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Special Issue on Globalisation, Identity Politics and the Sikh Diaspora

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The Politics of Recognition: Sikh Diasporic Nationalism and the International Order

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This paper examines the relationship between Sikh diasporic nationalism and the international order. Since the early 1980s, Sikh organisations in Britain and North America have articulated a national identity, through newspapers, journals, pamphlets and the internet, to international society. It will be argued that Sikh diasporic nationalism, which to a certain extent may be seen as a politics of recognition with its roots in the rift between location and identity within states in advanced capitalist societies, challenges the international order in two ways. Firstly, by asserting the right of national self-determination in the Punjab, nationalist organisations outside of India are committed to the achievement of territorially defined sovereign statehood. This challenge is partial in that it constitutes a challenge to the prevailing order whilst reproducing its central feature: the territorially demarcated sovereign state. The second way in which Sikh diasporic nationalism challenges the contemporary international order is through a rejection of sovereign statehood and an assertion of the sovereignty of the *Khalsa Panth*. It will be argued that this challenge constitutes a greater challenge to the Westphalian international order. Sikh nationalist elites, however, seem to be trapped in a discourse of territoriality.

Introduction

In this paper¹, I would like to examine the ways in which mainly *Jat* elites in overseas Sikh communities in Britain and to a lesser extent in North America imagine themselves as a 'nation without a state' and how this national identity is articulated to international 'society'. For Montserrat Guibernau, 'nations without states' may be considered as potential new political actors in international relations in that they are able to 'capture and promote sentiments of loyalty, solidarity and community among individuals who seem to have developed a growing need for identity'.² It will be argued that Sikh nationhood is constituted by a Sikh nationalist discourse³, articulated by 'nationalist' organisations through the Punjabi media and internet, which equates the ancestral homeland of the Sikhs with the Indian state of the Punjab. I understand nationalism to be a discursive articulation which constructs

subjects as being of a particular nation and thereby having certain distinctive characteristics and political needs and interests. Sikh diasporic nationalism may be seen as relying on the interpellation of overseas Sikh communities as members of a Sikh nation, rather than as followers of a world religion or of a Punjabi diaspora. I use the term interpellation in the Althusserian sense. For Althusser, all ideology 'hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects'.⁴ Sikhs are, thus, constituted as subjects through a process of recognition. To be hailed is to become a subject. This interpellation may be seen to have first taken place in the colonial period and continues among overseas Sikh communities today. Unable to identify with their place of settlement as a result of deep-rooted structures of ethnic exclusion, overseas Sikh communities have increasingly sought to participate in the politics of their 'homeland', the Punjab. The activities of the Sikh diasporic organisations in Britain and North America contest the sovereignty of the Indian state over the Punjab and constitute a challenge to traditional conceptions of the international order comprised of territorialised sovereign states.

The Sikhs: a religious community, nation or diaspora?

In western capitalist societies, we can isolate three interrelated discourses or 'master narratives' which locate the Sikhs as subjects. The first discourse identifies the Sikhs as followers of a universal world religion, such as Islam or Christianity.⁵ Sikhism is seen to consist of a series of doctrines and practices centred around a reading of a holy book, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, written in a sacred script particular to the Sikhs, in a Sikh place of worship, *gurdwara*. Anybody can become a Sikh, as long as one conforms to established practice. Sikhs following the edicts of the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, are enjoined to keep their hair, including facial hair, long (*kes*); to carry a comb (*kanga*); wear knee-length breeches (*kachh*); a steel bracelet on the right hand (*kara*); and to carry a sword or dagger (*kirpan*). Those who embody these five symbols of Sikh identity, known as *Kesdhari* Sikhs, constitute the Khalsa, or 'community of the pure' whilst *Sahajdhari* Sikhs, 'slow-adopters', may eventually progress towards full participation in the Khalsa.⁶ These symbols of Sikh religious identity serve to construct boundaries between Sikhs and other communities, making *Kesdhari* Sikhs an easily identifiable group in both an Indian and diaspora context.

Although there is some truth in Dusenbery's assertion that the master narrative of world religion is an 'historical product of modernist discourse and a related ethno-sociology', the origins of this discourse may be traced back to the pre-colonial *panthic* tradition of Northern India. A *panth*, consisting of those religious ideas and practices concerned with spiritual experience, may be used to identify the devotees of a specific spiritual leader. The Sikhs were the disciples of Nanak who

organised themselves into a 'community of the pure' under Guru Gobind in order to resist forced conversion to Islam. This discourse is strongest amongst non-*Jat* Sikhs, particularly *khatri*s from West Punjab, 'twice-migrant' *Ramgharias*⁷, and of course, *gora* Sikh converts in advanced capitalist societies. In the imagination of these Sikh communities, the Punjab represents not so much a 'homeland', as it does for *jat* Sikhs with relatives and perhaps, property, in East Punjab, but a 'holyland'.⁸

The second discourse identifies the Sikhs as a nation. The Sikh nation is seen to be built on the edifice of a homogeneous religious and cultural identity imbued with a strong, historical personality. For the Council of Sikh Affairs, 'the Sikh thesis, as laid down by the Gurus, is that they have a separate religion and culture and that in order to safeguard it they must maintain their distinct, socio-political entity'.⁹ The origins of this nationalist discourse can be traced back to the colonial period and the rise of the Singh Sabha¹⁰ movement articulating a 'Tat Khalsa' discourse.¹¹ Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha's *Ham Hindu Nahin* (We are not Hindus), written over a century ago, may be seen as one of the most influential expositions of this 'Sikh thesis'. For J.S Grewal, Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha's work can be seen as 'declaration of Sikh ethnicity'¹². The Sikhs, sharing a collective socio-religious identity, were seen to constitute a political community, a *qaum*. For Grewal, Nabha equated panth,¹³ with *qaum* and paved the way for the politicisation of the Sikh community under the Chief Khalsa Diwan and the 'Sikh' political party, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD). The SAD may be seen as the hegemonic political movement amongst Sikhs in the Punjab. It is committed to maintaining the Sikhs' distinct, socio-political entity within independent, multi-national India controlling the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC). The SGPC affords the Sikhs a forum to legislate on all issues concerning the community and its headquarters in the Akal Takht, situated within the Golden Temple complex itself, is the site of all spiritual *and* temporal power within Sikhdom.

