periodicals, ranging from **The Tribune** (English daily newspaper with the largest circulation in Punjab) to the **International Journal of Punjab Studies**. Several students contributed articles in a special issue on the **Sikhs in Faces: People, Places, and Cultures** (Peterborough, NH, Cobblestone, 2000), a popular educational magazine used in American schools. Paul Lynch, a Global Studies major, has created a 15 minutes long video about **Visiting the Gurdwara** (Fall 2003). When completed this video will serve as a teaching tool to explain this important facet of Sikh life.

Our forthcoming publications include **An Introduction to Punjabi: Lessons, Conversations, and Grammar**. Created by Gurdit Singh, Ami Shah, G.S Mann, all three of UCSB, and Anne Murphy of Columbia University, the book is geared toward the needs of foreign learners of Punjabi.

CONFERENCES

As a part of our plan to help build the field of Sikh and Punjab studies, we held several conferences and invited scholars to the campus for lectures.

On December 4-5, 1999, we organized an international conference entitled **Guru Gobind Singh: Life and Legacy**. The twenty-five presenters from six countries included luminaries in the field such as Indu Banga, J.S. Grewal, J.S. Hawley, W.H. McLeod, and Christopher Shackle. A. T. Embree and Ninian Smart chaired the primary sessions. The event also included a half-day panel of 14 doctoral students from different universities reporting on their research.

On May 12, 2000, we had a half-day conference on **Canon Formation in the Sikh Tradition**. The discussion was centered on sixteenth and seventeenth-century manuscripts that played the key role in the compilation of the *Adi Granth*, Sikh sacred text.

On April 21-21, 2001, we held an international conference on the theme of the **Sikh Diaspora**. Eminent scholars from Canada, England, Punjab, New Zealand, and the U.S. made presentations. With an audience of over 150 people, largely comprised of UCSB students and members of the Sikh community from all over the U.S, the conference provided a forum for dialogue regarding the challenges and promises facing the Sikh Diaspora.

On May 4, 2004, we held a half-day conference on **Debates in Sikh Studies**. Scholars from Punjab universities made presentations on primary resources and research collections, legal dimension of *Adi Granth*, role of gender in Sikh society and on issues in cultural transmission in the Sikh diaspora.

On May 29, 2004, we will hold an international conference on **Punjabi Culture**. Scholars from the Punjab, Europe, and the U.S. will discuss art,

architecture, beliefs, ceremonies, literature, music, and performance of the Punjab region as it relates to the future of Sikh and Punjab Studies.

LECTURES

We have also been fortunate to have had a number of illustrious guest visitors. **Iqbal Qaiser**, a Pakistani scholar of Sikh history, shared his ideas regarding the preservation of Sikh heritage in Pakistan (May 2000). **Adam Nayar**, Director of Lok Virsa, an Institute of Folklore in Islamabad, spoke on Punjabi Sufi poetry (May 2001). **Shahid Nadeem**, one of the leading Pakistani playwrights, reflected on the problems a creative writer faces in Pakistan (November 2001). Shinder Thandi, of Coventry University, UK, spoke on the economic dimension of the South Asian diaspora in North America (April 2002/03).

Rajinder Gill of Punjabi University, Patiala, made an interesting presentation on Punjabi music and poetry (June 2002). **Surjit Patar**, the leading Punjabi poet, spoke on the poetic process followed by singing of some his unpublished poems (October 2002).

In Spring 2003 we had lectures by **Shivdev Singh**, a physician turned painter spoke on his life career and artistic pursuits in the US; **Gurumail Singh Sidhu**, a Fresno State University scientist and a Punjabi poet and critic shared his reflections about writing poetry away from the Punjab. **Kirtan Singh**, a Euro-American Sikh has been very kind to come and share with us his experiences of being part of the Sikh community.

With co-operation with the Music department we were able to invite **Garib Das**, a leading exponent of the Dhol in Punjab as Artist in Residence (April 2003).

In Fall 2003 we had a unique opportunity to listen to a musical presentation of Kabir's compositions by a group of **folk singers** from central India.

Recent lectures included **Constance Elsberg**, the author of **Graceful Women: Gender and Identity in an American Sikh Community** (The University of Tennessee Press, 2003), who spoke on the problems confronting the Euro-American Sikhs in the U.S. March 2004.

Gautam Bhadra, a founding member the Subaltern School and Professor of History at Calcutta University shared his reflections about the development of Subaltern Studies during the early phase (1970s). March 2004.

