



# Sikhs in Academia Annual Conference 2026

7th June 2026 | University of Warwick



# Welcome

## to the Sikhs in Academia Annual Report

On behalf of the executive committee, it is our privilege to welcome you to this landmark publication: our first annual report. This document captures the ground-breaking insights, empirical research, and collaborative strategies presented at the Sikhs in Academia (SiA) Conference, hosted this year at the University of Warwick on 7th June 2026.



Our logo serves as a powerful visual emblem of the core philosophy driving Sikhs in Academia. At its heart, it embodies the intersection of the sciences and the arts, representing the vast spectrum of human knowledge we seek to master. It visually champions Miri (political/temporal authority) and Piri (spiritual sovereignty), mirroring our community's ever-present desire to protect, serve, and uplift society. Woven through the design is the ultimate concept of giving—sharing knowledge unconditionally as an act of selfless service. It is a symbol that honors our heritage while projecting an enlightened, fearless future.

### Who We Are

Sikhs in Academia is the premier global platform dedicated to bridging the gap between rigorous higher education and community development. We are a collective of researchers, postgraduates, and undergraduates working across all academic disciplines—from the humanities and social sciences to STEM and medicine. Our mission is to revitalise the rich, centuries-old scholastic heritage of the Sikh Panth. By providing a prestigious spotlight for our university students and PhD scholars, we champion the next generation of intellectual leaders who will shape regional and national policy.

### The Power of Knowledge

Scholarly engagement is deeply woven into our faith's DNA, tracing back to the 52 scholars and 36 scribes patronised by Guru Gobind Singh Ji at Anandpur Sahib. Today, SiA modernises that legacy by transforming raw individual talent into structured, data-driven community institutional power. We invite you to engage deeply with these findings, share them widely with friends and family, and join us in fostering an enduring culture of academic excellence. If you would like to contribute to our future research, networks, or upcoming reports, please complete the form here:

<https://sikhsinacademia.org/contact-us/>.

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The conference takes place in the FAB (Faculty of Arts) building room FAB0.03 – marked with the number 7, and the Junction building – marked with the number 12.

The nearest car parks are marked on the map. It is a big campus and there is a one way system that operates across the campus. Please allow 10-15 minutes to enable potential navigation.

You must pay for parking (approximately £3 for the day).

We will not be able to answer any parking/navigation queries on the day.

University of Warwick, CV4 7AL – scan the QR code for a Google Maps link  
<https://maps.app.goo.gl/1Fg1NF5GnZtEwLzC6>



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01

# Awards and recognitions



# Awards and recognitions

**Sikhs in Academia are proud to recognise four awards received by members of our network.**



**Professor Gurnam Singh**

Dr Gurnam Singh is an acclaimed activist researcher, educator, and journalist specialising in social justice, anti-racism, and critical pedagogy. Currently an Honorary Professor of Sociology at the University of Warwick, his distinguished academic career follows a decade in frontline social work. A prolific scholar, Dr Singh has secured over £500,000 in research funding and authored four books. His educational excellence was recognised with a prestigious National Teaching Fellowship in 2009, and he is a Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts. He also consults on higher education decolonisation and remains an active broadcaster for South Asian diaspora communities.

I feel deeply humbled by this recognition, not least because I know I still have so much more to achieve. Whatever I may have accomplished has only been possible because I have stood on the shoulders of giants; nobody achieves anything entirely alone, and so I am eternally grateful to my parents, family and community for the support I have received over the years.

As a young man, my ambition was to become a professional footballer. My reason was simple: I loved the game, and the idea of being paid to do something I loved seemed the perfect life. Alas, I never made the grade, but through a combination of good fortune, stubborn determination and the support of others, I was able to pursue my life long passion for learning.

Having spend over 35 years in academia, I feel enormously privileged to continually learning and expanding my mind and to get paid to do this. It is precisely this sense of privilege that has compelled me to give something back, through serving the community that has given so much to me. The remarkable thing is that, in supporting others and doing seva, we deepen and enrich our own capacity, not only as scholars, but as human beings.

# Awards and recognitions

## Professor Avtar Matharu MBE

Professor Avtar Matharu, a leading researcher in the Department of Chemistry at the University of York, has been awarded an MBE for Services to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Interfaith and Community Cohesion. “Receiving an MBE is truly humbling as I was not seeking it or did I have any idea that I’d been nominated. As a Sikh, I have always considered my voluntary work as ‘sewa for public good’. The MBE embodies my values and beliefs as a Sikh to be a good person.’



## Professor Gurpreet Singh Jagpal OBE



Professor Gurpreet Singh Jagpal, Chief Commercial Officer at Aston University, has been named an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the New Year 2026 Honours List for his outstanding services to enterprise, entrepreneurship education and policy. “I am deeply humbled to receive this OBE. This recognition belongs as much to the colleagues, mentors, partners and students I have had the privilege to work with as it does to me. Together, we have championed enterprise, strengthened ecosystems and created opportunities for individuals and communities to realise their ideas and ambitions across the UK and internationally. “As a British Sikh, I hope this honour encourages others from every background and community to pursue their aspirations with confidence. Enterprise and entrepreneurship can open doors and transform lives. I remain committed to building partnerships that drive innovation, widen participation and create meaningful real-world impact.”

# Awards and recognitions

Dr. Harjinder Singh Lallie, Reader at the University of Warwick, has been awarded an OBE (Officer of the Order of the British Empire) for services to Musical Heritage and Faith Communities. This prestigious honour celebrates a career dedicated to empowering young minds and reviving a 500-year-old musical tradition that was nearly lost to history.

Reflecting on the honour, Dr. Lallie shared: "I am incredibly humbled to have been awarded an OBE. What began as a personal calling to teach Gurmat Sangeet has evolved into a lifelong journey of cultural bridge-building. It has been an absolute privilege to watch this divine musical art form reach wider audiences. My deepest thanks go to my family, mentors, and students—this honour belongs to our entire community."

At the University of Warwick, Dr. Lallie's leadership as a Reader and module leader has impacted thousands of students, shaping their academic and professional journeys. Parallel to his university career, his ground-breaking work in reviving sacred Sikh kirtan turned ancient musical traditions into a living, breathing practice.

To ensure the survival of this heritage, Dr. Lallie built a sustainable educational infrastructure. He founded a dedicated music academy, travelled the country giving talks, and established a standardised examination board. This framework allowed hundreds of students to formally study the traditional string instruments and ragas used during the times of the Gurus, creating a permanent legacy of preservation that belongs to the entire Sangat.



**Dr Harjinder Singh  
Lallie OBE**

If you have been recognised or have an award and want to be featured in our next report, please email us at [chair@sikhsinacademia.org](mailto:chair@sikhsinacademia.org)

02

# Recruitment



# Recruitment

## Student Participation and Academic Attainment

Sikhs represent 0.9% of the general population in England and Wales. In Higher Education, they comprise approximately 1.2% of the total student body, indicating higher participation rates relative to their national population share. While the community is highly aspirational, they face a persistent 8.8 percentage point attainment gap in "Good Honours" (First Class or 2:1 degrees) compared to students with "No Religion." This gap remains a critical barrier to social mobility, as a 2:1 is the standard gateway for graduate-level roles and advanced research.

## The Postgraduate Research (PhD) Pipeline

There is a profound "pipeline leak" between undergraduate participation and entry into doctoral research. Sikh representation at the Postgraduate Research (PGR) level is exceptionally low, estimated at just 0.07% of the total doctoral student population. This confirms a historic lack of focus on high-level academia; currently, only 8% of Sikhs aged 65 and over hold a PhD, highlighting a generational absence of academic mentors.

“ The data reveals an aspirational dead-end for Sikh students. A persistent 8.8% awarding gap chokes the gateway to graduate success, resulting in a catastrophic 'pipeline leak' where representation collapses to just 0.3% at the PhD level—leaving a highly educated community without the academic architects to shape its own future. ”



## Quick Facts



**1.2%**

Of the total university student body



**8.8%**

Attainment gap



**0.3%**

of the PhD population, the lowest amongst all faith and non faith groups

### Join our mailing list

Do you want to keep informed of our activities and events? Complete the form here and select 'add me to your mailing list'

<https://sikhsinacademia.org/contact-us/>

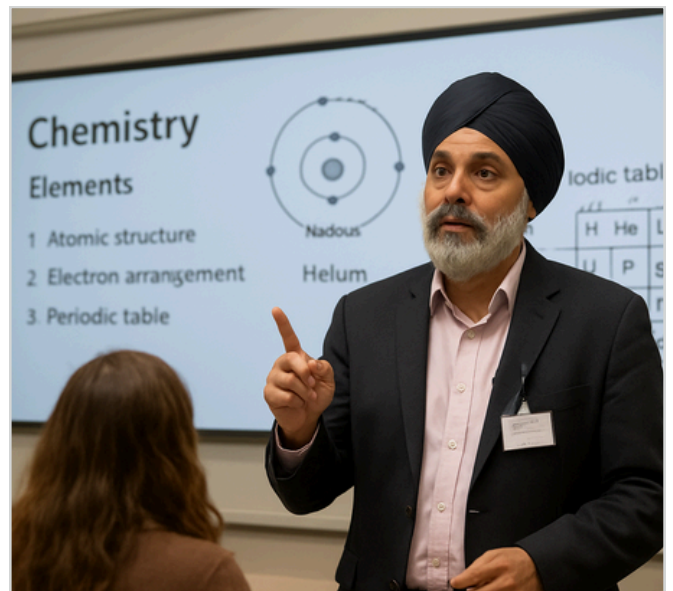
# Staffing

## Staff Representation and Pay Gaps

The national benchmark for Sikh representation among Higher Education staff stands at 0.3%—only one-third of the community’s share of the general public. Furthermore, Sikh staff are severely under-represented in influential roles. Data shows that 67.3% of Sikh staff are clustered in Professional Services, while only 25.5% hold Academic positions and a mere 7.3% are in Research. This lack of placement in senior academic tracks has driven the median pay gap for Sikh staff to 17.1%, up from 15.6% in the previous cycle.

“With a national staff benchmark of just 0.3%—one-third of the community’s population share—and a widening 17.1% median pay gap, the data provides absolute proof of a leadership vacuum. While 67.3% of Sikh staff are relegated to the 'engine room' of Professional Services, the negligible 0.07% representation in doctoral research confirms that the community is systematically excluded from the 'steering wheel' of academic leadership and national policy.

”



## Quick Facts



**0.3%**

of the academic staff population - 67.3% of which are in professional services.



