

FINAL GROUP WRITTEN PROJECT

IC602 Cultural Immersion and Social Analysis

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INTRODUCTION

In our week-long immersion trip, our team spent time among the Punjabi Sikh people group in Richmond Hill, Queens. The Sikhs' original homeland is in the North Indian region of Punjab. After the dissolution of the British Empire of India, Sikhs had the opportunity to begin traveling and immigrating to different parts of the world. As a result, there are many Sikh diaspora communities around the world. New York City is one of those diaspora destinations, and the Punjabi community has spent the last few decades digging new roots in Queens. We spent our time among the people to discern their social structures, worldviews, and communication styles in order to understand their deepest heart's desire and need. To collect data, our team conducted personal interviews, observed the community, interacted in religious centers, and compiled historical and demographic research. We then sorted our data into categories, discerned repeated themes, and analyzed them using Mary Douglas (Grid and Group), Erin Meyers (Culture Mapping), and Paul Hiebert (worldview classifications). Our research is limited by our short timeframe of the immersion trip, conversations through surface-level relationships, and our lack of experience conducting this type of fieldwork. Although our team members come from various ethnic backgrounds, our worldview is predominantly Western. This makes it difficult to truly understand the worldview of the Punjabi Sikhs without recording our own erroneous interpretations into our observations.

As a result of our research and analysis, we propose that the Punjabi Sikhs are yearning for a way to reconcile the struggle between meeting their worldly concerns while not being consumed by them. Sikhs grapple with questions such as, "Will I be able to provide enough

money? Will my people receive justice? Will I have good karma in this life?” Ultimately, they are insecure about whether God will answer their desires and secure a future for their people.

Thesis: We can bring the Gospel of Jesus to the Punjabi Sikhs in Queens by communicating a personal, powerful, and just God through the Gospel parables/stories in a relational context.

Of course, this study is only focused on the Punjabi community living in Queens, and the conclusions of this study may not apply to other Punjabi communities in the US or in India.

FINDINGS

Methodology

The immersion trip was organized through Professor Brian Davis and he had prepared several helpful contacts that propelled our research and allowed us insider access. This gave us an advantage over many researchers who have to build their connections on their own and this allowed us to collect much more data in our short time frame.

After the conclusion of the one-week immersion trip in Richmond Hill, our interviews and participant observation field notes were compiled and organized categorically. Through the initial sifting of data, common themes began to emerge and take shape. Additional demographic research and literature reviews provided more data to bolster our observations from our immersion trip. After the organization of the data was complete, various ethnographic models of investigation were employed to build a worldview map of the Punjabi Sikhs in Queens.

Limitations - Most ethnography research is conducted by more experienced researchers over a longer period of time in a specific context. Our limited experience and short time among the Punjabi Sikhs in Queens are certainly not enough to create a complete culture and worldview map. Drawing information from other Sikh Diaspora community studies may or may not be

completely accurate to this specific context, but only information that directly overlapped with our observed data was included in our data and analysis.

Our findings will be presented in the “Data” and “Analysis” sections. In the Data section, we will flesh out the history of the Punjabi Sikhs, Sikhism, the history of Sikh migration, and the Sikhs' encounter with Christianity. In the Analysis section, we will synthesize the results of our research to create a worldview framework that will provide support for our thesis.

DATA

History of the Punjabi Sikhs in India

A Brief Historical Sketch

The origins of the Sikh religion and people are found in the northeast region of modern India called Punjab. The word comes from the Persian word “panj-āb” and it means “five-waters,”¹ highlighting five major rivers that flow from the lakes of the Himalayas: Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Satluj Rivers. The original region primarily covered the greater areas of the bureaucratic city of Lahore in the north, and the highly commercially trafficked city of Multan in the south, with many smaller villages along the riverbanks.² However, the area is more expanded to include beyond even the five rivers and included the greater area surrounding the Indus, Sarasvati, and Drishadvati rivers.³ A lush region dubbed the “breadbasket of India,”⁴ Punjab has some of the most fertile farmland in the subcontinent. The fertility comes from its river water sources as well as the winter monsoon rainfall.⁵

¹ Grewal, J. S., *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 1.

² Singh, K., *A History of the Sikhs Vol 1: 1469 - 1839*, 8.

³ Kumar Jha, M., “Migration, Settlement, and State Formation in the Ganga Plain,” 607.

⁴ Kumar, M., Williams, M., “Punjab, bread basket of India, hungers for change.”

⁵ Singh, K., *A History of the Sikhs Vol 1: 1469 - 1839*, 4-5.

Being that Punjab was along the Royal Road in India (predecessor to the Grand Trunk Road)⁶, connecting the East to the West, this agricultural gem was also a highly coveted region to control. A number of great civilizations resided or sought control of the region through millennia. The Indus civilization is probably the oldest beginning during the third millennium BCE. The nomadic Aryan civilization began in the second millennium BCE to “establish small republics and monarchies nearly all over Punjab.”⁷ While being an extremely costly enterprise, Alexander the Great conquered its western and southern regions. Other prominent rulers included the Kushanas, Sassanians (Persia), Huns, Arabs, Turks, Afghans, and Mughals, as well as many regional overlords.⁸ However, over time, the predominant struggle for power was between those of the Muslim and Hindu faiths.

Hindu & Muslim Relations Before Sikhism

Before Sikhism and Islam, the natives of Punjab predominantly belonged to the Hindu faith. While a vast subject to explore, Hindu belief centers around devotion to an immense and hierarchical pantheon of gods and a religiously supported hierarchy in society known as the caste system. Based on good or bad deeds (karma), one ascends or descends the cycle of birth and rebirth among creation called “reincarnation,” until one reaches enlightenment (Moksha), and reunification back to the divine is complete. The term Hindu actually does not originate from the subcontinent, but was given to the native people by “Arabic and Persian writers,”⁹ from the Arabic word for India, “Al-Hind.”^{10,11} As historian G. S. Grewal points out, “secular identity was

⁶ Chandrasekhar, C. “Along the Grand Trunk Road: The Photography of Raghbir Singh,” 1-3.

⁷ Grewal, J. S., “The Sikhs of the Punjab,” 3.

⁸ Grewal, J. S., “The Sikhs of the Punjab,” 3-6.

⁹ Grewal, J. S., “The Sikhs of the Punjab,” 39-40.

¹⁰ Eaton, R. M., *Reviewed Work(s): Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World. Volume I: Early Medieval India*

¹¹ Wink, A. “The Expansion of Islam, 7th-11th Centuries,” 273.

thus turned into a religious identity.”¹² While Buddhism and other eastern sects were present at the time, the Hindu name became synonymous with the Vedic religion native to India for thousands of years. This event has had significant implications in the past as well as today, especially in Punjab. The proclivity of the natives to accept a foreign name for their identity highlights that throughout the subcontinent, there was no strong sense of national identity. Loyalty amongst the people of India was more to their local city-state rulers or provinces, versus a coherent identity to unite behind.

The arrival of Islam to India was by far the most transformative and painful compared to earlier foreign encounters. Hinduism was a distinct contrast to Islam, as the latter holds to monotheism, the belief that one must confess allegiance to one God, or Allah, and adopt key beliefs known as the Five Pillars of Islam. Early on, when Arabic Muslims originally came to India only decades after Muhammed passed away, they were welcomed by the native Hindu population kindly. Inter-marriage was not uncommon. Settling of Muslims happened throughout India, including the buildings of Mosques. Some Hindus even converted to the faith.¹³ However, with the first Arab invasion, the perspective began to change. Saudi military commander Mohammed-bin-Qasim arrived in 672 CE and conquered the province of Sindh (modern-day Pakistan, north of Gujarat), and thereafter Muslims began to be viewed as “invaders”¹⁴ and with growing mistrust. The aggression elevated to a whole new level with Mahmud of Ghazni’s invasion in the 11th century, who conquered Gujarat further along the coast.¹⁵ Over the next several centuries, these kinds of clashes became all too common in the north, and throughout

¹² Grewal, J. S., “The Sikhs of the Punjab,” © 1998 pg 39-40.

¹³ Singh, K., *A History of the Sikhs Vol 1: 1469 - 1839*, 21.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

India. Khushwat Singh describes how these conflicts particularly affected Northern India, stating:

“Muslim armies became a regular feature of life in Northern India. But neither the succession of victories by Muslim armies nor the massacre of Hindus and the destruction of their temples brought many Hindus into the fold of Islam. On the contrary, as would be natural in the circumstances, conquest only built up Hindu resistance.”¹⁶

Whether through resistance in conversion, or physical resistance in war, Hindus continued to battle the Muslim invaders. However, their losses were high. Despite their efforts, many Hindus were forcibly converted to Islam, taken into slavery, or killed. This repeated trauma was felt throughout the subcontinent and vividly explained by Koenraad Elst, stating:

“The Muslim conquests, down to the 16th century, were for the Hindus a pure struggle of life and death. Entire cities were burnt down and the populations massacred, with hundreds of thousands killed in every campaign, and similar numbers deported as slaves. Every new invader made (often literally) his hills of Hindus skulls. Thus, the conquest of Afghanistan in the year 1000 was followed by the annihilation of the Hindu population; the region is still called the Hindu Kush, i.e. Hindu slaughter. The Bahmani sultans (1347-1480) in central India made it a rule to kill 100,000 Hindus every year. In 1399, Teimur killed 100,000 captives in a single day, and many more on other occasions. The conquest of the Vijayanagar Empire in 1564 left the capital plus large areas of Karnataka depopulated.”¹⁷

Such memory was seared into the mind of Indians, especially in Punjab as their region was, in part, a gateway to the rest of the nation. With the Mughal Empire taking over the North in the early 16th century, Islam continued to remain in power until the mid-19th century. Central and southern India comprised a number of Hindu kingdoms¹⁸ that attempted to push back against Islamic expansion but eventually became largely subjugated at the height of Mughal rule.

Pre-Sikh Efforts for Peace and Religious Reform

While strong clashes ensued between Muslims and Hindus, there were also perspectives

¹⁶ Singh, K., *A History of the Sikhs Vol 1: 1469 - 1839*, 22.

¹⁷ Elst, K., *Negationism in India: Concealing the record of Islam*, 33.

¹⁸ Largent, K. J., *Finding God Among Our Neighbors: An Interfaith Systematic Theology. Vol 2.*, 36.

that sought peace between the two faiths, even with the faiths themselves. Within Islam, there was the Sufi approach to practicing the faith. Formulated from the Koran and Hadith, Sufism disregarded the aspects of conquest and instead focused on worshipping one God through a mystical encounter with Allah, and the assistance and welcoming of the poorer castes.¹⁹ Within Hinduism, the Bhakti movement was started. Bhakta also held to the belief in one God, the need for a guru for spiritual counsel, and the notion that the “caste system was not divinely ordained.”²⁰ Both movements could be viewed as a form of “compromise”²¹ between the faiths, and the fact that both had a growing following in Punjab and the nation stressed the desire amongst some in the Indian population for reform within their faith and peace.

Establishment of the Sikh Faith

It was within this context of the wearisome military campaigns and the rebutting peace-seeking movements mentioned above that Sikhism was founded. The “founder of Sikhism” Guru Nanak was born in 1469 in the village of Talwandi (modern-day Nankana).²² When he was about 30 years old, Nanak went to wash himself one day in the river, he claimed to have a mystical experience where he communicated with God. He told Nanak:

As the Primal Being willed, Nanak the devotee was ushered into the Divine Presence. Then a cup filled with *Amrit* (nectar) was given him with the command, “Nanak, this is the cup of Name-adoration (*naam piala*). Drink it. . . . I am with you and I do bless and exalt you. Whoever remembers you will have my favour. Go, rejoice, in My Name and teach others to do so. I have bestowed upon you the gift of my Name. Let this be your calling.” Nanak offered his salutations and stood up..²³

¹⁹ Singh, K., *A History of the Sikhs Vol 1: 1469 - 1839*, 26.

²⁰ Singh, K., *A History of the Sikhs Vol 1: 1469 - 1839*, 25.

²¹ Singh, K., *A History of the Sikhs Vol 1: 1469 - 1839*, 25.

²² Largent, K. J., *Finding God Among Our Neighbors: An Interfaith Systematic Theology. Vol 2.*, 36.

²³ Singh, N. G. K., trans., *The Name of My Beloved: Verses of the Sikh Gurus*, 18.

After this experience, Nanak disappeared, with many assuming he drowned. But three days later he reappeared, and declared, “There is neither Hindu nor Muslim,”²⁴ and was resolved to share his message of peace with the world. He traveled throughout India, and went “as far west as Baghdad.”²⁵ Throughout his life, Nanak established several tenets of Sikhism including monotheism and that all humans are equal, despite areas of “caste, gender, religion, and ethnicity.”²⁶ At the end of his life, he selected a successor that was not blood-related, Guru Angad.

There were a total of 10 Gurus from Guru Nanak in 1507 to Guru Gobind Singh’s death in 1708. Of the more noteworthy acts of the earlier Gurus, the 5th Guru Arjan formally compiled the Sikh holy book, the Adi Granth, which was a collection of hymns and writings of the previous gurus including himself.²⁷ Arjan also built the Golden Temple in the Holy City of Amritsar, which was established by the 4th Guru Ram Das.

Times of Peace and Persecution

While there were some periods of peace among the leading faiths, Sikhism predominately spread during times of conflict and often through heavy persecution. Notable periods of peace include the rule of Afghan Sultan Bahol Lodhi and the third Mughul Emperor, Akbar. Afghan Bahlol Lodhi who ruled over Delhi during the beginning of Guru Nanak’s ministry established such “political supremacy” in the region, that non-Muslim rulers “retain[ed] administrative control of their territories.”²⁸ While Akbar’s reign included some conquest, he was viewed as more favorable and tolerant of the Sikhs. Some of the more known aspects highlighting Akbar’s

²⁴ Largen, K. J., *Finding God Among Our Neighbors*, 37.

²⁵ Singh, K., *A History of the Sikhs Vol 1: 1469 - 1839*, 33.

²⁶ Largen, K. J., *Finding God Among Our Neighbors*, 37.

²⁷ Largen, K. J., *Finding God Among Our Neighbors*, 38.

²⁸ Grewal, J. S., *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 31.

treatment of the Sikhs include the cancellation of the annual tax one year to destitute Sikh farmers who didn't receive the monsoon rain. He also gave "fifty-one gold mohurs" to Guru Arjun in aid in the completion of the Guru Granth, and was noted to share some "beliefs" with the text.²⁹

However, the majority of Mughal rule was quite the opposite of Akbar. When the empire was founded in 1526 by Emperor Babur, his conquest of the northwest region of India including Punjab and Delhi was, as Guru Nanak called it, "a marriage of sin." Grewel describes the incident, "Not even the ladies of the nobles were spared dishonour [...] Rocklike buildings were razed to the ground and princes were trampled into dust."³⁰ A number of locals became Muslim, either through force, enslavement,³¹ or desiring a better life under the new ruler. After Akbar, there was a thorough rescinding of the favorable policies toward the Sikhs. The new Emperor Jehangir viewed Guru Arjan as a threat and was eventually charged with treason. He was tortured and sentenced to death.³² The next two centuries were marked with significant persecution of the Sikh community, where many ruling and local Sikhs were killed as they were seen as being not compliant with Moghul laws. Two more gurus were killed, including Guru Tegh Bahadur and the last Guru Gobind Singh. In an effort to protect Sikhs against ensuring attacks, and to protect other victims of imminent and serious injustice, Gobind Singh created the Khalsa, a warrior class composed of Sikh men and women.

The Sikh Empire and British Colonization

Following Gobind Singh's death, out of the need to protect the Sikh from further bloodshed, the head of the Khalsa, Banda Singh Bahadur, rallied the other Sikhs to establish the

²⁹ Singh, K., *A History of the Sikhs Vol 1: 1469 - 1839*, 58-59.

³⁰ Grewal, J. S., *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 31.

³¹ Grewal, J. S., *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 33.

³² Singh, K., *A History of the Sikhs Vol 1: 1469 - 1839*, 59-60.

first, free Punjabi state in 1708. There was some give and take with the security of the borders from time to time, yet because of some instability of the Mughal political leadership, the empire was not able to afford significant effort to crush the rebellion early on.³³ Eventually, in 1715, Banda Singh Bahadur and 700 warriors were overrun at Gurdaspur Nangal, paraded to Delhi, and executed.³⁴ En route on the parade, over 2,000 Sikhs were abducted and beheaded. Their heads stood on spears while the 700 were beheaded.³⁵ The free Punjabi state crumbled soon after, and many local Sikhs were massacred. Over the next few decades, the Sikhs engaged in small local battles against the Mughal Empire. Grewal states that the Khalsa, “took to roving life of outlaws in small bands. They moved with speed, and struck with effect.”³⁶

With the Mughals on the decline and the rise of the Maratha Empire, the Sikhs continued to engage in the struggle for independence. With no clear central leader, several local Khalsa leaders took prominence in local provinces. Two of the most prominent were Nawab Kapur Singh and Jassa Singh Ahluwalia.³⁷ These and other commanders “played a decisive role in liberating Punjab from the Mughals and foreign invaders.”³⁸ Due to local infighting among the Sikhs chiefs, the Persian Invasion of 1738, and the Afghan conquest in 1747 led by Ahmed Shah Abdali, independence during the mid to late 18th century was fragile. However, in 1799, a new young leader named Ranjit Singh thoroughly pushed back the Afghan army, establishing independence once again, which lasted for about 50 years.³⁹

Ten years into Sikh independence, the British Empire had made significant inroads into India. Arriving in 1609 by way of the East India Company (EIC), the British slowly began to

³³ Grewal, J. S., *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 106-108.

³⁴ Grewal, J. S., *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 108.

³⁵ Singh, K., *A History of the Sikhs Vol 1: 1469 - 1839*, 115.

³⁶ Grewal, J. S., *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 114.

³⁷ Singh, K., *A History of the Sikhs Vol 1: 1469 - 1839*, 123.

³⁸ Singh, K., *A History of the Sikhs Vol 1: 1469 - 1839*, 129.

³⁹ Singh, K., *A History of the Sikhs Vol 1: 1469 - 1839*, 125 - 127.

utilize ports, build factories, and acquire land for their company, which focused on the trade of various spices and textiles. Initially, the Mughal Empire allowed the EIC to trade freely within their empire.⁴⁰ However, as the Mughal Empire declined, other power struggles evolved between the Maratha Empire, as well as the Afghans. While enduring some losses, the British took advantage of these internal conflicts. In 1809, the treaty of Amritsar was signed by Ranjit Singh, where the British acknowledged him as the “sovereign ruler of the Punjab,” and was given free rein by the British to finish the removal of the primary Afghan and Mughal strongholds in the Punjab region.⁴¹ Ranjit also established near complete domination over the Sikh provinces, removing many Sikh chiefs from their posts.⁴² However, after the British government took a more active role in India, they slowly conquered the weakened powers after much fatigue from internal conflict. The Punjabi Sikhs offered heavy resistance to the British but eventually yielded to their rule.

With the British in control of India, there were significant implications for the Punjab region. As they were known for their bravery and skill in battle, the Sikhs were conscripted into the British military and made up a significant fighting force on behalf of the British Indian Army. Another different government project that affected Punjab was the irrigation projects, which as a result, fostered a more prosperous, agricultural region, bringing about, “10,000,000 acres of land under cultivation, creating a ‘prosperous, progressive and modern’ region in the province and changing not only its agrarian economy but also its demographic distribution and even its physical appearance.”⁴³ However, despite such improvements, the overall sentiment and

⁴⁰ Lagasse, P. "East India Company, British." in the Columbia Encyclopedia.

⁴¹ Grewal, J. S., *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 127.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Grewal, J. S., *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 156.

experience of British Imperialism were far more exploitative and crushing to the native population than any positive advance. Grewal summarizes impact the impact in Punjab, stating:

“Colonial rule in the Punjab as elsewhere in the subcontinent was marked by economic exploitation. Geared largely to export needs, the bulk of external trade was controlled by British exchange banks, export-import firms and shipping concerns. Payment of home charges out of Indian revenues drained wealth and converted rupees into sterling at the officially determined rate to the advantage of the British. The imperial government exercised control over the finances of the Punjab and shared income and expenditure in a manner that tilted the financial balance in its favour, making it a major co-sharer in the increasing wealth of the Punjab.”⁴⁴

Not only did the British control the produced crop, and trade of other materials, but they also controlled the value of their currency in the Punjabi population. With their money always at a disadvantage to the British, the Colonizers were able to maintain control. Other forms of oppression in India by the British included exporting “millions of tons of grain,” thus causing the death of 30 - 35 million Indians and 2 million Bengalis.⁴⁵ Physical violence was a daily⁴⁶ occurrence throughout the country. Professor Jyoti Rao states this as an extension of earlier experience with slavery, stating, “British violence, including murder of Indian civilians, was justified by casting Indian people as inferior and subhuman, relying on racial ideas ‘forged in the crucible of chat-tel slavery.’”⁴⁷ With these and other compounding factors, the life expectancy of the Indian population fell 20% from 1872 - 1921.⁴⁸

Another important factor of British Colonization of merit to this discussion is the relationship the British had with the caste system. The upper castes of India effectively partnered with British officials to obtain jobs and positions of power over the lower castes. Grewal states:

⁴⁴ Grewal, J. S., *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 156.

⁴⁵ Rao, J. M., “The lasting impact of colonial trauma in India,” 349.

⁴⁶ Rao, J. M., “The lasting impact of colonial trauma in India,” 350.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Rao, J. M., “The lasting impact of colonial trauma in India,” 351.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Punjabi Hindus outnumbered the Punjabi Muslims on the middle and upper rungs of administration open to Indians. The Khatrīs among the Hindus occupied the largest proportion of gazetted positions, followed by Brahmans, Aroras, Baniyas and Rajputs. [...] The new professions too were generally dominated by Hindus.”⁴⁹

The Hindus took full advantage and even kept Muslims out of positions of power. And yet, the discrimination against the Sikh and Christian populations was even starker.

Grewal continues:

“Numerically both Hindus and Muslims lost to Christians and Sikhs, the Hindus much more than the Muslims. Since numbers were generally equated with strength, particularly for employment under the government, change in numbers was viewed with concern. As yet, however, there was little representation on legislative or executive bodies on the basis of people’s will.”⁵⁰

Even though the Sikh and Christian populations far outnumbered the Hindu and Muslim populations in Punjab, the latter groups consolidated almost all the represented Indian power.

Even with the Indian Councils Act in place in 1861⁵¹, which was supposed to allow access for all members of society, Sikhs and Christians had extremely limited representation.

The Partition of 1947

The independence of India from the British Empire in 1947 was in part a triumph for the Indian people as they were finally free from the oppressive state of the British. However, in Punjab, it was an unmitigated disaster. As a result of a hasty decision, an ill-informed British official carelessly divided Punjab in half, giving a portion to the Indian state, and the other to Pakistan.⁵² This sparked not only one of the largest population migrations in history but also the deaths of 1 million Punjabis.⁵³ Grewal states:

⁴⁹ Grewal, J. S., *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 158-159.

⁵⁰ Grewal, J. S., *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 159.