The Sikh community, seen from within this nationalist discourse, corresponds to A.D. Smith's definition of a politicised *ethnie*, or nation. Not everyone can be a Sikh, one is born into an *ethnie*, or ethnically-defined community. The Sikh *ethnie* share common ancestry myths dating back to the founding of the Khalsa in 1699 and historical memories of martyrdom and persecution under successive Mughal, British and Indian rulers. This primordial or 'ethno-symbolist' view of the Sikh nation is captured by Mehar Singh Chaddah. For Chaddah, the Sikhs constitute a nation because 'the Sikhs are bound by a common race, common language and literature, common history, common religion...and common political aims and aspirations.'¹⁴ Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, the President of US based Council of Khalistan, in his millennium message to the Sikh 'nation', writes of a 'sovereign, independent nation' established by Guru Gobind Singh. Sovereignty, given to the Sikh peoples by Guru Gobind, was 'lost' to the British and then the Hindu Raj in

Delhi. Aulakh urges the Sikhs to reclaim their 'lost sovereignty' through the establishment of an independent Sikh state, Khalistan. Khalistan is justified on the grounds that the Sikhs are an endangered minority within India. This discourse became hegemonic amongst male, *jat kesdhari* Sikhs in the Punjab and the diaspora during the 1980s and 1990s.

The third discourse identifies the overseas Sikh communities collectively as a diaspora. Diaspora, derived from the Greek verb *sperio* (to sow) and preposition *dia* (over)¹⁵, has come to be used to describe any deterritorialised¹⁶, transnational¹⁷ community. James Clifford has appropriately called it a 'travelling term in changing global conditions'¹⁸. Whilst in earlier times, the term Diaspora was reserved for the Jewish and Armenian dispersion, it now, according to the editor of the journal *Diaspora*, 'shares meanings with a large semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest worker, exile community (and) ethnic community.'¹⁹ Steven Vertovec has recently distinguished between three current meanings of diaspora in the context of overseas South Asian communities.²⁰ They are diaspora as a social form, as a type of consciousness, and as a mode of cultural reproduction.²¹ The first meaning, diaspora as a social form, refers to the various attempts to provide ideal-type definitions or typologies of diasporas. For William Safran, diasporas are expatriate minority communities, dispersed from an original 'centre' to at least two 'peripheral' places. They maintain a memory or myth about their original homeland; they believe they are not, and perhaps cannot be accepted by their host country; and they see an ancestral home as a place of eventual return and a place to maintain and restore.²² Robin Cohen suggests that diaspora communities exhibit several of the following characteristics: (1) dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically; (2) alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions; (3) a collective memory and myth about the homeland; (4) an idealisation of the supposed ancestral home; (5) a return movement; (6) a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over time; (7) a troubled relationship with host societies; (8) a sense of solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries; and, somewhat questionably, (9) the possibility of a distinctive, creative, enriching life in tolerant host countries.²³ Applying Cohen's criteria, Darshan Singh Tatla has convincingly made the case for the inclusion of the Sikhs as a global diaspora²⁴, even though, as he admits, the Sikhs do not meet a strict criterion of 'forced' separation from their homeland. Of far more importance, however, is the *perception* that the Sikhs were forced from their homeland. Whether the Sikhs fulfil sufficient criteria to be labelled a diaspora (as a social form) is a matter of academic debate. The existence of a diaspora consciousness, or of a discourse identifying the Sikhs as a diaspora community, however, is not.

Sikh diaspora consciousness is linked, in common with other diasporas, to

collective experiences of forced dispersal or 'flight following the threat of violence'.²⁵ Darshan Singh Tatla in his seminal study of the Sikh diaspora, identified the Sikhs as a 'victim' diaspora²⁶, which has been mobilised by a single 'critical event'- the storming of the Golden Temple in Amritsar in 1984 by Indian troops.²⁷ Certainly, in the Sikh diaspora consciousness, the concept of the *ghallughara* (holocaust) looms large. The Sikhs are seen to have experienced two 'holocausts' this century which have both served to facilitate the construction of cultural and religious boundaries between the Sikhs and the other main ethno-religious/national groups in their 'homeland' of the Punjab. The first was partition. The partition of the Punjab province of the British Empire into two new successor states, India and Pakistan, caused one of the 'greatest human convulsions of human history' as 11 million people moved either side of the Radcliffe line.²⁸ Partition was marked by a high level of organised communal violence with hundreds of thousands slaughtered whilst travelling between West and East Punjab. The 'ethnic cleansing' was significantly accompanied by widespread sexual savagery with an estimated 75,000 women abducted and raped by men of religions different from their own which served to reinforce communal boundaries.²⁹

The second 'holocaust' suffered by the Sikhs was the aforementioned 'critical event', the storming of the Golden Temple in Amritsar by the Indian government in 1984. For Darshan Singh Tatla, 'the Indian army's assault on *Harimandir*, the holiest shrine in Sikh perception, constituted a 'sacrilege', a slur on a nation's dignity and integrity, an act of genocide.'³⁰ The assassination of the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi in October 1984 by her Sikh bodyguards, precipitated the worst communal riots in India since partition. Once again, the communal violence was highly organised and attacks upon Sikhs in Delhi were orchestrated by the ruling Congress Party. More than two thousand Sikhs died in the Delhi suburbs alone as Sikh homes and businesses were targeted.³¹ The actions of the Indian state gave rise to the view among diaspora Sikhs that the very existence of the Sikh panth was in danger, as in 1947. For the Council of Khalistan, 'after the Golden Temple attack in June 1984 by the Indian government it was clear to the Sikhs that the Indian government is determined to destroy Sikhism completely. The attack on the Golden Temple was conducted to crush the Sikh aspirations of Khalsa Raj.'³²

Sikh diasporic nationalism, based upon an implicit rejection of the discourse identifying Sikhism as a universal world religion, identifies the Sikhs as primarily an ethnic, not a religious community, forced from their homeland of the Punjab by the violence of Partition and 1984. The existence of a territorially defined homeland is central to the imagination of Sikh diasporic nationalism, although its relationship to statehood is ambiguous. Sikh diasporic nationalism may take the form of a search for statehood, but need not necessarily do so. Irrespective of whether statehood is achieved, Sikhs appear to have acquired 'a high degree of internal social and

political cohesion and subjective self-awareness'³³ and in so doing, constitute an 'imagined political community'. I am aware that my understanding of Sikh diasporic nationalism differs from some definitions of diasporic nationalism. For Stanley J. Tambiah, diasporic nationalism describes the situation of those immigrant communities that are intact in the countries to which they have migrated but have *lost* or are losing connections with their homelands, although they are involved in the 'imagining' of their countries of origin.³⁴ Whilst this may be true of *khatri* Sikhs from West Punjab, or 'twice-migrant' *ramgharias*, most Sikh *Jats* from East Punjab retain close connections with their home villages and often actively participate in the politics of their homeland. Sikh diasporic nationalism combines elements of both Tambiah's conception of *transnational* nationalism and of Khandewal's coinage *transnationism*.³⁵ Transnational nationalism refers to the Sikh diaspora's involvement in 'long-distance nationalism' in the Punjab, whilst *transnationism* refers to the forging of lateral links across states, thereby transcending spatial boundaries, and with instilling a sense of the global unity of all Sikhs, irrespective of caste or place of settlement. Sikh diasporic nationalism is concerned with both instilling a sense of the global unity of all Sikhs *and* involvement in the politics of the homeland.

