



THE SIKH MESSENGER

A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF THE
NETWORK OF SIKH ORGANISATIONS, U.K.



Lord Singh speaking at the United Nations Conference in Geneva

“In the face of extremism in this Country, there are few places where one can feel safer than in the company of a large number of Sikhs who have always shown their loyalty and understanding of our society.”

-- Rt Hon Lord Tebbit. House of Lords 27 June 2016

AUTUMN / WINTER 2016

With Compliments

to

The Network of Sikh Organisations

from

Guru Nanak Trust

Jasvinder Singh Kohli
Tel: (Mob.) 07957 362 66 44

With Compliments

From Amar Subhag Kaur and
Sundeep Singh Maker
Maker Properties

The Lord first created Light :

*From the Lord's play all living creatures came,
And from the Divine light the whole creation sprang.*

Why then should we divide human creatures

Into the high and the low?

G G S p 1349

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THE SIKH MESSENGER QUARTERLY

Autumn / Winter 2016

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EDITORIAL

Sikh Contribution to House of Lords Debate on British Values

EDITOR

In the last few years of the 20th Century, I was part of the Lambeth Group of religious representatives from the major faiths that met regularly at Lambeth Palace to plan celebrations of the new millennium and the layout and content of the Faith Zone at the Millennium Dome. We were conscious of the fact that in the 20th century more people had died in war and violent conflict than in the rest of recorded history.

I was asked to head a small group to draw up a list of values for peace and justice in the 21st century. As a start, I put forward a list based on the guidance of the Gurus and the teachings of the Guru Granth Sahib. With little modification it became the list of agreed values. It was prominently displayed in the Faith Zone and then filed away in the archives of Lambeth Palace, and repositories of other faiths. Fast forward a few years. Another meeting in Lambeth palace addressed by a charismatic preacher from the States. The gist of his talk, what the world needed was a list of values! We have had no end of lists of values.

There is plenty of guidance about living a good and responsible life in our different religious books and for most faiths it can be put on one sheet of A4. The problem is that the teachings are easy to state but extremely difficult to live by. So we humans find surrogates and alternatives for true and difficult commitment like rituals, penances and pilgrimages. Such actions give a sense of satisfaction and spirituality, but as Guru Nanak the founder of the Sikh faith observed, they are not worth a grain of sesame seed. The Guru taught that it is living true to such teaching that counts.

The task then given to the 9 successor Sikh Gurus was to live the teachings in challenging political times.

One of today's values is tolerance and respect for others. Guru Arjan the 5th Guru showed this respect by inviting a Muslim saint Mia Mir to lay the foundation stone of the Golden Temple. The Gurdwara was constructed with a door at each of its 4 sides to denote a welcome to all coming from any geographic or spiritual direction. Inside the temple or gurdwara and in all gurdwaras, a vegetarian meal called langar is served to all without any distinction of caste or creed. When the Moghul emperor Akbar visited the Guru, he too was asked to sit and eat with people of different social backgrounds. The Guru also added verses of Hindu and Muslim saints in the Sikh holy book the Guru Granth Sahib to show no one faith has a monopoly of truth.

But as I said, living true to universal human values is not easy. The Guru was arrested and tortured to death in the searing heat of an Indian June, for daring to suggest that there was more than one way to God. Sikhs commemorate the martyrdom, not by any show of bitterness, but by serving cool refreshing drinks to all near their homes or gudwaras.

Some years back, I organized this free distribution of free cool summer drinks in Hyde Park and later in Trafalgar Square. The initial reaction of the Hyde Park authorities was not encouraging. You can't do that sort of thing in a royal park; you'll get everyone doing it! It could be the end of civilization, as we know it!

Guru Arjan's successor Hargobind was imprisoned in Gwalior fort for his belief along with 52 princes. On the festival of Diwali, the emperor said that popular Hargobind was free to leave as a gesture of goodwill. The Guru refused to leave unless the 52 innocent princes imprisoned with him were also freed, emphasizing the importance of individual liberty for all—another British value.

In living true to exacting values the 9th Guru gave his life defending the right of Hindus, those of a different religion to his, to freedom of worship. Guru Gobind Singh the last human Guru of the Sikhs emphasized the importance of democracy—another British value. The Sikh turban is to remind us of our sometimes forgotten pledge to live by our ideals and values.

The values I've spoken off and the values taught in Britain today are in fact universal values taught by different faiths, and should I believe be referred to as such to emphasise they are not unique to Britain. We urgently need to go beyond simply making lists or paying lip service to universal human values and incorporate them as the founders of our faiths intended, into how we live move and have our being.

It is hypocritical to talk of a commitment to democracy and pally up to tyrants like the rulers of Saudi Arabia, or say, as our trade secretary said a couple of years ago, that we should not mention human rights when discussing trade with China.

It is wrong that the weak and vulnerable in society should depend on charitable appeals for basic necessities when their needs should be a first charge on us all. It is wrong to talk of respect for all and then use families settled here for generations as bargaining chips in our dealings for Brexit. Britain has led the world in many ways. My hope is that we will now lead in closing the gap in our long suffering world between values we all accept and the lure of self interest in both personal dealings and the way we view the wider world.

Visit to Amritsar

*☞The place is enchanting
And Beautiful is the Pool
The waters are ambrosial
And full is the Pool*

*At daytime the holy Granth
Was enthroned and read
It was laid to rest at night
After prayers were said*

*The much cherished Granth
Became central to the Sikh way
The Guru and the Granth
Are our guide night and day ☞*

*A poem from the book 'Sikh Gurus' by the
late S Jaswinder Singh Chadha*

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RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY

TALK GIVEN AT THE UNITED NATIONS PALAIS DES NATIONS GENEVA 22-9-16

Lord (Indarjit) Singh Vice Chair APPG International Religious Freedom

It is a real pleasure to be with you to give a Sikh perspective on Religious Literacy and Freedom of Religion and Belief Today, religion is very much in the news - often for the wrong reasons. Religion, and religious bigotry are often wrongly seen in the public mind as one and the same thing. There is therefore, a clear need for religious literacy to help us distinguish between religion and the misuse of religion.