**65%**

seek culturally appropriate support services



**50+**

UK universities with Sikh student societies

### Sikhs in Academia Needs you!

You can help us address these imbalances. Sikhs in Academia is funded by the Sikh community. All our colleagues work on a voluntary basis. Your donations help us to continue doing this work, running conferences, helping establish Sikh Chaplains. Please consider donating even a small amount here:

<https://sikhsinacademia.org/donate/>

03

# Conference Schedule





# Session 1

Chaired by Dr Sujinder Singh Sangha OBE

FAB0.03

<p><b>09:00</b></p> <p>Registration Arrive and collect your conference materials and name badge.</p>	<p><b>09:30</b></p> <p>Welcome Address Official opening and introduction to the conference themes and objectives.</p>	<p><b>09:40</b></p> <p>Welcome Address <b>Kulbir Shergill</b>, Director of Social Inclusion, University of Warwick</p>	<p><b>09:50</b></p> <p>My life in academia, Keynote. <b>Professor Daljit Singh Virk OBE</b> (Bangor University, professor emeritus)</p>
<p><b>10:05</b></p> <p>Time and Tonotopy: How Neurons of the Developing Inner Ear Make a Sound Frequency-Place Map? <b>Dr. Surjit Singh Saini</b> (University of Cambridge)</p>	<p><b>10:20</b></p> <p>Epistemic Justice in Climate and Health Research in Southeast Asia: Challenging Global North Dominance in Ethics and Equity, <b>Dr. Gurpreet Kaur</b> (SOAS, University of London &amp; UNU-IIGH)</p>	<p><b>10:35</b></p> <p>Exploring Langar in the Context of Allergies, Intolerances and Coeliac Disease: Experiences of the Sangat. <b>Dr. Amrit Daffu-O'Reilly</b> (Keele University)</p>	<p><b>10:50</b></p> <p>Q&amp;A</p> <p><b>11:00</b></p> <p>Refreshments</p>



# Session 2

Chaired by Raj Kaur Mann

FAB0.03

**11:25**

Embodied Constraint: Sikh Bodies and Secular Discipline in France. **Dr. Andrew Milne**, afternoon keynote (University of Bordeaux-Montaigne)

**11:40**

Sikh Heritage Projects: The Toskhana Project & Victorian Newspaper Digitisation. **Gurinder Singh Mann** (Sikh Museum Initiative)

**11:55**

Between Silence and Seva: Sikh Perceptions of LGBT+ Inclusion in Contemporary Communities. **Pritpal Bhullar** (Birmingham City University)

**12:10**

Hidden in Plain Sight: Sexual Violence, Silence and Accountability in Sikh and Panjabi Communities. **Jasvir Kaur Rababan MBE** (University of California, Riverside)

**12:25**

Q&A

## Lunch

### Become a Student Ambassador: Lead the Movement!

Are you a university student or PhD scholar looking to make a real impact? We are launching our Student Ambassador & Volunteer Programme to help expand our network across campuses nationwide. As an ambassador, you will represent the premier Sikh academic organization at your university. This is a brilliant opportunity to build your leadership profile, gain hands-on experience in event management and community outreach, and network directly with top global scholars and policymakers. Help us revitalize our intellectual heritage and connect higher education with our grassroots community hubs.

Ready to lead? Complete the form here: <https://sikhsinacademia.org/contact-us/>



# Session 3 - Parallel sessions

## STEM, chaired by Mangalpreet Singh

JX2.02

**13:15**

A Qualitative Study of Healthcare Professional Perspectives on Community Pharmacy's Role in Cardiovascular Disease Prevention for Minority Ethnic Groups. **Rumanveer Singh Duley** (Aston University)

**13:30**

Looking Inside Stars by Listening to Their Sounds  
**Anhad Bagga** (University of Warwick)

**13:45**

The Physic(al) Process: A Tale of Trial and Error in a Quantum World.  
**Ganga Singh Manchanda** (University of Oxford & IBM)

**14:15**

Q&A

## Social Sciences, chaired by Dr Harprit Singh

JX2.03

**13:15**

Navigating the Spirit through Time: An IPA and Life Course Analysis of Well-being among Sikh Survivors of Abuse  
**Harjinder Kaur-Aujla** (University of Birmingham)

**13:30**

To What Extent Did Transboundary Governance and Dam Operation Shape the Severity of the 2025 Punjab Floods? **Puneet Ark** (University of Manchester)

**13:45**

People Still Go on This Stereotypical View of a Mild, Meek, Quiet South Asian Woman': British South-Asian Women Academics' Experiences in HE.  
**Rajvir Gill** (De Montfort University)

**14:00**

The Effect of Acute Sex Hormone Fluctuations on Vascular Recovery Post Acute Exercise in Eumenorrhic Exercising Females.  
**Harjot Kaur Punni** (Loughborough University)

**14:15**

Q&A

Parallel sessions followed by a comfort break at 14:25



# Session 4 - Parallel sessions

## Society, Education, and Health. Chaired by Harjinder Kaur Aujla

JX2.02

<b>14:50</b>	<b>15:05</b>	<b>15:20</b>	<b>15:35</b>	<b>15:50</b>
Utilising a Dual Moderator Approach in Focus Groups to Evaluate Maternal Health Programmes in Diverse Communities. <b>Rohit Sagoo</b> (University of Bedfordshire)	An Examination of the Correlation and Compromises of Ofsted, The National Curriculum, and Physical Education in British Schools. <b>Tarandeep Singh Malhi</b> (University of Portsmouth)	How I Turned My PhD Research into an Educational Handbook. <b>Vishal Sangu</b> (Open University)	Maternal Mental Health in South Asian Mothers in the UK. <b>Gurkarishma Dhillon</b> (University of Oxford)	Q&A

## Sikh Studies, Chaired by Dr Randeep Singh Soin

JX2.03

<b>14:50</b>	<b>15:05</b>	<b>15:20</b>	<b>15:35</b>	<b>15:50</b>
Chardi Kala: A Cultural Orientation to Adversity in Sikh Communities. <b>Komal Grewal</b> (Deakin University, Australia)	Romanizing Gurmukhi for the Sikh Sacred Music Exams. <b>Anmol Kumar Patrai</b> (South Asian Music Committee) and <b>Mangalpreet Singh</b> (Aston University)	Preparing the Body for Sikh Contemplation: A Somatic Framework for Simran and Sehaj. <b>Vikass Hothi</b> (independent researcher)	Guru Nanak in Tibet: Sacred Geography and Contemplative Exchange across the Himalayan World. <b>Guvinder Singh Akali</b> (independent researcher)	Q&A



# Session 5

Chaired by Professor Gurnam Singh

FAB0.03

**16:05**

Inaugural lecture.  
**Professor Gurnam Singh**  
(University of Warwick)

**16:30**

Remembered Borders: Oral Testimony and the Legacy of Partition in India. **Dr. Rajwinder Kaur** (Government College Danewala, Malout, Punjab) and **Inderjit Kaur** Guru Nanak Khalsa college for women Ludhiana

**16:45**

From Knowledge to Skills: Examining the Role of Industry in Shaping University Curricula. **Harpaul Singh Dhindsa** (University of Lincoln)

**17:00**

Year Eights Accessing Healthcare Careers (YEAH!): A Widening Participation Initiative. **Sukhi Ubhi** (Imperial College London)

**17:30**

Q&A

**17:45**

Close

04

# HEI Sikh Chaplaincy Programme

Miss Harjinder Kaur-Aujla (University of Birmingham), Mangalpreet Singh (Aston University), Gracie Kaur (University of Brighton), Nimrita Kaur Bahia (Coventry University) and Dr Gurnam Singh (Warwick University), Dr Harjinder Singh Lallie (Warwick University)



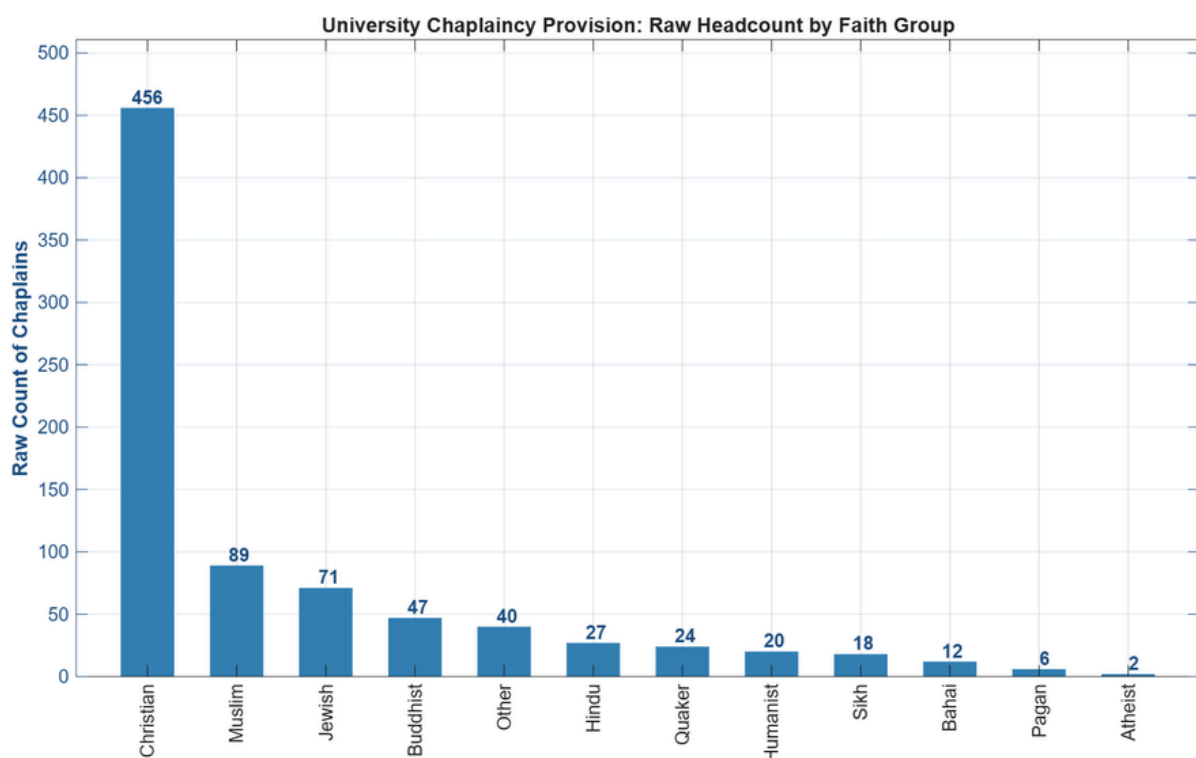


## Introduction and Background

Chaplaincy in universities plays a vital role in supporting students' emotional, spiritual, and personal well-being. It offers a safe, non-judgmental space for students to explore questions of identity, cope with stress, and find community—especially during times of crisis or transition. For many, faith is a core part of their lives, and having someone who understands their beliefs can be deeply reassuring. However, Sikh students often face a lack of representation in university chaplaincy services. The absence of Sikh chaplains can lead to feelings of isolation, a lack of cultural understanding, and missed opportunities for meaningful pastoral and faith-based support.

The Sikh Chaplaincy Programme was established following a Sikhs in Academia (SiA) audit, which revealed a significant gap in Sikh chaplaincy services across UK universities. The audit identified that only 17 universities supported a Sikh chaplain compared to 456 Christian, 89 Muslim, 71 Jewish, and 47 Buddhist. Interestingly, Hindu chaplains (n=27) were also under-represented.

very few signposted 'to' Gurdwaras on their 'local website' and there seemed limited information on the celebration of Sikh events of any real substance. None of the chaplaincy sites listed faith celebrations or pertaining to Sikhi faith articles. Additionally, only one university employed a Sikh chaplain, and that too on a part-time basis.



# Development and implementation



## **Programme Development and Implementation**

Recognising the need for improved chaplaincy/ faith advisory provisions, outreach efforts were initiated, leading to engagement with 100 universities, inviting them to discuss Sikh chaplaincy services. Twenty universities participated in an open meeting, resulting in the development of a pilot programme aimed at matching chaplains with universities. To date, five universities have successfully established Sikh chaplaincy/ faith advisory services through this pilot initiative.

To ensure national representation, regional leads have been appointed in key areas such as Scotland, where a faith advisory service was already functioning, and Wales, where a role has also been created to further develop Sikh faith-based support.