Implicit in the Sikh nationalist discourse is the presentation of Sikhs as passive victims of the aggression of others. Sikh participation in organised pogroms against Muslims in East Punjab during the months preceding partition and Sikh terrorism in the 1980s are conveniently erased from the highly selective nationalist 'memory' and Sikh terrorism itself is seen as having been the covert actions of the Indian state.³⁶ Indeed, the ethnic boundary created by violence in the Punjab, helps explain the transformation in diaspora consciousness from a regional Punjabi to a distinct Sikh ethno-religious identity. Certainly, as Karen Leonard has pointed out, the Sikh migrants in early twentieth century California constituted a Punjabi, not a Sikh, diaspora. Consequently, 'to go back and emphasise Sikhs and Sikhism does violence to the historical experiences of the immigrants and their descendants'.³⁷ For Verne A. Dusenbery, a localised territorial identity based upon the village co-existed with a deterritorialised religious identity in overseas communities for much of the last century. Members of the same Punjabi³⁸ village settled overseas might share a sense of community with their local *bhum bhai* (brothers of the earth) without expecting all villagers to be *guru bhai* (coreligionists).³⁹ The boundary created by violence served to sever the links between *bhum bhai* whilst reinforcing the links that bound *guru bhai* together. The use of violence in the construction of ethnic boundaries often occurs, as Daniele Conversi has pointed out, when there are few cultural markers accessible to differentiate between groups as the recent history of the Balkans aptly illustrates.⁴⁰ After partition and the events of 1984, the Sikh nationalist discourse became hegemonic amongst overseas Sikh communities,

displacing alternative discourses based upon regional, caste and religious identities.

Location and Identity

Sikh diasporic nationalism appears to have outlasted the militant separatism in the Punjab. Whilst Sikh militancy was crushed by police counterinsurgency operations,⁴¹ part of a strategy of 'violent control'⁴² by the Indian state which facilitated the re-emergence of the Badal faction of the Akali Dal as the premier political force within the Punjab, the Sikh diaspora continued to provide the 'the ideological underpinning for the demand for a separate Sikh state'.⁴³ Parkash Singh Badal's election as Chief Minister in February 1997 and the engineered dismissal of Gurcharan Singh Tohra as President of the SGPC in January 1999 has led to the increasing marginalisation of militants within the Punjab. Sikh diasporic nationalism may be seen as having its origins primarily in a rift between location and identity within states in advanced capitalist societies which has given rise to a 'politics of recognition' articulated through nationalist organisations. This is not to deny that linkages do not exist between nationalist organisations in the diaspora and militant organisations within the Punjab, yet merely to assert that Khalistani sympathisers exert a disproportionate degree of power and influence within the diaspora.

In the Sikh diasporic imagination, home refers to the 'ancestral homeland', the mythic place of return rather than the lived experience of a locality. The concept of a Sikh diaspora, thus, 'opens up' what Paul Gilroy termed 'an historical and experiential rift between the place of residence and that of belonging.'⁴⁴ The rift between location and identity may be seen in the growing disjuncture between a diaspora Sikh's legal identity as a citizen of a territorial state and his/her political identity as a member of the transnational Sikh *qaum*. Location may be defined in terms of citizenship. Citizenship may be seen as a legal category as opposed to description of political identity. The citizen is linked intrinsically to the state insofar as it is only the state which can bestow this status upon the individual. However, as Benedict Anderson notes, a passport has become a mark of 'economic status far more than any political attachment'. As Roger Ballard has recently demonstrated, an American passport has become a status symbol amongst *Jat* migrants from the Jullunder Doab region of East Punjab.⁴⁵ Possession of US citizenship, not only greatly enhances a *Jat*'s employment prospects but increases the *jat*'s eligibility in the marriage market within the transnational *jati*. With respect to many Punjabi immigrants, Anderson is quite right in stating that the 'segregated queues all of us experience at airport immigration barricades mark economic status far more than any political attachments.'⁴⁶

Sikh political identity in places of settlement refers to a diaspora consciousness: a 'homing desire' which may, but may not necessarily, take the form

of a desire for a 'homeland'. The concept of diaspora, according to Avtar Brah, inscribes a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origins.⁴⁷ The 'homing desire' of the Sikh diaspora can be seen in the variety of linkages that exist between diaspora Sikhs and the 'ancestral homeland'. The growth in the number of Gurdwaras built around Sikh settlements is indicative of this 'homing desire'. The Gurdwara, the site of religious, social, educational and political activity within the panth, may be seen as a 'diaspora space'. For Avtar Brah, a 'diaspora space' is the point at which boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, of 'us' and 'them', are contested.⁴⁸ Although the Gurdwara, as a place of worship, is theoretically open to all denominations, it is also the locus of all religious/political power within the Sikh community and thus constructs religious boundaries between Sikh and non-Sikh. Political parties contest elections to the SGPC, which controls the gurdwaras in the Punjab. SGPC acts as the 'Sikh Parliament': its influence extends beyond the borders of the Punjab, facilitating the creation of a Sikh *national* consciousness. Furthermore, the Punjabi and English language press has played a vital role in the *imagination* of a Sikh national identity. Today there are over twelve daily newspapers (four in the UK) and thirteen periodicals (eight in the UK) published in either Punjabi and/or English published outside India serving the Sikh community.⁴⁹ The new publications reflected the rising tide of an emerging Sikh national consciousness increasingly articulated and disseminated through the internet and institutionalised in organisations such as Khalistan Council in the UK, the World Sikh Organisation and Council of Khalistan in North America, and various factions of the Babbar Khalsa International, Dal Khalsa and the more militant International Sikh Youth Federation throughout the diaspora.

This 'long-distance nationalism' keeps the dream of an imagined homeland alive. For Benedict Anderson its lingering image is of a Sikh, in Toronto, Vancouver (or London), who, unable or unwilling to participate in Canadian (or British) politics, keeps in touch with terrorist groups within India through e-mail.