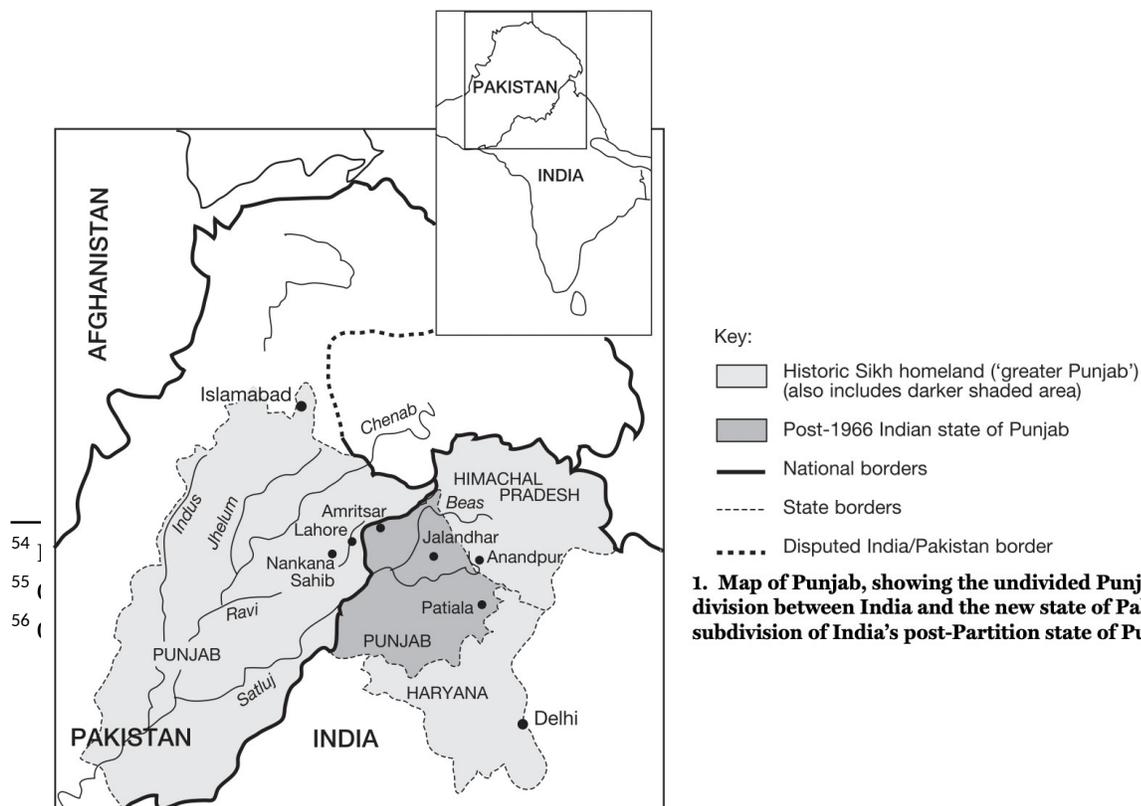
⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Grewal, J. S., *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 211.

⁵³ Ibid.

“Over 4 million refugees from West Pakistan crossed into the Punjab and a larger number of Muslims from the Indian side went to Pakistan. In 1951, when the total population of the Indian Punjab was over 12½ millions, there were nearly 2½ million refugees, forming a fifth of its population.”⁵⁴

It was indeed a humanitarian crisis. One of which received little or no attention from the outside world, nor among the non-Sikhs. The result of the migration ended up an enormous refugee population in both countries.⁵⁵ However, regarding the team’s engagement in Richmond Hill, it was clearly on the mind of the Sikh consciousness. In several Punjabi restaurants, there were images of the 1947 migration on the wall, with caravans of people en route to a new, unknown homeland.⁵⁶



1. Map of Punjab, showing the undivided Punjab before 1947, its division between India and the new state of Pakistan, and the subdivision of India's post-Partition state of Punjab in 1966

Map & Description from “Sikhism, a Very Brief History” by Eleanor Nesbitt, pg 9.

National Identity & Injustice, and Khalistan Movement

The magnitude of persecution and injustice that the Sikh community has endured, from the time of its founding through modern times, is without question. A significant portion of their history included heavy oppression from various Muslim empires. Then, with the dawn of the EIC and British Imperialism, the Sikhs were subjected to indentured servitude at best, to strong parallels to slavery at worst. Post-1947 until today, many in the Sikh population have called for a separate, independent nation for Sikhs free from exploitation and any danger to their community. This movement has been called the Khalistan movement. Prior to partition, ideas for Khalistan were suggested by Dr. V. S. Bhatti as a “buffer state between India and Pakistan.”⁵⁷ The idea was eventually turned down by the British and Hindu authorities at the time.

While sentiments for this movement waxed and waned through recent years, it came to a whole new focus during the events of 1984. In an unprecedented move in modern times, the Prime minister of India, Indira Gandhi, called for the arrest of a known Khalistan advocate Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale from the most Holy site for the Sikhs, the Golden Temple in Amritsar. When the operation was over, approximately 700 Sikh soldiers and officers were

⁵⁷ Grewal, J. S., *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 199-200.

killed.⁵⁸ In retaliation, Indira Gandhi was assassinated by two of her Sikh bodyguards. Following the assassination, it has been claimed that Hindu governmental leaders covertly sanctioned a mob uprising against the Sikh community. From Delhi to Punjab, Sikhs were killed, with some estimates stating hundreds, while others thousands.⁵⁹

Overview of Sikhism

Beliefs

The conception of Sikhism arose in the Punjab region, primarily inhabited by Hindu people, but at the time governed by Muslims⁶⁰. Because of this, Sikhism shows elements from both religions. The primary belief about God in Sikhism is that there is only one God.⁶¹ There is no name that the Sikhs have given to God, but Guru Nanak would refer to God by True Name, “*sat nam*” or as “*satguru*.” The view of the world from the Sikh perspective would be that it is created by God but is not the ultimate reality. The world is transitory and only God is eternal. God is formless, genderless, universal, and beyond description. God is the creator but did not intervene with creation by becoming an incarnated being, though God is actively participating in the world.⁶² Sikhs believe that all the religions on Earth worship the same God, so one must fulfill their duty in whichever path they are following to reach God. Sikhism does not actively seek to convert others to their faith but empowers others to follow in the way they are currently following. During the meeting at Harinder’s on March 14, 2023, he expressed his sentiments

⁵⁸ Grewal, J. S., *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 258.

⁵⁹ Grewal, J. S., *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, 255-258.

⁶⁰ Robinson, T., *World Religions: A Guide to the Essentials*, 233.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Nesbitt, E., *Sikhism. A Very Short Introduction*, 24.

about the diversity of religion, stating that it is not his duty to convert others to become Sikh but to empower others to continue to be faithful to their chosen religion.⁶³

The Sikh place of worship is their temple, *gurdwara*, and is intentionally built as a free-standing building with entrances on all four sides, representing that all are welcome in the temple.⁶⁴ The *Adi Granth* or *Guru Granth Sahib* is the holy book and the final Guru. Guru Granth Sahib sits in the middle of the gurdwara, resting on top of a bed, and the priest, *Granthi*⁶⁵, will sometimes fan it with a giant feather, taking care in protecting any dust or bugs from landing on the holy scripture.⁶⁶ All who enter the gurdwara must cover their heads, as an act of respect to God. Guru Granth Sahib is treated with the utmost respect and is treated as a living being. In the morning there is a ritual awakening called *Prakash*. The cloth covering Guru Granth Sahib is removed, the doors of the resting place are opened, and hymns and prayers will be recited. A ritual is also performed for putting the Guru Granth Sahib to sleep, called *Sukhasan*. The doors are closed during the recitation of prayers and hymns, and the cloth covers the Guru Granth Sahib.

The temple will also be a place for all to have a meal in the *langar*,⁶⁷ the kitchen/dining area attached to the gurdwara. The meals are vegetarian, ensuring that people of any dietary restrictions can partake of the meal. Serving these meals to all who come represents the equality of men, women, and children regardless of their caste, religion, or gender.

Sikhism believes in the cycle of reincarnation, where the forces of karma are at work. This element is taken from Hinduism. Different from Hinduism, Sikhism stresses that all human

⁶³ E-14 Harminder.

⁶⁴ Singh, J., *A Comparative Study of Sikhism and Hinduism*, 17.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ O-13 2nd worker.

⁶⁷ Luthra, S., "The significance of the institution of Langar in Sikhism," 291-305.

beings are equal. Hinduism divides humans into castes where one can hope to build enough good karma in their current life to be reincarnated into a higher caste in their next life, but Sikhism views incarnation as a human being to be the highest form before reaching “*mukti*,” spiritual liberation where one is released from the cycle of *samsara* and enters the presence of God, enjoying eternal bliss.

The equality of all people is a core belief of Sikhism. A verse from Guru Nanak says, “Call everyone noble, none is lowborn: there is only one potter, God, who has fashioned everyone alike. God’s is the one light that pervades all creation.⁶⁸” The human problem that Sikhism seeks to address is the selfishness of mankind. Man is bound to their ego and must set aside one’s ego to be free from *maya*, the illusion that is the world. Following the way of the Sikh strives to live a life that is no longer self-centered but is God-centered. Life is lived to fulfill one’s duties on earth, and so unlike Jainism or Buddhism, the extreme types of ascetism are rejected by the Sikh faith. The way to Mukti is to live a life free of selfishness, fulfilling one’s duties, serving others, and helping the needy. There are five vices that one must overcome: lust, anger, greed, worldly attachment, and pride (ego). In contrast, the virtues one must pursue are chastity, patience, contentment, detachment, and humility.⁶⁹

Practices

There are three main practices that all Sikhs should commit to. *Kirat Karo* is to use one’s God-given skills to earn an honest, pure, and dedicated living to improve the well-being of society. Guru Nanak said, “Only he who earns his living by the sweat of his brow and shares his earning with others has discovered the path of righteousness.⁷⁰” The second pillar is *Vand Shako*,

⁶⁸ Nesbitt, E., *Sikhism. A Very Short Introduction*, 106.

⁶⁹ Robinson, T., *World Religions: A Guide to the Essentials*, 234.

⁷⁰ Markham, I. S., *A World Religions Reader*, 305.

sharing what you have with those who are less fortunate in society, essentially charity. The third is *Naam Japo*, always focusing on God in all you do so that you can see God in every aspect of creation.⁷¹ Meditation and chanting of “Waheguru” is part of Naam Japo. While they meditate, they are intentionally reflecting on the characteristics and qualities of God. Other core values of the Sikh faith include *Seva*, the selfless service to others is considered a form of worship to God, and *Simran*, intentionally remembering the teachings and practices of God. The aim of these core practices is for the cultivation of a deep connection with God, achieving a sense of spiritual awareness for *nectar* in the mind.

There are five symbols that baptized Sikhs wear to be part of the *Khalsa*, a community of the pure. These symbols help to differentiate themselves and represent their religion. These are called the five K’s. The first is *Kesh*, long uncut hair, both on top of the head and the beard. The hair is often worn in a turban. *Kangha* is the second K, and it is a comb that one keeps, representing that though the hair may be uncut, it is not unkempt. *Kangha* shows that cleanliness is valued. The third K is *Kach*, which are the undergarments worn to symbolize chastity. *Kara* is a steel bracelet worn to remind one of the oneness of God. Lastly, is the *Kirpan*, a sword that one wears meant to show that one is ready to defend anyone who is oppressed, standing up for justice.

Commitment in any religion has varying degrees, and this is true of Sikhism. Those deeply devoted will undergo a ceremony, comparable to Christian baptism, called the *Amrit Sankar*⁷² or *Amrit Sanchar*.⁷³ The ceremony is for both men and women who want to devote themselves to Sikhism. The ceremony is conducted in a place where the Guru Granth Sahib is,

⁷¹ Priya, G. and Karla, S., “Diabetes Care: Inspiration from Sikhism,” 453.

⁷² Nesbitt, E., *Sikhism. A Very Short Introduction*, 46.

⁷³ Mann, G. S., “Sikh baptism (Amrit Sanchar): its meaning and historical context.”

and six *Panj Pyare* (already baptized Sikh, “beloved ones”) Sikhs conduct the baptism. The devotee will wash their hair, cover their head, wear clean clothes, and wear the five Ks before they present themselves to the Panj Pyare. One of them will read from Guru Granth Sahib and the other five are more involved. The principles of Sikhism are explained to the devotee, then *Ardas* (formal prayer), and the taking of the *Hukam* (opening the Guru Granth to a random page, receiving it as a divine order). The ritual drink, *Amrit*, is a sweet sugar water that has been prepared in a steel bowl, then stirred by the five Panj Pyare while the sixth reads and six verses from *Anand Sahib* (the Sikh hymnal) are recited. They pray once again, then one will drink the *Amrit* with cupped hands, five times. Each time they must say, “*Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh* (The Pure Belong to God, Victory to God).”⁷⁴ The *Amrit* is then sprinkled on the devotee’s hair and eyes, and the remaining is consumed by all those present. The code of conduct and discipline of *Khalsa* is explained. The *Khalsa* has four major things to abstain from. These are (1) cutting of hair, (2) eating halal meat, (3) adultery, and (4) using any intoxicants or such as drugs, tobacco, or alcohol, and additionally wearing the five Ks to represent their devotion. *Ardas* and taking *Hukam* are repeated, then they eat the *Karah Parshad*⁷⁵ (sweet bread pudding). Finally, one will take on a Sikh name, Singh, or Kaur, if they do not already have one.

Community

In the Sikh diaspora community, the gurdwara is one of the main locations in which the community can gather for the common purpose of worshipping God, but also one of the places where the second generation can feel connected to their faith and culture. This community can be referred to as *sangat*. Some Punjabis who immigrated attended *kirtan* (the service) and langar at the gurdwara even though they were not religiously Sikh when they were living in Punjab. The

⁷⁴ Sikhs.org, “Ceremonies and Festivals.”

⁷⁵ Cole, W. O. and Sambhi, P. S., *A Popular Dictionary of Sikhism*, 46.

cultural experience is beloved, especially for parents who want their traditions and values to be passed on to their children. The gurdwara serves the community as a center for socialization⁷⁶ and creates a meeting place where they can develop their unique group identity. Cultural ties are further maintained to the home country by immigrant parents who stay connected to their relatives who have not migrated.

Family is a highly valued and fundamental unit of society in the Punjabi Sikh culture. Harminder on March 14, 2023, told Esther and Athaley that he believes “religion cannot unite you, only culture can unite you.”⁷⁷ He further shared sentiments about his family and how there is a preference for Punjabis to marry within their ethnicity. He shared a story about his colleague who was actively participating in the Black Lives Matter protests, handing out free meals to protestors, but showed hypocrisy when he “did not allow for his daughter to be in love with an African American man.”

Aspects of Punjabi life that play a critical role in identity formation are religion, language, and script.⁷⁸ Religion and language were interpreted as key expressions of the Punjabi identity by Khushwant Singh (1999)

“The chief factor in the growth of Punjabi consciousness was the evolution of one common tongue from a babel of languages. [...] It was left to Guru Nanak and his nine successors to harness the spirit of tolerance and give it a positive content in the shape of Punjabi nationalism.”

The Punjabi cultural identity can recognize the milestones that language and religion have had in strengthening the group identity.

⁷⁶ Rana, M., “Mistaken Identities,” 3.

⁷⁷ A-14 Harminder.

⁷⁸ Singh, P., “Globalisation and Punjabi Identity”, 155.

Unity of the Punjabi Sikh community does not come without the internal challenges as with any other community, this can be seen in the diaspora.⁷⁹ Though equality is one of the fundamental values of Sikhism, the community internally operates hierarchically. There is a division of women and men within the gurdwara, but they sit parallel to one another, unlike in a Muslim Mosque where the women are either in the back or in a separate area from the men. Another factor that seems to contradict the value of equality is the prevalence of the caste hierarchy within Sikh communities. Though Sikhs united the castes and sought to abolish this separation of man, some in the community still pay attention to the status of others and have yet to release from worldly attachment.

One of the major issues that are prevalent within the Sikh community is alcohol dependency. Missionaries Kenton and Billy shared stories with the group about binge drinking, alcoholism, and its effects on the Punjabi community. A study conducted by Cochran and Bal (1990) showed that among Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim communities alcohol consumption is the highest among Sikh men.⁸⁰ Family members of those who experience alcohol dependency have been found to have an impact on their mental health and well-being.⁸¹ This experience is relevant to the Richmond Hill Punjabi community as Kenton shared with us in class about a man in the community who was told he is not allowed to enter the Gurdwara when intoxicated. He was prohibited from entering even when sober because those who serve in the Gurdwara are familiar with his alcoholic tendencies and have regarded him as “unclean” or “unworthy.” Binge drinking was also observed firsthand when Obed went to Sohna Punjab Indian Restaurant by himself on March 13, 2023. A group of 5-7 men came up from a side door appearing to be connected to a

⁷⁹ Singh, P., “Globalisation and Punjabi Identity”, 160.

⁸⁰ Johl, N. “An exploration of alcohol services staff experiences of providing support to relatives of alcohol-dependent individuals from the Sikh community,” 208.

⁸¹ Johl, N. “An exploration of alcohol services staff experiences of providing support to relatives of alcohol-dependent individuals from the Sikh community,” 209.

basement, and one of the men was holding a large bottle of liquor.⁸² After his food came, a different group of 8 men sat at a nearby table also with a bottle of liquor with them.

Another instance of hypocrisy that we observed in the community was during Obed's visit to the smaller gurdwara on 114th. He was in the langar and was speaking with the president of the gurdwara. The president told him that it is free to eat at the gurdwara, but it is also not good to come without giving a tithe as a donation. The president was insistent on getting his point across to Obed in how a financial donation should be made when eating at the gurdwara and "it is not good to eat for free."⁸³ There was a woman beside them during this conversation who appeared to be a poor woman because of how she was wearing her head covering, and she turned to Obed saying, "It seems he was talking to me."⁸⁴

Brief History of the Punjabi Sikh's Migration to the US and to Queens, NY

The history of Punjabi Sikh migration to the US begins at the very end of the 19th century. One such story was that of Bakhshish Singh Dhillon, who served in the British Army as a young man and emigrated to California in 1899.⁸⁵ He returned to Punjab after working in the US for eleven years, got married, and brought back the first Sikh woman to the United States, Rattan Kaur, who later gave birth to their daughter Katar Dhillon in 1915, the first Sikh female born in America.⁸⁶ Aside from being a story of "firsts," Dhillon's was all too common. While some other brief elements of history are mentioned below, aside from California, Punjabi

⁸² O-13 Obed Bazikian.

⁸³ O-14 President of 114 Gurdwara.

⁸⁴ O-14 Woman at 114 Gurdwara.

⁸⁵ Mann, G. S., Numrich, P. D, and Williams, R. B., *Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs in America*, 97.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

speakers primarily took root in the state of Washington, New Jersey, Texas, and New York. After California, New York has the next highest Punjabi population in the country.⁸⁷

Sikhs first arrived in the NYC area in the 1960s, and many settled in Queens borough. Worship gatherings first happened in homes, followed by St. Michael's School (Flushing), until finally, they renovated an old church which became NYC's first Gurdwara.⁸⁸ Richmond Hill eventually became the epicenter of the Sikh population in the Eastern United States.⁸⁹ While there is no concrete data on the exact number of Sikhs living in New York or Richmond Hill, certain data indicates that the neighborhood of Richmond Hill has a 25% Indian population, and based on language statistics, the state of New York has over 50,000 inhabitants speaking Punjabi.⁹⁰

Initial Reasons for Migration

Sikh soldiers who served in the British military were indeed the first category of immigrants to the United States. There were a few reasons for their migration. First, while serving in the military, soldiers often went on tour to different countries. The majority of the initial wave of Sikh that came to America first arrived in British Columbia, Canada in the 1890s.⁹¹ As Canada was part of the British Empire at the time, transferring there was more amenable. From there, several began to move south to America. Within 20 years, the numbers increased, and by, "about 1915, approximately six thousand of them had landed on the West Coast, either directly or by way of Canada."⁹² The majority of this wave of immigrating Sikhs were primarily from Punjab, but also from Shanghai and Hong Kong, China.⁹³

⁸⁷ <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data.html>

⁸⁸ Mann, G. S., Numrich, P. D, and Williams, R. B., *Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs in America*, 118-119.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data.html>

⁹¹ Mann, G. S., Numrich, P. D, and Williams, R. B., *Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs in America*, 97.

⁹² Mann, G. S., Numrich, P. D, and Williams, R. B., *Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs in America*, 108.

⁹³ Ibid.

Secondly, the reports that spread regarding America as a place where one could make money, as well as obtain good, fertile farmland. Many of the immigrants were already familiar with farming back in Punjab, and the idea of working on fertile land in California, or one's own land, was rather inviting. However, there were also other prominent fields that Sikhs entered as well, including lumber mills and forestry, and train rail repair on the North Pacific Railway.⁹⁴

Family Dynamics of Migration

A very common story is that Punjabi men often leave their families to come to America. Wives and young children are left behind in order to either provide funds for them or, in hope that one day the men can earn enough to bring their families to America. Richard Perez-Pena of the New York Times writes, "They are something of a bachelor society. Many came to the United States without their families, hoping to make enough money to bring their wives and children, siblings and parents from India, and most share apartments with other Sikhs whom they met through the temple."⁹⁵ One such story was revealed when Obed went to the Gurudwara: The Sikh Cultural Society on 118th St in Richmond Hill. After sitting during the langar downstairs, Obed started a conversation with a young Punjabi man. In his mid-20s, the gentleman shared within a few minutes that he had just arrived in the country a few months ago, and that he had a wife and kids back home. He then asked Obed to sponsor him and his family to come to America. Obed kindly deflected the point, but the gentleman kindly brought the subject back up three more times. After the meal, the Punjabi men picked up the empty plates and served many around our area.⁹⁶ Again, this story is one of many in Richmond Hill and has been a theme for decades. In 1994, the New York Times wrote an article about a tragic incident that was grieved

⁹⁴ Mann, G. S., Numrich, P. D, and Williams, R. B., *Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs in America*, 109.

⁹⁵ Perez-Pena, R., "Sikh Temple Helps to Bind A Community In Mourning," The New York Times.

⁹⁶ O-14 114th Street Gurdwara.

by the Gurudwara on 118th St. A van carrying 16 men, mostly Sikh, crashed while they were traveling to work. Three of the Sikh men were killed.⁹⁷

Assimilation: Legal & Cultural Aspects

As with a number of immigrant populations, assimilation into the United States is not always as easy as many could dream. The Sikh population went through many challenges in the transition into American life. One of the most glaring challenges that Sikhs faced early on is discrimination. This discrimination was multifaceted. First, the discrimination was legal in regard to immigration law. While the Fourteenth Amendment in 1865 legalized a pathway to citizenship for non-whites (reversing the Naturalization Act of 1790 and 1795 where only, “a free white person, may be admitted to become a citizen of the United States.”⁹⁸), there were still legal restrictions on Indians becoming United States citizens. It was not until the passage of the Luce-Cellar Act of 1946 that the status of Indian citizenship changed significantly. Following the victory of World War II, and in a supportive “gesture” in favor of countries that supported the Allied cause, Congress allowed a quota of 100 immigrants annually from India, and naturalized Indians living in the US. That number was increased in 1952 with a cap of 2,000 per year, and naturalized citizens were also allowed to bring their spouses (outside the quota limit).⁹⁹ While preference was given to skilled laborers in fields that were in great need,¹⁰⁰ this was still a significant achievement in uniting families that were long separated and increasing the Punjabi population in the United States.

⁹⁷ Perez-Pena, R., “Sikh Temple Helps to Bind A Community In Mourning,” The New York Times.

⁹⁸ The Naturalization Act of 1795, United States Congress.

⁹⁹ Varma, R., “Changing Borders and Realities,” 541.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

The passage of the Luce-Cellar Act also increased the morale of the Sikh population. Prior slow immigration and the hardship Sikhs had traveling back to Punjab made many feel disconnected from their culture and heritage.

“Sikhs could return to the Punjab for visits without fear of being denied reentry to the United States. These changes brought some fresh air into the life of the U.S. Sikh community. New male immigrants arrived with the traditional long hair and turban, encouraging older residents who had cut their hair to grow it out again. Young female immigrants appeared in the traditional Punjabi outfit of loose shirts (the kamiz) and baggy trousers (salvars). Older Sikh women in the United States, who had stopped wearing such garments years before, now donned them again.”¹⁰¹

With this bill passed, it brought life to the community and even reestablished cultural norms.