## **Achievements and Impact**

Despite ongoing challenges related to funding constraints and the shift towards multi-faith chaplaincy models, the programme has already achieved several key outcomes:

- Three universities have fully recruited Sikh chaplains/ faith advisors in improving student access to faith-based support. A further three are carrying out due diligence checks and supervision agreements with Sikhs in Academia.
- Sikh chaplains/ faith advisors have provided guidance on mental health, signposting individuals to accredited psychological services.
- Support has been extended to international students, helping them navigate challenges related to cultural transition and academic pressures.
- Faith-based contributions have influenced policies on campus, including guidance on end-of-life care and dietary requirements.
- Additionally, partnerships with Gurdwaras have been strengthened, fostering greater community collaboration. Significant public engagement events have been hosted, including a joint Vaisakhi celebration with Oxford University and a diverse turban tying event on campus.



## Future direction

As financial pressures continue to affect chaplaincy services, it is crucial that the Sikh Chaplaincy Programme expands to ensure greater accessibility for Sikh students across UK higher education. Given the potential stigma associated with mental health services, many students seek faith-based alternatives, making Sikh chaplaincy an essential component of holistic student support.

While this seva based service does not replace accredited therapy, it serves as an important first step in building trust, community, and belonging within the Sikh faith—a group that is numerically small but widely dispersed in higher education institutions.

The HEI Sikh Chaplaincy Programme remains committed to growth, representation, and impact, ensuring Sikh students receive culturally relevant guidance, advocacy, and support in university settings.

### Useful references

Aune, K., Guest, M., & Law, J. (2019). *Chaplains on Campus: Understanding Chaplaincy in UK Universities*. Coventry University. Retrieved from: <https://pureportal.coventry.ac.uk/en/publications/chaplains-on-campus-understanding-chaplaincy-in-uk-universities>

**We are recruiting more Sikh chaplains, if you feel you have what it takes, please contact us.**



### 52 scholars, and 36 scribes

Scholarly activity is deeply ingrained within the Sikh DNA. "Sikhs in Academia" is not a modern Western concept; its original blueprint was established over three centuries ago by Guru Gobind Singh Ji at Anandpur Sahib. The Tenth Guru did not just build an army of warriors, he built a fortress of the mind by granting royal patronage to 52 Kavis (scholars) and 36 Likhari (translators and scribes). This court was commissioned to master diverse philosophies, translate complex classical languages into the vernacular, and duplicate manuscripts for widespread distribution. Later, the Guru established the Nirmala academic order and declared Talwandi Sabo as Guru Kashi—a university town destined for global learning. When we advocate for a modern Gurdwara-Academia alliance, we are simply reclaiming our history. The Tenth Guru connected the mind to the heart under his own roof; it is time we restore that legacy.

**Spotlight**

05

# Talks, abstracts, biographies



## Time and Tonotopy: How neurons of the developing inner ear make a sound frequency-place map?

Surjit Singh Saini, University of Cambridge

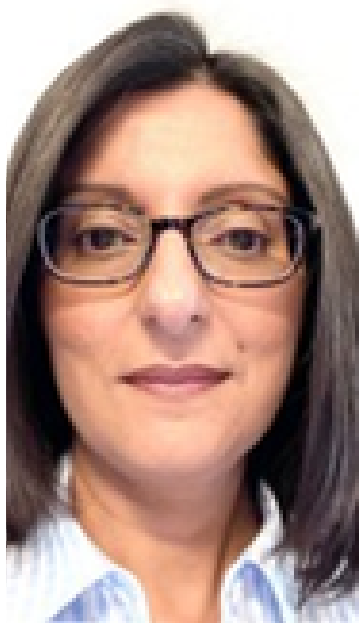
Our auditory systems are arranged in a tonotopic manner. Tonotopy is the representation of sounds of different frequencies in different regions. This organizing principle is conserved from the inner ear up to the auditory cortex. But how neurons of the inner ear (which are the first cell types to form during its development) acquire their tonotopic positions is poorly understood. The neurons of the inner ear delaminate from a sensorineurogenic epithelium in the ventral part of the otocyst. Delaminated neuroblasts then condense to form the acoustico-vestibular ganglion (AVG). As they differentiate, the neurons connect mechanosensory hair cells (HCs) of the inner ear with their targets in the hindbrain in a precise topographical manner. However, it is unclear how or when positional identities of neurons are specified within the AVG, such that topographical information from HCs is maintained into the auditory centers of the brain. Here, we find that the time of delamination from the otocyst correlates with neuroblast position in the ganglion. Using markers for neuronal differentiation, we find that the ganglion differentiates from a dorsal to ventral wave. Neurons that differentiate first innervate the vestibular apparatus, including the lagena and the proximal regions of the BP. Using sequential somatic cell labeling, we find that the central projection also follows a similar dependency on delamination order. Our studies show that the time of delamination of otic neuroblasts presages their target innervation choice and fiber positions within the developing eighth cranial nerve. We suggest that temporal information specifies the spatial identities during early inner ear neuron development.



Dr Surjit Singh Saini is a post doctoral researcher in the Physiology, Development and Neuroscience (PDN), department at Cambridge. Currently he is working on the evolution and development of an unusual sense in some animals viz., electroreception. He achieved his Ph.D. in the Developmental biology of the inner ear at the prestigious National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), Bangalore. Surjit is completely self taught after his school years, graduating by taking courses in an open University, while in full time employment and supporting a family. He hopes that his experience and example of succeeding to gain entry into two prestigious institutions, NCBS and Cambridge will inspire others like him who do not come from a privileged background.

## Exploring langar in the context of allergies, intolerances and coeliac disease - experiences of the sangat

Dr Amrit Kaur Daffu-O'Reilly  
(Keele University), Dr Kuldip  
Bharj (University of Leeds)



Amrit has worked in applied health research since 2006, focusing on preventing and managing heart disease and diabetes in South Asian communities. Her interests include understanding behaviour change barriers and co-designing interventions with target populations. She works with the Sikh community on improving the health value of langar in Gurdwaras. Based at the University of Leeds, Amrit is a mixed-methods researcher committed to reducing health inequalities and promoting inclusive research.

Langar is a community meal welcoming everybody inclusively into the Gurdwara, irrespective of background, religious affiliation, gender etc. There are no restrictions on who can consume langar, however, there are likely restrictions on those who can consume langar safely. Allergies, intolerances and conditions like coeliac disease are on the rise and receiving prominent attention in medical and other research areas. Allergies to certain foods can be life-threatening and intolerances can instigate the onset of unpleasant symptoms, such as bloating, diarrhoea and nausea, affecting health and wellbeing.

It is estimated that approximately 6% (2.4 million people) of the UK population have a clinically confirmed allergy, at least 30% of UK adults have a food intolerance and at least 1 in 100 people have coeliac disease, though as estimated 500,000 people remain undiagnosed. The only way to manage allergies and intolerances is to carefully avoid exposure to harmful foods and to use appropriate medication when needed. For coeliac disease, the only way to manage this condition is to follow a lifelong gluten free diet. There are no statistics available on the incidence of allergies, intolerances or coeliac disease specifically for the Sikh community.

Langar often contains a mix of ingredients and it is currently not standard practice in all Gurdwaras to highlight common allergens when serving langar. Ingredients that might be of concern to langar include nuts, often used in barfi and other confectionary, dairy produce and gluten (found in chapatti flour). To date, there is no published research relating to this topic " little is known about the experiences of those consuming langar and about safety practices in Gurdwaras. The purpose of this research is support Gurdwaras to implement safe practices and ensure the wellbeing of the sangat. The presentation will report on a survey that is currently being undertaken to address this issue. It will detail the processes used for this national survey that sets to gather data on the experiences of the sangat who consume langar specifically related to allergens, food intolerance and coeliac disease. In this presentation preliminary findings will be shared and will explore a way forward to extend this work in further enhancing safe management of allergies, intolerances and coeliac disease in Gurdwara settings.

## Epistemic Justice in Climate and Health Research in Southeast Asia: Challenging Global North Dominance in Ethics and Equity

Gurpreet Kaur, SOAS and UNU IIGH

This presentation will focus on a recent scoping review of epistemic justice in climate and health ethics, focusing on Southeast Asia (SEA). Despite the region's acute climate vulnerability, its ethical and equity frameworks remain overwhelmingly shaped by Global North paradigms that marginalize local knowledge, languages, and lived realities. By analysing global and regional literature across philosophy, bioethics, political ecology, gender studies, and Indigenous scholarship, the paper exposes how epistemic injustice through testimonial silencing, hermeneutical exclusion, and linguistic dominance perpetuates colonial hierarchies in research and policy. While global frameworks identify justice, rights, and interdependence as ethical imperatives, they remain largely abstract, Western-centric, and insufficiently action-guiding for Global South contexts.

The review finds SEA climate health research to be fragmented, technocratic, and externally led, with critical gaps in language inclusion, Indigenous and territorial justice, gender and LGBTQ+ equity, and culturally grounded conceptions of health. It argues that decolonizing the climate health nexus requires centring epistemic justice through community-led knowledge co-production, embracing pluriversal ethical frameworks, and expanding health beyond biomedical models to include relational, ecological, and spiritual dimensions. The paper links these ethical imperatives to emerging legal obligations following the International Court of Justice's 2025 Advisory Opinion on States' obligations regarding climate change, reframing justice, equity, and health as not only moral claims but enforceable duties. Ultimately, it calls for a paradigm shift from extractive, Global-North epistemologies to plural, decolonial, and intersectional ethics that recognise Southeast Asian communities as epistemic agents and moral authorities in shaping just climate health futures.



Dr. Gurpreet Kaur is a visiting scholar at SOAS, University of London, and a consultant with United Nations University's International Institute of Global Health (UNU IIGH). She works on the intersections of climate justice, gender, and health, employing an interdisciplinary approach. At SOAS, her research focuses on legal humanities. She is an endometriosis survivor and was on a wheelchair for five years. Her interest in pursuing international law and policy towards justice was cemented during these years as she experienced first-hand through disability that disempowerment can take various forms and shapes. Gurpreet has worked at Climate Outreach (UK), was the Human Rights and Inclusion Steering Committee member at Climate Action Network UK (CAN UK), and holds consultative status with the WHO on sexual and reproductive health and rights. She is also a TEDx speaker and has just finished writing a poetry collection on experiences of endometriosis in the South Asian community.

## Keynote: Embodied Constraint: Sikh Bodies and Secular Discipline in France

Dr Andrew Milne, University of Bordeaux-Montaigne



Andrew Milne is Senior Lecturer at the University of Bordeaux-Montaigne. His main areas of research are related to diasporic studies, particularly the Sikh diaspora in France and the United Kingdom, collective memory, nationalism and national identities. His latest publication, "Sikhs of France and the United Kingdom: A Powerful Diaspora and the Quest for Recognition", was published by Routledge in December 2025.

When discussing the particularly unique French form of secularism, debates traditionally revolve around religious symbols in public spaces and schools. This is primarily due to Law 2004-228 of March 15, 2004, which is the regulatory text in the French Republic concerning religious clothing. However, this paper intends to move away from that and focus on embodied religious practice.

I argue that this is not simply a question of visibility of those religious symbols but bodily integrity itself. For observant Sikhs, uncut hair (kesh) and its protection through the wearing of a turban are not optional markers of identity. They constitute a core dimension of the body as divinely given by Waheguru. The removal or modification of these elements (through obligation rather than choice) is experienced not as a form of compromise with the law, but as a form of corporeal violation. The use of interviews conducted with Sikh individuals in the Paris region will be fundamental to understanding this.