Canada indeed, by its profound indifference to him and to his fellows, encourages him to sikhify himself, and to live out a suburban dream politics of his own. His political participation is directed towards an imagined *heimat* in which he does not intend to live, where he pays no taxes, where he cannot be arrested, where he will not be brought before the courts-and where he does not vote: in effect a politics without responsibility or accountability.⁵⁰

For Anderson, it is this 'profound indifference' or alienation from the place of settlement, the rift between location and identity, which encourages the *cyberkhalistani* nationalist to take an active interest in the politics of 'the homeland', the Punjab. Whilst this interest in the politics of the homeland can be partially explained by the transnational links which exist between *Jat* Sikhs from East

Punjab, particularly from Jullunder Doab as Roger Ballard has illustrated,⁵¹ it is the rift between location and identity which leads many, although not most, educated, young Sikhs with no direct connection to the Punjab into militant activity. However, whilst Canada ‘encourages’, in Anderson’s words, the Sikhs to ‘sikhify’ themselves through a policy of multiculturalism, this isn’t the case in the US, where Sikhs are encouraged to de-sikhify themselves by assimilating to the ‘melting pot’, or Britain, where the politics of racial exclusion, albeit not at an official level, has left the Sikhs, and other ethnic minorities, at the margins of public life.

Britain as an ‘Ethnic Democracy’?

Stanley J. Tambiah⁵² has recently distinguished between four types of institutional arrangements by which immigrants are invariably incorporated into the host country. They are assimilation, exclusion and integration, with a fourth category of multiculturalism, which intersects with integration but highlights issues relating to the recognition of difference within plural societies whilst holding them together as viable polities. Whilst assimilation involves the creation of a ‘melting pot’, as in the US, where immigrants are expected to take the initiative in adapting to a de-ethnicised, market culture, exclusion involves the participation or incorporation of migrants only into the selected and marked-off sectors of the host society. In both Japan and Germany, sizeable migrant populations are denied the possibility of becoming citizens. Integration, the third type of incorporation, involves active state policies, in both the public and private spheres, designed to accommodate migrants in their host societies. Although the British state has been active in pursuing policies designed to integrate ethnic minorities into the labour market through equal opportunities legislation, granting full access to social service, education and housing and, finally, access to citizenship, the formation of enclaves of ethnic groups, or what Roger Ballard terms ‘ethnic colonies’⁵³, such as in Southall, not fully participating or not able to participate in British public life, qualifies Britain’s credentials as a multicultural society. The new ethnic minorities have indeed, as Ballard has pointed out, become part of the British social order, but they have *not* done so on their own terms.⁵⁴ The Sikh communities in Britain, in common with other South Asian immigrant minorities, have relied to a large extent on their own resources as a means of building a ‘home from home’, but to speak of these minorities being in a position to ‘reject’ assimilation⁵⁵ is to seriously overestimate the ability of ethnic minorities to make conscious, rational choices in the British *habitus* in which they find themselves.

Britain is home to the largest community of Sikhs outside the subcontinent. Almost half a million out of a total of one million overseas Sikhs live in the UK⁵⁶, yet although the Sikhs are one of the most upwardly mobile ethnic minorities, with a

standard of living higher than other minorities, they remain, together with other ethnic minorities, unrepresented in public life. Indeed, a recent report by a delegation of NGOs has drawn attention to the general lack of participation in public life by ethnic minorities. In the House of Commons there are only nine MPs from ethnic minority backgrounds whilst it is claimed that proportional to the population of ethnic minorities in the country, there should be about forty.⁵⁷ A proposed increase of just one Labour candidate from an ethnic minority at the next election to contest the next election has failed to appease 'black' party activists who fear the issue could cost Labour votes at the next election by exacerbating disillusionment among ethnic minority voters who, traditionally, overwhelmingly vote Labour.⁵⁸ Although Labour does have one 'sikh' MP⁵⁹, an unshaved *patit* Sikh, there still exists what Johan Galtung termed, a 'structural disequilibrium' between the upward mobility of immigrants of South Asian descent in the economic sphere and their inability to find corresponding levels of social respectability and political power within metropolitan societies.⁶⁰ This has led some theorists, such as Avtar Brah, to claim that Sikhs and other former colonial 'natives' are not British because they are not seen as being native to Britain: Sikhs can be 'in' Britain, but not 'of' Britain.⁶¹ This structural disequilibrium may be seen to have given rise to a 'politics of recognition' which in the case of the hegemonic Sikh organisations in Britain initially took the form of a desire to preserve the external symbols of the faith: turbans and *kirpans*.⁶² The 'Turban Victory'⁶³ of 1976, followed by the Race Relations Act of the same year, stands out as the most significant achievement of this early phase of the politics of recognition.

The second phase of the politics of recognition, however, is marked by an increasing identification with the politics of the homeland significantly by the same organisations and individuals active in the motorcycle campaign. This is the outcome not just of the impact of what Darshan Singh Tatla terms the 'critical event' of 1984 on the Sikh diaspora, but also, albeit to a lesser degree, of the changes taking place to British political life. The Falklands War of 1982 marked the beginning of a revival of a British ethnic nationalism, espoused by politicians from the mainstream Conservative right, articulated by the tabloids and characterised by the infamous Tebbit 'cricket test'. Increasingly, British South Asians, Afro-Caribbeans, Irish Nationalists and Europeans became the alternating 'other' against which British ethnic identity was constructed. In such a political climate, public displays of multiple political identities were difficult. Draconian immigration rules appeared to target subcontinental immigrants, yet failed to stem the tide of those seeking to be reunited with their extended families in the UK. Becoming British entailed a choice: identifying with the invented traditions of Britain's imperial past, with one's place of settlement, over one's place of origin. Those unwilling or unable to do so were left on the margins of British political life, and 'encouraged' to

identify with collective identities, suppressed in their place of origin. Economically, however, the Sikh communities in Britain were able to make the transition, through their extensive patronage networks which endemic to *Jat* society in particular, from industrial workers and council tenants to entrepreneurs and homeowners. It has to be said that the Sikh communities, in common with other working-class groups, had very little choice but to seek to set up their own businesses following the restructuring of much of Britain's manufacturing industry following the introduction of capital-intensive technology which led to hitherto unprecedented levels of unemployment. Of particular significance for the 'sikhification' of diaspora politics, was the demise of the Indian Workers' Associations (IWAs) in the light of these structural changes. From the 1950s, the most influential organisation within the Sikh community, were the Indian Workers Associations (IWAs). IWAs sprung up in almost every industrial city in the UK with a large *Jat* Sikh population during the late 1950s and 1960s and were in the vanguard in the unionisation of Asian labour and the fight against racial exclusionism within the Trade Union movement. By the mid-1980s, the secular ideology of the IWAs no longer appealed to militant Sikh activists who flocked to join the various Khalistani movements. Thus, perhaps paradoxically, the economic reforms and ethnic nationalism associated with Thatcherism, led to the creation of a prosperous, Sikh middle-class willing and able to mobilise in support of a homeland but reluctant or unable to participate in British political life.