Basic literacy

Unfortunately, instead of explaining the essentials of different religions and what motivates people of faith, the inter faith industry has made religious literacy a subject for academics who voice their understanding in highly abstruse and difficult to understand lectures and seminars. We need the basics in clearly understood language.

Let's start with Sikhism: a little known religion in the West, although tens of thousands of Sikhs gave their lives for the West in two world wars and were briefly welcomed with smiles and flowers. Today, Sikhs are confused with Muslims and often referred to as Bin Laden, although, as you will see, they are clearly two different faiths.

Sikhism is a religion with about 25 million followers that began in Punjab some five and a half centuries ago; a religion that believes in one God who is beyond birth and timeless. Teachings stress the equality of all members of our one human family, full gender equality, rejection of all notions of race or caste and a commitment to tolerance and respect between different religions; a belief that God isn't a bit impressed by our different religious labels, but in what we do in serving our fellow human beings. That is all anyone needs to know about Sikhs and Sikhism in my understanding of basic religious literacy.

We need to adopt the same basic approach in looking at other religions, and then go on to look for and rejoice in shared commonalities, and be aware of irreconcilable differences that should be questioned, respected, or possibly be challenged.

The real purpose of religious literacy is to remove dangerous ignorance. Prejudice thrives on ignorance and leads to irrational hate. We all know that in a fog or mist, even normally familiar objects like a tree or bush can assume sinister or threatening proportions. It is the same with people of different religions or cultures when we see them in a mist of ignorance and prejudice. Remove the fog or mist of ignorance and we see them as fellow human beings.

Let me now talk briefly about Freedom of Belief:

Article 18 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights declares that we all have a human right to practice and manifest our religion, and in precept at least, it is binding on all members of the UN. Unfortunately, the Declaration is often more honoured in its breach than in observance.

There are two difficulties-

1. Secular society can, at times, be antagonistic to beliefs that they may regard as a challenge to secular politics.
2. Arrogant behaviour of religions and factions in religions that look down on both other religions and secular society.

Secular Challenge. A history of oppressive religion in France at the time of the French Revolution, led to religion being seen as a threat to material progress, leading it to it being banished to the margins of society. In France and some other countries any public manifestation of religion like a Sikh turban is banned, despite France being a signatory to the UN Declaration of Human Rights. A European Court of Human Rights ruling that discrimination against the turban is illegal is simply ignored. Ironically France's narrow interpretation of secularity is similar to the narrow interpretation of religion by some religious bigots. Today we need to understand that a truly secular state is one in which all systems of belief can flourish and in which no religion or system of belief dominates political life to the exclusion of others.

Sikhs reflect on this discrimination against the manifestation of religious belief as we mark the centenary of World War 1, in which tens of thousands of Sikh soldiers were briefly welcomed with flowers before going on to fight and die in the freezing and vermin infested mud filled trenches of the Somme, and in Gallipoli and other battlefields, fighting for those who now discriminate against the turban. We feel particularly bad as the Sikh turban reminds us to be true to freedom of belief, tolerance and respect for others.

Demonising of religion in schools is also counter-productive. If children do not acquire some basic religious literacy in school, they will simply carry their ignorance and prejudices to adult life. In the USA, which bans the teaching of religion in schools, the first person murdered in revenge for 9/11 was a Sikh. This was followed by other incidents including Sikh worshippers being shot dead in a gurdwara in Wisconsin as a result of mistaken identity. Such incidents, also suffered by other faiths, result from ignorance and prejudice.

Religious arrogance and rivalry

Freedom of Religion does not carry a right to harm or disparage others; it must conform to basic human rights including full gender equality. Historical religious texts sometimes contain harsh strictures on geographic neighbours and other faiths at a time of the early development of that faith, as well as dated social attitudes. These have become embedded not only in some religious scriptures, but also in the psyche of unthinking believers. These need to be removed or disregarded if religion is to realise its true role in society.

As a Sikh, I believe that that a major impediment to religious harmony is the claim that the one God of us all is prejudiced or biased towards any particular faith, or that ours is the only way to God. This is not only insulting but a recipe for conflict. In the same way, the killing of innocents in the name of God, is the ultimate blasphemy.

Discussion in this area is also made more difficult by a jargon jungle of pejorative language. Words like fundamentalist, extremist, moderate, terrorist or Islamist do not enhance discussion and are simply used by governments and others to smear those they do not like. Let me give an example:

Many of you will be aware that in 1984 that the Indian government, pandering to latent majority Hindu racism in an election year, invaded the historic Sikh Golden Temple in Amritsar on one of the holiest days in the Sikh calendar, on the pretext that it housed some 'separatists'. Thousands of innocent pilgrims in the vast complex were brutally killed and much of the complex destroyed. The Indian propaganda machine labelled all practising Sikhs as terrorists and even sought to pressurise those like myself abroad, protesting in the media about the Indian Government action.

Early one Sunday morning two Scotland Yard police officers knocked on my front door. I invited them in and offered them a cup of tea. Somewhat embarrassed, they asked if I was an extremist or a moderate. I replied that I was extremely moderate. Then they asked if I was a fundamentalist. I replied 'well I believe in the fundamentals of Sikhism, like the equality of all human beings and commitment to work for greater social justice, yes I suppose I am a fundamentalist'. The two officers finished their tea and left thoroughly confused.