Following Talal Asad's (2003) claim that secularism relegates the understanding of religion to the notion of simple belief, it is, therefore, mental and internal, rather than a bodily experience. This does not fit in with the Sikh understanding of religion, since Sikhism has embodied practices, discipline and a form of dress. Sikhism fails to map easily on to the definition of religion by secular states. Secular frameworks do not always function solely through prohibition. They also regulate religion through setting limits, by classifying practices as being acceptable or excessive, with legal codification. This regulatory logic transforms religions into inward, moderate and non-disruptive, or compatible forms that are in line with liberal Western societies. State secularism, therefore, governs dress, gesture, ritual and physical behaviour. In other words, it affects embodied life.

That governance of embodied life leads to Sikhs in France being obliged to recalibrate their bodies across different social spaces. I will show through the interviews undertaken that Sikhs bring into play strategies such as removing the turban at school gates, reconfiguring hair so that it is less visible, or, cutting it entirely. These adaptations are a form of discipline, "docile bodies" (Foucault, 1977), with power becoming inscribed into the body, rather than being imposed upon it. Schools, as disciplinary spaces, regulate appearance and enforce conformity, through adaptive behaviour and modification.

Asad demonstrates that secularism defines what is acceptable religion, while Foucault shows that power works on the body. I argue here that the state, therefore, shapes religion and reshapes the body. If that (self-)disciplinary action is repeated, it leads to habituation, and the normalisation of altered bodies, which will bring about generational change, or what will be referred to as “embodied assimilation”. Normalisation produces new subjectivities over time, and thus, deviation from the norm may be attenuated or become less visible.

Regulation of Sikh bodily practices can be understood in France as disciplinary power, one in which secularism restricts religious expression, and actively produces compliant, docile bodies through processes of normalisation via self-regulation. Since secularism reshapes bodies into the private sphere, then they are split across contexts, and thus experience “fragmented embodiment”. The lived body is supposed to be continuous and a unified experience that is pre-reflective, (Merleau-Ponty, 1945). Yet Sikhs become aware of their bodies. I use the term “fragmented embodiment” to describe the way Sikhs are compelled to recalibrate bodily practices taking into consideration the institutional contexts. They generate, therefore, discontinuous bodily existences, which shift, or are sometimes in conflict. To illustrate that fragmented embodiment, one interviewee pointed out that he removed “the turban at the school gate”, only to “retie it immediately afterwards”.

For Sikhs, this embodied constraint through secular discipline is not simply a matter of adaptation or identity conflict. Rather, what is at stake is a spatial and institutional splitting of the body itself.



**Professor Narinder Singh Kapany (1926-2020)**

Having completed his graduation at Agra University, and then completing a PhD at Imperial College London, Narinder Singh Kapany went on to work with Professor Harold Hopkins and invent the fibre optics technology that we use today in every aspect of technology - particularly in data communication and the internet. Kapany is known as the 'Father of Optics'. Although Kapany's contribution to modern day telecommunications is tremendous it is often forgotten.

Sikhs in Academia aims to bring focus to Sikh academics who should be being cited in university classes as world leaders and contributors to research.

**Spotlight**

## Romanizing Gurmukhi for the Sikh Sacred Music Exams

Anmol Kumar Patrai, South Asian Music Committee and Mangalpreet Singh MPharm PgCert (CEPIP) MRCPharm (Aston University)



Anmol graduated from the University of Warwick in 2025 after studying BSc. Mathematics and Philosophy. During his time at Warwick, Anmol began learning tanti saaj which he viewed as a unique chance to learn more about his culture compared to opportunities available in his hometown of Darlington. Since moving back home he has continued to practice with his taus whilst working in an Independent Financial Advisory Firm.

The Sikh Sacred Music exams were created to give students the ability to study cultural instruments and traditions whilst also offering formal accreditation that could give UCAS points. Whilst similar exams have existed for many Western instruments, the aural nature of the Indian Classical Music system posed many challenges; this discussion focuses on issues via using the International Standard ISO15919 to transliterate Gurmukhi.

The two main challenges revolved around how different schools may use slightly different pronunciations, and that in certain roman-script vowel combinations, pronunciations could be misleading when compared to the original Gurmukhi. Any discretionary changes to ensure the ISO was as close to the Gurmukhi had to be strictly justified and represented in a manner that is clear and unambiguous for pronunciation purposes.

This discussion aims to highlight the importance of maintaining the original Gurbani while providing a comparable Romanised transliteration for students. This allows for greater inclusion and provides pronunciation guidelines for examiners when reviewing the Gurbani sung by exam sitters, with application to future works requiring transliteration of Gurbani and other scholarly Indic scripts.

Mangalpreet is a registered pharmacist and academic at Aston University, where he balances his working week between teaching in Higher Education and clinical practice in GP surgeries.



He contributes to both undergraduate and postgraduate education, teaching Public Health and Pharmacy Law. In addition, he is the Module Lead for the Postgraduate Independent Prescribing programme, where he supports the professional and clinical development of pharmacists working in practice. Alongside his academic and clinical work, Mangalpreet holds several executive committee roles, through which he contributes to strategic thinking and collaborative decision-making across a range of organisations and professional networks.

Beyond his professional responsibilities, Mangalpreet is learning to play the Dilruba, a traditional Sikh string instrument. He is deeply honoured to serve as a core reviewer for the Sikh Sacred Music examinations, helping to oversee the final review and approval of curriculum content before formal publication.

## Looking inside stars by listening to their sounds

Mr Anhad Bagga, Dr Anne-Marie Broomhall, University of Warwick

Throughout history, stars have been at the epitome of human curiosity. We have been trying to study them from an incredible distance, using specialised telescopes, and even observing in wavelengths not visible to the human eye. Despite technological advancements, peering through the stellar surface into the interior layers remains a challenge, as surface temperatures can easily burn electrical components. So, to get a glimpse into the deep layers, the only method would be to listen to the sounds travelling through the interiors. In this talk, Anhad will discuss how we observe and measure these sounds, and how we use them to infer the 'physics' deep inside the stars. Finally, he will present my research on magnetic activity in red giants, offering a glimpse into the future of our own Sun and the magnetic evolution of stars.



Anhad Bagga is a PhD researcher in Astrophysics at the University of Warwick. Anhad hails from India and has completed his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Tirupati. For their research, Anhad works on studying the oscillations or pulsations of stars - or "starquakes" - to unravel the mysteries of physics deep inside the stars. From this research, Anhad aims to contribute to the study of the Sun and its impact on Earth.



Long before global conversations on institutional representation began, **Professor Inderjit Kaur Sandhu** (1923–2022) was quietly breaking the glass ceiling at the highest echelons of academic leadership.

In 1975, she made history by becoming the Vice-Chancellor of Punjabi University, Patiala—shattering traditional gender barriers as one of the first female Vice-Chancellors worldwide and the first Sikh woman to lead a university in Northern India.

Her legacy extends far beyond the campus gates. During the 1947 Partition, she led critical relief work to rehabilitate over 400 refugee families. Later, from 1980 to 1985, she became the first woman to chair the Staff Selection Commission in New Delhi. Professor Kaur's life stands as a powerful testament to what happens when we place formidable, intellectual leadership at the table. She didn't just witness history—she wrote it.

Spotlight

## The Physic(al) Process: A tale of trial and error in a quantum world

Ganga Manchanda,  
University of Oxford & IBM

We provide a brief introduction to the scientific method as applied to physics, emphasising the role of mathematical formalism in the construction and refinement of physical theories. Following this we discuss two elements of quantum mechanics --- superposition and wavefunction collapse --- to demonstrate the fundamentally non-classical nature of the framework. Though the application of quantum theory has been widely successful over the last century, certain pathologies cannot be ignored. We present three of these in order of increasing severity: the problem of limitation, the problem of interpretation, and the problem of existence. Specifically, we consider the limitations of quantum mechanics through its failure to be reconciled with general relativity, the empirically equivalent Copenhagen and many-worlds interpretations of quantum mechanics, and we examine the justifications for the existence of a grand unified theory in light of Gödel's incompleteness theorems.



Ganga Singh Manchanda is a doctoral researcher in quantum computing at the University of Oxford and IBM. He holds an MSc in Quantum Fields & Fundamental Forces and a BSc in Physics with Theoretical Physics, both from Imperial College London. Initially in quantum gravity, his research interests have moved towards Hamiltonian simulation for which he holds an EPSRC Industrial Doctoral Landscape Award.



When we talk about shifting the needle from informal activism to rigorous intellectual power, we must look to the giants of scholarship within our own community. Enter **Dr. Hardial Singh Sainbhy** of Jagraon, Punjab—one of the most academically qualified individuals on the planet.

Dr. Sainbhy has transformed a passion for learning into an unparalleled legacy. He has amassed a staggering 16 Master's degrees across diverse disciplines (including History, Political Science, and Religious Studies), alongside 5 Postgraduate Diplomas, an LLB law degree, and 4 advanced diplomas. His life proves that the Sikh appetite for deep scholastic rigor is boundless. However, his journey also reminds us of our core mission: we must build the strategic infrastructure to channel this incredible individual intellectual capacity directly into institutional policy and national community leadership.

**Spotlight**

## Hidden in Plain Sight: Sexual Violence, Silence and Accountability in Sikh and Panjabi Communities

Jasvir Kaur Rababan MBE,  
University of California  
Riverside

This paper presents findings from my MA thesis on sexual abuse and violence in Sikh and Panjabi spaces. Drawing on original community based data, it examines how sexual harm is shaped by cultures of silence, stigma, gendered power and communal pressure and asks how these dynamics affect disclosure, response and accountability. The research argues that abuse cannot be understood solely at the level of individual experience but must be situated within broader social and cultural structures that often protect reputations over survivors.

The presentation identifies key patterns in how sexual violence is obscured, normalised or left unaddressed, while also considering the emotional, social and communal consequences of such silencing. In doing so, it highlights the urgent need for culturally literate, survivor centred and accountable frameworks for safeguarding within Sikh and Panjabi contexts. By addressing a subject that has often remained marginal within both academic discourse and community conversation, this paper contributes to broader discussions on gendered violence, ethic and responsibility in minority religious and cultural spaces.



Jasvir Kaur Rababan MBE is a PhD researcher in Religious Studies at the University of California, Riverside, working at the intersection of Sikh studies, music, trauma and decolonial thought. Her research examines Kirtan as medicine, with particular attention to embodiment, healing and the epistemic force of Sikh sacred sound. Internationally recognised as a leading female rabab player and scholar-practitioner, she has played a significant role in the revival of Sikh musical heritage. Her work also engages questions of gendered violence, abuse and accountability in Sikh and Panjabi contexts, bringing rigorous scholarship into conversation with advocacy, community healing and public leadership.



Spotlight

**Professor Jasvinder Singh** is a distinguished Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). He holds various roles, including Director of the Cochrane Musculoskeletal Group Satellite Centre and the Health Services Foundation Gout clinic. With over 500 manuscripts, 20 book chapters, and 34 editorials, he is a highly acclaimed researcher. Prof. Singh, recognised as one of the 'Best Doctors in America' annually since 2011, was awarded the prestigious Max Cooper Award in 2017. He is the world's most cited Sikh professor, with over 160,000 citations.