Possibly Britain, under Thatcher (1980-90) and perhaps even in the post-Thatcherite period (1990-2000), may be characterised, like India, as an 'ethnic democracy'. According to Sammy Smooha, ethnic democracies combine 'the extension of political and civil rights to individuals and certain collective rights to minorities with institutionalised dominance over the state by one or more ethnic groups'.⁶⁴ For Gurharpal Singh, India may be seen as an ethnic democracy⁶⁵ in that, although minorities have asserted individual and collective rights, the recognition of these rights have been based on a tactical accommodation with hegemonic Hinduism, which, following Ainslee T. Embree, may be regarded as India's 'civic religion'.⁶⁶ This is a view made explicit in the Sikh diasporic nationalist discourse. Khushwant Singh foreshadowed contemporary events by predicting that 'Hindus who form 80% of the population will in due course make Hinduism the state religion of India'. Consequently, 'the only chance of survival of the Sikhs as a separate state is to create a state in which they form a compact group'.⁶⁷ Thus, for contemporary Sikh nationalists such as Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, 'it doesn't matter whether Congress or the BJP runs the government. The party label on the Hindu majority does not matter. Congress and BJP are equally anti-Sikh'.⁶⁸

The dominance of the English bourgeoisie in British political life has diminished since the election of a Labour government in 1997. The British state,

under New Labour, has extended the right of autonomy to territorialised 'national' minorities, creating regional assemblies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland yet ethnic minorities, or deterritorialised 'national' minorities, remain marginalised. Recently, the recognition of the existence of 'institutional racism' at the heart of British public institutions, by those institutions themselves, has exposed the ethnic nature of Britain's democracy. No sooner had the Macpherson report described the Metropolitan Police Force as institutionally racist over its handling of the murder of Stephen Lawrence, the Home Office Minister, Michael O'Brien, admitted that his department was 'institutionally racist'.⁶⁹ Recent proposals to charge visitors from the Indian subcontinent ten thousand pounds as a bond if immigration officials suspect that they intend to remain in the country after their visas run out underlines this allegation of 'institutional racism.'

The United Nations refugee agency, the UNHCR, recently criticised the governing Labour party and the opposition Conservatives in Britain over their approach to asylum seekers. The UNHCR said that the Conservatives' manifesto for local elections in April 2000 played into the hands of racists by saying that racketeers were flooding Britain with bogus asylum seekers whilst Labour was criticised for not doing enough to tackle prejudice against refugees⁷⁰. This criticism was echoed by a joint report presented to the UN Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD)⁷¹ by a delegation of NGOs⁷². The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 was singled out as 'yet another example of where immigration legislation and policies have created racial tensions rather than racial harmony, particularly with regards to the current system for 'no choice' dispersal of asylum seekers outside of London'.⁷³ The voucher system was also castigated for 'stigmatising' asylum seekers by drawing attention to their position leading to reports of harassment. Mohammed Ali from the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants and himself a refugee, testified before the UNCERD that 'frightened and vulnerable people are being treated in a completely inhumane manner. Things have become much worse, threatening the safety of asylum seekers and of ethnic minorities in general in the UK'.⁷⁴

The existence of 'institutional racism' negates the 'ideal' of a multicultural society as professed by British policy makers and the media. The ideal of a multicultural society sees British society, in the words of John Rex, as 'involving simply a confrontation between private familial and communal cultures on the one hand, and the shared political culture of the public domain on the other'.⁷⁵ The distinction between private and public domains may be likened to Tonnies' distinction between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*.⁷⁶ Whilst the private domain is the space occupied by the socio-religious institutions of particular communities, the public domain is occupied by the political, educational, economic and legal systems that are shared by 'a multitude of natural and artificial individuals' from different

communities bound together by a contractual relation.⁷⁷ However, in much of the recent public debate on immigration and asylum seekers, the confrontation is seen as being between 'British public culture' in the public domain and the culture of immigrants in the private sphere. The political culture of the public domain is not so much shared as constructed out of the traditions and memories of the 'British', i.e. white, non-immigrants. Thus, the plight of Sikhs fleeing the troubles of the Punjab during the 1980s and early 1990s did not succeed in attracting the same degree of media coverage as has the plight of the white farmers facing land reform in Zimbabwe. Since 1984 none of the 5,900 Indian citizens who have applied for asylum have been found to be 'genuine refugees' although nearly 800 of those refused asylum have been granted exceptional leave to stay.⁷⁸ In a recent case, the appeal against a deportation order of two Sikh militants, Mukhtar and Paramjit Singh, branded international 'terrorists' and a threat to Britain's national security by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, was upheld by the Special Immigration Appeals Commission, stating this would contravene Article three of the European Convention on Human rights.⁷⁹ The difficulty second or third generation educated, young British Sikhs have in identifying with Britain has been aptly paraphrased by Shinder S. Thandi as 'we are Sikh, British and here to stay, for now, but on condition that Britain changes its views of its own identity. We've had to change because of our family histories of migration and colonialism: now its your turn.'⁸⁰ Sikh political attachment to Britain as a potential homeland is thus at best conditional.

Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition

Although the ethnic nature of British democracy, and particularly the hegemony which continues to be enjoyed by the English bourgeoisie in British political life, may go some way towards explaining the alienation of many British Sikhs, it can not explain the militancy of their north American (in some cases quite literally) cousins. Despite considerable differences in the upward mobility, class composition and sheer numbers between British and North American Sikhs, militant organisations have sprung up on both sides of the Atlantic and, indeed, North American organisations have been more vociferous in their demand for a separate homeland, despite the fact that, in Canada at least, Sikhs have been able to attain the political power and social respectability to go with their new found economic wealth, as the recent election of Ujjal Dosanjh⁸¹ (ethnically a Punjabi Sikh) as Premier of British Columbia testifies.