Negative Political Influence

Unfortunately, politicians throughout the world also show a reluctance to be even-handed in their approach to human rights and religious freedom, basing their stance on trade and power block politics. Some examples from Britain, but it's much the same across the world.

At the time of the mass killing of Sikhs in India in 1984, I went to see the British Home Secretary who I knew well and asked him why was the government silent on this near genocide. He turned to me and said 'Indarjit we know what is going on; we're walking on a tightrope; we have already lost one important contract (the Westlands helicopter contract) what can we do?'

More recently, a minister in the House of Lords rose to state that Her Majesty's Government wanted an international inquiry into human rights abuse in Sri Lanka. I rose and asked: 'will the government support a similar international inquiry into the killing of tens of thousands of Sikhs in 1984?' The minister's dismissive response: "that is a matter for the Indian government". The great human rights activist Andrei Sakharov declared: 'that there will never be peace in the world unless we are even-handed in looking to human rights'. We should heed his sane advice.

The trumping of trade over human rights was even blatant at the time of a visiting Chinese trade delegation in 2014. The Minister then responsible for trade publically stated that: "when we are talking trade with China, we should not raise issues over abuse of human rights." I have cited examples from Britain, but sadly most countries in the world behave in exactly the same way.

Conclusions

Religious literacy and inter faith dialogue is a basic need for religious harmony. It is too important to be the sole preserve of so-called scholars, or religious leaders who meet and

make virtuous pronouncements, and then go away to denigrate the beliefs of their inter-faith colleagues and say to their congregation that they and they alone, are the one true faith’.

We also need to urgently get away from arguments of religion versus secularity. They are not mutually exclusive and can be mutually enhancing. Religion emphasises responsible behaviour while secular politics emphasises behaviour that conforms to society norms. Religion emphasises ethical values that do not change with time and can or should underpin secular society. Basic religious literacy can not only show that different religions are not all that different in ethical values, but also that our shared ethical values can help make secular society more humane and caring and our world a more peaceful place.

THOUGHTS FROM GURBANI

Jab Eh Man Mai Karl Gumana

*When a man’s mind is obsessed with vanity
His self-conceit distorts his reasoning. He wanders in error.
When he thinks himself as dust at the feet of others,
Then he beholds the Lord in every one.
The fruit of humility is unforced joy,
This is the gift the Guru bestowed on me.*

*When a man judges his neighbour to be evil,
He is himself the victim of evil thoughts.
When he discards the distinction of ‘mine’ and ‘thine’
No man is then his enemy.*

*When a man clamours: ‘It is mine, it is mine.’
Then he is in the midst of many troubles
When he recognizes the Supreme Giver and Doer.
Then he is free from pain and free from sorrow.*

*When a man binds himself to worldly attachments.
He is caught up in the endless cycle of deaths and rebirths;
When all his worldly delusions are dissipated,
He attains to oneness with God.*

*The hunger for worldly wealth is never satisfied
The world’s thirst is not quenched
But let a man detach himself from worldly attachments,
And after his trial he shall prosper.*

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NETWORK OF SIKH ORGANISATIONS ANNUAL REPORT 2015-2016

Introduction

The Network of Sikh Organisations (NSO) is a registered charity linking more than 130 UK gurdwaras and other UK Sikh organisations in active cooperation to enhance the image and understanding of Sikhism and the Sikh community in the UK.

SECTION 1

MEDIA AND PARLIAMENT

PRESS RELEASES

Network of Sikh Organisations pushes BBC for ‘on-air’ correction – 31 Jan 2015

A guest on BBC Radio 2 incorrectly stated a victim of a machete attack in Wales was a Muslim. The NSO contacted the BBC to point out that the victim was in actual fact a Sikh

Under-Secretary of State ‘impressed’ with education provided by Sikh schools – 01 Feb 2015

Lord Nash highlighted his view on Sikh Schools in parliamentary debate

‘Sikh turban not cultural headwear but a religious requirement’ says Lord Singh – 27 Feb 2015

Lord Singh flags attacks on Sikhs in one-sided ‘Islamophobia’ debate – July 02 2015

The Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations (NSO) Lord Singh of Wimbledon has asked the government for parity in tackling hate crimes against all communities, not just Muslims

The Assisted Dying Bill (No.2) – 31 July 2015

Lord Singh challenges the proposed bill, highlighting the importance of ‘assisted living’ and caring for those around us is central to Sikh teachings. The bill was eventually defeated in the Commons.

Lord Singh's Lord's comments on the visit of President al-Sisi greeted with laughter and approval - 05 November 2015

Lord Singh highlighted the government's hypocrisy in entertaining leaders whose countries are responsible for human rights violations

Corbyn to raise 1984 Sikh genocide with Modi – 12 November 2015

The office for the leader of the Labour Party has said Jeremy Corbyn will be taking up the issue of the 1984 Sikh genocide with the Indian premier during his visit to Britain this week

NSO Director rejects invitation to meet Modi – 12 November 2015

The Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations (NSO), Lord Singh rejected an invitation to the 'UK Welcomes Modi' reception and dinner hosted by the Indian High Commissioner because of the Indian PM's reluctance to hold an independent inquiry into the mass killing of Sikhs in 1984.