## Sikh Heritage Projects

Gurinder Singh Mann, Sikh  
Museum Initiative, and fellow  
University of Leicester

This presentation will focus on two new Sikh heritage projects that seek to deepen understanding of Sikh history, material culture, and representation in the United Kingdom. Together, these initiatives explore both the physical journeys of Sikh artefacts and the narrative constructions of Sikh identity within historical media, offering complementary perspectives on heritage, memory, and colonial legacy.

The first project, the Toskhana Project, investigates the pathways through which Sikh relics and artefacts were removed from the Punjab and transported to Britain during the nineteenth century. Following the annexation of the Sikh Empire, a systematic process of acquisition, redistribution, and display took place, resulting in the dispersal of culturally and religiously significant objects across museums, private collections, and institutional holdings in the UK. This project traces those trajectories, examining archival records, museum catalogues, and provenance data to reconstruct the movements of these items over time. By mapping these routes, the Toskhana Project not only reveals the mechanisms of colonial collecting but also raises important questions about ownership, restitution, and the ethical responsibilities of contemporary institutions. It aims to provide greater transparency and accessibility regarding Sikh artefacts, while engaging descendant communities in conversations about their cultural heritage.

The second project in association with the University of Leicester centres on the digitisation and analysis of Victorian newspapers that reference the Punjab and Sikh communities. Newspapers from this period played a significant role in shaping public perceptions of the British Empire and its subjects, often framing events and peoples through imperial ideologies. By digitising a wide range of these publications, this project creates a repository that enables researchers to examine how Sikhs and the Punjab were represented in the British press. It highlights recurring themes, language, and imagery, shedding light on how narratives of loyalty, martial identity, and exoticism were constructed and circulated. Furthermore, the project opens up new opportunities for interdisciplinary research, combining digital humanities methods with historical inquiry to uncover patterns that might otherwise remain obscured.

Together, these two projects demonstrate the value of integrating material and textual approaches to heritage research. While the Toskhana Project foregrounds the movement and materiality of Sikh objects, the newspaper digitisation project illuminates the discursive contexts in which Sikh identities were framed and understood. Both initiatives contribute to a more nuanced and critical understanding of Sikh heritage in Britain, emphasising the lasting impact of colonial histories on contemporary collections and representations. This presentation will outline the methodologies and future directions of both projects, highlighting their potential to inform academic research, museum practice, and community engagement. By bringing these strands together, it underscores the importance of collaborative, transparent, and critically informed approaches to the study of Sikh heritage



Gurinder Singh Mann is a Sikh historian and Director of the Sikh Museum Initiative. As well as an Honorary Fellow at the University of Leicester. He holds an MA in South Asian Religions from De Montfort University and has authored four books on Sikh history. He has spent over 25 years researching Sikh artefacts and delivering global lectures and convening international conferences. Gurinder has curated major exhibitions, led innovative digital heritage projects including curating the Anglo Sikh Virtual Museum and statue installations. The documentary on his life *The Sikh Scholar* premiered at the SikhLens Festival in California in 2024.

## Maternal Mental Health in South Asia Mothers in the UK

Gurkarishma Dhillon, University of Oxford

The perinatal period presents a critical window for mental health interventions, as women are particularly vulnerable to the onset and exacerbation of mental health conditions. Despite the availability of perinatal mental health services in the UK, women from South Asian background encounter significant barriers in accessing and utilizing these services. This qualitative study aims to explore the experiences, needs, and barriers that South Asian women encounter during the perinatal period.

### Methods:

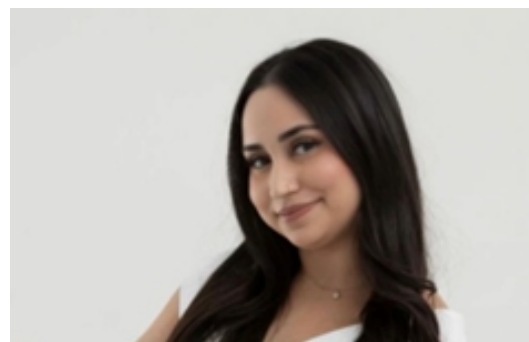
A scoping review has been conducted, exploring the context of perinatal mental health among South Asian women in the UK. Data were coded in NVivo and analysed using thematic analysis. A qualitative study will examine women's experiences, challenges, and opportunities related to perinatal mental health. 4 focus groups and 5 semi-structured interviews, will be conducted in Birmingham and Leicester with 25 participants, including South Asian women with and without lived experience, family members, carers, charity workers, and healthcare professionals.

### Results:

The review identified four main themes within the existing literature: difficulties in communicating symptoms of distress, cultural views perpetuating stigma and hindering help seeking, family and community perceptions as supportive and detrimental, and lastly, a lack of cultural awareness amongst healthcare providers and systems. Findings from the qualitative study are currently being analyzed and are expected to be completed by May 2026.

### Discussion:

This research adds better understanding of the lived experiences of South Asian women in the UK with perinatal mental health problems. The findings will support approaches addressing the unique needs of ethnic minority populations in the UK and promote culturally sensitive, community-based approaches to address perinatal mental health problems.



Gurkarishma Dhillon is an MSc student in Women's and Reproductive Health at the University of Oxford, with an Honours BSc in Kinesiology from York University. Her research focuses on equitable, culturally competent healthcare for underserved populations. Beyond her academic endeavors, Gurkarishma is the Co-Founder of the Punjabi Women's Network, a community group with over 1000 members dedicated to advancing the academic and professional pursuits of Punjabi women globally.

## Guru Nanak in Tibet

Guvinder Singh Akali,  
Independent Researcher

There are journeys that history records, and there are journeys that history forgets. The travels of Guru Nanak through the Himalayan world belong, in large measure, to the second category "preserved not in the archives of empire or the ledgers of scholarship, but in shrine traditions, oral memory, sacred geography, and a body of esoteric literature whose very existence has been, until recently, either unknown or deliberately set aside. This paper proposes a rigorous, critically grounded enquiry into that forgotten terrain. Drawing upon the Janam Sakhi literature, Tibetan textual sources, material culture, and living oral traditions documented across the Himalayan borderlands "Sikkim, Nepal, Tibet, and the sacred sites of the Tso Pema region" it examines the evidence for Guru Nanak's passage through these landscapes and the contemplative exchanges his presence appears to have occasioned. The Guru's reception within Himalayan communities under the appellations Guru Gomka and Lama Nanak, the appearance of Jalandhar and Amritsar within the Chakrasamvara Tantra, and the remarkable resonances between his charisma and the tradition of Guru Rinpoche are treated here not as doctrinal assertions but as historically significant data demanding careful, dispassionate analysis. The paper's methodological commitments are firm. It neither conflates distinct traditions nor dismisses the evidence of their contact. It attends instead to the shared sacral geography, the parallel contemplative epistemologies, and the symbolic vocabularies that suggest a world of religious exchange far richer and more complex than post-colonial reformism has allowed us to see. Within the Sikh tradition itself, esoteric texts of uncertain but suggestive provenance point toward a depth of yogic and contemplative understanding "including striking affinities with Dzogchen treatments of the nature of mind" that the rationalising pressures of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries systematically obscured. A substantial portion of the evidence for this enquiry remains undocumented: shrines, oral histories, local memory, material remains. This paper is therefore archival and ethnographic in ambition as much as it is hermeneutical "an act of recovery as much as of analysis. With over thirty million Sikhs worldwide and comparatively little scholarly literature available in English, the need for work of this kind is considerable. What follows is a beginning.



Guvinder Singh is Curator of Eastern Antiquities and Director of Indian Philosophy at Watkins Books, Cecil Court, London. He holds an MA in Traditions of Yoga and Meditation from SOAS, University of London, and a BA in Theology and Philosophy from the University of Roehampton. A scholar-practitioner rooted in the Nihang Khalsa tradition, his research spans Sikh Studies, Tibetan Buddhism, Christian mysticism, and comparative contemplative philosophy. He is a certified yoga therapist, trainee counsellor, and a commissioned chaplaincy candidate within HM Armed Forces. His translation and editorial work engages classical Gurmukhi, Braj Bhāṣā, and Sanskrit sources, with a particular focus on recovering lost yogic and esoteric dimensions of the Sikh tradition."

## Navigating the Spirit: IPA and Timeline Analysis of Non-Baptised Sikh Domestic and Abuse (DVA) Survivors.

Harjinder Kaur-Aujla, University of Birmingham

### Introduction

Research into domestic violence and abuse (DVA) within minority communities often utilises a "cultural-deficit" model, stripping trauma of its ontological weight. For Sikh survivors, abuse is a profound spiritual and social dislocation. This study moves beyond Western clinical frameworks to explore how trauma reverberates through the Sikh theological and cultural landscape. Importantly, evidence suggests that domestic abuse is not more prevalent within any single faith community; rather, it remains a universal social issue.

### Methods

The study employs Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to capture the "double hermeneutic"—the researcher's interpretation of the survivor's own sense-making. This is integrated with a Life Course Perspective, examining how abuse intersects with *Grishti Jeevan* (the householder stage) and a longitudinal timeline formulation from the survivor's lens.

### Results

Preliminary analysis identifies DVA as a "biographical interruption" to the Sikh life-cycle. Core constructs like *Izzat* (honor) and *Chardi Kala* (resilient optimism) act as double-edged swords: *Izzat* often enforces silence, while *Chardi Kala* is frequently reclaimed as a catalyst for spiritual and cultural belonging. Healing is defined by the successful re-negotiation of one's place within the *Sangat* (community) and a re-alignment with spiritual needs. Insights into psychological well-being reveal that for many, the reclamation of the feminine identity serves as an essential compensatory anchor—a way to console the self and maintain agency through crisis points. The welfare of children in this decision-making process, was paramount to all women that came forward.

### Discussion

This research has highlighted that 'survival' for Sikh women, does not always mean to leave the relationship. It suggests that recovery requires healing through support, a desire for therapy, intermediaries and "spiritual reclamation." There is a critical need for culturally-grounded family mediation interventions, specifically the "Dehli Model" of mediation, which navigates the threshold between individual safety and the best interest of the family unit. This approach restores spiritual dignity by placing women and children in the driving seat of their own destinies, providing robust communal support.



Harjinder Kaur-Aujla is a prominent British mental health professional, academic, and advocate. She is a BABCP-accredited Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapist and a Registered Mental Health Nurse with over 20 years of experience in the NHS and private sectors. Key Areas of Expertise

## From Knowledge to Skills: Examining the Role of Industry in Shaping University Curricula

Harpaul Dhindsa, University of Lincoln

Across the UK higher education sector, the development of graduate skills and employability has become a central driver of curriculum design. Universities are increasingly encouraged to work closely with industry through advisory boards, professional accreditation, work integrated learning, and degree apprenticeships. These forms of engagement are commonly framed as enhancing relevance, improving graduate outcomes, and strengthening institutional links with employers. While there is a growing body of literature examining employability and skills development, less attention has been paid to how industry engagement shapes curriculum design processes and academic decision making in practice. This paper contributes to this discussion by offering a reflective, practice informed examination of industry influence on university curricula.

Drawing on professional experience within a UK university, the paper explores how skills oriented agendas are enacted at programme level, particularly during curriculum design, validation, and review. Rather than evaluating industry engagement as inherently positive or negative, the analysis focuses on the processes through which industry perspectives are translated into curriculum structures, learning outcomes, and assessment practices. The paper is informed by insights from curriculum theory and higher education research, particularly debates concerning the relationship between disciplinary knowledge, skills development, and the changing purposes of universities.