Verne A. Dusenberry⁸² goes so far as to suggest that Sikh identity in Canada may be seen as a product of state policies of multiculturalism in the same way as Richard Fox had previously suggested that the Sikh self-image during the colonial

period was a result of their treatment as a separate 'race' by the colonial state. Although I would not go that far, considerable continuities do exist between the discourse of multiculturalism as employed in modern Britain and that of the martial races in colonial India. For Richard Fox⁸³, the militant Sikh self-perception as 'Lions of the Punjab', the Punjab's natural military and political elite, is in part a re-appropriation of the colonial depiction of the Keshdharis as 'true' Sikhs. As the British believed the Singhs to constitute a separate race, possessing a distinctive physiognomy, habitat, behaviour and appearance, the colonial state strove to treat the Keshdharis as a distinct community. The British re-invention of Sikh identity was functional in that it served the interests of the Indian army. Certainly as N. Gerald Barrier confirms 'British policies and institutions contributed to shifts within Punjab political culture that affected the way Punjabis saw themselves and organised'.⁸⁴

The British contributed to the evolution of a new political system by borrowing ideas and structures from earlier regimes and transferring new doctrines and institutions that gave Punjab politics a framework. Since British officers believed that the valour and even loyalty of their Sikh troops were closely linked with religious identity they went to great lengths to ensure that each recruit was baptised, and adhered to wearing the Five Ks. This was reflected in Orientalist scholarship. As Harjot Oberoi has noted, scholars such as Ernest Trumpp, John Gordon and Max Macauliffe showed far greater interest in recording the ideals of the faith than the actual behaviour of its practitioners⁸⁵. Thus for Macauliffe, writing in 1881, Sikh identity was embodied in the five Ks. 'All orthodox Sikhs *must* always have five appurtenances whose names begin with the letter K.'⁸⁶ Not to do so, could result in failure to find employment in the British army. Orientalist scholarship also made possible the emergence of a distinct Sikh national identity by likening the Sikhs to a nation before a distinct Sikh politico-religious identity had been institutionalised into Singh Sabhas. Cunningham saw the Sikhs develop from a 'sect' into a people under Guru Gobind Singh and from a people into a 'nation' under Ranjit Singh at the time of the British annexation of the Punjab.⁸⁷

Similarly, the discourse of multiculturalism as employed in modern western states holds that society is naturally divided into a series of culturally distinct communities each with their way of 'trying to get the world right'. The Sikhs constitute one such community with their own distinct ethno-religious identity and appearance, yet in order to be recognised as such, and be eligible for state grants for university chairs, they need to differentiate themselves from other 'East Indians', to 'sikhify' themselves in Anderson's words. For Charles Taylor, multiculturalism as a project and a goal is intimately related to a 'politics of recognition' and 'politics of difference'.⁸⁸ The politics of recognition is predicated on the assumption that far from being primordial, identity is formed in a continuing dialogue and struggle with

significant 'others'. In the case of the Sikhs, the significant 'others' include 'white natives' and fellow Muslim and Hindu Punjabis. The politics of recognition demands that the Sikh qaum's particularity, as well as equal entitlements to collective rights, is recognised by the state, thus bringing into play a politics of difference not easily reconcilable with mainstream liberal thought. Whilst mainstream liberal thought, or the 'politics of equal dignity' in Taylor's words, 'fights' for forms of nondiscrimination that are 'blind' to the ways in which citizens differ, the 'politics of difference' redefines nondiscrimination as requiring that these distinctions are made the basis of differential treatment. Thus, for Taylor

The politics of difference is full of denunciations of discrimination and refusals of second-class citizenship. This gives the principle of universal equality a point of entry within the politics of dignity. But once inside ...its demands are hard to assimilate to that politics. For it asks that we give acknowledgment and status to something that is not universally shared.⁸⁹

Like the Quebecois and First Nations, Sikh nationalists affirm a separate identity which cannot be attained within Canada. Unlike both 'nations without states', the Sikhs, however, do not lay claim to territories inside Canada and were encouraged to engage in 'long-distance nationalism' in order to gain the recognition of their particularity from the Canadian state, at least until the more violent manifestations of their long distance nationalism threatened Indo-Canadian relations. Darshan Singh Tatla has compared the 'long distance nationalism' of the movement for Khalistan with that of the *Ghadar* movement almost a century ago. The Ghadar movement has its origins in the experiences of Punjabis who migrated to North America in search of labour opportunities between 1905 and 1913.⁹⁰ Confronted by the racism of white settlers and the exclusionary practices of North American states many loyal Punjabis, some of whom had served King and Country in the British army, looked to *The Ghadar* newspaper published by Har Dayal from San Francisco, for a suitable explanation. The Ghadar effectively made the link between the poverty in the Punjab from which they fled and economic exploitation by the British. For Mark Jurgensmeyer, 'the hostility towards the prejudice of North Americans was transferred into hostility against the British, as the immigrant community identified itself with the nationalist struggle against the oppression in India.'⁹¹ Seventy years later, the reality of racial discrimination and increasing intolerance within Europe and North America reinforced the feeling of marginality, alienation and nostalgia amongst immigrant populations. In both cases, 'the cry for a homeland can be interpreted as a demand for 'honour' and 'respect' or a wish to be seen as equals among the world of nations.'⁹² Sikh participation in the Khalistan movement, just as Punjabi participation in the Ghadar movement, may be seen as

attempts to change the political map of South Asia in order to gain honour or respect in their place of settlement. The Sikhs need an independent 'homeland' in order to participate as equals in a 'world of nations'.

The Territorialisation of Memory

Montserrat Guibernau has recently defined 'nations without states' as 'nations which, in spite of having *territories* included within the boundaries of one or more states, by and large do not identify with them.' The members of a nation lacking a state of their own regard the state as alien, and maintain a separate sense of national identity based upon a common culture, history, attachment to a particular territory and the explicit wish to rule themselves⁹³. Of central importance to Guibernau's definition of a nation without a state is thus the existence of a territorially defined homeland or ancestral land.

For the Sikhs, the Punjab may be equated with what AD Smith terms the ancestral land where 'in the shared memories of its inhabitants, the great events that formed the nation took place'⁹⁴. This 'territorialisation of memory', however, may be seen as the outcome of a historical process in which Sikh elites played a pivotal role in constructing an ecological account of the relationship between the Sikh people and the Punjab. As early as 1946, the SGPC committed itself to the 'goal of a Sikh state' and therefore, the territorialisation of the Panth. The Sikh people needed a state of their own to 'preserve the main Sikh shrines, Sikh social practices, Sikh self-respect and pride, Sikh sovereignty and the future prosperity of the Sikh people.'⁹⁵

The ancestral homeland of the Sikh nationalist imagination, however, does not correspond to the borders of the Indian state of Punjab. Some of the 'great events that formed the nation', to which A.D. Smith refers and the place where 'the heroes, saints and sages of the community from which the nation later developed lived and worked and...are buried'⁹⁶, lies to the West in Pakistan. This includes the birthplace of the founder of the Sikh religious tradition, Guru Nanak. Sikh nationalist elites have never laid claim to those lands but instead seek to invest those shared memories of collective experiences within the borders of the new Sikh majority state within the Indian Union.