Repercussions of Paris terror attacks on Sikhs – 20 November 2015

Senior government figures have contacted Lord Singh about a possible backlash against British Sikhs following the Islamic terrorist atrocities in Paris. Lord Singh informed the Head of Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) that attacks on Sikhs, and Sikh places of worship were a real possibility

Government fails to take anti-Sikh hate crime seriously – 7 December 2015

In October the government announced anti-Muslim hate crime would be monitored as a separate category across all police forces, providing parity with the recording of anti-Semitic hate crime. In contrast Britain's other minority faiths like Sikhs and Hindus are not separately tracked, although the government has given assurances it will address hate crime against all communities even-handedly

Signs of success in NSO's anti-Sikh hate crime monitoring campaign – 09 Dec 2015

The Network of Sikh Organisations (NSO) is pleased to acknowledge positive steps taken by the government, following its campaigning on the issue of separate monitoring for anti-Sikh hate crime

Lord Singh points to Saudi Arabia's 'medieval' interpretation of Islam in extremism debate – 24 December 2015

Lord Singh said, "my Lords, does the Minister agree that much of the conflict in the Middle East and the radicalisation of young Muslims in this and other countries is due to the export of a cruel and medieval interpretation of Islam from Saudi Arabia that has been rightly criticised by Dr Shuja Shafi, the Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain?"

Government review into funding for extremist interpretations of Islam – 07 February 2016

Lord Singh asks the government to be more precise about what they mean when they talk of ‘Islamic extremism’

Lord Singh appeals to Portuguese authorities in Parmjeet Singh case – 07 February 2016

Lord Singh appealed to the authorities in Portugal not to be used like pawns in a backdoor attempt by Indian authorities to silence criticism of their human rights record, and to return Paramjeet to British jurisdiction

Human rights abuses anywhere are the responsibility of us all, says Lord Singh – 24 February 2016

A question on how the government intends to respond to resolutions made at the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe condemning the actions of ISIS as genocide was the subject of a debate in the Lords earlier this month

Accusation of religious phobia should not stifle free speech – 26 February 2016

Debate was on the suppression of free speech in British universities. Lord Singh said “My Lords, debate should always be conducted in courteous terms but does the Minister agree that words such as “antisemitism” and “Islamophobia” and those relating to any other type of religious phobia should not be used as shields to stifle legitimate debate?”

Positive outcome in NSO’s campaign for separate recording of anti-Sikh hate crime – 04 March 2016

After a long campaign the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have confirmed that Police forces in England and Wales will be reporting on religious hate crime according to religion, and this will include Sikhism

Director’s involvement in other Parliamentary Activities

- 3 June 2015. Director re-elected Vice Chair All Party Parliamentary Group on International Freedom of Religion and Belief. (APPG FoRB)
- 16 June. Attended Parliamentary meeting on Faith and Society
- 8 September Attended meeting for APPG for Religion and Belief
- 14 September Telephone Conference on Sikh schools with Lord Nash Minister of State Education
- 20 October Meeting APPG Faith and Society
- 10 November Downing Street Reception for celebration of birthday of Guru Nanak
- 21 December Meeting with Baroness Anelay Minister of State Commonwealth and FO

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-
- 19 January 2016 Meeting ASPPG FoRB
 - 25 January Meeting with Greg Clarke Minister of State DCLG
 - 1 February Meeting with Fiona Bruce APPG RE
 - 3 February Meeting with Canadian MP Jagmeet Singh
 - 25 February Meeting with Fiona MacTaggart MP Portcullis House

Summary of Lord Singh contributions Hansard HOLS [2015-2016]

India: Religions Freedom - 17 March 2016

Speech highlighting the plight of minority faiths in India

Women discrimination - 8 March 2016

Does the Minister agree with the Sikh teaching that in conflict, enemy women should be regarded as mother, sister or daughter?

Freedom of Speech – 22 February 2016

My Lords, debate should always be conducted in courteous terms but does the Minister agree that words such as “antisemitism” and “Islamophobia” and those relating to any other type of religious phobia should not be used as shields to stifle legitimate debate?

Daesh Genocide - 9 February 2016

My Lords, when a few months ago I asked for government support for an international inquiry into supposed genocide against the Sikh community in India, I was told, in a very short reply, that it was solely a matter for the Indian Government. That was not a very Christian sentiment. Would the Minister agree with the sentiments of the Sikh Guru who gave his life defending the right of followers of another religion to worship in the manner of their choice? Human rights abuses against anyone are the responsibility of us all, and the Government should take every measure to bring those guilty of them to justice

Islam Extremism – 3 February 2016

My Lords, when we talk about Islamic extremism, should we not attempt to be more precise in what we are talking about? There are passages in the Koran that might have been relevant to the time when the infant Muslim community was under siege from all sides but may not be so relevant today. It is important that those passages be put in the context of today. Should the Government not be working with Muslim leaders to that end?

Saudi Arabia: Executions – 1 February 2016

My Lords, I cannot understand why we make only private representations to Saudi Arabia. Is not public condemnation much more effective?

Religious Hate Crime – 27 January 2016

Lord Singh pushing for equity for all faiths in the government's approach to hate crime

Saudi Arabia – executions – 13 January 2016

My Lords, by any sort of measure the regime in Saudi Arabia, with its beheadings, amputations and public floggings, is one of the most barbaric in the whole of the Middle East, yet our Government continue to look more benignly at that regime than at others in the area. There is a Christian hymn that states:

“They enslave their children's children who make compromise with sin”.

Does the Minister agree with this sentiment and agree that the overriding strategic interest for the 21st century is even-handed respect for the human rights of all people?

Counterterrorism Muslim communities – 21 December 2015

My Lords, does the Minister agree that much of the conflict in the Middle East and the radicalisation of young Muslims in this and other countries is due to the export of a cruel and medieval interpretation of Islam from Saudi Arabia that has been rightly criticised by Dr Shuja Shafi, the Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain? Should we not be doing much more to help people counter this extreme interpretation of their faith, which is doing incalculable harm to the image of Islam?

Syria and Iraq: ISIS – 8 December 2015

My Lords, does the Minister agree that we cannot destroy a negative ideology based on a harsh interpretation of medieval Islam by bombs and bullets alone? Is the Minister aware that the Muslim community and Muslim leaders have condemned Daesh, and will the Government work with them to ensure that their message of condemnation is carried to every mosque in the country—preferably in English, which is the language young Muslims best understand?