The presentation will highlight a series of anonymised observations from academic practice, including the growing prominence of employability language in programme documentation, the role of employer input in shaping learning outcomes, and the ways in which academic staff negotiate external expectations while attempting to preserve disciplinary integrity. These examples are used to explore broader questions about what kinds of knowledge are prioritised within contemporary curricula, how academic autonomy is experienced in practice, and how skills agendas are interpreted and enacted across different disciplinary contexts.

A key contribution of the paper is its emphasis on the lived realities of curriculum work. By foregrounding practitioner perspectives, it seeks to move beyond abstract policy discussions and offer a grounded account of how skills and industry agendas are embedded in everyday academic practices. The paper also reflects on the potential tensions and synergies between skills development and knowledge based education, considering whether current approaches risk narrowing curricular aims or, alternatively, open opportunities for more meaningful engagement between universities and the world of work.

The paper concludes by inviting dialogue rather than prescription. It poses a series of questions for conference participants concerning how institutions might balance industry engagement with broader educational values, how skills development can be integrated without displacing disciplinary knowledge, and how academics can be supported in navigating these complex demands. In doing so, the paper aims to contribute to ongoing conversations about the future of university curricula, the role of skills in higher education, and the implications of industry influence for academic practice.



Harpaul Singh Dhindsa is a higher education professional at the University of Lincoln, with experience in curriculum development, programme validation, and industry engagement. His work sits at the intersection of academic practice, employability, and learning and teaching policy, with a particular interest in how external stakeholders influence curriculum design and decision making in universities. Harpaul is currently exploring doctoral research examining the role of industry in shaping university curricula, drawing on critical perspectives from higher education studies and curriculum theory. His research interests include employability agendas, academic autonomy, and the relationship between knowledge and skills in higher education.

## Chardi Kala: A Cultural Orientation to Adversity in Sikh Communities

Komal Grewal, Deakin University, Australia

Culture shapes how individuals interpret and respond to adversity. This influence may operate implicitly through everyday practices, and shared norms or more explicitly through named constructs that articulate socially valued ways of enduring difficulty. Examining such constructs contributes to broader discussions of how collective cultural frameworks shape interpretations of adversity and responses to hardship.

Chardi Kala, a Punjabi concept commonly translated as 'ever-rising spirit,' represents one such construct. Although Chardi Kala is commonly used in everyday conversation, including as a response to 'How are you?', and is recited daily in Sikh prayer, it has not yet been examined within psychological research. To explore its psychological meaning and application, we conducted 14 semi-structured interviews with Sikh adults (7 women, 7 men) investigating (a) how Chardi Kala is defined and (b) the contexts in which it is most salient. Interviews were conducted in English or Punjabi according to participant preference.

Using reflexive thematic analysis, we identified four interrelated themes that comprise Chardi Kala: (i) an enduring orientation of steady uplift, (ii) acceptance of limited control and reinterpretation of adversity, (iii) persistence and active engagement, and (iv) collective meaning and belonging. Participants described Chardi Kala as a socially reinforced orientation that situated adversity within collective narratives of persecution, sacrifice, and endurance. Hardship was understood as part of an ongoing historical and ethical continuum rather than solely as an individual challenge to be met. Within this framework, coping was oriented less toward relief or emotional regulation and more toward perseverance. Participants described responding with steady uplift and continued engagement, regardless of whether resolution was likely. To our knowledge, these findings provide the first empirical psychological exploration of Chardi Kala. They suggest that shared cultural frameworks may shape not only how adversity is interpreted, but also what it may mean to cope well with hardship within a certain context. A subsequent quantitative study (n=561) validating a measure of Chardi Kala and examining its associations with psychological functioning and cultural adaptation in Sikhs is currently under analysis.



Komal Grewal is a Doctor of Psychology (Clinical) candidate at Deakin University, Australia. Her research focuses on culturally embedded responses to adversity, with particular attention to Sikh and Punjabi contexts. Drawing on both qualitative and quantitative research methods, she examines how culturally rooted constructs such as Chardi Kala inform understandings of stress, coping, and resilience. Komal has a strong interest in statistics and research methodology, which underpins her approach to rigorous and culturally sensitive psychological research. Her broader interests include cross-cultural psychology and the development of culturally grounded approaches to mental health and wellbeing.



### **Bawa Kartar Singh (1886-1960) Professor of Chemistry, Nominator for Nobel Prize and direct descendant of Guru Amar Das Ji**

Only 10 Indians were ever asked to send proposals for the Nobel Prize, one of which was BK Singh while he was an Emeritus Professor of Chemistry at the University of Allahabad in the 1940s. Singh completed postgraduate studies at Cambridge University in the early 1900s and then taught across India after returning, at Dacca, Lahore and Patna. Punjab University, Chandigarh failed to honour Singh during his lifetime but now holds memorial BKS lectures to commemorate his contributions to Chemistry.

Spotlight

## Between Silence and Seva: Sikh Perceptions of LGBT+ Inclusion in Contemporary Communities

Pritpal Bhullar, Birmingham City University

This paper examines Sikh perceptions of LGBT+ inclusion, drawing on survey data collected in 2023 and 2026 across the UK and diaspora communities. It explores how awareness, cultural norms, and lived experiences shape attitudes toward sexuality and gender identity within Sikh spaces, with particular attention to the gap between theological principles and social practice.

This topic matters because Sikh teachings emphasise equality, dignity, and Sarbat da Bhala (the welfare of all), yet many LGBT+ Sikhs continue to experience silence, marginalisation, or conditional acceptance within their communities. As conversations around inclusion gain greater visibility globally, Sikh institutions and communities are increasingly being called upon to reflect on how their values are enacted in practice. Understanding these perceptions is therefore critical not only for fostering inclusive environments, but also for ensuring that Sikh ethical principles are meaningfully realised in contemporary contexts.

Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data, the paper highlights several key findings. While there is a relatively high level of familiarity with basic LGBT+ terminology, understanding becomes more limited when engaging with gender identity and related concepts. A clear generational divide emerges, with younger Sikhs demonstrating greater openness compared to older generations. Crucially, the research identifies a distinction between tolerance and acceptance: many respondents support respectful treatment of LGBT+ individuals, but fewer endorse their full inclusion in visible or leadership roles within religious and community spaces. This reflects a form of conditional inclusion, often shaped more by cultural norms than theological doctrine. The study also foregrounds a pervasive culture of silence, which limits dialogue and contributes to the invisibility of LGBT+ Sikhs. The audience will gain three key insights. First, a nuanced understanding of how Sikh perceptions of LGBT+ inclusion are formed and expressed across different demographics. Second, an appreciation of the distinction between Sikh theology and socio-cultural practice, and how this shapes contemporary attitudes. Third, practical considerations for fostering more inclusive Sikh spaces, grounded in both empirical evidence and Sikh ethical frameworks.

The paper will be delivered through a structured presentation combining data visualisations, anonymised qualitative excerpts, and thematic analysis. It will begin with an overview of the research context and methodology, followed by a presentation of key findings, and conclude with a set of evidence-based recommendations. Time will be incorporated for reflection and discussion, encouraging audience engagement and dialogue on this often-underexplored topic.



Pritpal Bhullar is a UK based researcher, writer, and community advocate exploring the intersection of Sikh identity, faith, and human rights. His work focuses on LGBT+ inclusion within Sikh communities, using survey data and dialogue to examine how cultural norms and theological principles shape perceptions. He is particularly interested in bridging the gap between values such as equality and Sarbat da Bhala and lived experiences of inclusion. Alongside his research, he writes on identity, marginalisation, and social change, and facilitates conversations to encourage more open, compassionate, and informed engagement within community spaces.

## How I turned my PhD research into an educational handbook From Thesis to classroom: Translating Research on Sikh Decolonisation into an Educational Handbook

Vishal Sangu, Open University

This paper reflects on how my doctoral research on contemporary Sikh engagements with decolonisation was translated into an educational resource for secondary school students in Britain. My PhD examines how Sikhs actively decolonise identity across cultural practice, religious interpretation, political activism, and debates around statehood, challenging the marginalisation of Sikhi within decolonial work in Religious Studies. Drawing on qualitative research with British Sikhs, the project traces how decolonisation operates from everyday practices to public advocacy, policy discourse, and media representation.

The presentation focuses specifically on my collaboration with the charity The Brilliant Club, through which I developed an academic handbook for secondary students entitled *What Does It Mean to Be a Sikh? Sikh Migration: History, Identity, and Impact*. The handbook introduces pupils to Sikh history in Britain through key themes including early encounters with empire via Maharaja Duleep Singh, post Partition migration, experiences of racism and resistance, and contemporary diasporic politics, faith, and debates around Khalistan. Combining historical, textual, and visual sources with lived experiences and testimonies, the course encouraged students to interrogate identity, migration, and belonging, questions central to my doctoral research. Students engaged with maps, religious texts, media coverage, and government reports, developing skills in historical enquiry, critical thinking, and cultural literacy.

By reflecting on this process, the paper demonstrates how PhD research on British Sikhs can generate meaningful public impact, intersect with education and policy, and offer a model for early career researchers seeking to translate specialist scholarship into accessible and socially relevant outputs.



Vishal is a final year PhD candidate at the Open University, based in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, in the Religious Studies department. Vishal's research looks at how and why contemporary Sikhs are actively decolonising their identity. The discipline of Religious Studies has engaged with decolonisation but has overlooked narratives within Sikhi. He undertakes qualitative research, looking at how interlocutors in the study provide context to decolonisation, tracing how they decolonise their identity stemming from their cultural practices to advocacy of statehood.

## To what extent did transboundary governance and dam operation shape the severity of risk leading to the 2025 Punjab floods beyond the effects of extreme monsoon rainfall?

Puneet Ark, University of Manchester

This paper examines the extent to which transboundary governance and dam operations shaped the severity of the 2025 Punjab floods beyond the effects of extreme monsoon rainfall. Flood hazards are often explained primarily through meteorological extremes, yet disaster scholarship shows that flood impacts are produced through interactions between environmental hazards, infrastructure systems, and institutional arrangements. This is particularly significant in transboundary river basins, where upstream operational decisions, unequal control over infrastructure, and uneven access to hydrological information can strongly influence downstream exposure. Focusing on the eastern Indus Basin, this study analyses the 2025 Punjab floods as a case through which to evaluate how dam governance, institutional coordination, and treaty design shaped flood risk across political boundaries.

The dissertation adopts a single case study approach and uses a qualitative methodology supported by quantitative evidence. It combines thematic conceptual analysis with a time-series analysis of hydrological conditions, reservoir operations, flood warnings, and downstream impacts between late August and early September 2025. The dataset is based entirely on secondary material, including peer-reviewed literature, institutional reports, flood monitoring updates, and credible news reporting. A PRISMA-informed screening process was used to select relevant material, and the case was analysed through six concepts developed from the literature review: floodplain sensitivity, release timing and operational decisions, information sharing and transparency, institutional rigidity and adaptability, upstream control and downstream exposure, and legal compliance versus effective risk governance.