Shinder Thandi of Coventry University, England, spoke about the week of Sikh-targeted rioting and massacre following the assassination of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984. He recapped the events leading up to and following these riots, placed the events in light of relevant theoretical

models, and told us about the frustrations of victims' families seeking justice for atrocities committed. April 23, 2004.

Pashaura Singh of University of Michigan spoke about the early history of the Sikh tradition. In his presentation he highlighted several areas that remain largely unexplored and suggested sources and possible approaches in addressing them. April 30, 2004.

Om Prakash Narula, a retired Brigadier General from the Indian army and the author of *I Still Remember A Small Town in Punjab* (Delhi: Srishti Publishers, 2001) spoke about the Punjab of the 1930s. In his fascinating presentation, he reflected on the fading culture of the pre-1947 Punjab and the personal pain of having left West Punjab behind. May 20, 2004.

We were also honored by a visit of Inder Kumar Gujral, a distinguished Punjabi and a former Prime Minister of India, who delivered a lecture on Indian Politics in the 1980s. (Fall 2000).

OUTREACH ACTIVITY

In June 2001, G. S. Mann conducted a **workshop** on the teaching of Punjabi to 95 high school teachers in Singapore. In June 2002, he offered a **two-day workshop** to the same group of teachers on the history and message of the Adi Granth.

Over the past three years Mann has been supporting and advising **Stanford University's** Department of Religion in developing a course on Sikh Studies.

Mann helped the **California Commission on Teacher Credentials** and National Educational Society in the creation of teacher's credentials examination for Punjabi language in Spring 2004.

Mann has been acting as the advisor to Sikh Heritage Gallery Project at the **Smithsonian Institute**, Washington D.C. The gallery is due to be inaugurated in July 2004.

Since its inception in 1997, our **Summer Program in Punjab Studies** has attracted over 100 scholars from **forty-four universities in nine countries** (Australia, Canada, England, France, Germany, India, Italy, Sweden, and the U.S.). Their areas of interest comprised Anthropology, Architecture, Asian Studies, Economics, Education, Ethnomusicology, Global Studies, History, International Affairs, Law, Library Science, Literature, Linguistics, Political Science, Psychology, Public Administration, Public Health, Religious Studies, Social Work, and Sociology.

SOME REFLECTIONS

Over the past five years the program has developed a set of core courses that introduce Sikhs and the region of the Punjab. We currently have **10 doctoral students** working on different aspects of Sikh and Punjab studies. **Anna Bigelow**, who wrote her dissertation on Malerkotla, a Muslim majority town in East Punjab, now occupies a Faculty position at the University of North Carolina. In 2003-04, two of our graduate students, **Dan Michon** (Religious Studies) and **Gibb Schreffler** (Music), won the prestigious Fulbright Hays fellowship to do fieldwork in the Punjab. **Kristina Myrvold**, a doctoral student at Lund University, Sweden, and a visiting fellow at UCSB in 2003, will initiate an undergraduate course in Sikhism at Lund in Fall 2004.

The **undergraduate courses** have also been well received and the number of students joining them has been on the increase.

Courses	99-00	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04
Global Diasporas (Sikhs)	14	40	65	69	79
Modern South Asia	n/a	46	48	49	49
Sikhism	22	24	59	n/a	50

Our international conferences, notable publications, workshop, and expert advice have helped disseminate information about Sikhs and the Punjab region to wide-ranging forums. I am very grateful that the external review of Department of Religious Studies in Spring 2004 described its Sikh and Punjab Studies component as 'nationally recognized,' and considered the service rendered by the Summer Program in Punjab Studies as 'truly exceptional.'

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

In order to consolidate and expand this work, the executive of the Global and International Studies Program has recently approved the creation of a **Center for Sikh and Punjab Studies** at UCSB. Located jointly in the Global and International Studies and the Department of Religious Studies, the Center will aim to promote the study of the Sikhs, the region of the Punjab, and the Punjabi communities in the Diaspora. First of its type in North America, the Center will aim (1) to serve as a premier venue for research and scholarly exchange; (2) to develop and promote comprehensive undergraduate and graduate teaching

programs; (3) to disseminate knowledge and information through publications and outreach activities; (4) to assist and coordinate with other UC campuses and universities embarking on programs in this area, and (5) to be proactive in involving the Sikh/Punjabi community in these activities.

Gurinder Singh Mann
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