India: Human Rights – 7 December 2015

My Lords, reference to respect for human rights in a constitution does not necessarily guarantee those human rights, and there has been disturbing evidence of discrimination in particular against the Christian and Muslim communities since the coming in of Mr Modi's Government. Does the Government agree that human rights should be respected everywhere, without any considerations of trade?

Paris Attacks – Violence against Muslims – 1 Dec 2015

My Lords, the Minister will be aware of numerous attacks on Sikhs as a result of mistaken identity. While hate crimes against the Muslim community have been monitored by every police force in the country, not a single penny is being spent on monitoring hate crimes against Sikhs. The American Government are well aware of this problem which

Sikhs suffer from and are taking steps to monitor that hate crime. When will the British Government catch up?

Lady Deech: Freedom of expression at Universities

Lord Singh states freedom of speech is an essential part of democracy, but goes on to say it means different things to different people

Religion: Advertisements – 25 Nov 2015

Is the Minister aware that Christianity and other religions carry the potential to seriously destabilise society by talking about putting others before self, whereas the prevailing marketing culture says, “Me and mine”? It also does things like talking about forgiveness and reconciliation, which could seriously jeopardise jobs in the prison industry.

G20 and Paris attacks – 17 Nov 2015

My Lords, if a killer disease were rampant, every effort would be made to find its causes and the environment in which it thrives. With Islamic extremism, we need to do much more to look at the ways in which radicalisation takes place. There are verses in the Koran that were written for particular circumstances more than 1500 years ago, when the infant community was being besieged and its very existence threatened—words such as, “Kill them wherever you find them”, which are pretty direct. They were written for different circumstances, but they are being used today by those people who want to radicalise disadvantaged youths, or youths generally, to move them towards this extremism. Does the Government agree that they and the Muslim community need to do much more to ensure that young people in mosques are taught their religion in the context of today’s times.

NISHAAN

ILLUSTRATED JOURNAL OF THE SIKHS

**A highly readable and beautifully illustrated magazine of
SIKH HISTORY AND CULTURE**

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National Press Coverage

Over the year our campaigning on issues has made it into the mainstream press. In January 2016, we were delighted when BBC London covered our press release on the effects of 'Islamophobia' on non-Muslims. The story was also covered in SW Londoner. Our FOI request, which revealed significant numbers of non-Muslim victims of 'Islamophobic crime', recorded by the MET in 2015 was the subject of an article in the Spectator magazine and the issue reached a considerable audience.

Thought for The Day – Radio 4

Lord Singh has made regular appearances on Thought for The Day on BBC Radio 4. Lord Singh was also quoted in the Telegraph on the subject of proposals around a Sikh regiment in the British Army.

Desert Island Discs. 13 November. Lord Singh appeared as guest on Kirsty Young's prestigious music programme, with life history interspersed with music selections.

Sikh Messenger

Our quarterly magazine is being made available on our website www.nsouk.co.uk.
Contributed by Hardeep Singh NSO Press Officer and Deputy Director Media

SECTION 2

WORKING WITH OTHER GOVERNMENT AND NATIONAL BODIES

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Sikh Armed Services Chaplaincy

The NSO is the consultative body on chaplaincy in the armed Services. It provides religious support to the Sikh chaplain Mandeep Kaur. The Director NSO is the endorsing authority to the Sikh chaplaincy and has attended several meetings at the Ministry of Defence to discuss religious requirements of Sikhs in the armed services and provide support to the Sikh chaplain.

Mandeep has continued her excellent role as chaplain, enjoys the confidence and respect of colleagues in other faiths, serving Sikhs and the military establishment. She has continued to organize a well-attended annual 'Chardi Kala' conference for serving Sikhs and key people in the military establishment.

- 25 April Director attended a memorial service at the Cenotaph for those killed at Gallipoli in WW1
- 30 July Meeting at Clarence House on Services recruitment from minority communities

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION (DfE) AND OFSTED

Guidance to Sikh schools

- The Deputy Director Education, Lady Singh frequently gave guidance and support to Sikh Schools. A number of successful bids for Free Schools, has resulted in an increase in the number of Sikh schools. Strong letters of support from the NSO helped this rise. NSO is strongly supporting applications for Sikh Schools in lobbying and in the provision of guidance and expertise
- NSO is the endorsing authority for all Sikh schools recognised by the DfE and inspects Sikh schools for the teaching of religious education under Section 48.
- Deputy Director, Lady Singh has been Her Majesty's Additional Inspector for state maintained and independent schools as well as Sikh schools since the inception of Ofsted. Carried out Section 48 inspections for Khalsa Secondary Academy Slough and Nanaksar Primary School
- Provided support for Khalsa Academies Trust secure buildings for the academy and Atam academy
- 4 July 2015 Helped organise a conference on the teaching of Punjabi at Guru Nanak Academy
- NSO is providing a lead role in a bid to establish a Sikh free school in Hounslow.

The Education Deputy Director is a member of the DfE Faith Group and ensures that Sikh schools' requirements are properly met.

Religious Education Council membership

The NSO is represented on the REC by Ranvir Singh, a highly experienced teacher. His role is to ensure that the RE Council is fully apprised of the need to give due attention to Sikhism and other minority faiths in the RE curriculum.

Teaching of Sikhism in mainstream schools.

NSO is very active in organising training in Sikhism in schools and colleges. The Director was invited to speak to school leavers on their Leavers' Founders Day. His talk was highly appreciated by both pupils and staff.

Other members of the NSO have kindly given up their time to visit schools to do assemblies on Sikhism and give training to teachers. NSO is grateful for their invaluable contribution.