The findings show that extreme monsoon rainfall was the primary hydrological trigger of the floods, but that flood severity cannot be understood through rainfall alone. Intense precipitation across northern India generated rapid inflows into the Ravi, Sutlej, and Chenab systems, while simultaneous high flows across multiple tributaries placed exceptional pressure on downstream infrastructure in Pakistan's Punjab. Upstream reservoir releases were not the sole cause of flooding, but their timing mattered because controlled discharges entered river channels already under severe tributary pressure, contributing to downstream flood propagation. Information sharing mechanisms remained active during the event, yet the timing and precision of flood notifications were limited in their operational usefulness for downstream preparedness. Although the Indus Waters Treaty continued to function, it remains structured primarily around water allocation rather than real-time cooperative flood regulation during extreme events. The dissertation argues that the 2025 Punjab floods were produced through the interaction of hydrological extremes and governance conditions. Upstream-downstream asymmetries in infrastructure control, restricted adaptive coordination, and pre-existing floodplain vulnerability all influenced how extreme flows were transmitted and experienced across the basin. As Sikhs, this research also carries particular significance in highlighting the importance of supporting and engaging with scholarship that centres Punjab's rivers, communities and environmental challenges within wider debates on transboundary flood governance. More broadly, the study shows that understanding flood disasters in regulated transboundary basins requires attention not only to rainfall intensity, but also to how institutional structures distribute authority, information, and exposure across space.



Puneet is a final-year BSc International Disaster Management and Humanitarian Response student at the University of Manchester, with interests in flood risk management, climate resilience, and environmental protection. She is passionate about applying research to real-world challenges affecting communities exposed to environmental hazards. Puneet has developed skills in Geographical Information Systems (GIS), risk analysis, and environmental policy through her own study. As a Sikh student and previous Sikh society president, presenting at Sikhs in Academia, she is committed to increasing Sikh representation in environmental fields and supporting inclusive, community focused approaches to resilience.

## People still go on this stereotypical view of a mild, meek, quiet South Asian woman. British South-Asian Women Academics experiences in HE.

This project focuses on exploring the experiences of British South-Asian women academics in HE. The work builds on exploring the diverse identities and ethnicities of women of colour in academia/HE, which risk being homogenised within the 'BAME' categories. The PhD project explores the themes of identity, positionality, and intersectionality.

Previous research exploring the identities of South-Asian adolescent girls highlights the public discourse held towards South-Asian women. For example, the work of Ludhra and Jones (2009) and Shain (2003) discusses the stereotypes associated with South-Asian girls, which present them as a homogeneous group who lack individuality and power. While their work focuses on the experiences of South-Asian girls in school settings and the younger age group, it does provide a critical perspective on how the stereotypes associated with their identities shape South-Asian women's experiences, regardless of the institutions they are in. The misconceptions and stereotypes of being a group that is lacking individuality, perceived as passive and meek, contribute to the experiences of British South-Asian women in academia. The impact of these stereotypes is evident in the experiences they have, regardless of the role or position they hold in academia (Gill, 2026).

Using a qualitative approach, the project employs semi-structured interviews, drawing out stories and voices from 10 British South-Asian women working in academia in various roles, from lecturer to leadership roles.

The project is currently in its coding and data analysis stages. For the conference, the focus will be on the methodological approach to data analysis and creating a codebook to capture the nuances of the participants' experiences. The process of unpacking qualitative data and stories can be long and rigorous. The aim of the process is to capture the unheard stories of participants in a way that not only reveals common patterns but also reflects their unique experiences. The presentation for the conference will focus on how a codebook was developed, as well as some emerging themes.



Senior Lecturer and PhD student in The Division of Education at De Montfort University, Leicester. Her research interests include social justice, race and gender, identities, positionality, creative methods and technology. She is currently working on her PhD (part-time), exploring the identities and experiences of South-Asian women in academia.

## Remembered Borders: Oral Testimony and the Legacy of Partition in India

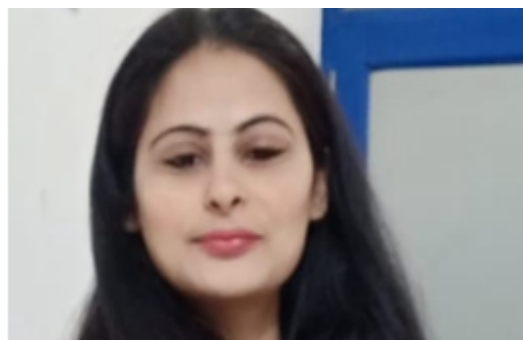
The Partition of India in 1947 stands as a defining moment in South Asian history, marking not only the creation of new national borders but also the emergence of enduring social, cultural, and psychological divisions. This paper, 'Remembered Borders: Oral Testimony and the Legacy of Partition in India,' examines how oral testimonies illuminate the lived experiences of Partition and shape its continuing legacy in postcolonial India. By foregrounding personal narratives, the study seeks to move beyond official histories and state-centric accounts, offering a more nuanced understanding of how memories of displacement, violence, and loss are preserved, transmitted, and reinterpreted across generations.

Central to this research is the use of oral history as both a source and a methodological tool. The paper draws extensively on my long-term engagement with the 1947 Partition Archive since 2018 through which I have conducted and collected hundreds of interviews with Partition survivors. These testimonies provide invaluable insights into individual and collective experiences that are often absent from written archives. As a methodological approach, oral history enables the recovery of marginalized voices while also revealing the interpretive nature of memory itself—its silences, contradictions, and emotional textures.

The study argues that the 'borders' created in 1947 were not merely territorial but deeply embedded in personal and collective consciousness. Through oral testimonies, these borders are remembered, negotiated, and sometimes reimaged, reflecting ongoing processes of identity formation and belonging. Survivors' narratives frequently traverse geographic and temporal boundaries, linking past experiences of migration and violence with present-day understandings of nationhood, community, and self. In this sense, memory becomes an active force in shaping the afterlives of Partition, rather than a passive recollection of historical events. Furthermore, the paper engages with the politics of memory by examining how certain narratives gain prominence while others remain marginalized within dominant discourses. Oral testimonies challenge homogenized national histories by highlighting diverse experiences shaped by factors such as religion, gender, class, and region. At the same time, the study acknowledges the complexities inherent in oral history, including issues of selective recall, nostalgia, and retrospective reinterpretation. These aspects underscore the need to approach oral testimonies critically, recognizing them as dynamic and context-dependent forms of knowledge.

By situating oral narratives within broader debates on memory, trauma, and postcolonial identity, this paper demonstrates how the legacy of Partition continues to resonate in contemporary India. The persistence of remembered borders—both physical and symbolic—reveals the unfinished nature of Partition and its ongoing impact on social and political life. Ultimately, this study highlights the significance of oral testimony not only as a means of documenting the past but also as a powerful methodological tool for understanding how history is lived, remembered, and continually reshaped.

Rajwinder Kaur, Government College Danewala, Malout, Punjab, India and Inderjit Kaur is an experienced Punjabi educator and Assistant Professor at Guru Nanak Khalsa college for women Ludhiana



Dr. Rajwinder Kaur, Assistant Professor of History at Government College Malout, holds a Ph.D. from Panjab University on Punjab's post-partition religious politics. Her research spans modern India, partition witness interviews for the USA-based 1947 Partition Archive, drug issues with Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi, and presentations at Oxford University.

Inderjit Kaur is an experienced Punjabi educator and Assistant Professor at Guru Nanak Khalsa college for women Ludhiana since 2009. Holding an M.Phil, she manages academic examinations, youth festivals, and evaluations. Both scholars actively contribute to research, seminars, and burning cultural or social issues within the Punjab region.

## Utilising a dual moderator approach in focus groups to evaluate maternal health programmes in diverse communities

Rohit Sagoo, University of  
Bedfordshire



Rohit Sagoo is a Children's Nurse, academic, and PhD student at the University of Bedfordshire, with over 20 years' experience across clinical practice, education, and research. His doctoral work focuses on maternal and child health inequalities and evaluates community-based interventions to improve outcomes for underserved populations. Rohit is a member of the Race Equality Engagement Group (REEG) with the Cabinet Office, contributing to national discussions on equity and policy. He is also the founder of British Sikh Nurses, leading community health initiatives to address disparities, and is widely recognised for his leadership, advocacy, and commitment to improving health equity.

Maternal and child health interventions increasingly require culturally competent, inclusive methodologies to capture the lived experiences of service users in multi-ethnic and socioeconomically deprived contexts. The Starting Well Partnership Programme (SWPP) in Luton, UK, was developed to improve maternal and early childhood outcomes through community-based, preventative interventions. Evaluating such programmes requires approaches that can sensitively explore complex and often emotionally laden experiences of pregnancy, childbirth, and parenting. Traditional single-moderator focus groups may limit participant engagement where issues of trust, cultural dynamics, and researcher positionality are present.

### Objectives

This study examined the effectiveness of a dual-moderator focus group methodology in capturing nuanced perspectives from service users and providers, and its contribution to the evaluation of WPP implementation and delivery in a super-diverse population.

### Methods

A qualitative design was adopted to address objectives 3 and 4 of the SWPP evaluation. Data were collected through five focus groups and one semi-structured interview with mothers and expectant mothers (n=19), as well as SWPP practitioners and volunteers (n=10). A dual-moderator structure was implemented, comprising a lead moderator who guided the discussion and a co-moderator who observed group dynamics, facilitated inclusivity, and provided cultural and relational support. Notably, the inclusion of a female co-moderator with established community relationships helped mitigate potential gender and power imbalances, particularly when a male researcher led discussions on sensitive maternal health topics. Sessions were conducted in both virtual and face-to-face formats. The study was underpinned by a critical realist and pragmatic epistemological stance and analysed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis, supported by NVivo.

### Results

The dual moderator approach enhanced psychological safety, trust-building, and participant engagement. It enabled deeper exploration of culturally embedded and intersectional experiences, including emotional well-being, access to services, and structural barriers shaped by socioeconomic and linguistic factors. Participants reported valuing the empathetic and informal environment, which facilitated openness when discussing sensitive issues. The co-moderator played a critical role in interpreting non-verbal cues, managing group dynamics, and ensuring all voices were heard, leading to richer and more authentic data. Facilitators observed greater depth, reflexivity, and inclusivity compared to traditional single-moderator approaches.

### Conclusions

The dual moderator model represents a robust methodological enhancement for qualitative maternal health research in diverse communities. Addressing issues of positionality, cultural competence, and power dynamics strengthens the validity, inclusivity, and depth of qualitative inquiry in complex public health evaluations.

### Key message

Dual moderation fosters culturally safe spaces and enhances the richness and credibility of maternal health research with marginalised populations.

## A Qualitative Study of Healthcare Professional Perspectives on Community Pharmacy's Role in Cardiovascular Disease Prevention for Minority Ethnic Groups

A Qualitative Study of Healthcare Professional Perspectives on Community Pharmacy's Role in Cardiovascular Disease Prevention for Minority Ethnic Groups

### Background:

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) continues to disproportionately affect minority ethnic communities in the UK, with persistent inequalities despite ongoing prevention initiatives. Community pharmacies "embedded within local neighbourhoods and highly accessible" are well placed to contribute to preventative care. However, their potential to address these disparities is not fully realised. This study examined healthcare professionals' (HCPs) views on how community pharmacy can support CVD prevention among minority ethnic groups.

### Methods:

A qualitative design was used, involving semi-structured interviews with twenty purposively sampled HCPs. Data were analysed thematically. NHS ethical approval was secured.

### Results:

Participants included community pharmacy staff (n=12), general practice pharmacists (n=4), a nurse (n=1), a hospital pharmacist (n=1), and general practitioners (n=2). Most were of British South Asian background (n=12).