The other most noticeable forms were racial or cultural discrimination. Devout Sikh men who maintain the Turban and beard obviously stand out from the average dress of the American male. This has led to countless examples of harassment, violence, and even assault and death. After the events of September 11th, there was a wave of fear that spread across the Sikh community. The reason for this is that many who are unfamiliar with the Sikh faith falsely assume that Sikhs are Muslim. This error led to a spike in discrimination after the 2001 terrorist attacks. The community often goes on alert after any terrorist threat is feared in the United States.

In order to assimilate into the United States well, a number of Sikhs have decided to make alterations in order to appear more western. This primarily includes either shaving the beard or keeping it trim, or cutting their hair (with the removal of their turban). In some cases “Worshippers no longer had to [...] cover their heads if they had cut their hair.”¹⁰² These were

¹⁰¹ Mann, G. S., Numrich, P. D, and Williams, R. B., *Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs in America*, 115.

¹⁰² Mann, G. S., Numrich, P. D, and Williams, R. B., *Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs in America*, 113-114.

signs of Americanization, but permission for these changes was duly taken from the religious authorities in Amritsar, the Punjab.

Yet another point of assimilation is the common financial hardships immigrants have when entering the United States. One notable conversation Sam and Obed had in Richmond Hill concerned this very topic. Obed asked about the experience of moving from Punjab to America to three men in a local hardware store, covering the age - late 20s - mid-40s. The response can be summarized in the following: It is not easy to move to America or anywhere else. One gentleman said that some Punjabis move to America with the impression that upon arrival, becoming rich will be easy, which is not true. “You work very hard in Punjab. You work very hard in America. Even harder here.” Obed then asked, since you work harder in the United States as in Punjab, why move to America? The response was that if a Punjabi arrives in America, one is perceived as rich. But then one is expected to give their money away to their families in Punjab.¹⁰³ This story highlights the challenge, drive, and even need for Punjabis to come to America.

Punjabi Sikhs Encounter and Interaction with Christianity

Historical Encounter

Christianity was thought to be around in Guru Nanak’s time (1500) in parts of India. It is considered one of the ancient religions in India.¹⁰⁴ The 1830s is when Christian missionary activity became more prevalent in India.¹⁰⁵ Christianity flourished in Southern India, but the North was not as lucky. Due to repeated invasions during the first millennium AD, Christianity

¹⁰³ O-14 workers at Five Boro Building Supply.

¹⁰⁴ Loehlin, *Sikhs and Christians in the Punjab Past, Present, and Future*, 451.

¹⁰⁵ Bangash, *Missionaries, Christianity, and Education in 19th Century Punjab*, 154.

was almost extinct in Northern India.¹⁰⁶ British colonial rule lasted in Punjab during the 19th century, so colonialism factored into the interaction and tensions that arose between the faiths. The presence of Christian missionaries and their desire to convert the Punjabi people to their faith grew further tensions between the Sikhs and Christians. Each of these religious groups has historically viewed each other as misguided in their approach to reaching a fulfilled life and knowing God. William Carey translated the New Testament and part of the Old Testament into Gurmukhi Punjabi in 1819, he was the first Christian scholar and translator in North India.¹⁰⁷ Through the 19th century many Presbyterian missionaries were called to the Punjab region, seeing it as a Land of Promise.¹⁰⁸ Though the percentage of the Indian population that converted to Christianity barely passed 2% by the end of the 19th century, there were significant influences in education and equality that Christians had made in India.¹⁰⁹

An important individual to mention is Sunder Singh who was from a Sikh farming family in Rampur, which is now in the Ludhiana District. Because of his mother's devout attitude, Sunder inherited her spiritual interests and at school developed a hostility towards Christianity. He went so far as to burn a New Testament manuscript in public.¹¹⁰ Throughout his years he began to pray for God to reveal Himself to him and his Pauline transformation is recorded:

[...] he prayed, became aware of a glow of light shining in the room, how in the middle of it he saw the face of Jesus Christ and how, convinced that God had answered his prayer [...] he cast himself down on the ground and acknowledged Jesus as his Lord.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 453.

¹⁰⁹ Bangash, *Missionaries, Christianity, and Education in 19th Century Punjab*, 161.

¹¹⁰ Loehlin, *Sikhs and Christians in the Punjab Past, Present, and Future*, 455.

¹¹¹ Riddle, *The Light of Other Days*, 175.

Sikhism and Christianity were both seeing converts in near equal numbers, fostering interest from the underprivileged groups who wanted to escape their mistreatment from Brahmanism. Sikhism provided a familiar environment for these people to gather and find hope and freedom in this religious movement.¹¹² Christianity had a similar appeal to the outcasts and enticed followers through teachings about the love of God for all men, women, and children, regardless of their social status through the compassion of Christ for those seen by the world as lowly.¹¹³ Unfortunately because of how these movements were operating parallel to one another in time, an attitude of rivalry between the religions developed, and offense was taken by the Sikhs when higher class groups were converting to Christianity.

More Recent Encounters/Testimonies

In 2003, many Sikhs who identify as a part of the Dalit caste, though Sikhism sought to eliminate the caste system, left Sikhism for Christianity. Conversions were seen in the towns of Moga and Amritsar.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, Christians do not publish figures of conversion to prevent inciting “local wrath.” In April 2003, a Sikh federal minister proposed a law to ban conversion in Punjab, and there are reports of Christians bribing Sikhs to convert by offering money and jobs.¹¹⁵ Christians are even being asked to stop building churches in Punjab as the Christian missionaries are being seen as forcing conversions, but one convert and his wife, Malkiat Singh, and Gurbax Kaur embraced their faith even though their family boycotted them. Singh said, “I stood for what gave me satisfaction and peace. Jesus listens to our prayers [and] sends his pure soul, which gives us such joy and strength.”¹¹⁶

¹¹² Loehlin, *Sikhs and Christians in the Punjab Past, Present, and Future*, 457.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Singh, *Power in Punjab*, 25.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Some scholars claim that Sikhs and Christians are drawing closer to one another in India because of their shared values of monotheism and having faith in belief in salvation by the grace of God, with traditions of service and self-sacrifice.¹¹⁷ Dr. Ganda Singh, a leading Sikh scholar has, “as a labor of love,” translated the Sermon on the Mount into Gurmukhi Punjabi, introducing it with an explanation of how he was given a copy of Matthew’s Gospel when he was a schoolboy, from Rev Wazir Shah of Haryana, and how this teaching from Christ has helped him in his life.¹¹⁸ It appears that most of the interactions have been initiated by the Sikhs, and Christians have been open to responding to the advances. The Bible Society made a complete Bible translation into Gurmukhi Punjabi in 1959, and Gurmukhi Bible correspondence courses have been appreciated by over 1500 young Sikhs.¹¹⁹

The Hindustan Times published an article in 2022 that discussed the need for Sikhs and Christians to have a discussion because of some recent Sikh-to-Christian conversions in New Delhi. The Sikh inquiry and Christian response:

The Sikh representatives were of the view that this festering problem should not be neglected. On their part, representatives of the Christian community reiterated that they are totally against any forcible conversion through fraudulent means or false promises of miraculous healing, cash incentives etc. and they condone such acts, the spokesperson said.

Panjoli said this issue is extremely sensitive and Jathedar of Akal Takht Sahib also expressed concern over the same. "The issue was discussed during the meeting and the SGPC delegation stressed that both the Sikh and Christian communities are in the minority and the conflict between them is not a good development," he said.

Addressing the community at an event organised to mark the 38th anniversary of Operation Bluestar at the Golden Temple in Amritsar on June 6, the jathedar said, "Christianity is being spread in Punjab on a large scale to weaken us religiously.

¹¹⁷ Loehlin, *Sikhs and Christians in the Punjab Past, Present, and Future*, 458.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 459.

Churches and mosques are being built in large numbers in the villages of Punjab, which is worrisome for us."¹²⁰

From this news article there is still clearly conflict and tension between Christians and Sikhs when discussing the topic of conversions. The “fraudulent means [...] of miraculous healing” is a claim that the Sikhs are making of Christians’ attempts to win converts to their faith. The experiential aspects of healing and financial provision were evident in the way that those we met in Richmond Hills were seeking God. Those of the Punjabi culture respond well to signs and wonders, seen specifically on our first night at Bethlehem Punjabi Church.

We had the pleasure of meeting some people who converted from the Sikh faith to Christianity. The first of these people is Mr. Tarsem Singh. Tarsem was hoping for the return of his son for seven years. During this time, he was faithful to attending the gurdwara, but he had a Christian friend who invited him to come to church at Bethlehem Punjabi Church in Queens. He attended this church and prayed to Jesus for the return of his son. After three weeks of attending and praying to Jesus, his son returned home.¹²¹ He saw this experience as only possible because there is power in Christianity. Upon his conversion to Christianity, his children felt betrayed. They voiced that he had raised them in the Sikh faith, encouraging them to attend services in the gurdwara, yet he is no longer doing so. Tarsem shared more of his healing experience through the power of the Holy Spirit. He was healed of psoriasis; he had lost his hair, but it was restored. He was diagnosed with bad glaucoma and lost his sight but 70% of his sight has been restored.¹²² Sam asked him if it was the pastor who prayed for healing over him, and Tarsem responded by

¹²⁰ Singh, *Conversion row: Minority commission calls for dialogue between Sikh, Christian communities in Punjab*.

¹²¹ S-13 Tarsem Singh

¹²² O-13 Tarsem Singh

saying he was the one who prayed to God for healing.¹²³ As a former Sikh, Tarsem expressed that he believes satguru is Jesus.¹²⁴

ANALYSIS

Culture and Contextualization

According to Charles Kraft, culture is the structured customs and underlying assumptions by which people govern their lives. It is a way of life for people, the underlying script which guides actors in the way they function in their roles.¹²⁵ Paul Hiebert says that culture is constructed as people create and ascribe meaning in the world around them, enabling them to bring order into their chaotic world. Culture is therefore constructed through the lens of worldview, which is the most fundamental view of reality shared by a people group.¹²⁶ Additionally, culture is both constructed and contested in society. More succinctly put, *culture is constructed by worldview, and constructed in and contested by society*. Kraft goes on to suggest that there are two different dynamics happening within a given people group: surface-level culture (patterned behavior) and deep-level culture (worldview assumptions). The surface-level culture is the visual and auditory patterns of culture that we can easily observe. Clothing, family structure, and etiquette are just examples of observable patterns of behavior. However, these

¹²³ O-13 Samuel Song, Tarsem Singh

¹²⁴ S-13 Tarsem Singh

¹²⁵ Kraft, C. H., "Culture, Worldview, and Contextualization" in *Issues in Contextualization*, 385.

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Hiebert, P., *Transforming Worldviews*, 84.

patterns are often the signifiers of the deeper worldview assumptions that constructed them. This is at the heart of what our group is seeking to understand about the Punjabi Sikhs, what is the deep-level culture and worldview that shapes their reality? Mary Douglas, Hiebert, and Erin Meyers have created tools that help researchers take the surface-level cultural signifiers and deduce what worldview assumptions lie behind them.

Mary Douglas – Grid and Group

Mary Douglas created a two-dimensional analysis of societies that can be used to describe the type of social control present.¹²⁷ The first dimension is “grid”, which measures the degree to which people are affected by externally imposed classifications. This would determine the rules for people relating to each other amongst themselves. Formality, roles, and structure fall into this dimension. The second dimension is “group”, which measures the degree of control the group exerts on an individual and how the group maintains its boundaries. Plotting the grid on the y-axis and group on the x-axis, four distinct “social games” played by societies: Authoritarian, Hierarchical, Individualistic, and Collective.

In time with the Punjabi Sikhs in Queens, we have observed patterns of behavior that suggest that this group is high grid and high group, or hierarchical.

Evidence for High Grid

A) Caste

¹²⁷ Grid and Group Theory Class lecture, Brian Davis.

Sikhism sought to destroy caste differences among the people, even going as far as giving people the new names of Singh and Kaur to hide their caste-associated Hindu surnames.

However, conversations with people show that caste is still important in Sikh circles.

Tarsem comments on the recurring problems with caste among Sikhs.

Tarsem: Sikhism says that the Caste system doesn't exist, but it really does. Even though their last names are Singh, they have a second name which denotes caste. And the people in the community will ask for the second name.

Brian: Is that basically the first question that they will ask about you when meeting?

Tarsem: Yes. In America I have a friend who is from a higher caste, and he treats me well, like a good friend. Because of this, I am accepted in my friend's higher caste group. I have never mentioned that I am middle caste to my friend's friends.¹²⁸

Another Sikh-background Christian at Bethlehem Punjabi Church echoed similar sentiments.

Man A: I came to faith because I felt love in the church. I didn't feel love in the Sikh community because of the caste system.

Obed: Isn't the caste system not allowed in Sikhism?

Man A: In word it is not allowed, but in practice it is very present.¹²⁹

Looking to the Sikh community in California, Laura Hirvi has noted that caste is still very much a present practice:

In Yuba City, my informants all expressed condemnation of caste when the subject came up in conversation, but admitted that despite the long history of settlement in California it still played a role in guiding the practices of some Sikhs. This is especially the case when it comes to marriage...¹³⁰

Hirvi's research on the Sikh community in Finland also showed the same attitudes toward caste.

For this dynamic to present itself across the various Sikh diaspora communities, it is highly likely that this stems from the worldview of those living in Punjab, and it followed the Sikh

¹²⁸ O-13 Tarsem Singh at Satguru.

¹²⁹ O-12 Man A at Bethlehem Punjabi Church.

¹³⁰ Hirvi, *Identities in Practice*, 44-45.

immigrants into their new communities. Despite the attempts of Sikhism to rid themselves of the caste system, the system is still very much a part of the Sikh worldview.

B) Class (Wealth)

Interestingly, the topic of class privileges naturally came up in conversations about caste. In our discussion with Tarsem, he continues to describe the special privileges about being in America.

Tarsem: If I were to go back to Punjab, it doesn't matter that I am middle caste now that I am American and have achieved "the American Dream." I would be treated well because of my wealth.¹³¹

Three Sikh men, Kurnel, Japner, and another, from Five Boro Building supply also echoed Tarsem's thoughts on the Sikhs who came to America to work.¹³² Perhaps implying an association between "American" and "wealthy", Monica (the owner of Angel's Creations) commented about how some Punjabi people try to move out of the Punjabi neighborhoods for the sake of status.

Esther: Do most of the Punjabis live close to each other?

Monica: Most of the Punjabi people live close together, but some Punjabis want to leave the community and live in the white neighborhoods. They are proud to be seen as American and want to show it off that they succeeded.¹³³

As our team surveyed the residential neighborhood in Richmond Hill, we noticed interesting patterns in many of the houses we saw. Firstly, many houses had either Hindu-associated flags, "Khalistan" flags, or Islamic motifs in the front of their houses. We also observed Hindu temples and mosques along with the gurdwaras.¹³⁴ Both of these observations indicate that Richmond Hill has a mixed population of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. In all of the

¹³¹ O-13 Tarsem Singh at Satguru.

¹³² O-14 Workers at Five Boro Building Supply.

¹³³ E-17 Monica at Angel's Creations.

¹³⁴ E-13 Neighborhood Walk.

houses of desi¹³⁵ families, the porches and front steps of the house were often redone with marble and were decorated with stainless steel railings. Many of the houses also had luxury cars that were parked in the driveways. The non-desi houses looked noticeably older in the exterior and were likely the original designs of the houses before they were renovated by the new Punjabi community. The stylistic choices made by the desi families seem to suggest the importance of displaying wealth.

Taking all of these observations together, having wealth is an important part of how the Punjabi Sikhs assess and judge each other, to the point where it bypasses the classifications of caste in special cases.

Evidence for High Group

A) Strong Religious Identity

When Guru Gobind Singh introduced the *Khalsa*, he also established a ritual which would solidify the Sikh identity. This ritual is called the *amrit sankar*. After the ritual, the men would take on the last name *Singh* and the women would take on the last name *Kaur*. This renaming was highly significant because many last names usually denoted Hindu origins and caste belonging. Additionally, initiated Sikhs are called *amritdharis* and they are required to wear the five K's to physically signify their Sikh identity.

As the Gurus strived to distinguish and protect Sikhs from the Hindu and Muslim conflicts, strong boundaries were created to identify the Sikhs. Even though many in the Western world confuse Sikhs with the Muslims, it is easy for people in Punjab to distinguish who is or isn't a devout Sikh. Tarsem also confirms this.

Tarsem: ...one can't have a Kirpan and be a Christian. Even if one has a Kirpan and has a short beard, he is mocking the Sikh religion. That is an insult to the faith, and the community could call the cops on you.

¹³⁵ Collective term used to describe the people of Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh.

Tarsem points to a Sikh man with a turban but a shaved beard.

Tarsem: This young man is not a committed Sikh.

Harminder, a practicing and devout Sikh, also said that Sikhs are not supposed to cut their hair, drink alcohol, have sex outside of marriage, and eat meat. Moctar Singh, a teacher from the Sikh Cultural Society Gurdwara,¹³⁶ also claimed the same prohibitions as Harminder. Outside of the visible five K's, it seems that there are other rules that can increase one's level of religiosity.

In addition to the personal display of faith and level of commitment, Sikhs also take much pride in their Golden Temple, also known as the *Harmandir Sahib* (abode of God). The temple is located in Amritsar, Punjab and is viewed as the holiest site in Sikhism. It is both a symbol of their homeland and also a deep symbol of their faith. In the Sikh Cultural Society Gurdwara, a small replica of the Golden Temple is found in the lobby of the building.



Figure 1. Replica of the Golden Temple in the Sikh Cultural Society lobby (left) side by side with aerial view of the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Punjab (right).¹³⁷

¹³⁶ 9530 118th Street, South Richmond Hill, NY, 11419.

¹³⁷ https://www.designingbuildings.co.uk/wiki/Golden_Temple,_Amritsar

Two young men named Abhi and Prince display their pride and enthusiasm about the Golden Temple when our team spoke with them. They showed us old videos and pictures of them in Punjab and visiting the Golden Temple. They urged us to go visit the temple as well.¹³⁸ Another key symbol of Sikhism is the *Khanda*, a symbol of three swords and a circle within. This symbol appears in the Gurdwara but also as flags along many of the houses in the neighborhood. When we were visiting various businesses and people's homes, the symbol would also be present there as well.¹³⁹

Taken altogether, it is clear that Sikhs have solidified their religious boundaries with visible religious symbols, Sikh surnames, religious attire, and a designated Holy Temple in the homeland (which is linked to the local gurdwaras). Group allegiance and membership is very defined.

B) Punjabi Culture Boundary Maintenance

Although Sikhism is present outside of Punjab, most international Sikhs are descendants of Punjab that have started new Sikh communities in their new countries. Adherents of Sikhism are almost always Punjabi. In this sense, Sikhism has not left its cultural home of Punjab, and therefore the link between Punjabi culture and Sikhism is very strong. For many, the boundaries between the two would be difficult to even distinguish. Since the Sikhs are the minority group in the Queens context, it is understandable that many people would be open to interacting with outsiders (as many Sikhs have been open and hospitable to our team during our visit). Even in the Gurdwara, visitors seem to be encouraged so that the Sikhs have an opportunity to share the goodness of their faith. These factors can obstruct a true view of how the Sikhs maintain their

¹³⁸ E-15 Prince and Abhi.

¹³⁹ Angel's Creation, Apna Bazaar, India Café, E-13 Neighborhood walk.

group boundaries. When looking for good indicators of boundary maintenance, two key areas to observe are the strength of the community and explicit/implicit rules of marriage.

As many immigrant groups in New York City have done, the Punjabi Sikhs have settled into the neighborhoods where other Punjabis were present. The reasons for this are multifaceted, but a likely reason is to find support as an immigrant in a country where the language, currency, customs, and religion were very different from Punjab. In our observation of Richmond Hill, it is clear that there is a high concentration of Punjabi people living in a relatively small radius.¹⁴⁰ Additionally, Punjabi was often heard in the streets and there are many businesses which mostly conduct their transactions in Punjabi. We have spoken to immigrants that have been here from as long as 35 years ago¹⁴¹ to as recent as three years ago,¹⁴² indicating that Punjabi immigration is ongoing and continuing to bring new people into the area. In our team's conversation with Harminder, he confirms the migration and settlement patterns that we have observed.

Esther: In my hometown in the Catskills, many Bengali people ended up moving there because my parents were the first Bengali people there. Do you see a similar pattern among the Punjabi Sikhs?

Harminder: Yes, like for your hometown, Sikhs gather where other Sikhs are.

Later, Harminder comments on the dynamics of the Sikh community in Queens versus that of Punjab.

Harminder: There is a difference between the community in a village in Punjab versus here. It is not the same here, people are not as connected here as they are there. But there is still a sense of community here. This is both good and bad; good because it helps keep the community safe (neighborhood watch). But it can be bad to some because there is a fear of gossip in the community.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ See Neighborhood Map in Appendix (Figure 1).

¹⁴¹ E-17 Owner of India Fashion.

¹⁴² E-14 Harminder.

¹⁴³ E-14 Harminder Singh.

Similar comments on community dynamics were echoed in our conversation with Monica, as she affirmed that most of the Punjabis live close to each other for protection. Monica believes that Punjabis need to watch out for each other because “the white people don’t care about us.”¹⁴⁴

Sonia, a Punjabi woman in her late-30s/early-40s shared some more negative comments about the Sikh community. Sonia was talking to us in the streets after the Bible Study at Kenton’s house, and an older Punjabi woman stopped and stared at us for a few seconds and then kept walking.

Sonia: This is exactly what I hate about the community, everyone is like that. People should stop and just mind their own business.

Earlier, Sonia also commented that she does not enjoy socializing in the Gurdwara because the women gather and just gossip about others. In fact, she ended up joining Moctar Singh’s introduction to Sikhism in the upper classroom of the Sikh Cultural Society Gurdwara because she “would rather listen to good spiritual teaching than gossip, which is not good.”¹⁴⁵

It is clear that the Punjabi people have a tight social group in Queens, perhaps mimicking some of the group dynamics in Punjab. Whether the effects of the community are positive or negative, it is clear that members of the group pay close attention to each other and this has a profound influence in their lives.

Returning to the initial idea that Punjabi culture and Sikhism flow into each other, many Punjabis express the group identity through the word “culture.” Sonia says, “you must never leave your culture.”¹⁴⁶ Earlier, Monica’s comment about how some Punjabis leave the community to become Americanized and live among the “white people” was full of much

¹⁴⁴ E-17 Monica at Angel’s Creations.

¹⁴⁵ E-18 Sonia at Kenton’s House.

¹⁴⁶ E-18 Sonia.

disdain. She would say, “they are Indian, but they want to pretend to be white.”¹⁴⁷ Additionally, many of the restaurants and Gurdwaras had paintings depicting Punjabi people in various scenes of life. When the team would ask the workers what the paintings meant, they would all answer saying that they are depicting, “Punjabi culture.”¹⁴⁸ Clearly, the Punjabis are proud of their culture and believe that it is an integral, non-negotiable part of who they are. Harminder interestingly made a comment that, “religion can’t unite you, only culture can unite you.”¹⁴⁹ Later, he continues to speak about the importance of culture when it comes to marriage.

Harminder: There is a lot of hypocrisy. For example, I know this girl who has an uncle that went to a Black Lives Matter protest. She told me that her uncle is a hypocrite, and I asked her why. She says that he goes to a Black Lives Matter protest, but when he found out one of this daughter wanted to be with a black person, he did not accept the relationship! Now, if we are talking about hypocrites, I am also a hypocrite. I would not be able to accept my children marrying a black person either.

Harminder laughs to himself, thinks for a few seconds, and then continues.

Harminder: Maybe I wouldn’t mind if the person was from a different culture if they became Sikh...¹⁵⁰

While Harminder may personally have qualms about whether to accept interracial marriage, he made his stance on culture clear. As we were talking about the injustice happening in Punjab, Harminder says the Punjabi people are like Mercury Man (a comic book hero from Space Adventures #44 in 1962).

Harminder: Mercury Man has the ability to turn into mercury and scatter into many pieces when he is shot. However, eventually all the pieces come back together and he is whole again. Like Mercury Man, when the Punjabi people are shot and dispersed, they will unite together to rise up and fight back. This is because culture brings people together.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ E-17 Monica.