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

NSO is continuing to support SACREs to find Sikh members throughout the country. Sikhs still lag behind other communities in coming forward for this important work;

Report prepared by Lady (Kanwaljit) Singh OBE Deputy Director Education

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

Prison Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care

Background

The Sikh Chaplaincy Service (SCS) section of the NSO provides pastoral care for all prison inmates professing the Sikh faith. It also provides an information and consultative link with Prison Service HQ in London, and is represented on the Chaplaincy Council.

REPORT OF THE SIKH CHAPLAINCY SERVICE 2015-2016

Summary of key activities.

Chaplaincy and pastoral care:

Faith Adviser Lord Indarjit Singh provides:

1. advice to MOJ and NOMS through Chaplaincy Council;
2. endorses suitable candidates seeking appointment as Sikh Chaplains;
3. provides support to the Sikh Regional Managers in all Regions;
4. clarifies principles and policy matters concerning faith provisions detailed in the PSI
5. chairs regional meetings of SRMs to give guidance and support;
6. is responsible for the endorsement and renewal process by liaising with MoJ Shared Services for security vetting of Sikh Chaplains;

Deputy Director Inder Singh Chawla

Our much valued Deputy Director Inder Singh Chawla suffered a stroke earlier in the year. With God's grace he is recovering well and we pray for his continued recovery to full health.

Training Officer Gagandeep Singh has been acting as Deputy Director and has been helped in this work by the Director and S Ajmer Singh in the Midlands.

Frivolous Litigation

A Sikh chaplain who was reprimanded by the Director for going against the teachings of Sikhism as outlined in the PSI and introducing those of a sect, took out a malicious religious discrimination case against the Director and Deputy Director. It was eventually dismissed by the Tribunal.

During the year Sikh Regional Managers have received valuable support from their teams of Sikh chaplains covering all prisons in their respective areas.

We have recruited four new Sikh Chaplains and got them security clearance. We are delighted that Pritpal Singh Makan from Manchester has been appointed as the first Sikh Managing Chaplain, historically this post was taken by Christian Chaplains, but in recent years many Muslim Chaplains have been successfully selected to this post, after going through the Interview Panel.

All the major Sikh festivals (Gurpurbs) were celebrated across the Prison estates. In many establishments, representatives from the local gurdwaras were invited and they donated Indian sweets and Sikh Artefacts.

Contributed by Director and Gagandeep Singh SCS Training Manager

PROMOTION OF INTER FAITH UNDERSTANDING

Representation on International, National, Regional and Parliamentary Inter- faith bodies. These include:

Parliament of World Religions

Interfaith Network UK (IFN) The NSO is a founder member

Faith Communities Consultative Forum UK (FCCF)

London Faith Forum

Lord Singh is a Vice Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group(APPG) for International Religious Freedom, APPG Faith and Society.

NSO Director Lord Singh has been the lead person in this area.

Activities

- 5 May Director Keynote Speaker at inter faith conference Cumberland Lodge Windsor.
- 10 May Director attended Service at Westminster Abbey for 70th Anniversary of VE Day
- 15 June Director attended 800th anniversary of signing of the Magna Carta at Runnymede
- The Director was a lead Plenary Speaker and an active member of various workshops at the meeting of the Parliament of World Religions at its meeting at Salt Lake City in October 2015
- 11 November Downing Street Reception for Guru Nanak's birthday
- The NSO is a founder member of the IFN and NSO participation has been high in all its events
- 13 November Director gave talk to 6th formers at Heathlands School on role of Parliament
- 23 November Director gave address to Westminster School Assembly.
- The NSO has been playing a lead role at the FCCF in promoting and encouraging open and frank dialogue in promoting better understanding between communities.
- The NSO funds the membership fee an active member of the Sikh community to serve on the London Faith Forum which works to assist cooperation and understanding between London's many faiths.
- The Director NSO is a vice chair of APPG for International Religious Freedom and APPG Faith and Society. He recently travelled at his own expense to give a presentation to the UN in Geneva. He also raises issues affecting different religious communities in Parliament.
- 15 April Director gave a talk on Sikh Values to the Gladstone Club

RESOURCES

The Director is assisted by a number of volunteers in this important work. All work without any payment. The cost of air travel and accommodation for the Director's lecture to the Parliament of World Religion in Salt Lake City were mostly borne by Sikhs in the USA with the Director meeting the rest.

Subscriptions

£2,400 annual subscription to APPGs

£440 annual subscription IFN

£200 annual subscription London Faith Forum

BENEFIT TO THE COMMUNITY.

There is widespread appreciation of the NSO's work in this area. Many comment that the work of the NSO not only helps a wider understanding and appreciation of the Sikh community but also plays a significant role in wider inter faith understanding

SECTION 3

HEALTH

Organ Donation Black and Asian communities have a much greater than average incidence of organ failure while the need for organ replacement is higher than average. The NSO has continued to draw attention to this anomaly and work with the Sikh Doctors Association encouraging Sikhs to become donors.

The NSO has continued to encourage Sikh doctors to give health talks and provide health checks in gurdwaras for healthy living, including testing for diabetes and raised blood pressure.

SECTION 4

REPRESENTATION ON NATIONAL CELEBRATIONS

- The NSO was represented by Director Lord Singh at the GLA Remembrance Day Service in London.
- NSO Director represented the Sikh Community in several national commemorations such as on the Remembrance Day at the Cenotaph, Holocaust Memorial Day and Commonwealth Observance Day at Westminster Abbey.
- NSO attended the Annual Citizens Advice function in the House of Commons

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The NSO Co Chairs and Director would like to thank the contributors to this Report and the many volunteers who made the work possible.