The importance attached to the creation of a Punjabi-speaking state by the SAD, one in which Sikhs would constitute a majority, and the declaration of a religious war, *dharam yuddh*, to achieve this goal, testifies to the fundamentally territorial nature of Akali politics. The adoption of Punjabi as the language of the Panth left the non-Sikh majority with little option but to record their language preference, Hindi, rather than the language spoken at home, Punjabi, in the 1951 and 1961 censuses. Indeed, for Harjot Oberoi, the protracted struggle for the Punjabi

Suba cemented territoriality into Sikh identity.⁹⁷ Punjabi, and therefore the Punjab, was claimed exclusively for the Sikhs.

In the diasporic nationalist discourse, Sikh identity is equated with Punjabi identity. For Surjan Singh, in the Babbar Khalsa's case for the Republic of Khalistan, 'in historical terms Sikhs and the Punjab are interchangeable elements.' The Sikhs are seen as the 'true sons of the soil', having defended the Punjab from 'the foreign Afghan' and having valiantly resisted the British until 1849.⁹⁸ Indeed, the Sikhs are seen as having paid a disproportionate price for Indian independence. Surjan Singh estimates that over 95% of India's 'freedom fighters' were Sikh at a time when they constituted barely 1% of the population⁹⁹. The claim that the Sikhs spearheaded the movement not only to free their homeland Punjab, but also the entire Indian subcontinent is echoed by Kuldeep Singh, 'coordinator' of the Vishav (World) Sikh Council. Kuldeep Singh asserts that out of a total of 121 men that were sent to the gallows, 93 (76.8%) were Sikhs and out of a total of 2,646 people imprisoned for life by the British, 2,147 (81.1%) belonged to what he considers the Sikh Nation.¹⁰⁰

Independence for India, however, did not bring about an independent homeland for the Sikhs. One form of imperialism was substituted for another. Indeed, remarkable similarities are seen to exist between the colonial and post-colonial period. For the World Sikh Council, in the present Hindu India or in the pre-partition Hindu society neither the Prime Minister, President nor the members of the Cabinet constitute the 'governing class'. The real governing class, Kuldeep Singh asserts, are the Brahmins (only 5% of total Hindu population) and their close associates, who dictate the policies and terms to the rulers of India.¹⁰¹ Interestingly, Kuldeep Singh goes on to cite as evidence the words of the British Orientalist scholar, Max Arthur Macauliffe, in his introduction to his monumental work, *The Sikh Religion*, in six volumes, published in 1899 Macauliffe warned the Sikhs that 'a movement to declare the Sikhs Hindus in direct opposition to the teachings of the Gurus is widespread and of long duration.'

For Dr. Jagjit Singh Chohan, the Khalsa Sikhs are seen as the 'vanguard of the Punjabi peoples'. To this end, the Khalistan Council has used a local radio station, Panjab FM, to transmit the nationalist message during the recent *Vaisakhi* or spring festivities¹⁰². Khalistan is not imagined as a religious theocracy but as a secular Punjabi state based upon the principles of human rights and social justice.¹⁰³ The Nehruvian Indian state is seen as an oppressive imperial structure imposed upon the Punjabi people by the Brahmanical successors to the Raj. The Khalsa, on behalf of the Punjabi people, should therefore assert their right to national self-determination.

The Sikh Diaspora and the International Order

Sikh diasporic nationalism challenges the international order in two ways. Firstly, by asserting the right of national self-determination in the Punjab, nationalist organisations outside of India have contested the legitimacy of the Indian state's use of force in the Punjab. The goal of Sikh diasporic nationalist activity is the achievement of territorially defined sovereign statehood. This challenge is partial in that it constitutes a challenge to the prevailing order whilst reproducing its central feature: the territorially demarcated sovereign state. The contemporary political map of South Asia has twice before been redrawn (Pakistan in 1947 and Bangladesh in 1971) and this suggests that this territorial challenge can be accommodated. The second way in which Sikh diasporic nationalism challenges the contemporary international order is through a rejection of sovereign statehood and an assertion of the sovereignty of the Khalsa Panth. As no territorial limits are placed on the sovereignty of the Khalsa, it is possible that Sikh political aspirations can be accommodated through existing federal arrangements within India. Sikh political structures, particularly the SGPC-Akali Dal complex, constitute an alternative, indigenous political system¹⁰⁴ for ordering the Khalsa Panth. Although the goals of Sikh diasporic nationalists can be accommodated without redrawing the political map of South Asia, it will be argued that this challenge constitutes a greater challenge to the Westphalian international order.

International order may be defined, following the work of Hedley Bull, as 'a pattern of human activity that sustains the elementary or primary goals of the society of states, or international society'.¹⁰⁵ A society of states exist 'when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions'.¹⁰⁶ A society of states, or international society, presumes the existence of a system of states 'formed when two or more states have sufficient contact between them, and have sufficient impact on one another's decisions to cause them to behave...as parts of a whole'.¹⁰⁷ The primary or elementary goals of a society of states are for Bull, 'the preservation of the system and the society of states itself'.¹⁰⁸ This is to be achieved through 'maintaining the independence or external sovereignty of individual states'.¹⁰⁹

Nationalism is constitutive of the contemporary international order. According to the norms underpinning international regimes governing sovereign statehood, sovereignty is seen to reside with the nation. The nation-state is the only internationally recognised structure of political association. Only nation-states are admitted into the United Nations or other international organisations. Article 73 of the UN Charter affirms 'the principle of equal rights and self-determination of

peoples'. This was echoed by the General Assembly which declared in its resolution in 1960 (GAR 1514) that 'all peoples have the right to self-determination'.