¹⁴⁸ E-12 The Sikh Cultural Society Gurudwara, E-16 Gurudwara on 114th street, O-13 Sohna Punjab Indian Restaurant, E-15 Satguru, E-16 India Café.

¹⁴⁹ E-14 Harminder.

¹⁵⁰ E-14 Harminder.

¹⁵¹ E-14 Harminder.

It seems that marrying outside of the culture may be a taboo for many in the community, but naturally there will be people with different opinions about this. Sarinder from New Apna Virsa told a team member that he personally does not care what culture someone is, and that it is more important to find a good person in marriage.¹⁵² He is much younger than Harminder, has been in the US for 13 years, and does not identify as religious, possibly indicating that he may be less concerned about the social norm. However, we did notice that all of the married Punjabi people we observed and interviewed with are also with Punjabi spouses.

All in all, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that Punjabi culture is an essential part of the people's identity, how they relate to each other, and how they protect the boundaries of their group. As with religious identity, the cultural identity defines group membership and allegiance.

The Hierarchical Social Game

According to the evidence and Douglas's Grid and Group theory, the Punjabi Sikh community in Queens likely functions as a Hierarchical society. In this type of society, the members experience strong group pressure and grid restrictions. Their place in their group is rigidly defined and their social obligations/privileges are bound to their grid. In this society, authority is respected and rituals are emphasized. Wealth is often unequally distributed, and there is a strong emphasis on showing loyalty to one's group.¹⁵³ Our research and observations align with this classification, affirming that this is the social game of the Punjabi Sikhs in Richmond Hill.

Erin Meyers – Eight Scale Culture Map

¹⁵² E-13 Sarinder at New Apna Virsa.

¹⁵³ Grid and Group Theory Class Lecture, Brian Davis.

After extensive academic research, Erin Meyers developed a tool to measure eight different scales that help people delineate the complexities of various cultures. The eight scales are Communicating, Evaluating, Persuading, Leading, Deciding, Trusting, Disagreeing, and Scheduling. From Harvard Business Review, the Indian culture has been mapped according to these eight metrics. These metrics will be compared to our observations in order to determine its accuracy among the Punjabi Sikhs in Queens.¹⁵⁴

Communicating

This metric measures whether a culture prefers high or low-context communication. In low-context cultures, communication is clear, explicit, and straightforward. There is little to read in-between the lines, and messages are understood at face value. In high-context cultures, communication is more nuanced and complex. It is essential to read in between the lines to understand what someone is saying. Notably, in our conversations about traveling to India, several men would imply that they can't go back to India without directly giving reasons why.¹⁵⁵ In our talk with Prince in Satguru Sweets, we asked him if he would be able to show us around Punjab, but he mentioned that he couldn't. When we pressed him why, he said he didn't have his papers. After this, Prince and Abhi became uncomfortable and decided to leave.¹⁵⁶ Of course, there is secrecy surrounding talks of documentation, but we realized that we were being told indirectly about their documentation status before, and they expected us to understand between the lines.

LOW-CONTEXT



HIGH-CONTEXT

¹⁵⁴ <https://hbr.org/2014/08/whats-your-cultural-profile>

¹⁵⁵ E-13 Sarinder in New Apna Virsa.

¹⁵⁶ E-15 Prince and Abhi at Satguru.

According to HBR’s data, India leans towards being on the high-context end of the scale.¹⁵⁷

Our observations seem to agree with this assessment, as there were many moments where some people seemed to be implying something without saying words directly to us.

Evaluating

Evaluation describes a culture’s preference for direct or indirect criticism; it is distinct from regular communication.



According to HBR, Indians are leaning towards giving and receiving indirect negative feedback.¹⁵⁸ Our observations also seem to agree with this assessment. For example, the president of the Gurdwara on 114th street seemed to be heavily implying to one of our team members and another woman nearby that you cannot eat in the Gurdwara for free and people must be generous to the Gurdwara. He spoke about how “people” should do something, but it was highly implied he expected *them* to do something through tone and eye contact, without ever clearly addressing them verbally. The criticism was definitely understood, but it was communicated in a rather indirect manner.

Persuading

The persuading scale shows a culture’s preference for principles-first or applications-first arguments. According to HBR, India is neither principle-first nor applications-first, but rather holistic, thus it cannot be plotted on the spectrum.¹⁵⁹ It was difficult for our team to assess this scale, but in our teaching session with Moctar in the Sikh Cultural Society Gurdwara, his lecture

¹⁵⁷ <https://hbr.org/2014/08/whats-your-cultural-profile>

¹⁵⁸ <https://hbr.org/2014/08/whats-your-cultural-profile>

¹⁵⁹ <https://hbr.org/2014/08/whats-your-cultural-profile>

seemed to build a holistic picture of the Sikh faith, with the teaching just building upon itself in a non-linear way.¹⁶⁰ This could also be due to his language difficulties, but the logic was a bit difficult for some of the team members to follow. Maybe it was because of how we are used to listening to lectures, or perhaps it was our lack of knowledge of specific elements of Sikhism.

Leading

The Leading spectrum indicates a culture's view on the degree of respect and deference given to authority figures. It can either be egalitarian or hierarchical.



According to HBR, India leans more heavily into the hierarchical side.¹⁶¹ As we observed through our Grid/Group classification, the Punjabi Sikhs in Queens are a hierarchical society. Specifically, some of our informants have mentioned the power of “Babas,” who are people who run religious organizations and have immense influence over people. Harminder described a Sikh Baba locally (near Lindenwood) who has recently been gaining a large following of people.¹⁶² When we visited the Gurdwara, there seems to be a lot of respect given to Moctar, who is a prominent religious figure in the Gurdwara. And most obviously, the Guru Granth Sahib is respected and treated as if he were a living Guru. It is clear that the Punjabi Sikhs are very inclined to respecting and following leaders, especially if they are religious figures.

Deciding

The Deciding scale determines how decisions are made in this culture. A culture either leans towards consensual or top-down decision making.

¹⁶⁰ B-12 Moctar Singh.

¹⁶¹ <https://hbr.org/2014/08/whats-your-cultural-profile>

¹⁶² E-14 Harminder and Inderpreet.

CONSENSUAL



TOP-DOWN

HBR's assessment of Indian culture places it more towards the top-down end.¹⁶³ This matches our observations and is highly linked to how religious leaders are perceived and treated in this context. The decision-making power of the leader can also be seen in how leadership is passed on in a Gurdwara. Harminder explains that a leader should be chosen by re-election every two years, but there is always a conflict at the local Gurdwaras because the current leader does not hold a re-election. People break out in fighting because the position of leader has a lot of authority in the community. It is worth noting that rebellion is possible in this situation, and a leader can be displaced if he is overstaying his term.

Trusting

The Trusting scale measures whether trust is gained through task-based recognition or relationship-based recognition. This is particularly important in the dynamics of work.

TASK-BASED



RELATIONSHIP-BASED

According to HBR, India leans heavily toward the relationship-based end of the scale.¹⁶⁴ Our observations also seem to affirm this. For example, Sarinder from New Apna Virsa talked about how he had been working at his current restaurant for 13 years. He has a good relationship with the owner, but he is picky about hiring more help because he really needs to trust the person he works with. He says he has one other cook that he knows well and has a good relationship with.¹⁶⁵ It seems that his trust at work was built through his personal relationships. Monica from

¹⁶³ <https://hbr.org/2014/08/whats-your-cultural-profile>

¹⁶⁴ <https://hbr.org/2014/08/whats-your-cultural-profile>

¹⁶⁵ E-13 Sarinder.

Angel's Creations also spoke at length about the importance of relational trust when she spoke about her relationship with her clients.¹⁶⁶

Disagreeing

The Disagreeing scale measures how confrontational a culture is, and whether confrontation is viewed as positive or negative.



According to HBR, India leans slightly more towards avoiding confrontation.¹⁶⁷ This was difficult for our team to ascertain because we have observed specific instances of direct confrontation. For example, there is direct confrontation when a Gurdwara leader overstays their welcome,¹⁶⁸ in issues between spouses,¹⁶⁹ with the Gurdwara teacher,¹⁷⁰ among friends,¹⁷¹ and even in a Punjabi church setting.¹⁷² Perhaps the history of the Punjabi people made them more confrontational compared to the rest of the people groups in India.

Scheduling

The Scheduling scale measures whether a culture views times as linear or flexible. It measures how much a culture sticks to a schedule or has flexibility with time.



¹⁶⁶ E-17 Monica.

¹⁶⁷ <https://hbr.org/2014/08/whats-your-cultural-profile>

¹⁶⁸ E-14 Harminder Singh.

¹⁶⁹ E-18 Sonia, E-17 Monica.

¹⁷⁰ E-12 Moctar disagreed with much of what was shared by our team during our time with him.

¹⁷¹ E-14 Harminder and Inderpreet openly expressed disagreement during dinner.

¹⁷² E-12 Jason disagreed with the idea of contextualization.

According to HBR, India leans heavily towards viewing time as flexible.¹⁷³ This is heavily affirmed by our observations throughout our trip, mainly at how difficult it was to coordinate times to even meet with many of our informants. Many of our spontaneously planned meetings led to wonderful conversations with people, while a lot of attempted planned meetings fell through the cracks.

Summary

In summary, many of our observations affirm the assessment given by HBR for India. However, our observations on disagreeing do not conform to HBR's assessment. This is interesting to note when considering how Punjabi Sikhs are different from many of the other Indian groups.

Paul Hiebert – Worldview Themes

Kraft's "deep-level culture" of a people group is ultimately what our group is trying to parse out from all of our observations with the Sikh people. To organize these worldviews, Hiebert's worldview categories are extremely helpful in building a framework from our observations. He describes three large categories: Beliefs (what are truths to be held), Values (what is important to them), and Heart (how do people feel about life). These categories fall under the synchronic dimension (World Maps), while the diachronic dimension looks more at the cosmic story (World Myths).

Synchronic (World Maps)

A. Cognitive (Beliefs)

i. Epistemological Assumptions

The epistemological assumptions of Sikhs indicate the assumptions they make about the nature of the world. Sikhism states that the universe is illusory. This is very similar to how Hinduism

¹⁷³ <https://hbr.org/2014/08/whats-your-cultural-profile>

views the universe. People have desires and needs, but the ultimate purpose and goal of life is to take the piece of God that is within them (the *atma*) and reunite with the larger God outside of them. The way to do this is to pile up good karma and escape the cycle of transmigration (*sansar*). Hence, the spiritual needs are greater than the material needs. However, it is easy to get pulled into the material needs. Harminder and Moctar both confirm this when they state, “people get in trouble when they focus too much on their desires instead of on God.”¹⁷⁴ Such thinking implies that spiritual matters are of greater significance than material matters, but human desires may cloud this reality. Additionally, a fatalistic mentality has popped up in our conversations. More than once has someone claimed that “whatever happens is up to God, good or bad, and we can only accept it.”¹⁷⁵ Elsewhere, there is a strong belief that bad things happen to people because of the bad karma from their previous lives. It is both their own doing, but also out of their control.¹⁷⁶ Jawsinder Singh Sandhu also affirms these fatalistic tendencies in his study of Sikh suffering and healing.¹⁷⁷ Sikhs are either at the mercy of God’s will or their previous karma, and this often makes them feel powerless to address their suffering. The only spiritual way to alleviate this suffering is to chant and focus on God.¹⁷⁸

ii. Types of Powers in the World

According to Sikhism, the predominant power that governs the world is God. God is everywhere all at once, and he controls everything. The Guru Granth Sahib says, “the entire universe evolves from, and revolves around, *Ek Onkar*—the one cosmological essence that unifies all diversity.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ O-17 Harminder Singh, O-12 Moctar Singh.

¹⁷⁵ B-12 Moctar Singh, E-14 Indepreet, and O-17 Harminder Singh.

¹⁷⁶ E-18 Kenton, E-18 Sonia, E-17 Monica.

¹⁷⁷ Sandu, J. S., “The Sikh Model of the Person, Suffering, and Healings,” 37-39.

¹⁷⁸ B-12 Moctar Singh, E-14 Harminder Singh.

¹⁷⁹ GGS, 294.

From this description and the statements of others,¹⁸⁰ God is seen as the ultimate impersonal power in the universe. The other force that seems to affect people's ability to get closer to God is the five desires/devils. These devils are not as powerful as God, but they fight for control of our minds. In a sense, they are distractions that seek to separate the *atma* in people from *En Onkar*. Again, this seems to be in impersonal power.

B. Affective (Values/Feelings)

i. Anger, Justice/Injustice

A recurring theme that we observed in our interactions and our literature review was the injustice experienced by the Sikhs throughout history, continuing into modern-day events. As we spoke to Harminder, a modern sense of betrayal was planted with the Hindu Betrayal of the Sikhs in 1947. The Indian government promised that they would take care of the Sikhs if they remained part of their country, but the Sikhs were betrayed by the Hindu leaders.¹⁸¹ This seed of anger exploded when the Prime Minister of India attacked the Golden Temple in 1984 in Operation Bluestar.¹⁸² Harminder equates the current leader of India, Narendra Modi, as an enemy of Sikhs because of his Hindu-Revivalist agenda.¹⁸³ In our conversation with Monica, she would say that "India is for the Hindus." As our team spoke to people in the gurdwaras and restaurants, we heard more stories of unjust persecution and martyrdom of Sikhs.¹⁸⁴ These anti-Sikh events and sentiments have led to the modern-day movement of establishing "Khalistan," a country for the Sikhs. There are many who support the movement, despite opposition from the Indian government.¹⁸⁵ For the

¹⁸⁰ B-12 Moctar Singh, E-14 Harminder Singh and Inderpreet.

¹⁸¹ E-14 Harminder Singh.

¹⁸² E-14 Harminder Singh, E-15 Abhi and Prince.

¹⁸³ E-14 Harminder Singh.

¹⁸⁴ E-15 Abhi and Prince, E-16 Gurudwara Singers, E-12 Posters of unreleased Criminals.

¹⁸⁵ E-13 Many houses with Khalistan Flags, A-14 Harminder Singh.

people, this is the solution to the injustice that the Sikhs have been facing. It is clear that this is an important value that holds deep emotion for the people.

ii. Working Hard

Work is an important value among Punjabi Sikhs. As Moctar taught about God, he connected the concept of “working” to “good” and moving toward God.¹⁸⁶ On a personal level, it was clear from many of our conversations and the migration data that most Punjabi Sikh’s motive for migration to the Americas was for work opportunities and wealth.¹⁸⁷ There are even people who have come here to work without legal documentation.¹⁸⁸ As Monica says herself, “Indians work very hard.”¹⁸⁹ However, in the feelings and attitudes we observed, it may seem that the work ethic stems less from a value for work and more from a desperation to provide for needs.

iii. Self-control

There is an interesting observation of the value of self-control and moderation. According to more religious Sikhs like Harminder and Moctar, Sikhs are supposed to exercise self-control against the five devils/desires. Additionally, good Sikhs will also abstain from eating meat and drinking alcohol.¹⁹⁰ However, there were hints of high alcohol usage when walking through the neighborhood and observing liquor bottle trash in front of many of the desi-style houses.¹⁹¹ We could not confirm whether it was the Sikhs who were drinking in that instance, but when our team member went out for a late dinner on Monday evening, he observed many groups of Sikh men heavily drinking with each other at Sohna Punjab Indian Restaurant.¹⁹² Our informants Billy

¹⁸⁶ O-12 Moctar Singh.

¹⁸⁷ O-15 Japner and Kurnel at Five Boro, E-16 65-year-old working in NJ, E-17 Monica, E-14 Inderpreet and Pupinder.

¹⁸⁸ E-15 Abhi and Prince, O-13 Tarsem Singh, E-13 Sarinder.

¹⁸⁹ E-17 Monica.

¹⁹⁰ B-12 Moctar Singh, O-17 Harminder Singh.

¹⁹¹ E-14 Neighborhood walk.

¹⁹² O-14 Sohna Punjab Indian Restaurant.

and Kenton have also confirmed that there is a high level of alcohol usage among the Sikhs in Queens, along with results from a current research study.¹⁹³ Although the idea of self-control is important in Sikhism, there seems to be much misalignment in the community. Perhaps there are deeper desires/emotions in people behind this behavior.

C. Evaluative (Heart)

i. Equality/Hierarchy

From the previous discussion in Grid/Group theory, the prevalence of caste and wealth hierarchies creates a deep yearning among many Sikhs for true equality for members within their groups. Additionally, the external tension between the Hindu revivalist movement continues to press the Sikhs and push for the separation of Khalistan. According to Harminder, “If Hinduism teaches inequality, then how can Sikhs be equal? Sikhs, Christians, and Muslims are all second-class. Everyone except Hindus.”¹⁹⁴ Both within their group and outside of their group, the equality/hierarchy evaluation is constantly being assessed.

ii. Body/Spirit – Good Karma/Bad Karma

Good and Evil is framed mostly in the context of transmigration. If the mind is not focused on the “sweet nectar” of God’s meditation and chanting, it can be tempted by the five devils/desires. The desires seek to keep you focused too much on the material reality, but chanting is the way to untether the desires of the world and release yourself from the illusion of this world while still fulfilling your worldly duties.¹⁹⁵ If one does not fixate on God, they can give themselves up to the

¹⁹³ Johl, N. “An exploration of alcohol services staff experiences of providing support to relatives of alcohol-dependent individuals from the Sikh community,” 208.

¹⁹⁴ O-17 Harminder Singh.

¹⁹⁵ B-12 Moctar Singh, E-14 Harminder Singh.

material world and they do not accumulate good karma. Reaping bad karma brings people further and further away from God, and it also causes them suffering in their next lifetime.¹⁹⁶ According to Sandhu, *As you sow, so shall you reap*¹⁹⁷ is frequently quoted by Sikhs as a possible explanation for understanding the inevitable experience of suffering as a part of the human condition.”¹⁹⁸ Therefore, much of how they evaluate actions is the good/bad karma of their previous life, which is deeply connected to the notion of attachments of body versus the unattached mind.

Diachronic (World Myths)

A. Cosmic stories

In the Sikh worldview, God is the creator of the world. He is eternal and shapeless, and when he created the world, he left an essence of himself within all people (*atma*). The ultimate purpose and goal of people’s lives is to reunite with God into a state of nothingness.¹⁹⁹ Moving away from God will only lead to more suffering and attachment to the world. This kind of state can be seen as a type of Hell.

B. Progression of Time

Sikhs believe in a cyclical progression of time, in the cycles of transmigration until the *atma* reunites with God.²⁰⁰

C. Cultural Systems

Out of the three prevalent culture systems, the Punjabi Sikhs function more dominantly through Honor/Shame than Guilt/Innocence and Power/Fear. Honor/Shame is primarily concerned with

¹⁹⁶ E-16 Monica, O-14 Harminder Singh.

¹⁹⁷ GGS, 134.

¹⁹⁸ Sandu, J. S., “The Sikh Model of the Person, Suffering, and Healing,” 38-39.

¹⁹⁹ O-17 Harminder.

²⁰⁰ B-12 Moctar Singh.

how members of the society view and evaluate one another. This hierarchical society is fixated on status, maintains tight group borders, and has members that are very interconnected. These factors contribute to creating a lot of internal group pressure for its members. Some informants have mentioned that gossip is a problem within the community, to the point where it causes others to fear how they are perceived.²⁰¹ Additionally, the display of wealth and status implies that the group members are concerned with how others perceive them. This would also explain why acts of dishonorable injustice are particularly inflammatory to the Sikhs.

GOSPEL INTERACTION

Although Sikhism widely differs from Christianity, there are several concepts that are found to be quite similar to each other. In Sikhism, God is referred to as Waheguru, which can be translated as “Wonderful Teacher” or “Wonderful Lord.”²⁰² Similar to the Christian doctrine, Sikhs believe that there is ultimately one God who is the creator and sustainer of the universe. They believe that Waheguru is infinitely loving and merciful towards all creation. A Sikh’s purpose in life (including in all stages of creation) is to have a deep connection with the Waheguru through prayer, meditation, and service to others. Furthermore, a true teacher of Sikhism is called Satguru. The term appears more than 2500 times in the Guru Granth Sahib and is usually used to refer to God but can also be interchanged with a guru or a teacher. The satguru, which has a similar concept to Jesus in his or her purpose, is a title given to an enlightened individual (rishi or sant) whose purpose is to guide the Gursikhs (disciple or learner) into the ultimate destination of moksha, which is enlightenment or liberation by merging one’s consciousness with Waheguru. As such, a Satguru is a teacher or a guide that is necessary for

²⁰¹ E-17 Monica, E-18 Sonia, E-14 Harminder.

²⁰² Cole, W. O., *A Popular Dictionary of Sikhism: Sikh Religion and Philosophy*, 86.

one to achieve reunification with the creator and sustainer of all. Above mentioned aspects of the Waheguru and Satguru are similar to the indispensable theme of Christianity of the Father and the Son. Thus, although widely different, there are both similarities and differences between the two religions. As a follower of Christ, called into missions through Jesus' Great Commission, it is crucial to identify the aspects of Sikhism and its culture that must be affirmed, critiqued, or redeemed. In order to accomplish this, through the following segment, a brief survey and comparison of the pillars of Sikhism and Christianity will be made.

Affirmation

A key concept in Sikhism taught by Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, is *Haumai*. Although it is difficult to translate the exact meaning, according to W. Owen Cole in *A Popular Dictionary of Sikhism*, "the literal meaning is 'I-I.'"²⁰³ In both the spiritual and ethical sense, it can be loosely translated to English as pride, ego, and self-centeredness. According to Guru Nanak, *Haumai* is a spiritual disease; an ever-present condition that dominates the entirety of an individual's life and deters them away from reaching enlightenment.²⁰⁴ Instead of being obedient to the teachings of a Satguru, one's life under the domination of *Haumai* will be self-willed and opposed to truth. Even if it occasionally motivates one to do good actions, according to Cole, "the motive is always selfish and therefore *haumai* is a chain binding humans to the cycle of rebirth."²⁰⁵ Finally, the only way mankind can find freedom from the disease of *haumai* is to affirm that God is truth and to follow in God's Divine Order, *hukam*. *Hukam* is an Arabic word that means Divine Order. To the question of how truth can be attained, Guru Nanak responded,

²⁰³ Cole, W. O., *A Popular Dictionary of Sikhism*, 40.

²⁰⁴ GGS, 466.

²⁰⁵ Cole, W. O., *A Popular Dictionary of Sikhism*, 40.

“submit to the hukam, walk in its way.”²⁰⁶ As such, in Sikhism, denial of self and following the will of God is a crucial element that brings one to enlightenment, “liberation comes, not from changing God but from a change or orientation in the one who seeks it.”²⁰⁷

It is clearly evident that the concept of haumai and hukam is affirmed in the Bible. Jesus says in Mark 8:34, “whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” Jesus Christ, our satguru, teaches us that self-denial and following His way are the only means to salvation. In fact, Apostle Paul further affirms this in the book of Philippians where he discusses the ethics of living life as a follower of Christ. He states in chapter 2:2, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” Through the testimony of his own life, Paul emphasizes the need for self-denial to the point where it is no longer he who lives but Christ that lives in him (Galatians 2:20). A complete submission to the will of God, what is coined as “carrying the Cross” as mentioned by Jesus. Therefore, as followers of Christ, the concept of denying oneself and following the will of God can be an effective connecting point with a Sikh that can be affirmed through the gospel.

When visiting a gurdwara, a person will always be met with two different moments of receiving food called Karah Parshad and langar. Karah Parshad is a type of pudding prepared with wholemeal flour, sugar, and ghee butter. When receiving the pudding, a Sikh would touch it with their kirpan which signifies what is known as “deg and teg” which are the Persian words for kettle and sword.²⁰⁸ Receiving the pudding in such a way signifies the responsibility of the Sikh to provide food and protection for the needy and oppressed which is a core principle of Sikhism.