IT'S TIME THE GOVERNMENT ENDED ITS SILENCE ON SIKH HATE CRIME VICTIMS

Hardeep Singh - Assistant Editor

On 15 September 2001, Balbir Singh Sodhi, a gas station owner, was arranging flowers outside his family business in Arizona. He had just returned from Costco, where he purchased some American flags and donated money to a fund for victims of 9/11. Moments later, he was shot dead. Sodhi, a turbaned Sikh, goes down in history as the first person killed in retribution for the Al Qaeda terror attacks. On his arrest, his murderer Frank Roque told police, 'I'm a patriot and American.' Fifteen years on, Sikhs, both in the US and Britain, are acutely aware that hate does not discriminate. And Sikhs, like Muslims, continue to face the backlash to the Islamist war on the West.

That's why 'Action Against Hate' – the Government's four-year plan of how to tackle hate crime – is something of a damp squib. 'Hate crime of any kind, directed against any community, race or religion has absolutely no place in our society', declares Amber Rudd in the introduction to the report. When you scratch beneath the surface, though, it seems the Government takes the myopic view that only Abrahamic faiths suffer bigotry. All examples of religious hate crime cited in the report focus on Muslim, Jewish and Christian victims. These, of course, include some terrible incidents – like a woman who racially abused a pregnant Muslim lady on a bus, and an assault on Jewish schoolgirls. Remarkably, however, the report fails to highlight last year's attempted beheading of a Sikh dentist by a neo-Nazi in Wales. Like Sodhi's case, this was a revenge attack – this time in an apparent response to the Islamist murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby. And it's a trend Sikhs are all too familiar with.

Last month saw the conviction of a man for calling his Sikh neighbours, 'ISIS slags' and 'ISIS bitches'. Many similar victims suffer in silence. Yet the problem is nothing new. The issue was detailed in evidence submitted to the Home Affairs Committee on Terrorism and Community Relations back in 2004. And it's been raised repeatedly in both the Commons and the Lords. But despite this, case studies highlighting a phenomenon affecting one of Britain's most visible minorities won't be found in 'Action Against Hate.'

To complicate matters, many incidents against Sikhs and others (including Hindus and Christians) have been incorrectly recorded as 'Islamophobic hate crimes'. In fact, Met Police figures for the first half of this year reveal a quarter of incidents put under this category involved victims who were either non-Muslim or of no recorded faith. These aren't numbers to be scoffed at. Yet remarkably the authors of 'Action Against Hate' don't consider them worthy of a mention.

But some are, thankfully, beginning to spot the problem. Sadiq Khan showed he had his finger on the pulse when he made a clear pledge to London's 125,000-strong Sikh community prior to his election to 'make sure [hate] crimes against Sikhs are properly recorded.' Let's hope he keeps his word.

And important figures in Britain's Hindu community are also speaking out. Satish Sharma

from the National Council of Hindu Temples expressed his dissatisfaction with the status quo. He told me that 'Action Against Hate' is further evidence of the 'complete indifference of the Establishment to Hinduphobia'.

If there's any hope for an equitable approach for all faiths, it comes from Britain's most recognised Sikh, Lord Singh of Wimbledon. It was his intervention, which helped encourage the Government in its move towards mandatory disaggregation of religious hate crime figures from April 2017. If you're a Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, or Rastafarian, statistics for your community (as for Muslims and Jews) will now at last be made available from next year. And last month, Lord Singh expressed his disappointment at the 'narrow and biased thinking' behind 'Action Against Hate'. He said the report contained, '45 examples of hate crime against Abrahamic faiths but not a single example of the many, well-documented mistaken-identity hate crimes suffered by Sikhs and others'.

In her response, Baroness Williams talked in vague terms about 'common issues across the strands of hate crime'. But details of how to tackle this issue were thin on the ground. And as for Lord Singh's accusation that those compiling the report could do with 'acquiring some basic religious literacy', Williams was clear who was at fault:

'We have talked about this in the past. People such as the media have a role to play in improving their religious literacy.'

But the truth is, journalists aren't the only ones who need help with their understanding of religion, or the concerns of religious minorities are they? Let's hope the Government can finally wake up to the fact that Sikhs can be victims of hate crimes too.

Article originally published in the Spectator

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY BBC RADIO 4

6-7-16

I was very moved by a recent piece in the Times by Daniel Finkelstein about the bravery and courage of both his paternal and maternal grandfathers. Both were intensely patriotic and were decorated for their heroism. They were both German.

While it is right and proper to honour the memory of those killed in the conflict of the first world war, more than a million in the trenches of the Somme alone, we will never learn from history if we fail to reflect on its lessons for us today. This thought was in the mind of the Queens father George V as he looked on endless graves in Flanders and comment that 'we will have failed to honour the memories of those who gave their all, if we allow such slaughter to ever occur again' We now also need to ask: did the war advance the cause of peace and social justice in Europe or elsewhere? And did the punitive reparations demanded of Germany in anyway contribute to the rise of Adolf Hitler?

Today, with the publication of the long delayed Chilcot inquiry into the 2003 war in Iraq there will also be both questions and recriminations. What is beyond dispute is that the long suffering people of Iraq are, as we were reminded in the terrorist outrage killing 20 people, still far from hoped for peace and true democracy.

Discussion on the Reports findings will almost certainly, like the continuing saga of the

Brexit debate, be focussed on who to blame. It all brings to mind a T-shirt worn by a little boy sitting opposite me on the London Underground. It showed a picture of Mickey Mouse and a caption: 'whatever it was, I didn't do it.'

I was recently invited to the formal unveiling of a beautifully illuminated prayer that is recited in daily prayers in the Lords. It reminds us of our responsibility to put all selfish interests and partial affections to one side in all our deliberations. It is remarkably similar to the Sikh daily prayer reminding us of our duty to put selfish interests to one side and work for the greater good of all.