Three overarching themes were identified:

- 1) Cultural, social and structural influences on access, including socioeconomic determinants of access; culture; language and communication; and trust.
- 2) HCP and service delivery dynamics, encompassing community pharmacy workforce alignment with community needs and professional attitudes; and service design, adaptability and innovation.
- 3) Engagement, resources and organisation-level influences, covering messaging, promotion and engagement strategy; and resources.

HCPs highlighted the need for proactive, community-centred approaches that recognise the specific barriers and facilitators shaping minority ethnic groups' engagement with CVD prevention.

### Conclusion:

Community pharmacies have potential to reduce cardiovascular health inequalities among minority ethnic groups. Realising this requires culturally responsive, accessible, and proactive service models that address barriers related to workforce diversity, trust, service design, communication, and language, ultimately strengthening engagement and supporting CVD prevention.



Rumanveer is a community pharmacist with over a decade of experience and a second-year PhD researcher specialising in qualitative methods, and the role of community pharmacy in cardiovascular disease prevention among minority ethnic groups in the UK. His work integrates professional expertise with lived experience to explore the factors that shape access to preventive care. He is currently conducting qualitative research exploring patient, carer and practitioner perspectives to inform more equitable community pharmacy led CVD prevention. Alongside his doctoral work, he continues to practise as a locum community pharmacist, maintaining close connection to everyday patient care."

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## Year Eights Accessing Healthcare Careers (YEAH!): A Widening Participation Initiative

Sukhi Ubhi, Imperial College  
London

Widening participation in healthcare careers remains a key priority in addressing workforce shortages and improving representation across the sector. Early intervention is increasingly recognised as critical in shaping young people's aspirations, particularly among underrepresented communities. The Year Eights Accessing Healthcare Careers (YEAH!) programme was developed as a targeted outreach initiative designed to engage pupils at an early stage in their educational journey, providing insight into the breadth, accessibility, and rewards of careers in healthcare.



Sukhi holds a Bachelor's degree in Sociology, a Master's in Education and AFHEA status. She has worked in secondary and higher educational institutions and through her role as MEdIC Co-ordinator has developed a keen interest in outreach and widening participation for underrepresented communities. Sukhi co-ordinates the Widening Access to Careers in Community Healthcare (WATCCH) programme for Year 12s and more recently co-created the Year Eights Accessing Healthcare (YEAH!) Careers workshops at Imperial.

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## The Effect of Acute Sex Hormone Fluctuations on Vascular Recovery Post Acute Exercise in Eumenorrheic Exercising Females

The menstrual cycle is characterised by acute fluctuations in sex hormones, primarily oestrogen and progesterone. Oestrogen is believed to be cardioprotective, with regularly menstruating females (eumenorrheics) demonstrating increased resting endothelial function, limb blood flow, and vascular reactivity in high oestrogen phases. However, contrasting studies suggests no effect of acute hormonal variations on vascular function. Limited evidence exists on the effect of acute exercise on vascular function, as measured using flow mediated dilation (FMD). As such, this study aims to investigate the time-course recovery of vascular responsiveness and recovery across the menstrual cycle phases. Eumenorrheic females were tested at three stages of the menstrual cycle phase: early follicular (EF), late follicular (LF) and mid-luteal (ML). Cardiovascular measures include heart rate, blood pressure, brachial flow mediated dilation (FMD), forearm blood flow (venous occlusion plethysmography), and radial arterial stiffness (pulse wave analysis). Cardiovascular measures were taken pre-exercise, and at 30-, 60- and 120-minutes post-exercise. Participants completed 30 minutes cycling at 60% peak power output on a stationary cycle ergometer. This study is still in the data collection phase. Preliminary data suggests there is no statistically significant difference in arterial stiffness or forearm blood flow between the three phases pre- and post- exercise. Current results may suggest there is no need for a standardised phase when investigating exercise-induced vascular responses, and may provide greater insight into the cardiovascular modulatory effects of endogenous oestrogen that may not be evident under basal conditions, although data collection will need to be completed before conclusions.



Harjot Kaur Punni is a Postgraduate University Teacher in Physiology and Nutrition at Loughborough University, contributing to teaching across undergraduate and postgraduate modules. She is also actively involved in equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) within teaching at Loughborough. Harjot is completing a PhD exploring the cardiovascular consequences of oestrogen and energy deficiency in physically active females. Her research focuses on female physiology and cardiovascular and metabolic health, with a broader aim of improving understanding and support for females in sport and exercise science.

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## An examination of the correlation and compromises of Ofsted, The National Curriculum, and Physical Education in British Schools

Tarandeep Singh Malhi,  
University of Portsmouth

Physical Education (PE) is a core national requirement in the English National Curriculum (NC) that is timetabled for all children up to the age of 16. It requires students to acquire a mix of physical, social, and cognitive competence through sports. This study reports on levels of inclusiveness within the PE curriculum in a sample of 30 British secondary schools that had recently undergone an Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) inspection. This was done through close document analysis of the PE curriculum maps of these schools, which are available in the public domain. Using a grounded theory approach, inductive thematic analysis was applied to identify themes such as sporting activities, teaching methods and pedagogy, opportunities within the curriculum, and skills and knowledge taught. The primary findings show that the information available through the school websites was disseminated mainly through the sports that the NC highlighted, implying that the schools' best approach to spreading PE knowledge is through organised sports. as well as secondary curriculum designs, knowledge, and assessments, that are more concerned with NC aims and objectives rather than considering inclusive practice and alternative sporting activities for their students.



Tarandeep Malhi is an Associate SENDCO and author of Bernstein's Theory in PE Design, Tarandeep drives evidence-based cultural change. By developing the SEVA framework, Tarandeep integrates social, emotional, and academic success. Connecting doctoral research on the National Curriculum (2024) to the classroom, Tarandeep ensures equitable, personalized support for every student's needs. (48 words)

Eva

A lecturer and researcher since 2005, Eva directs postgraduate research and leads Early Childhood Studies. Her expertise in research methodology and professional practice fosters academic excellence and robust student mentorship.

## Preparing the Body for Sikh Contemplation: A Somatic Framework for Simran and Sehaj

Vikass Hothi, Independent  
Researcher

Sikh contemplative practices such as Simran, Paath, Naam Japna, and shabad-centred listening place central emphasis on inner stillness, Sunneea (deep listening), Sehaj (effortless balance), and Visram (restful repose). While these states are richly articulated within Sikh scriptural and theological discourse, the embodied conditions that support their emergence—posture, breath regulation, fascial tone, and autonomic balance—have received comparatively limited sustained attention within Sikh Studies (Taneja 2017; Mandair 2022). This paper proposes a somatic and phenomenological framework for preparing the body—mind of the Sikh practitioner for contemplative engagement.

Drawing on Daoist Neigong principles of internal softening (song) and foundational wuji alignment, Chan/Zen accounts of attentional stabilisation and non-interference, and Vedantic Haáha formulations of posture as sthira sukham Ansanam, the paper integrates these with contemporary research in fascia, respiration, and autonomic regulation (Brennan 2016; Mallinson & Singleton 2017; Myers 2020; Porges 2011). These influences are presented non-theologically as somatic grammars rather than imported belief systems and are explicitly framed as preparatory supports for Sikh contemplative aims rather than replacements.

The paper introduces a structured five-stage somatic framework—quieting, sinking, easing, gradual slowing, and integrated softness—through which the practitioner progressively reduces unnecessary muscular tension, restores diaphragmatic function, and cultivates structural neutrality. This process facilitates a shift from effort-driven practice toward embodied receptivity, aligning physiological conditions with the experiential qualities described in Sikh contemplative literature. By articulating the relationship between somatic preparation and contemplative depth, this work offers a novel contribution to Sikh Studies, positioning the body not as incidental but as foundational to contemplative realisation. It provides a practical and theoretically grounded model for both scholars and practitioners, while remaining fully consistent with Sikh epistemological and spiritual aims.



Vik Hothi is a UK-based researcher, educator, and martial arts instructor specialising in embodied training and somatic development. He holds a First-Class BSc in Sports and Exercise Science and has over two decades of experience teaching movement, internal practices, and martial systems, alongside training in structural integration.

He is the founder of Shaolin Martial Arts and author of *The Doctrine of Wing Chun*, which explores the relationship between structure and embodied intelligence in martial practice. Building on this work, his research examines somatic preparation in contemplative practice, developing cross-traditional frameworks supporting Sikh approaches to meditation, stillness, and embodied awareness.

06

# The Digital Inclusion Project

**Advancing Faith-Based Digital Access to Strengthen Academic Opportunities in Coventry**  
**Harjinder Kaur Aujla and Mangalpreet Singh**





## Introduction and Background

The Sikhs in Academia (SiA) Sikh Digital Inclusion Programme aims to bridge the digital divide within Sikh communities by promoting faith-based digital literacy as an early intervention strategy. By integrating technology with culturally responsive education, the programme seeks to improve academic success, access to online resources, and community engagement for Sikh pupils of school age and is being piloted in Coventry. Specifically, we partnered with Coventry City Council and organised the allocation of 20 free refurbished laptops to families below given income thresholds, and where one child was studying towards their A level examinations. We were supported by Gurudwara Nanaksar Foleshill Road Coventry. The pilot project was a huge success, and we plan to expand this across other regions in the coming year.

### Objectives

- Increase digital literacy among Sikh students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Strengthen access to laptops, ensuring students can engage with technology alongside academic development.
- Collaborate with universities, Gurdwaras, and community organizations to provide structured digital inclusion support based on family financial need.
- Address barriers to technology access, ensuring parents are equipped with the necessary digital tools and security tools to support their children through primary and secondary school education.
- Capacity built with other charities/organisations in the area including a Gurdwara to support learning through provision of a laptop in communal settings.

### Programme Implementation

This initiative involved several key strategies:

- Identifying Stakeholders: We worked with Coventry Council to secure a tenure of twenty lap-tops for parent to support home learning
- Prioritisation: We developed a financial criteria including consideration of extreme hardship through a SiA digital inclusion panel
- Partnerships: Collaborating with Coventry Council, Coventry Gurdware and Sikh Union Vaisakhi festival attendees and online networks to publicise the project
- Resources and Education: Ensuring project leads were competent and DBS checked to deliver introductory training and information on parental controls including AI.

A programme supporting Sikh families in Coventry by boosting digital skills, providing laptops, and working with community partners to improve learning, confidence, and access to online education.

### **Programme Implementation**

This initiative involved several key strategies:

- **Identifying Stakeholders:** We worked with Coventry Council to secure a tenure of twenty lap-tops for parent to support home learning
- **Prioritisation:** We developed a financial criteria including consideration of extreme hardship through a SiA digital inclusion panel
- **Partnerships:** Collaborating with Coventry Council, Coventry Gurdware and Sikh Union Vaisakhi festival attendees and online networks to publicise the project
- **Resources and Education:** Ensuring project leads were competent and DBS checked to deliver introductory training and information on parental controls including AI.

### **Expected Impact**

By prioritising faith-based digital inclusion, the programme will:

Improve academic performance and technology access to Higher Education for Sikh students.

Empower young Sikhs with digital tools for both professional and personal growth.

Promote home-based digital learning provision to reduce educational disparities.

Include parents of low socio-economic background in their child's education and digital security needs

### **Useful Research**

Mattes, A., Haselbacher, M., Limacher, K., & Novak, C. (2024). Religion and politics of belonging in digital times: Youth religiosity in focus. *Frontiers in Political Science*, 6. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2024.1476762>