²⁰⁶ GGS, 1.

²⁰⁷ Cole, W. O., *A Popular Dictionary of Sikhism*, 41.

²⁰⁸ Cole, W. O., *A Popular Dictionary of Sikhism*, 46.

Furthermore, according to W. Owen Cole and Piara Singh Sambhi, Karah Parshad is an expression of “unity, equality, and freedom from caste restrictions against commensality, by eating together.”²⁰⁹ It is a tradition started by Guru Nanak to teach social equality amongst his congregants, as taught by Rehat Maryada, the Official Sikh Code of Conduct.²¹⁰

After the Sikh service, one will be met with a free meal called langar. In direct translation, langar means “anchor.”²¹¹ It signifies both the location (gurdwara) where the meal is prepared and the fundamental belief of Sikhism. Langar is a vegetarian meal that is served in gurdwaras all around the world. The practice was first established by Guru Nanak and it is an integral part of Sikh worship and ethics as all visitors, both Sikhs and others, sit together and eat alongside each other. By doing so, the very act of eating together becomes a practical way of demonstrating Sikhism’s rejection of the caste system and embracing social equality.

Furthermore, any Sikh, regardless of gender, is permitted to offer, prepare, or serve food that is “simple, not ostentatious, and only vegetarian, to cause no one offense.”²¹² Therefore, these two practices are a clear indication of Sikhism’s emphasis on the equality of all mankind. People of all backgrounds, ethnicity, religion, and social status are honored and respected.

Sikhism’s concept of equality of mankind will be well met by the Christian concept of imago dei. In the creation account of Genesis 1:26-27, God created mankind in His own image. This account has important implications for the concept of equality for Christians as all mankind, in being created like God, possess inherent worth and dignity. This is regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, or any other characteristics. Similarly, Guru Granth Sahib teaches that all mankind is equal and alike as “the Lord’s Light” is “within all” and that “there are no

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ *Rehat Maryada: The Code of Sikh Conduct and Conventions*, Ch. VII Article XII.

²¹¹ Cole, W. O., *A Popular Dictionary of Sikhism*, 57.

²¹² Cole, W. O., *A Popular Dictionary of Sikhism*, 57.

classes or castes in the world hereafter.”²¹³ Furthermore, it states that “the One who created the world also created all human beings, and all are equal in His eyes. We are all His children...”²¹⁴ Additionally, Jesus taught us to not only recognize the significance of each person, but to serve one another as he did (Mark 10:45). Jesus demonstrated this by healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and helping the poor and marginalized (Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 8:1-10; Luke 4:18-19). He even washes the feet of his disciples and commands them to do the same (John 13:14-15). Therefore, the concept of equality and servitude found in both Sikhism and Christianity can be used as a powerful tool to relate to one another. Finally, in relating to one another in this matter, the Parable of the Good Samaritan may be shared to affirm a Sikh’s dedication to equality and servitude (Luke 10:25-27). The parable is used by Jesus to teach his followers about loving one’s neighbor and helping those in need, regardless of their background or circumstances. In fact, Jesus shares the parable to critique the lack of compassion displayed by religious leaders of his time. In the story, it is the Samaritan, who is despised by the Jews, that shows compassion to a stranger in need. As followers of Christ, we are called to do the same by demonstrating God’s love that transcends all differences through our life. Clearly, in the humble pursuit of displaying love and compassion to all, both Christians and Sikhs can stand in partnership with each other.

Critique

In discussing the establishment and practice of equality in Sikhism, another crucial element of the faith must be mentioned: Sikhism’s naming system. As it has already been established, in the Indian tradition, men and women usually have three names: (1) given name, (2) given name of a parent, (3) the family name from which a person’s caste can be adduced.²¹⁵ It is a system that is used to easily identify and categorize people into their caste. In direct

²¹³ GGS, 349.

²¹⁴ GGS, 469.

²¹⁵ Cole, W. O., *A Popular Dictionary of Sikhism*, 59.

opposition to this, every person of Sikhism has the same middle name with the exception of differentiating gender. Men are given the name Singh which means lion and women are given Kaur which means princess. This was established in 1699 when the Khalsa was initiated by the tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh. The given name signified that each member of Sikhism “were all sons and daughters of the same parents, the Guru, and his wife,” and this new kinship replaced the distinction made by the caste system. Clearly, the naming system of Sikhism is an important statement of the emphasis on equality for all. However, upon closer examination and interaction, it can be noted that this has not happened in its entirety as old names are still used for a variety of reasons, including differentiating caste.

According to Eleanor Nesbitt in *Sikhism: A Very Short Introduction*, writes regarding the remnants of caste stereotypes in Sikhism, “Clearly, it is over-simplistic to assume that Sikhs have overturned or escaped the caste-based structure of South Asian society.”²¹⁶ The truth is, all the Gurus married wives within their caste and their children did the same.²¹⁷ This tradition is still prevalent in Sikh families and aligning of caste remains high priority in search of prospective son or daughter-in-law, “love marriages crossing caste divides often result in a parental boycott of the errant son or daughter.”²¹⁸ Furthermore, particularly amongst diaspora Sikhs who initially chose to have their last names as Singh or Kaur to avoid caste names are reinstating their caste-specific family name.²¹⁹ This is also the case in deciding which gurdwara a Sikh may choose to attend. According to Nesbitt, in the UK, “Punjabis of the two most disadvantaged *jatis* continue to feel more comfortable gathering in their own places of worship.”²²⁰ The opposite is also true where gurdwaras have names such as Bhatra and Ramgarhia (majority caste group of the

²¹⁶ Nesbitt, E., *Sikhism: A Very Short Introduction*, 120.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid., 119.

Punjabis) in their names, suggesting the caste specificity of their gathering. The divisiveness of caste within Sikhism and Punjabis in Richmond Hill was also observed. In our conversation with Tarsem, he mentioned that he felt loved at the Christian church unlike what he experienced at a gurdwara. He blamed the caste system that is still prevalent in its culture and stated that although the caste system is banished in “words” it is still “practiced.”²²¹ Even for those who gave up their caste-specific family names, when a Sikh would meet another for the first time, it would be common to ask for each other’s “second last name.”

It will be arbitrary to assume that the Sikh Gurus failed to rid the caste system in place of equality. As already mentioned regarding equality, each of their lives and teachings points to a strong critique of caste divisions, especially the daily practice of langar.²²² However, although it is true that the caste system is disregarded in spiritual relevance and pursuit in Sikhism, it is still prevalent in its culture. As already established, Sikhism’s emphasis on equality and fairness must be celebrated. Nevertheless, the prevalence of inequality and discrimination within their culture as Punjabis must be critiqued. We must not be quick to point fingers, however, as we must be reminded of our shortcomings in the same area. Discrimination between Jews and Gentiles was prevalent in the very beginning that needed to be addressed (Galatians 2:11-14). Furthermore, other forms of discrimination including racism, social status, and culture, and the church’s silence towards these matters continue to hurt and separate the church.²²³ Perhaps, beyond linear criticism, a Christian can relate to the Sikh in its pursuit of equality as we seek to establish God’s kingdom here on earth (Matthew 6:10).

²²¹ O-13 Tarsem Singh.

²²² GGS, 38

²²³ Brown, A. W., "Racism and the Christian Church in America: Caught between the Knowledge of Good and Evil," 144.

In Sikhism, life is understood to be repeated through the cycle of rebirth called Samsara. Samsara, literally meaning “going through,” is a belief in the succession of transmigrations that each soul must go through in its journey to final liberation.²²⁴ After death, unless the soul is to have reached liberation, or mukti, where they exit the cycle of rebirth, they would be reborn again as any living creature on earth. In fact, “birth as a person would be regarded as a great privilege.”²²⁵ In order for a soul to be reborn as a human being, it is believed that it must go through 8,400,000 lifetimes or lifeforms (chaurasi lakh joon).²²⁶ Samsara, in Sikhism, is considered to be hell to the extent that it is characterized by suffering, “the cycle of Samsara is a painful trap, and it is only through the Guru’s grace that one can attain liberation.”²²⁷ Therefore, the goal of a Sikh is to exit Samsara, and its concept of rebirth stands as a central theme of their faith.

Clearly, the concept of rebirth, reincarnation, or samsara is not affirmed in the Christian doctrine. Hebrews 9:27 says, “Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,” plainly indicating that Christian theology rejects the idea of samsara. Additionally, Matthew 25:46 specifies that, upon death, believers of Jesus go onto eternal life while unbelievers go on to eternal punishment. Indeed, the Christian doctrine of redemption emphasizes that mankind has one life on earth, and through it, one opportunity to be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, observing 1 Corinthians 15, where Apostle Paul is extensively discussing the topic of resurrection indicates that there is no cycle of rebirth but only one life. Instead of suffering through the samsara, after physical death, followers of Christ are raised to new life and reunited with the soul. In verses 42-44, Paul specifically talks

²²⁴ Cole, W. O., *A Popular Dictionary of Sikhism*, 74.

²²⁵ McLeod, W. H., *The A to Z of Sikhism*, 206.

²²⁶ Kalsi, S. S., *Religions of the World: Sikhism*, 50.

²²⁷ GGS, 259.

about the resurrection of the body. Although he indicates that the resurrected body is different from the old, it is not a different person or creature but a perfected form through reunification with God. Even throughout the transition, it is evident that the identity and originality of both the soul and body are retained. Therefore, the Christian doctrine of redemption and resurrection does not leave any space for the concept of samsara found in Sikhism to be redeemed but to be critiqued.

From the Christian perspective, the nature of mankind is clearly defined in Romans 3:23, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Due to the rebellion against God from Adam and Eve, the first humans, all of mankind have been tainted and are born with sinful nature (Genesis 3:1-24). This is called the doctrine of original sin. What God originally created and intended for good has been spoiled (Genesis 1:31). Therefore, as those who are sinful and inherently evil, Apostle Paul further states in Romans 3:10-12 that all mankind has turned away from God and in our own nature do not seek Him. Additionally, not a single person is capable of producing good. This further understanding is called the doctrine of total depravity and, although not all Christians believe in it, it stands as the core tenet of Reformed Theology, a branch of Protestant Christianity. Nevertheless, the concept of humanity being inherently evil due to the original sin of Adam and Eve is a significant core doctrine of Christianity. It provides a framework for understanding the nature of sin and the need for salvation. Mankind is powerless to rescue and rid themselves of sin and salvation can only be earned through total reliance on God.

Sikhism, in direct contrast to Christianity, human nature is understood to be inherently good. Guru Nanak writes, “God is hidden in every heart; the Lord illumines every heart.”²²⁸ According to W. Owen Cole and Piara Singh Sambhi, In keeping with the Indian tradition in

²²⁸ GGS 579

general, Sikhism teaches that “human beings are unenlightened but capable of enlightenment.”²²⁹ There is a Punjabi word that translates to sin called pap which means performing an unworthy act. However, unlike the Christian concept of sin that pervades and spoils the identity of the entire person, in the concept of pap, the stress is not on the person performing the act but on the very act itself.²³⁰ The problem in Sikhism, therefore, is with the orientation of the man, not sin. Guru Nanak writes, “The man is unsteady, it does not know the way.”²³¹ The unenlightened person is confused and lost by the illusion of maya, an incorrect interpretation of creation.²³² There is not a moment of universal Fall in Sikhism as taught by Christianity. In fact, Sikhism does not seek to understand or explain the origins of the human condition.²³³ Instead, each person’s confusion and delusion of reality prevents them from reaching enlightenment. Therefore, the answer, although in need of the grace of Waheguru and the guide of Gurus, is found in self-realization and living life in pursuit of truth, hukam.²³⁴

Sikhism’s belief that mankind is inherently good and capable of reaching enlightenment stands in direct contradiction to the Christian doctrine of original sin. Although Christianity emphasizes the need for one’s decision to have faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and the process of sanctification afterward, it does not leave any room for the effort and will of mankind to rescue themselves. From the very beginning of the Bible to the end, the plan of humanity’s salvation is understood to have been initiated and completed solely by God alone (Ephesians 2:8; John 3:16; Romans 5:8). Therefore, Sikhism’s understanding of the goodness of

²²⁹ Cole, W. O. and Sambhi, P. S., *Sikhism and Christianity: A Comparative Study*, 74.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ GGS, 415

²³² Cole, W. O. and Sambhi, P. S., *Sikhism and Christianity*, 74.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid., 77-81.

mankind and each person's ability to work out their own enlightenment must be critiqued and denied in the perspective of Christianity as truth.

Redeem

Both Sikhism and Christianity heavily emphasize the need for God's grace in order to reach liberation or salvation. As it has already been acknowledged, the two faiths widely differ from each other, however, "With Christianity... a faith that the Sikh Gurus did not encounter, there are deep affinities, one being in the Sikh and the Christian emphasis on divine grace."²³⁵ Author Eleanor Nesbitt's reaction to the similarities is no surprise as we have observed the same from one of our contacts during the immersion week. Referred to as Brother Harry, he was a Punjabi Sikh that recently converted to Christianity. When speaking with him about his conversion, he expressed that he was surprised at the level of similarities he found between the two faiths regarding grace. In fact, he suggested the idea that Guru Nanak may have encountered and been influenced by Christians during his missionary journey. His theory, albeit just a speculation, is understandable upon observing Guru Nanak's writings of grace, "Liberation comes only through grace."²³⁶ In the context of the writing, Guru Nanak is writing against teachings that liberation or salvation could be obtained through good works, as taught by dharma in Hinduism.²³⁷ Gurus of Sikhism accepted the worldview of karma and samsara from Hinduism and often spoke of it.²³⁸ However, Guru Nanak's experience and understanding of God clearly puts the emphasis on grace alone for reaching enlightenment and absorption back into God, mukti. Regarding his writings, author W. Owen Cole states, "Throughout his hymns and those

²³⁵ Nesbitt, E., *Sikhism. A Very Short Introduction*, 7.

²³⁶ GGS, 2

²³⁷ Cole, W. O. and Sambhi, P. S., *Sikhism and Christianity*, 82.

²³⁸ GGS, 662

of his successors the emphasis is strongly upon grace, the unmerited transforming power of God.”²³⁹ In Sikhism, God’s grace is recognized as the beginning of the liberation process as it is only through grace that God, Waheguru, “initiates the disciple’s enlightenment by a glance which penetrates to the centre of his or her being.”²⁴⁰ Guru Nanak deploys the word Darsan, which means to behold or experience god, forty-six times in his hymns to speak of God’s grace as being the ultimate source of mukti.²⁴¹ Finally, in practicing their faith, Sikhs heavily rely upon meditation on God’s name (nam simran), the company of other enlightened people (sat sangat), and the performance of good deeds (sewa). However, even these are taught to be forms of worship in response to god’s grace, “The one to whom you show your grace bring to yourself, that one meditates on the Name. You are ineffable, immanent in all. The one you bring to the truth is the one who attains it.”²⁴²

While Sikhism’s deep understanding of God’s grace must be acknowledged, from the perspective of the Christian faith, there is much left to be redeemed. Through the Bible, the grace of God is revealed and demonstrated in various ways. In fact, with the understanding that the entirety of the Bible speaks of God’s salvation plan for humanity, the book as a whole could be viewed as an expression of God’s grace. However, for a Christian, none would argue against the idea that the ultimate expression of God’s grace is realized through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (John 3:16). Already identified, Christianity teaches the concept of original sin, the depravity of humanity, and the need for a messiah for a solution (Romans 3:10-11, 5:12; John 14:6). As the salvation of a Christian is only guaranteed through faith in Jesus, Christians believe that Jesus took on the punishment for humanity’s sin and made it possible for

²³⁹ Cole, W. O., *A Popular Dictionary of Sikhism*, 34.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² GGS, 1291.

humanity to be reconciled to God. Therefore, a Christian concept of grace would not be complete if the life of Jesus is neglected in any part. Furthermore, Christians believe in the Holy Spirit, which is another actuation of God's grace. After the ascension of Jesus into the right hand of God, the Holy Spirit now resides in and amongst us (Acts 1:9, 2:1-4). Now, it is through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit that a follower of Jesus can live a life that is pleasing to God (Acts 1:8). Thus, even the very act of pleasing the Lord and expanding God's kingdom is not simply a response to God's grace, but through God's gracious gift of the Holy Spirit that empowers us.

Observing the grace of God that is actuated in His plan for human salvation reveals that the Christian God is personal and relational. The disobedience and rebellion of Adam and Eve resulted in sin that separated humanity from God both spiritually and relationally, resulting in a broken relationship. God, who is perfect and holy, could not be in a relationship with us because sin, as an act of rebellion against God, cannot be tolerated (Habakkuk 1:13). Therefore, God's plan for salvation was to provide a solution to sin so that humanity could once again have a relationship with God as it was originally meant to be. On the other hand, although the nature of Waheguru in Sikhism is expressed to be graceful and loving, it does not display a personal God who desires a relationship with each individual. Guru Granth Sahib reads regarding Waheguru, "God is in every heart, but only those who are blessed find Him there."²⁴³ Clearly, although the presence of the Waheguru is in everyone, it is up to the individual to seek and find Him through spiritual practices and blessings. W. Owen Cole in *A Popular Dictionary of Sikhism* writes regarding this matter, "God is known to humanity through the Divine Word (Shabad)... for it is through grace and meditating on the Name that liberation is obtained."²⁴⁴ Sikhism may teach of

²⁴³ GGS, 687

²⁴⁴ Cole, W. O., *A Popular Dictionary of Sikhism*, 33.

the nature of God as graceful and loving, however, it does not illuminate a God that is personal. This is further emphasized in their understanding of reaching mukti.

The salvation that Sikhism pursues is mukti. Mukti is a spiritual liberation, a “release from the round of death and rebirth to the attainment of union with God.”²⁴⁵ However, unlike being reunited with God to share a restored personal relationship with Him, in mukti, one is simply reabsorbed as a spark that rose from the fire and fell back into it or a drop of water being thrown back into the river. At first, Sikhism’s and Christianity’s themes of creation reuniting with the creator may seem quite similar to each other until the realization of the lack of individuality of a Sikh in mukti. The whole purpose of reuniting with God in the Christian concept is for each individual to return to a restored relationship with Him (John 14:2-3). It is clear through the study of the creation account that each individual has been uniquely created to embody the image of God (Genesis 1:27-29; Psalm 139:13-14). Therefore, while Sikhism’s concept of liberation and its similarities to Christianity is acknowledged, it must be redeemed for each individual to understand the value and uniqueness of their soul.

Finally, in Sikhism, the concept of a guru, or perceptor, is one of the most important pillars of the faith. The word guru is used to mainly represent three things: (1) God, (2) the ten human Gurus, (3) and the Guru Granth Sahib.²⁴⁶ The guru is the one who illuminates the truth about God and directs the Sikhs towards mukti. Following, listening, and practicing what the gurus teach is key in Sikhism and that is the reason why the Guru Granth Sahib, the principle scripture of Sikhism, has been installed after the tenth human guru for people to follow. Naturally, gurus are highly respected in Sikhism and the human gurus are given a special birthright as they are said to be non-karmic. They were not born into the earth as the

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 56

²⁴⁶ Cole, W. O., *A Popular Dictionary of Sikhism*, 36-37.

consequence of karma or being bound to the samsara. In fact, they are taught to have been “in a state of bliss in the presence of God and were born in obedience to the divine will...”²⁴⁷ As such, in the Christian perspective, human gurus would be considered to be prophets who came to preach and teach about the will of God. Here, another term regarding the guru must be mentioned: satguru. Satguru, which means “true guru” is only reserved for the supreme guru, God. Guru Nanak, uses the term satguru three hundred times in the sacred text (Guru Granth Sahib) and often uses it to display God as the true guru in contrast to false human gurus he observed.²⁴⁸ Satguru, therefore, denotes a true teacher that is the key to achieving enlightenment, “without the satguru, all other teachings are incomplete; with his grace, all can be saved,”²⁴⁹ and “the satguru alone is the solution to all problems.”²⁵⁰

Similar to the concept of satguru, Jesus is portrayed to be a true teacher in the gospel. In fact, Jesus himself states, “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am.” All people who listened to Jesus were amazed as he was distinguished amongst the religious teachers of his time (Mark 1:22). Furthermore, Jesus is not only fully human but fully divine (Philippians 2:6-7). He is the fulfillment of all teachings and prophecies of the Old Testament and following Him is the only way to salvation (Luke 24:44-45; John 14:g). Author Jasvir Vasi writes in his book, *Light of the Satguru: Good News for Sikhs*, “Jesus Christ is the culmination and ultimate, unique & complete fulfillment of personhood of Satguru as described in the 6,000 hymns of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib.”²⁵¹ As Vasi invites his readers to consider Jesus as the true guru and uses it to contextualize the Christian faith, as followers of Christ, we

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Cole, W. O., *A Popular Dictionary of Sikhism*, 76.

²⁴⁹ GGS, 19

²⁵⁰ GGS, 835.

²⁵¹ Basi, J., *Light of the Satguru: Good News for Sikhs*, 230.

must recognize the significance of the concept in Sikhism and redeem it for the expansion of God's Kingdom.

CONCLUSION

Our team proposes that we can bring the Gospel to the Punjabi Sikhs in Queens by communicating a personal, powerful, and just God through the Gospel parables/stories in a relational context. As we have fleshed out our analysis of the Sikh deep-level culture, we believe that a fundamental concern of the Sikhs is whether God addresses their human needs and secures a future for their persecuted people. This insecurity drives people to work hard and secure their own paths for their families and their people. We have observed that in the hierarchical world of the Sikhs, group pressure and caste/wealth discrimination create obstacles for many to find security in their group. The honor/shame aspect of the culture would only exacerbate this. For those seeking to secure a better prospect for themselves and their families, they immigrated to New York. They work incredibly hard to secure their future, in a way that may leave many leaning on alcohol to handle the pressure. Additionally, deep insecurity often causes people to flaunt their successes and wealth. As high-context communicators that can give indirect-negative feedback in social settings, the gossip in the community may actually push people further into a state of shame and overcompensation. Another element of this is the ongoing persecution of the Sikhs and the injustice they have faced in their people's history. As a society with a strong sense of group, the Sikhs are concerned about the future of their homeland and the safety of their people. Many are politically active and are advocating for Khalistan as a solution to the issue.

In order to address the deeper concerns of the Sikhs for addressing their desires/needs, we must present a personal, powerful, and just God. An impersonal God is not capable of caring for

people. It is difficult to understand why a God like this would intervene in people's lives. Presenting God as one who is not only personal, but also one who *deeply cares and loves people* is a profound message.²⁵² Secondly, a powerful God is one who is greater than all other forces and powers in the universe. In the Sikh worldview, their karma and attachment to the material world separate them from God, but the God of the gospel is actually greater than all powers. Nothing can separate Sikhs from God, for he has conquered even death. He can do far more than simply meet needs, *he can deeply satisfy our souls while simultaneously drawing us closer to Him.*²⁵³ And finally, a just God holds the ultimate authority to judge the world. *Justice is no longer in our hands, but it is Jesus who will come to judge and set things right.*²⁵⁴ This news is particularly good for the Sikhs because they can place their trust in a God who is able to care for them and satisfy the desires of their hearts. They no longer have to suffer by securing life for themselves through their work or angrily fighting for justice for their people. Their needs and desires are an important part of who God created them to be as humans, and they do not need to discard their humanity in order to escape the suffering of life.

This is a powerful message, and we have personally heard of many Sikhs who came to faith in Christ because they found a personal, powerful, and just God who cared for their needs. Through answered prayers, healing, and other miracles, there were many at the Bethlehem Punjabi Church who encountered God in a way that led them to accept Him. Additionally, loving relationships with other Christians were an integral part of creating a space where the Sikhs prayed to God for their needs.²⁵⁵ They were able to cast their burdens on Jesus and follow Him in

²⁵² Exodus 33:11; Psalm 139:1-4; Isaiah 41:10; John 10:27-28

²⁵³ Psalm 147:5; Isaiah 40:29; Romans 1:20; Ephesians 3:20

²⁵⁴ Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 89:14; Romans 12:9

²⁵⁵ O-12 Pastor Gill, Woman in red and her sister, and three other men at church converted because of answered prayer, healing, and loving relationships. O-15 Jason's parents came to Christ after healing. E-16 Priti's husband came to faith through signs and wonders and answered prayer.

freedom. It is clear that both love and power encounters are key elements involved in Sikhs' coming to Christ.