If we are true to such sentiments in all our political decision, we could slowly inch towards a world in which hope and vision replace the petty bickering all too evident in current debate.

13-7-16

The 17th century poet John Dryden, reflecting on the limitations of democracy wrote:

*'Nor is the people's judgement always true,
The Most may err as grossly as the Few'.*

The poet reminds us that democracy, the best system of government we have, carries its own flaws and imperfections. It is something that many are still reflecting on following a referendum that showed marked divisions of opinion throughout the country and between those under 35, who largely wished to remain in the Union, and older people wishing to leave. Equally important, the referendum revealed a marked differences of opinion between the majority, who favoured Brexit, and those representing them in Parliament. For the first time in many years, we are now being forced to wrestle with basic questions of identity, sovereignty and aspirations in our relations with Europe and the rest of the world.

It's a sad aspect of human nature that the easiest way in getting someone on our side in discussion or debate is to find someone we can blame for all our problems. In the 50s and 60s it was people from the Commonwealth. In recent debate we have heard much from both sides about immigrants from Europe supposedly living on benefits or taking all our jobs, and floods of refugees from the Middle East. It all reminds me of what I used to call Indarjit's law: that when two or more people can find sufficient in common to call themselves 'us', they will immediately look for a 'them' to despise to strengthen their new found unity. We see it in rivalry between football fans but in its extreme form, it can lead to horrors like the holocaust and more recent genocides.

In the India of the 15th century, Guru Nanak saw Hindus and Muslims each looking on the other with undisguised hatred and contempt, arising from a supposed exclusive understanding of God. Guru Nanak rejected the idea of God taking sides and stressed important commonalities in belief and aspirations, and the importance of building a society based on a common pursuit of truth and justice. Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru, incorporated some verses of Hindu and Muslim saints into our scriptures the Guru Granth Sahib to emphasise common ethical teachings.

My hope is that later today when Theresa May assumes office as Prime Minister she will use her considerable experience to focus on commonalities like the pursuit of social justice and respect for the rights and beliefs of others as she leads the country to a new future.

SIKH WELFARE & AWARENESS TEAM (SWAT)

Mission statement

We have a vision where every person we meet knows they are loved and valued, lives safely, with respect, faith, hope and care for themselves and others, achieving their full potential and positively contributing to and transforming their communities.

Our Ethos Based on Guru Nanak Dev Ji's teachings:

- Naam Japna: Remembering God.
- Kirat Karni: Earning an honest living.
- Vand Chakna: Selflessly serving others, sharing income and resources

Organisational Information

SWAT has no official government grant funding for the work we undertake within our community. We have in the past applied for small amounts from lottery funding which we used to purchase a van and have had a few other small amounts to carry out various small projects, but the bulk of our funding comes from donations from our supporters. The money is used to buy food items as well as the general expenditure we incur such as insurance and fuel.

There are two main strands to SWAT's work:

SWAT - YOUTH PROJECT

Founded in early 2009. Our youth club comprises of over 50 members from the ages of 13 to 17, offering a variety of activities namely pool, table tennis, music workshops, mixed martial arts, football and other outdoor activities and events. We see ourselves as the first structured Sikh Youth Club in the UK offering regular workshops on substance awareness, informal talks on the Sikh and other religions and encouraging the children to engage in group discussions and debates on current issues they are facing today such as gang culture, drug addiction, and alcohol abuse. SWAT was set up as a positive move to prevent and try to combat these problems which exist within our community.

We have 3 – 4 volunteers who manage the youth club which takes place once a week on a Friday. All of the volunteers are unpaid.

Youth Club Aims & Objectives:

To increase the wellbeing of young people by providing them with opportunities for self-development through extracurricular provision such as organized activities, events and sports.

Directing the youth towards established Training/Apprenticeship programs and Education Opportunities.

SWAT - HOMELESS PROJECT

Provide drug care and counselling. Direct them to health centres and medical aid.

Assist with finding temporary shelter. Provide clean clothing, sleeping bags and toiletries.

Provide moral support and help with communication and translation.

Assist with connecting people to relatives/ friends. Work towards a way of sending people back home safely.

Assist with finding employment, and educational opportunities.

NETWORK OF SIKH ORGANISATIONS UK

The Network of Sikh Organisations (NSO) is a registered charity no.1064544 that links more than 130 UK gurdwaras and other UK Sikh organisations in active cooperation to enhance the image and understanding of Sikhism in the UK

Some of the things we do:

- Promote unity and cooperation between all Sikh organisations in the UK, whether or not affiliated to the NSO
- Enhance the image and understanding of Sikhism throughout the UK through broadcasts on radio and television and articles in UK dailies and the social media
- Promote and participate in inter-faith dialogue and the active promotion of tolerance and respect between faiths.
- Through the Sikh Chaplaincy Service (SCS) provide spiritual and pastoral care to all Sikhs in prison establishments in the UK
- NSO is the Endorsing authority for Mandeep Kaur, Sikh Chaplain to the Armed Services
- Support Sikh chaplains in hospitals,
- NSO is the recognised authority for the inspection of Sikh faith schools and is represented on the Religious Education Council and the All-party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Religious Education. Deputy Director NSO Education Dr Kanwaljit Singh OBE. provides training and guidance to Sikh schools.
- NSO is actively engaged in the protection of human rights and religious freedom with NSO Director serving a Vice Chair of the APPG for international religious freedom. The 'NSO is also supported by Deputy Director Jesbir Uppal of "Freedom Declared."
- Work with government and other statutory and non-statutory bodies to ensure that the views and concerns of UK Sikhs are fully represented.
- Counter the numerous sants, babas and politically motivated individuals who seek to distort the Gurus' teachings and establish their own 'maryada'

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