To work within the social landscape of the Sikh community, it would be essential to build up intimate relationships with them so that they would be open to sharing their lives and receiving prayer. Additionally, it is important how this message is specifically communicated to the Sikhs. In general, using the Bible to build a logical argument is likely not the best way to communicate. Our team has noticed how people use short oral stories in the telling of Sikh history and important religious events. There has also been a lot of vivid imagery in many of the restaurants and gurudwaras that we frequented, highlighting either key religious events or simply showcasing typical scenes from Punjab. One of our team members tried to communicate short stories of Jesus from the Gospel to one of our Sikh interviewees and found that a pithy story can grab attention and perhaps provoke further conversation. In order to communicate a personal, powerful, and just God, we believe that parables/stories centered around Jesus would likely be the most effective, to begin with. Additionally, many parables have themes of spiritual victory of believers persecuted by the powers of the world, which could resonate with those from the conflict-prone Punjab region. We have also observed that men are more comfortable having conversations with other men, and vice versa, though there would be exceptions given to someone who is outside of their ethnic group.²⁵⁶ Therefore, it would be helpful for both male and female missionaries to be involved in relationship-building within the Sikh community.

In our conversations with those who do ministry with Sikh background believers, we have noticed that there is a concern for biblical discipleship and upright theology among Sikh background believers. Although this is beyond the scope of our research, it is worth noting that a power/love encounter needs to be paired with biblical truth so that new believers may be

²⁵⁶ E-15 Abhi and Prince, "men and women usually don't talk together like this."

grounded in their faith. Instead of adding Jesus to their understanding of God, they need to see Jesus beyond the beliefs of the Sikh world. This is the process of sanctification, and even though this is mostly worked out after conversion, our team believes that we should be careful with how we initially present God. The Sikhs must understand that Jesus is indeed a personal God, therefore he also has feelings and thoughts about how we chose to live our lives. God is not simply one who is there to answer our prayers, he wants a relationship with us. He wants our love and devotion to Him. This goes beyond the cry of the Sikh heart, but it gives them the greatest honor of realizing that God doesn't want their good deeds, but he wants *them*.

To take this study further, it would be worth investigating what specific stories about the Bible capture the attention of Sikhs and various other formats of storytelling. Additionally, it was difficult to find women to speak to because women stay at home while the men work. It is important to find opportunities for missionaries to connect with women, and navigate the dynamics of men being the family-decision makers. Since missionaries have noticed the lack of biblical discipleship, perhaps the existing models of Bible study may not be the best format. It would be interesting to explore other methods of Biblical discipleship.

In summary, our team believes that the presentation of a person, powerful, and just God can be a powerful witness for the Sikhs' deeper concerns of life. The stories and parables of Jesus are perfect for this presentation, as the story of God himself living in the world and encountering humanity in their needs.

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Interviews

The footnotes citations for the interviews are as follows: the first initial of the note taker followed by date of interview. Then the person interview/location of the interview is stated.

Example: O-13 means Obed's interview on 3/13. All field notes are included for reference in the Appendix.

Jason (worship singer at Bethlehem Punjabi Church), spoke to the whole team, Richmond Hill, NY, March 12, 2023.

Church members at Bethlehem Punjabi Church (one woman, three men), interviewed by Obed Bazikian, Richmond Hill, NY, March 12, 2023.

Pastor Gill at Bethlehem Punjabi Church, interviewed by team, Richmond Hill, NY, March 12, 2023.

Moctar Singh's teaching lesson at the Sikh Cultural Society Gurdwara, notes taken by the team, Richmond Hill, NY, March 12, 2023

Worker from Sohna Punjab Indian Restaurant, interviewed by Obed Bazikian, Richmond Hill, NY, March 13, 2023.

Sarinder the worker at New Apna Virsa, interviewed by Esther Neves, Richmond Hill, NY,
March 13, 2023.

Tarsem Singh, interviewed by Obed Bazikian and Sam Song, South Ozone Park, NY, March 13,
2023.

Neighborhood walk observations, notes taken by Esther Neves and Athaley Albania, Richmond
Hill, NY, March 13, 2023.

President of 114th Street Gurdwara, interviewed by Obed Bazikian, Richmond Hill, NY, March
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Woman at 114th Street Gurdwara, interviewed by Obed Bazikian, Richmond Hill, NY, March
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Harminder Singh, Inderpreet and Pupinder, interviewed by Athaley Albania and Esther Neves,
Glen Oaks, NY, March 14, 2023.

Japner, Kurnel, and another worker at Five Boro Building Supply, interviewed by Obed Bazikian
and Sam Song, South Richmond Hill, NY, March 15, 2023.

Prince (28 male) and Abhi (22 male) at Satguru Sweets, interviewed by the whole team, South
Ozone Park, NY, March 15, 2023.

Observations at India Cafe, by Esther, Richmond Hills, NY, March 15, 2023.

Jason (worship singer from Bethlehem Punjabi Church), interviewed by Obed Bazikian, Queens,
NY, March 15, 2023.

Priti (translator at Bethlehem Punjabi Church), phone call with Esther Neves, March 16, 2023.

Mr. Singh (65 year-old worker from Lindenwood, NJ). interviewed by Obed Bazikian and Esther
Neves, South Richmond Hill, NY, March 16, 2023.

Three singers from Gurdwara on 114th, interviewed by the whole team, Richmond Hills, NY,
March 16, 2023.

Harminder Singh, interviewed by Obed Bazikian and Sam Song, Glen Oaks, NY, March 17,
2023.

Owner of India Fashion (Middle aged married woman), interviewed by Athaley Albania and
Esther Neves, Richmond Hill, NY, March 17, 2023.

Monica and Rajendra Kumar at Angel's Creation and her house, interviewed by Athaley Albania
and Esther Neves, Richmond Hill, NY, March 17, 2023.

Kenton Killebrew, interviewed by team, Queens, NY, March 18, 2023.

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Hill, NY, March 18, 2023.

Addresses

Five Boro Building Supply - 115-12 101st Ave, South Richmond Hill, NY 11419.

Sohna Punjab Indian Restaurant - 117-10 Atlantic Ave, Queens, NY 11419.

Satguru Sweets - 13408 Rockaway Blvd, South Ozone Park, NY 11420.

Angel's Creations - 116-16 101st Ave, Queens, NY 11419.

India Cafe - 9408 Lefferts Blvd, Queens, NY 11419.

India Fashion House and Retail - 116-02 101st Ave, Queens, NY 11419.

New Apna Virsa - 118-05 101st Ave, Queens, NY 11419.

Apna Bazaar - 116-19 101st Ave, Queens, NY 11419.

Singh Farm - 117-05 101st Ave, Queens, NY 11419.

Phil Rizzuto Park "Scooter Park" - 95 Avenue 125th St, South Richmond Hill, NY 11419.

“114th St Gurdwara” Baba Makhan Shah Lubana Sikh Center - 113-10 101st Ave, South Richmond Hill, NY 11419.

The Sikh Cultural Society Gurdwara - 9530 118th St, South Richmond Hill, NY 11419.

APPENDICES

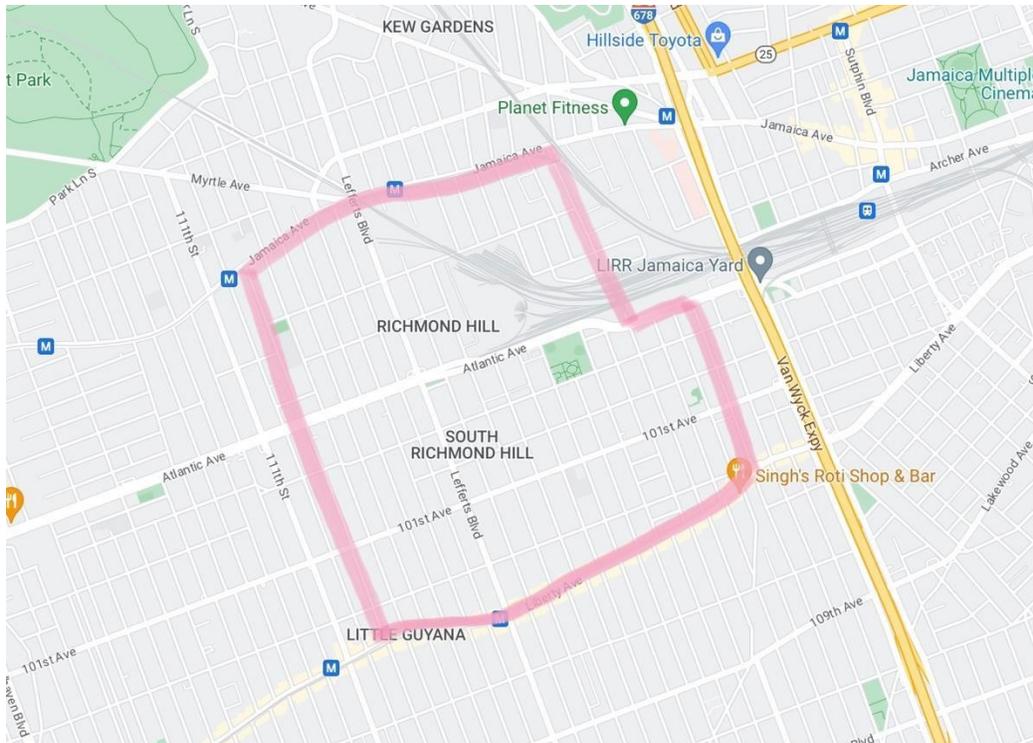


Figure 1. Map of Richmond Hill, highlighting portion with highest Punjabi Sikh residency.

Observed through physical markers and neighborhood demographic data from bestneighborhood.org.

Field Notes

Sunday 3/12

Brian - Meeting at Gurdwara

Teacher: Moctar (spelling?) Singh *** (MS) *******

I "ik" = one → God

Air, water, fire - mind is in the center

So if we want to meet God, keep the mind in God.

At the opposite end of the system from the mind is the knot of the bellybutton which is the place of the 5 devils.

Ego, lust, anger, love (attachment), greed, sex - 5 devils

Chanting to keep mind close to God, avoid bad.
 Nectar is mind food. Sweet drink.
 TV is not mind food
 SGGS is for everyone
 Every mind brings poor things with it. We need to cut it
 Get married to one lady
 A mind that never sleeps can continue to chant and
 When the mind doesn't think it is empty.
 Good and bad doesn't matter.
 If a mind is empty, good & bad won't affect it, but still affects the body.
 He reported his experience of coming back from pneumonia and he should be alive but because he chanted and his mind ...when
 you pray the bad times will be less.
 If you chant it doesn't matter what language.
Chant for 3 hours and do good deeds and you will see a change.
 God gives us our breath. After you take one breath, He will give a second.
 If we don't finish one...
 Holy book says we can prepare food 36 ways.
 He doesn't drink, eat meat, only sleeps 3hrs a night.
8.4/84million? lives we have this last step
Do you good deeds, and your duty, your work.
God is in you and me. If you hate the visible (me) you can't meet God.
 Hearing the word...
 Guru Argent sat over fire, but said whatever happens my mind is with god.
When the mind comes to one of the 5 devils, the others come and take over too.
 Mind needs a sport to not drown
 "This body is yours, god"
 "Give me wisdom."
 When we leave the body we awake refreshed
 We want to stay in...
 When a dream comes the mind is in the empty space looking down at the visible world, but the mind is facing down like an upside
 down pot that cannot be filled with god.
 Hell:
 84 million steps, the last step, then 84 million starts again
 Based on our good or bad deeds we start in one of the 3 elements
 So this is our last chance, our last step.
 What you don't spend you put in the bank, the god bank.
 The proud: they are looking, listening, and speaking, but no god
 You want to meet god, start chanting. He is right here, well a little bit higher.
 Don't need too much knowledge. Save your breath. Just chant god.

Other man with blue turban:
 Create a vacuum here (pointing to head) and god is there.

Athaley Gurdwara

- All wear head coverings, men women and children
- Men and women are segregated, but sit side by side

Lecture from Preacher

- Mind and soul – not physical (invisible)
- Air water fire are physical, visible elements.
- Rhythmic chanting
- o Remove all thoughts.
- o We want to be without thoughts.
- o Only "sweet nectar" is good to feed the mind
- The whole universe is within your body
- Chanting for hours healed his body (personal testimony)
- Will not feel freedom right away when starting chanting, it took years of chanting for him to feel something
- Start and end the lecture with the question: Do you want to meet God?

Bethlehem Punjabi Church – Pastor Gill

Service

- Many cameras, streaming online.
- Renting the building of another church
- A o G denomination
- Worship lasted 40-50 mins, in Punjabi. Piano acoustic guitar, 2 male singers, 3 female sings and they cover their head.
- P. Gill preaches in Punjabi and Translator Priti is female and translates to English. She covers her head when going on stage.
- Pastor gets layperson to read the scripture from the pew.
- There is interaction with the congregation.
- End with song and then call to come forward for prayer and deliverance.

Deliverance and healing

- Many came to be prayed for by pastor, his wife, and another woman
 - Some came for the first time (nonbelievers) because they wanted to be prayed for
- Dinner after the service
- Samosas, biscuits, a flour dessert soaked in sugar syrup.
 - Greet one another by saying "praise the lord"
 - Talked with some teens.
 - o Mischa and H (can't remember her full name)
 - o H's family became Christian about 2 years ago. Previously were Sikh.
 - Jason worship leader 2nd gen Christian, Nyack grad, Pakistani Punjabi.

Esther - Meeting at Gurdwara

Separation of men and women during service - integrated during the meals, but most of the prominent figures are male

Started off with the idea of "do you wanna meet God. "The idea of meeting God - what does that mean, who can meet God, does everyone get to meet him?"

Kenton asked about Hell - kind of avoided the questions

What is "good" and "bad"? Does the Holy Book outline what it is? He didn't understand the question, but interpreted as feeling God or Bad

The idea of love "pyar" is seen as sinful - one of 5 devils. When Bridgie talked about God's voice, he pushed back and asked what His voice sounds like (maybe because she said His voice is love and he sees love as bad)

Also saying we can use any name for God, but believes that Jesus is not a valid name because he doesn't believe God needs any intermediaries.

love as attachment is bad, you shouldn't be attached to anything even your kids, you should love all equally, but he's quite fond of his kids

The importance of chanting, integrate it into your mind to empty the mind. To keep the mind pure, on "nectar"

Images of men who were wrongly held longer than their sentence at the entrance of the gurdwara - justice

OBED - Meeting at Gurdwara

- Meet with the preacher. His name meant "Chief" Singh
- Wanted to focus on the interpretation on the Granth, and not deviate from the book
- Focus - connect with God, he was very practical. Chanting the name, then feel one's pulse and chant internally, then breath in a rhythmic way, then stop breathing
- Nectar - mind food, sweet drink. TV is not mind food, Youtube,
- "God is Father, and we are his children"
- The 5 devils
- Air = Work, Water = Good, Fire = Bad.
 - Work - chanting - connecting with God? Or working?
- "If we want to meet with God, keep the mind in God"
 - ?What does it mean to meet God?
 - ?Does everyone meet God?
 - ?Is God a personal God?
 - ?Do you meet with God?
- Kenton's Question - About Hell. How do people go to Heaven or hell?
 - He didn't give a straight answer
 - The lady in class later said that there was a hell on earth, like the life we are living is hell, and then there is a real hell
- "You want to meet God, start chanting"
 - Chanting is to keep the mind in God
- "Save your Breath"

OBED - Bethlehem Punjabi Church

- Women had head covering during worship. A cultural thing?
 - Why do they cover their head?
 - Sikh and Hindu women had a head covering
- Pastor Gil
 - Sermon was expository, verse by verse
 - Powerful sermon, charismatic style
 - What's needed to bring people to the Lord
 - Experience - including Power Encounter & Healing
 - Festival needed to bring people the Christ
 - Song - "That I may keep everlasting life?" - Hinted Arminian theology
- Obed's conversation with 3 men at table. Asked about the pain / hurtful / persecuted history. Obed felt that perhaps he was misunderstood because the response was defensive a bit, as they said that

- Lady in Red dress mentioned that she became a Christian through her husband. Gave her a bible, and she eventually came to faith. She didn't want to because Christians were of a very low caste. But she started reading the bible, and it was an eye opening experience. She felt love.
 - Her faith went to a whole new level after marriage. Didn't get to experience the power of God till her sister's son was on his deathbed. He was dying, sister, who was not a Christian said, if your God is real like you say, pray that my son rises "practically from the dead" since the doctors had given up hope. The pastor came, prayed, and the boy was healed. Sister became a christian, and now is a pastor in India. But Lady in red dress also received many miracles. One was the answering of a prophecy that she will conceive and have children, starting in 2016.
- Man I met in church said that he came to faith because he felt love in the church. He didn't feel love in the Sikh community because of "the caste system" I asked him isn't the caste system not allowed in Sikhism? He said that in word it is not allowed, but in practice it is very present.
- Another man said when I asked why people come to faith in this community. He said "Everyone has a need. It's in God being able to meet that specific need that they come to faith.."
- Another man had psoriasis and was becoming blind. Lost hair. He came to faith because God healed him. His life turned around.

Sam- Meeting at Gurudwara

- Upon entering, noticed a table with non-Punjabi people. Most likely people from organizations / government to promote themselves.
- Noticed list of 'prisoners' on the left wall next to where we put on the head covering.
- Poster to 'remember' 1984
- Men and women sit separately inside the temple.
 - When we needed to leave and the ladies did not know we were headed out, the instructor told us that it is 'totally fine' for us to step in and go towards the women's side.
- Received instruction for hours: very much one-directional teaching. Maybe indicating a high-power distance society?
 - Emphasized the importance of meditation
 - Spoke of a "nectar" that we can tap into through meditation that supposedly brings a type of bliss or peace.
- After lecture, had a meal
 - Everyone sat side by side in a line
 - It was important to wash hands before eating, after eating. Same goes for drinking tea.
 - Not everyone was talking, but it seemed like a free place for people to converse and spend time together.
 - We stood around in circle for 10 minutes speaking after the meal inside the hall

Sam- Bethlehem Punjabi Church

- Service lasted for about 2-3 hours
 - Worship session was longer than expected
 - Most songs were in Punjabi
 - Pastor did more of a Bible study / narrative sermon, not 3-point sermon.
- After service
 - Had a chance to sit with younger Punjabis (Manpreet and his brothers)
 - Truck driver
 - Does not live in Richmond Hill anymore. Moved to near Catskill, NY.
 - Received number to possibly meet for interview
 - Tarsim Singh
 - Sikh turned Christian. Open to speak about his experiences. Received number and planned to meet for an interview.
 - Jason
 - Pakistani
 - Parents turned to Catholicism to escape religious persecution.
 - Disagreed with 'learning about culture' and practically anything else besides keeping the Bible simple and straightforward.
 - Believed that 'all humans are practically the same.'

Monday 3/13

Athaley - Walk w/ Esther, Kris

- Architectural design choices – outside of houses only
 - South Asian preference
 - Religious symbolism of Hindu, Sikh, muslim households
 - Iron fences, marble pillars, marble deck, statues of animals/artichoke
 - "Frudwara St.
 - Luxury cars parked in the driveways.
 - Showing off wealth
- Demographic change is obvious while walking.
 - Clear distinctions of where the cultural boundaries are physically by the shops etc.
 - South/east Asian is not differentiated on maps online.

Restaurant for lunch – New ApnaVirsa

- o Only 1 employee working alone.
Nonreligious from Kashmiri
13 years in Queens
Family is not here
"can't go back" when asked, when was the last time he was home.
- Possibly no papers OR political situation is too dangerous.
Invited us to come back.
- o Regulars came in often and he knew who was an impatient/patient customer.
- Asking Q's – open ended, short 1's so that the interviewee can lead the conversation

Esther - Walking around the Neighborhood Observations

Hindu flags, safe neighborhood
Marble steel fence cultural
Elephants and Dove symbols?
Brown Train line more Spanish neighborhood
More Spanish churches
Bosnian mosque in an old church
American flag on some homes
Old house vs new house
Embellished entrance gurdwara
Bricked over front
Puerto Rican flags
Some Irish decorations
101 st Ave work checking out
Lion statue with foot up

Esther - New Apna Virsa Sarindar (with Athaley and Kris)

Sarindar from restaurant
lived in Richmond hills 13 years, worked at this restaurant for 13 years as well. last few months finally got a 2 bedroom place, when he first came he lived with his uncle for 3 years then moved out, 7 years in another place. mother and father are still in Kashmir.
Single, no wife, no religion but punjabi
just working and focusing on business, doesn't want to get too distracted. hard time trusting others because they might not have good intentions.
mother very attached to him, but close to all the siblings
hasnt gone back or visited since he came - undocumented maybe?
Brother is in indian army, sister's husband in indian army
some sort of split in the family - unclear but maybe talking about when he came to the US
open to marrying people of other religions because he doesn't care. "God made everyone" or something like that
people hang out in the evening, not really during the day
people familiar with him because he's the cook

my thoughts: financial reasons to come to the US?, search for freedom?

OBED - Tarsem - Satguru (met with Brian Davis & Sam)

- Tarsem: Name Tarsem in the Indian origin, means One who was desired for a long time.
- Picked up. Meet at a local cafe. We asked him if he knew of a place we could go so that we can continue the conversation yesterday that's comfortable for him. He led us to Satguru. (Satguru means the True Guru - one who liberates us from suffering, as he has liberated himself. Christians coming out of Sikhism contextualize Satguru as the Jesus)
- When sat down, Sam asked if he could write down notes. But he started shaking a bit. He said he always starts shaking every time he shares his story in regards to faith. "Because the devil doesn't want him to talk about this" We prayed for him, all of us, and proclaimed peace, the blood of Christ, deliverance, and Brian said that there is no fear in Christ. He stopped shaking.
- He talked about the Holy Spirit
 - When talking about money, he said that when he desired money, the Holy Spirit left him. We tried to clarify, and he said that we should desire the Holy Spirit for the Holy Spirit. When he sought money, he said the Holy Spirit was not "on" him.
- He also mentioned he heard footsteps behind him. He said his friend told him that if he was not afraid, then it could be the Holy Spirit. But he doesn't know if it was the Holy Spirit or not. He feels that since he wasn't afraid, it was the Holy Spirit. He was fully convinced that it was the Holy Spirit.
- Shared his story - Moved to America. **No green card or papers still to this day.** He moved to Brooklyn, first to Midwood, a Jewish community. Then to Richmond Hills. He was told that when he moved to Richmond Hills he would be lucky. Tarsem said he wasn't lucky for many years in Richmond Hills. Only after becoming a Christian did he become lucky.
- **His son ran away from home and was living in Boston. After 7 years, after praying for son in Sikh temple and not getting answers, he went with his Christian friend to a Christian church and asked God to bring son home. After 3 weeks, his son came home. His wife believed, and so did he.**
 - He was 5% religious, his wife was 95% religious. His wife encouraged the connection with Christianity.
- When he became a Christian, he said his friends and family rejected him initially. It was the most difficult with his kids. They said you told us to go to Gurdwara all our lives, and now he wasn't going. So they were upset

- He said he never went back to Gurdwara. But later he said he did go back, and listened to the message, but he drew the line with the food.
 - Doesn't eat the food, because they stick the knife or kirpan in food, as a sacrifice to God.
- God later healed him from psoriasis. He lost his hair, but then his hair was restored. He had bad glaucoma. Lost most of his sight. Now he has 70% of his sight back. Sam asked if the Pastor prayed, Tarsem said he prayed for healing.
- I asked about the difference between Sikh and Christian Community in terms of equality. He said "the Sikh faith is not bad, only the people are bad" But in the Christian faith, if you have money, one is favored more than one who has less money. Because people with money are closer to the pastor.
 - However, he said he was in Sikh community here for 20 years, and people do not know his name. He said he didn't know people's names either. He said if I met 100 people at Gurdwara, he would not get close to any of them. There was a legal document that Tarsem needed to have a leader from the church sign for, and when he went to get it signed, the leader / staff said no, he didn't know him. He felt the leader was under the table asking for money. He was frustrated / upset / hurt about this, because he was going for 20 years. He had to call his friend who knew that leader, and his friend got the leader to sign the doc.
 - At church everyone knows his name. And if he is not there for 1 week, someone would call him and ask how are you doing.
 - I asked if he felt love in one community versus the other. He referred back to the name statement. Where in Sikh, he wasn't really known well. But in Church, he is known. The wealth issue is still there. But said he felt more loved and connected at the church.
 - He didn't like going to another church gathering during the week because of "he said, she said" gossip. He didn't like that. He comes on Sunday, and that's it. He doesn't get too involved in the community. He comes to church to connect with God more.
- Caste system - the religion says it doesn't exist, but it really does. Even though their last name is Singh, they have a 2nd last name which denotes caste. And the people in the community will ask for it. Brian asked, is that basically the first question they will ask about you when meeting? Tarsem said yes.
 - In America, he has a friend who is from a higher caste, and he treats him well. Like a good friend. And because of that, Tarsem is accepted in his friend's higher caste group. He never mentioned that he is middle caste to his friend's friends.
 - Going back to Punjab, it doesn't matter that he is middle caste now that he is American. When he goes back, he is treated well. Primarily because of wealth.
- The Kirpan is the most important part of the 5 K's in terms of being a devout Sikh.
 - One could have a bracelet and still be a Christian. However, one can't have a Kirpan and be a Christian. Even if one has a Kirpan and has a short beard, he is mocking the Sikh religion. That is an insult to the faith, and the community could call cops on you.
 - He pointed to a Sikh man with a turban, but shaved beard. He said that this young man was not a committed Sikh

OBED - Sohna Punjab Indian Restaurant, S Richmond Hill, Queens

- There was no one there at 8:30 pm except me and the waiter
- He seemed surprised to see me. I asked if I could eat there, and he said yes.
- Ordered Lamb Curry (delicious)
- While waiting for food, I was looking around at all the pictures of Sikh culture and stories on the wall. The waiter came back into the room, and saw me looking at paintings. He looked curious as to why I was looking. I asked if it was ok to look at the cultural stories, and he said yes, and went back inside.
- 2 guys came in to eat. From Punjab. I asked them about the paintings, and specifically about the painting of an old man sitting and looking up as if he was having a vision. He said, no, he is just sitting. Lol. I then asked if these are different parts of Punjab history, and he said no it's primarily cultural pictures.
- Then I sat down, and as I was waiting for food, there were about 5-7 men that came from the basement, from a side door I didn't know was there. They walked out and seemed surprised to see me (theme of the night). I just said hello, and the leader guy said "hey man." One of them was carrying a big bottle of liquor. There was an older man with a big white beard all the way to possibly a teenager (late teens).
- A muslim man came in to order food. He was casually studying me. I said hi, he said hi back and looked away.
- Above me were pictures of celebrations (possibly a wedding), dancing, flute playing, making flour from grain, making yarn for string, farming, and a picture of 1947 with people fleeing. Also one of 3 boys getting spanked (later found out from the waiter it was for not doing their homework). They were reading their homework while being spanked).
- After my food came, there was a large group of 8 men that came / sat right across from me. They brought a bottle of liquor too. But they were surprisingly very quiet. I wonder if they didn't want to speak freely because I was there, that's how it felt. The waiter put the check on my desk when I was half finished, possibly implying to move along.
- I asked God for an open door to speak
- When I went to pay, I asked the waiter about the 1947 painting. He confirmed it was when India became free. I then asked him about the religious artwork in the middle of the back wall. He began to tell me about Guru Nanak and Gobind Singh. And the text write on the book is "God is One" and "God is Life" I then asked him about the feather, and he couldn't explain it well (english limitation)
- He passed the question to another person there. He was the 2nd worker there. He said the feather was to keep the book free from flies and dust. Clean. Holy book.
- I then asked about serving the food in the gurdwara. He said something interesting - Sikhs believe all people are equal. No matter rich or poor, everyone is equal and all are welcome.
- They invited me to the temple on Sunday to visit with them and they said they will show me around.

Sam- Meeting with Tarsem @ Satguru Sweets, South Ozone Park

- Chose Satguru Sweets as meeting location because it has seats and accommodations.
 - Later learned that most Punjabi cafes are made to be to-go only.
 - Most people are busy working throughout the day.
- When asked to take notes, Tarsem did not respond positively.
 - Later instructed by professor to be more 'natural' with taking notes.
- Tarsem's hands began shaking a little when he began speaking about his experiences
 - Whenever he talks about God/Holy Spirit, he believes that the enemy is not happy and causes this.
 - Further manifested when he began speaking and his whole body started shaking.
 - Professor, Obed, and I prayed for him and the shaking left.
- "Pray for the Holy Spirit, not more money"
 - Contact prayed for more money.
 - He mentioned that he now has money, but the presence of the Holy Spirit left him.
- Interaction with the Holy Spirit
 - Tarsem was walking in the night when he heard footsteps behind him. He was unsure if it was a good / bad spirit.
 - When inquired about it with his friend, friend told him that, unless he is afraid or anxious, those footsteps would be the Holy Spirit.
 - Tarsem fully agreed that it is.
- Testimony
 - His son (youngest) left home and lived away in Boston. Tarsem and his wife prayed for their son's return for 7 years while in the Sikh faith with no progress.
 - Christian friend invited him to church and Tarsem began praying at church.
 - After 3 weeks of praying (3rd time at church), his son returned home.
 - Upon realizing that there is 'power' in the Christian faith, both him and his wife came to Christ.
 - Although opposition was minimal, he did face it from friends and family.
 - Kids were the most difficult. They felt 'betrayed' that their parents forced them to go to the gurdwara growing up, now trying to force them to go to church.
 - After becoming Christian, Tarsem returned to the gurdwara at least once since his friends invited him (if you're going to invite me to church, then you come with me to gurdwara).
 - No trouble with visiting gurdwara, however, he would not eat the food.
 - Contact mentioned that the food was spiritual.
 - A ceremony of dipping the kirpan in the food to sacrifice it to god
- Regarding the division / inequality in Sikhism and Christianity
 - Contact mentioned that everyone in Sikhism has the same last name.
 - However, upon meeting each other, Sikhs will ask each other their 'other last name' which indicated their caste
 - Compared to Punjab, inequality is a lot less in America
 - It does not matter that he is of a lower caste anymore. If he returns back to Punjab, he is considered to be American and 'achieved the American dream.'
 - Indicating that his citizenship and financial status elevated him beyond the caste system.
- Contact mentioned that wearing the Kirpan whilst shaving the beard will be a mockery / insult to the religion.
 - Police can be called
 - Openly pointed out certain Sikhs and mentioned that they are not genuine as they were grooming their beard.

Tuesday 3/14/23

Athaley - India Restaurant Café w/ Obed Sam Kris

- The chant was playing in the background, as soon as they walked in he changed it to Punjabi/Hindi pop music
- Speaking with workers
 - 2 men, both have their heads covered. One is wearing a du rag, one is wearing a baseball cap.
 - Teaching us about Sikh faith, 5ks, and describing the pic of the man on the wall.
 - Owner came in and did something???. Kris said he wont tell us what he did. I think it's related to us standing around and not buying anything.

114 Gurdwara w/ Obed

- Much smaller location.
- Less people
- Man and woman are separate
- Child running around,
- Ran to climb the stairs that go up to where guru granth sahib is and the mother ran to grab him and hit him on the face.
- Child started crying
- There was a younger woman who was there, she did not wear a headscarf but only put on her hood.
- I tried talking to her but all I got is that she lives nearby/in the area.
- She looked like shes in highschool.

Harminder's place w/ Esther, Kenton, Billy

- Roommates present – Inderpreet and Bupinder
- all sikh from Punjab and their family is not in America
- Harminder

- o Social activism – saved 32 girls who are nursing students and raised money to bring them back home to/from Kashmir
- o "religion can't unite you, only culture can unite you"
- o Depression exists in all cultures and religions of people but community is necessary to combat depression
- Covid-19 experience
- o Distributing meals to people in the streets,
- o Did not get sick initially but only when things started opening up
- o Mild flulike symptoms
- o He's anti vaxx
- o We all have a doctor inside of us
- o "personal doctor" that heals our body itself
- Talking about God gives him energy
- o Its like praying
- o Speaking to others about God makes him feel close to God/God is close
- o Contrast w/ the preacher who said chanting brings us close to God
- All people are equals
- o Does not try to convert others to Sikhism but encourages others to be faithful to their chosen religion
- Gudwara drama
- o People fight based on what "party" is in charge of the temple and the party should serve a 2 year term. If an election is not called after 2 years there will be a fight and people use their kirpans
- Inderpreet
 - Hindu contrast w/ Sikhism
 - Previously hindu
 - Hindu foundations are based on discrimination w the classification of the caste system
 - Within the brahmin caste there are 14 categories
- Political turmoil in india
 - o Khalistan
- Mercury man
 - o Breaks apart when shot but people unite together to rise up and fight back.
 - o Culture brings people together.

Esther - Meeting at Harindar's apartment with two roommates, Inderpreet and Pupinder

Harindar

Khalistan - Freedom promised in 1947, hindu betrayed them, sikhism became violent and radical
 Punjab had 100% literacy before the British came, knowledge and education were highly valued. When british came, the hindus gave themselves over to them because they didn't want to be under muslims, british offered 5 rupees for books, knowledge is wisdom, wisdom is power, sought to destabilize the people by taking their knowledge.

You cant be of a religion without power, example of the church spreading faith through the sword.

Depression of the community, people are alone here, theres not community, thats why people do shootings and kill when they're not even paid to kill. Covid kinda helped because people connected with families even though they got isolated with each other

village culture in Punjab vs here, people are not connected like that here. Good and bad, fear of community but also safety of community (neighborhood watch). There are still Punjabi people that are connected here

Kashmir, political instability, violence, people were kicked out??? People fled? talked about rescuing Kashmir girls during this. had group of people who came alongside him and helped him financially support them, he bought the tickets and then harindar and his friend went to kashmir, people said he was crazy for going, but he brought 32 girls home from south india to Kashmir. they were studying nursing.

antivax - due to religious beliefs because of aborted babies cells, came to give meals during covid didnt get covid, but whe we got covid then it was mild, and got regular flue syptoms, healed himself, said there is a doctor in all of us and we dont need the vaccine

Came in 2019 potentially because there were safety concerns because of what he did in kashmir, waiting for his papers to go through (young black lady didnt understand the situation, if she was older maybe she would understand the situation and urgency)

interracial Marriage looked down upon, BLM hypocrisy - hypocrisy of race, culture unifies people, not religion.

but He said he wouldnt mind if the person was a different race but as long as they became sikh, contrast with people can be any religion - outsider vs insider

Inderpreet - Served me and athaley first, because this is America and usually in Punjab the women serve the men first and do the kitchen duties

God is the same, it doesn't matter what religion you are, God is one, as long as you are devoted to God that's what matters. You need to have a "hunger for God"

I asked: Do you think people misplace hunger for God for Hunger for other things?

he talked about the "5 desires" - Lust, Greed, Sex, Anger, Obsession. how they try to take control of your mind, you should be the "master over them" they should not be the master over you.

Mind vs Soul, they have to be fed equal because if you feed only one it will overpower the other, if you feed only your mind, your soul will be weak. The 5 desires are good in moderation, they are necessary. Money, only need 3K as a single person, and I just need to make enough to survive. I'm not going to be greedy and ask more than I want. Talking about the jet, wanting more even though you have a private jet.

Other roommate: talks about how God gives "profits and losses" and you have to be "thankful" for both. Even when you lose, understand that it is also from God and be thankful for it.

Enforcing Hindi language, also in Urdu in Pakistan, suppression of native tongues, agenda of RSS (Hindu revival movement). Not wanting to support certain people that are being backed by Hindu agenda to pressure people into religion. Strong belief that people should be free. Khalistan should be a place where people are free to worship whatever they want.

Babas - people who run religious organizations themselves, they have power

Baba who raped someone then bought an island off Ecuador then claimed his own nation.

Parents generation doesn't want to talk about what happened in Punjab with the Sikh betrayal because they are afraid that talking about it will lead to death or imprisonment (controlling the narrative, information control) all the information is controlled by the government. "Modi makes an idol of Patel who was the person who betrayed the Sikhs". Hitler influence, discrimination, Khalistan is easier to talk about outside of Punjab, but recently people have started talking about it at "ground zero" he thinks personally something will happen but doesn't know when. Modi traveled for 2 years, replaced all Indian ambassadors with insider people to hide human rights violations.

Other roommate talked about how he was Hindu nominally then in 2009/2010 he started praying for money reasons, he didn't really get that involved in the rituals before, but decided to pray to Lakshmi (female) and when he tried to go with his wife, his wife was rejected. and he thought the discrimination was ridiculous. Then afterward he became Sikh

14 levels of Brahmin, but Brahmin is supposed to be highest level but they love to categorize people, the Brahmins favored the British and set up some sort of agreement so they became the most educated and the people that ruled over the other Indians.

Gurdwara drama of transition of leadership, there is a fight when people don't hold a re-election after 2 years, 1 person leading the church versus a "committee", he thinks it would be less conflict, but also inquired how new leaders are chosen and "who owns the church"

"Mercury man" in context of oppression of Sikh community, they will be shot as and split into many small pieces but it comes together to fight back.

Sikh people gather where other Sikh people are, like Bengali people in Ellenville.

He said that he enjoys when people come over, he gets to talk about God for 2-3 hours and it's energizing because he feels like it's prayer. This maybe makes him feel close to God,

Didn't mention chanting

not about emptying the mind of the desires, but rather hold them in healthy amounts

He is a social activist.

OBED - India Cafe - 9408 Lefferts Blvd, Queens, NY 11419

- Akash. Been there for a couple of years. Life is easier here. Felt safe here. Didn't feel safe in Punjab. Too many enemies.
 - Akash doesn't put on all 5 K's regularly. But he puts it on when he goes to the temple.
- Spinning of yarn. Common theme again in the paintings on wall
- Yellow picture. Man in turban. Right hand Kirpan. Left hand a weapon, like a bow and arrow. Significance was battle / protection.
- Young Prwe - didn't talk much.
- Kris mentioned the owner did something when entering, but we didn't notice. Saw later at Gurdwara?

Small Gurdwara (Baba Makhan Shah Lubana Sikh Center)

- Went with Athaley
- Sat on the right. Noticed people walk around, bow at the book in the back of the altar area. Then touched an orange post with a spear on top. There were 5 Sikh symbols on 3 sides on the top above the book. And 5 flowers on each side of the arrangement of swords before the book. Noticed Shields too.
- Man sat down next to me in Gurdwara. Pink turban. I didn't recognize him at first, but he was the man in my vision this AM. But he looked warm, but slightly distant. His son walked right behind me. Was playing hide and seek around me for 5 min with his Mom on the other side. So cute.
 - I went for food. Sat next to the man with the pink turban. Looked cautious. Asked for his name. He said my name is Singh. A wall there. He looked at me almost as if he was burned for trusting in the past. Like he was misunderstood. Perhaps for being Sikh? And there was pain there. But as we continued talking, there was a

really warm, kind smile that was coming out. Just like I saw in the vision. When I saw his smile, it reminded me of the person I saw.

- Word - courage. This is not our neighborhood. We don't look like them, we don't sound like them. We belong here because God called us here. That we may bring the Sikhs to where they genuinely belong
- Said he was from a state next to Punjab. But I didn't get to ask too many personal questions. Felt like I had to build up trust with him. But when he started smiling a bit, he spilled something and was wiping up the spill. Then he left pretty quickly with family.
- 2 sikh men in front of me were warm. One was very smiley and kind. They ate fast, and were inferring that I was eating slowly. Told them I was a student, and the smiley one left pretty quickly after that (not necessarily because of that). But the other man was telling me about the Gurdwara.
- Then met Kumar and his family. Kumar had an American accent. Worked in NJ for a few years in construction. Now he is an independent contractor working for the city of NY, doing inspections. **Family member (cousin) from Belgium.**
- When leaving the cafeteria, I asked an older man sitting on the side about the painting on the wall. He turned out to be the President of the Gurdwara. At first, he looked a little annoyed that I was asking him. But then he walked over and started explaining that it was the 6th Guru. Something about ships, and payment? It was hard to understand what he was saying. And he didn't look like he wanted to talk about it. He then told me he was the President of the Baba Makhan shah lubana sikh center. I said I felt bad to pull him away asking him about the painting, and that he must have been busy. He patted me on the back and said oh don't worry.
 - He then started talking about giving money to the Gurdwara. He said "Sikhs, we give 10%. That's my religion." I asked him if that was in the granth; he said yes.
 - President then said, **"eat for free is bad"** and he kept on that theme for a while. "eat for free not good" he said later. He kept saying that to me. That people come, and they eat food, and don't give anything. He stressed that when you come, you should give. \$1, \$2, \$5, \$10. If you have \$1000, you should give \$100. Doesn't have to all be at the Gurdwara, but to this cause or that cause. But everytime you eat, you should give. If you can't give money, you should give something else to the Gurdwara, or serve the Gurdwara in the kitchen, or on the grounds.
 - On the way out, I walked past the President again, and he asked me what school I was attending. I told him about Alliance University. He asked me where, I told him Downtown. Financial District. Studying intercultural studies. Said I was here with a group of students learning about Punjabi Sikhs in Richmond Hills.
 - He then continued the narrative about giving. Everytime you come and eat, you give. (I didn't know if he was expecting me to give something. He didn't see me before. Did he know I didn't give?) This time he said this statement while he was next to a woman who seemed poor. He said that one should give, and he looked back at her several times. When he left, she looked at me and said, **"It seems he was talking to me"** I told her I think he was saying it in general, with the hope to try and make her feel better. She said that she didn't have money, and wasn't in the position to give. She then asked if I was a Christian. I said yes. I told her I was a student studying, etc. I then ask if she was a Sikh. She said no. She then said I go to Gurdwara, Mosque, Church. She said it's all similar. It's all the same God. I said there are similarities, but also differences too. I then asked for her name. She said, with a warm smile, and maybe a little nervously "Oh, I can't give you my name." I said warmly, ok, that's completely fine. We said a few more warm words, and I said departing God bless you.
 - Should I have given money to the Gurdwara? Should I have given money to this lady?
 - When leaving, man touched the floor of Gudwara and then head?

Visited a mini department store with select items, punjabi specific.

- This was more Sam's contact. (His notes)

Five Boro Building Supply - 115-12 101st Ave, South Richmond Hill, NY 11419

- Kurnel - older, bald gentleman. Also a youngster when the 1984 incident took place. Remembers it in the news.
- Japner - military man, worked with US military in Iraq
- 3rd man worked there. Very nice. Didn't get name. When I told him we were doing intercultural studies, he voluntarily asked do you have any questions you'd like to ask. (he asked this after I bought the drill bit).
- I asked what was your experience moving to America. He said it wasn't super easy. **No matter where you go, leaving Punjab to move somewhere else is hard.. It's work.** He said, "Money doesn't grow on trees."
- Kurnel said that people have the impression that when you come to America, you will easily become rich. **That's not true. You have to work very hard there.**
- Japner said, "You work very hard in Punjab. You work very hard in America. Even harder here."
- **In Punjab, if got to America, you are perceived as rich. You are therefore expected to give to many.**
- I asked if money was required to eat, they said a big NO

Today - I heard from 2 different Sikhs and 1 Christian that "Life is too short." Seems like a theme.

Wednesday 3/15/23

Esther - Prince and Abhi (english name Sam) at Satguru with Athaley, Obed, and Sam

- 28 and 22 from Indianapolis, traveling to NY for 3 days for a friends birthday party
- **Prince had "no ID"**
- Prince and Sam were looking at us and listening to conversation
- Prince and Obed looked at each other and Prince smiled

- Obed was asking Prince about the pictures on the wall, and Prince was explaining what the pictures on the wall meant, he said "Punjabi culture" when talking about the images
- They both offered their food to us to come try, only Obed ate the food and the others didn't
- Obed went up to the lady at the counter and asked for a spoon, asked to make an origami bird and asked her to pick her favorite color, she said yellow, then he asked what the picture with the string was, but it was actually making butter
- Obed was talking to them while eating the food, they were showing him how to eat it, prince showing him how much to put on the puri
- Esther walked over, then others came, standing talking then offered to buy tea and joined them to chat.
- Asked Esther and Athaley how old we are, they told us to guess how old they are.
- Asked us where we are from, thought Esther was Indian but Esther said she was Bengali
- Obed showing pictures from Gurudwara and asking what the pillars mean and why people were bowing there. They said it is to bless and honor
- **Sharing video of Old Punjab, told us to visit and see the Golden temple, showed pictures of the Golden temple, started showing other photos**
- asked to follow on Instagram
- Talked about the Karpan, and asked the other guy to show it to us, said they can have the karpan at any age
- Abhi had a bracelet tattooed on him, he was also not wearing a Turban, shaved his beard
- Mentioned that for four religions any one can come into Gurudwara, four sides, proud of the fact that they feed people and take care of people. Mentioned that 20 rupees were spend to feed other people in 1480s (Guru Ka Langar Tradition)
- Sam initially talked about the battle of Saraghari, but they didnt seem to understand but after talking about the movie kesari, Prince smiled and talked about how amazing it was
- **They talked about "the Father" Baba Nanak, the 3-4(?) daughters were killed, four brothers, people were beheaded, 500 years ago, injustice, spend time explaining it and energetic about it**
- **1984 incident Sikh massacre Prince seemed to want to talk about it, but Abhi said something in Punjabi and Prince stopped talking about it.**
- They were talking about movies, that display Sikh history in Punjabi discussed
- They were telling us to visit Punjab and we asked if we can go with them and get a tour, Prince seemed hesitant and said he doesn't have ID, Abhi said something in Punjabi, Prince stopped talked and they started to get up to leave
- When others came by, they were greeting others and seemed to know them.

OBED - Jason - Punjabi Worship Leader

- Met at McDonalds
- Family History - Pakistan > UAE when he was age 4. Stayed till 18, then moved to US.
- **Some people in Punjabi region became Christian to AVOID persecution from either the Hindus or Muslims.**
 - Grandpa became Catholic
 - Parents are catholic, nominal (but now attend BPC)
- Sister Alice Shevkenek (Missionary from Canada > Pakistan after 1947)
 - Mother's sister's husband attended Sister Alice's meeting. Gave life to God in the late 70s or 80s.
- Parents married 94'
- Jason - white blood cells (low) very sick
 - Mother's sister's husband **(Became a Pastor), asks for healing. Jason is healed, parents get saved.**
- Father's elder brother got saved separately
- **Uncle William, Father's sister's husband was in the US, got stomach cancer. Came back to Punjab, got healed by Pastor (Mother's sister's husband)**
 - **Uncle William began to witness for the Lord.** Jason's father was baptized by him. Dedicated next 12 years of life to serve God before he died.
- Family moved to UAE - Abu Dabi.
 - Attended AOG Church - Pastor Robert, who came to faith by Sister Alice.
 - Traditional Pentecostal Church
 - 2 Nephews of Pastor Robert - Abed & Arif Bhatti (Arif like Keith Green of Pakistan)
 - Jason at age 8 saw humility in these men like no other person before.
 - **2 Nephews came where Jason and cousins were handing out. Arif started praying in tongues out loud randomly, and all Jason's friends started crying, but were incredible joyful inside**
 - **Cousins couldn't sleep that night, but were praying all night.**
 - At this point, Jason "knew Jesus was real, and he had a plan for his life." But he didn't quite commit his life to God fully then.
- Salvation Story
 - Jason went into the world for a bit.
 - Had perspective that he had to work oto earn salvation
 - Tozer quote ministered to him - Everything is wrong until Jesus sets it right." -
 - George Mueller Quote -
 - "There was a day when I died, utterly died, died to George Muller, his opinions, preferences, tastes and will, died to the world, its approval or censure, died to the approval or blame even of my brethren and friends, and since then I have studied to show myself approved unto God."
 - This quote "Cut Jaons like 1,000 knives" - Was the turning point in his life.
 - Zac Poonen - Discussed hidden, Pharisee aspects of life
- Other Christian beliefs
 - A lot in moden christianity is wrong

- Leonard Ravenhill - We all want a new demonstration of Christianity. Instead, we need a new demonstration of the old paths.
- Check everything through lens of scripture and church history
- Assurance of Salvation - Puritans, Spurgeon
- Ethnic Churches
 - Some aspects of culture, language, clothes etc, is ok.
 - But Jesus is almost 2nd
 - Leonard Ravenhill - "I left my nationality at the cross" (couldn't find quote)
 - Man should leave his father / mother. In the Indian community, Mom is more important than the wife. They never break the emotional bond
 - Hindu concept - Parents are god
 - American culture - conversely, totally disrespects parents, which is not good also

How he got involved in BPC

- 2018 - was resistant, but was asked to play guitar 1x a month.
- Then covid, worship leader got stuck in Pakistan, and he got pulled in
- Still believes culture should suppress the true church

Punjabi Church - it's 80% punjabi

To Be Witness to Punjabi people

- Preacher must be saved
- Know gospel thoroughly - lost, damned
 - God is saving me from himself
- Take away all false hope before giving real hope
- All things to all men
 - Before you whip, make sure you weep for them
 - Guidance of the Holy Spirit
- Have Genuine Love
 - People are not items or quotas. They are people.

How do Punjabi come to faith?

- Open doors, a crisis point (Spurgeon)
 - A need for Him
- Pastor Gil - crisis - healing / deliverance
 - Downside - experience driven culture
 - Not logical - less reliance on Word of God
 - Want feeling, dream, vision, electricity
 - Issue with conversion - rejecting all other faiths and embrace Christ alone
- Baptism - Public ritual - Final. not going back after baptism.

Thursday 3/16/23

Esther - Team Lunch at India Cafe (everybody and Kris)

Professor asking us questions about what is the Sikhs greatest need?

Justice and discrimination are some important cries of the soul

What to do with desires? Abolish desires versus align our desires with God

Personal being that created us with desires that can satisfy desires with himself, versus an impersonal being that is incapable of satisfying our desires

I was looking at one of the pictures on the wall of the restaurant with a woman spinning some thread. The restaurant server came up to me and explained that she was spinning thread. Seemed open to chat but we needed to go to the park.

Kenton and Haley's Booth in Scooter Park

(Hindu?) man and woman (with a child?? unsure), man's sister is a believer, Kenton's presentation of the Gospel with a paper with images that explains the gospel, light with a man, tomb with soldiers, man got distracted by soldiers, at the end they prayed for his documentation and his upcoming trip

they made tea for the people, put books on display and people were drawn to seeing book sin their language, so maybe thats why they came up to the table to see what it's about.

Wondering how to bring healing prayer into these encounters.

Obed and I went to try to talk to some of the older Sikh gentlemen sitting on the benches.

First I tried to offer tea to the ones who were playing a card game with a rock, they didn't accept it. Obed tried to talk to them but they didn't really want to talk.

Then we approached an older Sikh gentleman sitting alone. He was wearing a turban.

Mr Singh is a 65 year old, he came five years ago, his children are here and he works in lindwood?? In NJ? At the Petrol station (gas station), he said there are more Sikhs here than in NJ.

Goes to the gurdwara 2 hours every day, he has two kids, one of his sons has a kid two years old, He is Just visiting queens today. English is not that good. Smiled and asked us to sit down with him when we were initially standing and talking to him. Politely decline offer for tea.

Son is a truck driver in Indianapolis, Mr. Singh worked as an electrical welder for a manufacturing company in Punjab for 35 years, still working now. He has a wife, she's here as well, pointed in some other direction of the park. Eventually Obed and I decided to leave and we told him to enjoy the rest of his day.

Reflections: During conversation with Harminder, Kenton was pulling Bible verses to relate to what Harminder was sharing about Sikhism. Focused on Truth presentation, focusing on Jesus's love for all or Jesus's not discrimination

On the way to the Gurdwara to listen to the Punjabi Singers, Priti called me

Came to Christ at 10, parents were not believers. Came to church in 2010, born in queens family found out about pastor while in India and then came to his church, lived in jersey then moved to upstate NY

Mother in law christian, her husband was Hindu then became a believer through signs/wonder and answered prayer, that's often how Punjabi people come to faith here and in Punjab, last five years in Punjab Christian movement has been taking off.

Church has connections with other churches in California and texas, etc not always Punjabi

Did event with pastor Steve Sri Lanka pastor who is a prophet and ppl came to that and the whole sanctuary was booked out with people that stayed to hear him prophecy for 3 hours

They do a lot of outreach events in the park hold concerts invite people that usually draws a crowd for people to come

Works as a nurse currently

Gurdwara for evening service

A few people showed up to listen to the songs and a few younger women showed up. Athaley and I wanted to talk to them but they left almost immediately after. In the downstairs seating area, there were a lot of paintings depicting various scenes/important events in the Sikh history of the people. All of us spoke to the singers after dinner, they were traveling internationally and were staying in the US for 5 months. They will be sleeping in the gurdwara. They spoke about some of the events in Sikh history, including stories of the martyrdom and persecution of people.

Reflection Questions:

Are Punjabi people superstitious?

Family structure?

Role of women in religion and life

Why do bad things happen - where does evil come from

What do women do in the Gurdwara

Friday 3/17/23

Esther - Lunch at Punjabi Kaba House

Buddha-like statue in the front (pic), but not Buddha according to Hari (restaurant worker) its meant for good luck. The chef was Bengali (Mansur). Was a painting in the back but it wasn't Indian. There were two groups of women that ate there, youngish, one had a kid. mid to late 20s. Hari lives 118 near the Gurdwara, Mansur lives 114/112

Athaley told Hari that "we went to the gurdwara yesterday" hari asked "on 118th" she said "on 114th" and he looked confused, raised eyebrows, opened eyes and mouth, then said that "118 is bigger, and they give free food, and I go to that one"

Boys went to go see Harminder at 4PM - girls stayed in neighborhood

Went outside at 6PM to try to find some women to talk to in the bars, but Athaley wanted to stop by the clothing stores she went to before.

General observations when walking around at 6PM, still don't see younger women walking around. I felt that I was getting a lot of stares from some of the Punjabi men, one man waved at us while he was driving by in his car.

First we went to Indian fashion house wholesale and retail

Store here for 12 years

Owned space before that

Been here for 35 years

Was in India New Delhi/Punjab before then

Two kids, born here, both grown up, daughter married son is waiting

Asked where the women are because i don't see them on the streets, she said Yeah women are inside

Speaks Punjabi, Hair dyed

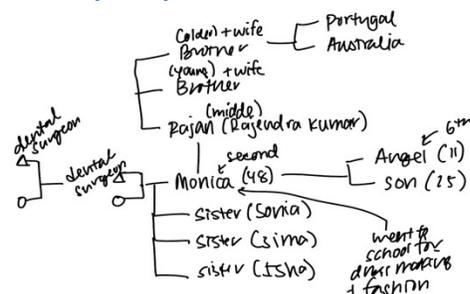
Didn't notice any signs or symbols in the store

No Sikh or Hindu symbols

Store closed so we left

Went to Angel's Creations next, where we met Monica

Her family history



First we stood in the store and talked to Monica for almost 2 hours. Then when it was time to close, her husband came back and she invited us into her apartment upstairs for dinner. There was a secret door in the store which connects to the stairwell that goes to their apartment. They bought us pizza and

we stayed until 10:30PM. She was concerned about us getting back to our place and offered her husband to drive, but we said we were okay to walk.

She named her store after her daughter, they do made-to-order custom clothes there.

There are Sikh symbols in the store, and also a Hindu God in the back. They identify as Hindu but say Sikhism is the same

She came here 11 years ago, daughter was born here

Started this shop with her husband, this is a family business (went to school for fashion)

Punjabi people live close together vs. some punjabi people that leave the community and want to live among white people, and they are proud of it

A Trinidad women goes to the gurdwara and takes some of the food and gives it to Monica. Monica doesn't like that because she thinks the food should be for people who need it, and that she can cook her own food at home.

Ego, men have ego, mentioned this several times

The husband and wife have to trust each other, you can't control each other

Described people as children of the Father (God)

Muslims have many kids, they try to take over India but they already have so many other Muslim countries, they should just go there and let the Hindus have India

"Clean heart" -> "good thoughts" -> "do good things"

Bad thoughts lead to a bad life

I asked, "What about people who do bad?" she said that they must have done a lot of good in their previous lives, but their next life will show the bad karma

She and her husband Rajandra Kumar are very proud of India, they talked about Indian education and how Indians are very smart people

Monica said that the man can't be younger than his wife, he must be at least 2-3 years older than her so that he can learn how to do things in the world and do everything he needs to do to protect his wife and family

They are prob Punjab

Mentioned Satyuk(good cycle) and Gulyuk (bad cycle) people need to do good and carry good forward. Instead of being so fixated of the world being in gulyuk, do your part to do good things. don't hold onto bad thoughts because the stress makes you sick, don't distrust people automatically.

She remembers her bad deeds clearly, recounted stories of not letting her sister wear a blue dress she made and ripping up her friends Hindi homework when she was mad at her. She says she cannot forget about these things and she still tries to make up for them

Refers to God in the singular

In terms of business, i mentioned how desi people bargain a lot in stores, and she said its rude to bargain because of how much it costs the store to import these items. She says don't stress about \$1K-2K dresses, you still have your life which is the most important thing

Indians work very hard

She doesn't do to the temple, because she works, but she doesn't feel like she needs to. God is everywhere, even when no one is watching God is everywhere. Talked about how people wear rings that say "god" on them but remove them when they go to the bathroom, and she thinks its ridiculous because it's not like God isn't in the bathroom.

Talked about feminine hygiene a lot, and the importance of keeping clean

When people get married the woman moves in with her husband's family. Monica says you must be a servant for one year and then everyone will serve you for their whole lives

She had a hurtful sister in law

90% of family problems are because of women. A woman can make or break a family

Talked about the importance of communication with your spouse, showed a music video about how miscommunication led to divorce

She wants her son to find someone on his own, he lives in India separate from the family

Don't trust the military, regardless of what country. They are doing things no one knows about.the government is also shady, if they say 1K people died, it's actually 10K people. Talked about the earthquake in Turkey and they said they are hiding the true numbers of bodies.

Mentioned the Sikh images of gurus on the wall (took images) and she said those are Sikh gurus, but sikhism and hinduism is basically the same. She said the guru was very respected.

Believes in a covid conspiracy theory, that the US was involved

When people get married, its two families coming together

When she was younger she was next door neighbors with her husband

Monica - all countries should be like families and take care of each other

Husband much more into politics than she is

Obed - Harminder - Obed & Sam went to meet with Harminder & Interpret

- "It is God's discipline that one looses his hair, or grows hair"
 - It's God's will whether it happens or not
- The FIVE - Lust, Anger, Greed, Attachment, and Ego
 - Need these 5 things, but just under control in discipline
 - Ego - Hairline difference between ego and self esteem
- 4 Don'ts
 - Never cut hair
 - Never take alcohol or drink that makes crazy (loose control)
 - Sexual crazy relationships. Only sex with wife
 - Only eat Non-veg

- Sikh - means learner. Therefore, everyone is a Sikh
- We don't claim we have the last truth, God has last truth
 - Truth to go to God in this life.
- The purpose of this life is to be with God

- About GOD - God is one. His name is True, Creator of everything, don't fear anyone. Doesn't die or is born. (Eternal, Shapeless)

- Life cycle - Reincarnation

How can we be with God?

- By the Blessing of God
- Doesn't mean "I have to do certain rituals or effort. God is not a bunch of grapes that you can hold"
- Imagine a drop of water of the ocean on your hand. You are the drop. Ocean is God.
- Becoming a part of the ocean again is the Purpose of Life.
- Drop of ocean = soul.
 - Traveling from life to life. Both men and women are equal
- Shabbat - Word
 - Shabbat Guru - Word of God
- When you enter the temple, you get a blessing in the form of the food in hand.

Successful life of s Sikh

- End praying
 - Life is the turn to belief in God

Women stay home because they have house work.

- Taking care of the kids is very important

Jassa Singh Ahluwalia

- Harminder's great, great grandfather from 17th century.
 - Great General of military
 - Conquered Red Fort - White House of that time.
 - Freed Punjab - became independent finally.
 - [The Story of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia | Sikh History Series | Sikh Research Institute](#)

- 36 Levels of Brahmin

- 1947 - Betrayal, very painful. We feel cheated
- Sikhs feel like 2nd class citizens

1984

- No example in all of Indian history that they attacked the primary temple like this.

Hinduism teaches Inequality

- If Hinduism teaches inequality, then how can Sikhs be equal? "Sikh, Christian, Muslims are all 2nd class. Everyone except Hindus"
- 60-70% of India is Dalits (untouchables)
- Brahmins > less than 4%. Yet, they control all of India
- 1950 Constituion created post partition (47') "doesn't recognize our religion" (Sikh)

"Sikhism is not about religion" "It's a ruling of the truth" "We don't feel bad that you think something else"

- No matter the religion, "I know God will make a way for you"

Guru Nanak - 3 things he calls for

- Honest Living
- Praise the Lord
- What you earn, share with others

Other Sikh principles

- Respect the air (without air, you die)
- Respect the water (helps all life)
- Treat land as your Mother

Men & Women both have Kirpan

- Used when someone is in need, and there is no other form of helping

Do you feel any discrimination in the US?

- Everywhere there is discriminatory people
- But the Law in the US protects equality

- In India, the Law is discriminatory

Cultural Celebrations vs Religious Celebration (In Hinduism & Sikhism)

- 13th April - Lori // Birth of Guru
- End of Winter seasons // Birth of the Kalsa
- Be sake - Harvest - 1699 // Sikh New Year (Chait - month) - Start new life

Women do anything that men can do in the Gurdwara. Cook, clean, even sing

Raag - way or type of singing

Symbol of top of temple bed post - ੴ means God is one

If God wishes, he could send another prophet again to reveal God

Waha Guru - Means Praise the Lord

Satguru - true guru

- Gu means darkness, Ru means light
- Only others can say someone is a Satguru. One cannot claim they themselves are the Satguru

When Sikhs bow to Granth Sahib, Sikhs are bowing to All Satgurus - those in Sikhism, but also Satgurus in Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, etc

Nanak quote - I am the lowest of the low

What you think of the word Peace in Sikhism, what comes to mind? Or what does the Granth say about peace?

- Surrender to the wish / will of God, surrender to God.
- If you don't, you will question why? Why did this happen?
- And if you don't, you make life a hell itself

What you think of the word Hope in Sikhism, what comes to mind? Or what does the Granth say about Hope?

- "Hope for what?" - Harminder said
- The purpose of life is very hard. But the purpose of life is to be in the company of others learners and to praise the God.
- Hope is to get into the ocean (earlier metaphor)
 - In life, we go after all these things. Homes, kids, money. Many prioritize these things.
 - Very few walk the lane of "Hope is to get into the ocean"
- Life and Death is in the hand of God
 - If this is believed, why do you fear?

Vustero - Blessing. (also a word for cursing)

40 Devotees?

Saturday 3/18/23

Esther - Meeting with Kenton

Auntie nisha pray healing read bible

Why demonization? Demonization is from bad karma

Gods will things happen, miracles aren't the same

Mostly first gen living here

The reason why things happen- how to explain that

Personal god and wanting that but being afraid of leaving life behind

What did I do in previous life?

The importance of a previous life

Taking ownership but not really for their previous lives

Lack of urgency because of reincarnation beliefs

"This is my chance to reincarnate into water" from Harminder who believes he has a chance

For someone who hard times have fallen, do they believe they can do better the next time In the next life? Have they given up on this life?

Gospel sharing strategies: Coming in wanted to approach people intellectually, sometimes even a threat to them when Kenton knows SGGs better than that. But pointing how things in life connect to Bible, praying with him, showcasing love to them, makes them question "why are you loving me?" And that moves them

Pretty simple minded people, doctrine flies over their head, give them something very simple

Pastor in India who has led many Hindus to faith, trains many pastors, Kenton "what are differences in training pastors"

"In city talk more doctrine because western academic mind"

"In village you will lose them, give them something simple" "childlike faith"

Do they feel inferior being a minority in a majority context?

I'm Punjabi neighborhood they don't feel that way cuz of community

But in Alabama they are more isolated, "low hanging fruits" easier to reach them

There's community pressure here too, when outsiders initially come they are protective over their group, but now they have made themselves known and people are warming up to them
People who experience miracles come to church but still remain syncretistic, believe Jesus and guru Nanak. Not enough truth in that circumstance

Most Punjabi churches are charismatic here and abroad, in South Asia church, mostly Assembly of God, the charismatic stuff speaks to their worldview, but there's also sexual abuse happening, pastors abusing their powers

Discipleship in the Bible is not good

My thoughts: Pray for gratitude for the doors he has opened for me

Timothy: taking the form of god only but denying the power of God

Obed - Kenton Coffee Time

- Hope - Not connecting to a personal God
- Sam asked what is God?
 - God is everywhere. Impersonal
- What do we have that they don't have?
 - Christians "talks to God like we know Him"
 - Sharing personal stories of God with Muslims would make them cry
- The Husband is god. Whatever the husband does, the women follows

Contextualization

- I don't know the gospel ever made "logical" sense to them
- Don't know what sin is
- Some say - Gobind Singh and Jesus are the same

Isaiah 35:8

- Even if we were fools, they shall not go astray

Sikh explanation for demonization - someone's karma from previous life

- Christian response - these people are welcome and there is redemption possible in this life

Sikh perspective on Miracles - does God do miracles?

- Yes, those things are the grace of God

Guru Nanak - was not trying to start a new religion. There was just tension b/w Hindu / Muslims. He was just trying to do the right thing.

- Langar broke the caste system.

Kenton's friend Ungor - believes that Nanak connected with Jesus, or other Christ followers

Harry - Sikhism is a misunderstood Christianity

The Question Kenton heard from many people

- "What did I do in my previous life to be experiencing what I'm experiencing now?"
- I must have done something bad to be experiencing the ill I am going through now.

"The Sikh people are simple minded" - They do not want to dwell on the depths of theology and logic. (Don't take this the wrong way)

Most Punjabi churches are charismatic

Kenton Bible Study at his house

- Sona - said she often finds things on the road, left behind. And she often tries to give back things that are lost. She is trying to do the right thing, but is often misunderstood.
- From study - Jesus only did what the Father asked Him to do. That is success.
 - Don't be quick to judge the other by their fruit.

1PM Bible Study at Kenton and Haley's

Kenton & Haley: Concerns for syncretism and hearing gospel in church

Don't wanna engage with Muslim and Sikh even tho native

Parvinder follow Jesus but still had idols

Enthoreligious group - religion is identity

Betheham church very westernized

In Philippines church looks like gurudwara

Who attended bible study: Poonam, and two kids Harshad and layhek. Kids are autistic and husband just left her recently.

Sonia and her son arshvir

Arshvir scared because his friend told him about ghosts so now he feels like there are ghosts

Sonia talk a lot about being good, gods not with you if you don't trust in him, "he hides himself in your heart from you"

Goes to gurudwara also mentioned another god

Bad things are from past life, bad karma

Bad things happen to me but bad karma

Keep finding lost things, and then returning them
Birds are a sign that god is with you
Sister envy her, sister in law weird with her husband because she sits next to him after Sonia goes to sleep
Sonia didn't want three things - curly hair, short (5"8"), drinks a lot is all three
Sonia shocked that we're staying in the same place towards the end
Husband started hitting her only right after they got married
He doesn't cuddle with her or sleep with her, makes her sad and she wonders why
He cheated on her in the beginning of their marriage with a girl from Canada. Husband lied about her mother coming to stay with them, lied for three months saying she was her mothers sister
She has two sisters, she is middle child. Her dad was engineer.
Women should be hosts, but her husband more feminine than her
Timeline confusing about when she came here
Currently unemployed
Wants to visit France and talked about all the places she visited
She used to do karate was a brown belt, girls aren't allowed to have muscles until after they get married
Cricket with the guys, stood up to 19 guys during conflict, stood up to principal
High sense of doing good, standing up for what she thinks is right
Very open spiritually
When someone has a bad smell, someone cursed them
She said she cursed someone by accident, we have the spiritual power to curse people
Doesn't have money, job but trying to find peace
Used to be hit every other day, until she hit him back
Didn't talk about politics at all
Sometimes she gets angry at her son and she starts doing the same thing towards him but realizes and tries to stop herself
Tried to give benefit of the doubt to people
She said you should never leave your culture
She said Punjabi dramas portray such a family life but it's a lie. Punjabi families aren't like that
She doesn't touch men, if she is friendly at men they will take it the wrong way, so even with her closest childhood friends she doesn't touch them
Really wants to be loved by her husband, but when things are bad she jokes that she's gonna take her son and run away and he says your crush is dead where are you gonna go
Says her son is closer to his dad
Esther talked about how she might be the lost one trying to be found and she seemed to be intrigued by it
Her sister cut her hair short because of jealousy
She was concerned about gossip, she came into class cuz she thought it would be better to listen to preaching than gossip
When she goes to the gurdwara Women teaching downstairs, she just prays and eats and doesn't wanna gossip
Sonia noticed the old woman looking at her and said everyone in the Punjabi community is like that, they should mind their own business
The true satguru would never claim to be one
The importance of storytelling, maybe present the gospel more as parables

Sunday 3/19/23

Esther - Bethany South Asian Church @11:30AM

started a little after 11:30
Shared church building with other churches, a Korean church was there too.
3 songs in beginning, Punjabi and Hindi.
Women wear head scarves, but not separated seating
Two women on worship, two men one of them primarily leading
Older woman shares prayer requests for everyone after worship
Raj Paul 29, came here at 19 went to seminar planted a church in India
2008 came to the lord, 18 when started preaching
Was at Bethlehem Punjabi church for 6 years then lord told him to move on
Disempowered Jesus versus strong Hindu idols
Ghandi hated Christian's but loves Jesus, discrimination on train first class to third class, but he learned from the Bible
Is the suffering servant or the risen savior more powerful? My thoughts
Raj Paul is an Uber driver too, Uber takes out 30-40% of earnings
Picks out six bible verses, shares stories personal and Bible mixed in with each other in sermon
They do three day fasting every month
Going through bible verses, someone from the audience reads
Zoom- all over Seattle Malaysia
Started as a worship leader, bent over lord touched him
Niagara Falls - buffalo sight and sound theater giant retreat
2013 Arizona messa South Indian church, dryness in the church some are not, people didn't talk to each other
Decided to have church lunch and talk to each other to live for each other everyday
Four older sisters second generation all minister of god
Holiness and purity, sanctification more than miracles
Mom used to do healing, first female pastor in northwest India, dad's parents died when he was three or four but he became a believer eventually, he worked hard
Doesn't rly know his heritage
Chela disciple don't want old to be disciples by the young

Don't go to richest home but go to poorest homes when you go to india

Genders separate in India, couple don't sit together

In India, people need love and commitment

Is the second generation more truth oriented?

Obed - Bethlehem Punjabi Church - Smaller one

- **Raj Paul** - Sometimes we want God to make us a door. But sometimes God wants us to be the door.

Church in Punjab grew when a lady who was bent over was healed.

Dryness in the Indian Community - not too much talking?