The territorial configuration of the Westphalian world order impacts upon personal identity by privileging one form of collective identity, belonging to a nation, over others, i.e. class, gender and locality. Consequently, in order for the Sikh transnational qaum to be recognised internationally, its self-appointed elites are forced to employ discourses of 'nationhood' and 'territoriality' which reinforce traditional conceptions of the international order. The Council of Khalistan, as self-appointed representative of the Sikh nation 'betrayed' by the Akali leadership, claims that sovereignty on behalf of the Sikh 'peoples'. Indian rule in the Punjab is seen as illegitimate, its excessive use of force the tactic of an army of occupation, the Sikhs are not seen as sovereign within East Punjab. 'Let us pray to the Guru to give us courage and bless us with victory so we can free Khalistan from Indian occupation. Our method is peaceful, nonviolent, civil disobedience. The Indian government does not have enough jail cells to hold the entire Sikh Nation'.¹¹⁰ The aspirations of the Council of Khalistan are clearly territorial and are perfectly consistent with what A.D. Smith calls the nationalist world order. According to Smith, the basic tenets of the doctrine of nationalism are:

- a) The world is divided into nations
- b) The nation is the source of all political power
- c) Each nation must be free to determine its own destiny
- d) To be free, each individual must identify with a particular nation.
- e) The world is based on the principle of national self-determination.¹¹¹

The nationalist world order is dependent upon the continued existence of the sovereign state system. Nationalism, as Hudson Meadwell has pointed out, 'continues to be about territory, and territorial politics presupposes states in the modern era'.¹¹² After decolonisation, the language of self-determination was used to legitimise the post-colonial state although the post-colonial state boundaries did not always coincide with *national* boundaries. For James Mayall, the post-war international order institutionalised the principle of national self-determination and, in so doing, 'tamed' it by 'freezing' the political map. In this sense, 'the world has been made safe for nationalism'.¹¹³ However, the events accompanying the collapse of the Soviet Union unleashed the previously tamed force of ethnonationalism. Late twentieth century nationalist movements, including the Khalistan movement in the diaspora, are typically seen as 'negative' and 'divisive', 'reactions of weakness and fear, attempts to erect barricades to keep at bay the forces of the modern world'.¹¹⁴ James Mayall has recently blamed the 'nationalist pathology', the investment of territory with symbolic significance (to the point where even to contemplate territorial adjustment becomes tantamount to blasphemy), with having claimed five

and a half million lives between 1989 and 1996.¹¹⁵ Contemporary ethnic nationalism is seen as the reaction of 'embattled tradition'¹¹⁶ to the intensification of the processes associated with globalisation.

Sikh diasporic nationalism, however, may be seen as a product rather than a reaction to globalisation. Globalisation has brought a reconfiguration of ethnic identities within advanced capitalist societies, enabling Sikh diasporas to take advantage of the opportunities which modernity affords them without abandoning their attachment to their homeland. Globalisation may be seen as a multidimensional process changing relations of power in society.¹¹⁷ In its economic dimension, globalisation is linked to the creation of an interdependent world capitalist economy. The multi-national corporation is seen as the main actor in the global economy, effectively challenging the economic sovereignty of the nation-state. This erosion of state sovereignty is paralleled in the political dimension by the tendency of the nation-state to surrender certain aspects of its sovereignty to supranational institutions, whilst simultaneously decentralising power within the nation-state to ethno-regions, such as the Scots or the Catalans in the European Union. Finally, in its cultural dimension, globalisation, driven by a technological revolution which has made communication instantaneous over large distances, breaks down the barriers of territorial identity, facilitating the development of new kinds of 'imagined community'.

This gives rise to the possibility of conceiving of 'nations without states' as global political actors. I understand a global political actor to be a transnational community able to engage in the practice of international relations, including interstate diplomacy and participation in international organisations, and consequently, to constitute an object of analysis in both the disciplines of international relations and political science.

The Sikh *qaum* may be seen as constituting a deterritorialised 'nation without a state' or a transnational 'imagined community'. This is not to deny that the Sikh nation is 'real' in the sense that it exists in the eyes of its members, but merely that it is an 'imagined political community', one that is imagined as finite and sovereign.¹¹⁸ Membership of the Sikh nation is finite in that it is limited to Keshdhari Punjabi-speaking Sikhs. Furthermore, the Sikh nation is sovereign in that all political and spiritual power is located within the Khalsa Panth. Guru Gobind is seen to have conferred sovereignty upon the Khalsa Panth through the proclamation of *Raj Kare Ga Khalsa*, that is 'Khalsa shall rule and is sovereign.' No territorial limits are placed on the sovereignty of the Khalsa.

Sikh diasporic nationalism challenges the Westphalian international order based on the existence of a system or society of territorialised sovereign states in its assertion of the sovereignty of the Khalsa Panth. The sovereign state, as Tom Young points out, has two important features. First, it requires that no other centre of

political power may legitimately exist; and secondly, it demands that there be nothing outside the scope of the state and its power.¹¹⁹ Sikh diasporic nationalism, in its assertion of the sovereignty of the institutions of the Sikh political system, recognises an alternative centre of political power within the Punjab. Both realist and liberal conceptions of the international order take the territorial sovereign state to be the basic unit of international political activity. Whilst most realists would agree with Kenneth Waltz that, on the international stage, 'states set the scene in which they, along with non-state actors stage their dramas'¹²⁰, liberals seem to limit state sovereignty through a network of regimes and institutions designed to promote universal standards of conduct necessary for the creation and maintenance of an international society. These standards include the formalisation of the consent of the governed in representative institutions, the maintenance through the rule of law of individual guarantees to life, liberty and property, and the creation of a market economy regulated by the 'invisible hand' of multinational capital, all of which require the disciplinary power of the state. The Sikhs, however, in managing to maintain a collective ethno-religious identity without a sovereign homeland, have come to constitute almost a 'paradigmatic example of a transnational community'.¹²¹

Khalistan is constituted by the reproduction of representational practices associated with sovereign statehood: the setting up of a 'government in exile', the issuing of a separate Khalistani currency and, importantly, Khalistan passports. The Sikh qaum approximates to what Arjun Appadurai terms a 'delocalised transnation'. A 'delocalised transnation' retains a 'special ideological link to a putative place of origin,' in the case of the Sikhs, the Punjab but is otherwise 'a thoroughly diasporic collectivity.'¹²² Thus, the Sikh transnation sought Non-Governmental Status at the United Nations in 1987.¹²³ Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh of the Council of Khalistan, recently testified to the UN working group on Enforced and Voluntary Disappearances¹²⁴ and briefly the Council of Khalistan gained membership of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation (UNPO).¹²⁵ The Sikh transnation has thus been accepted as a 'nation without a state' although unlike say the Palestinian 'nation without a state' it lacks a single, legitimate representative organisation capable of articulating the demands of its members to the international system.

However, the continued territorialisation of Sikh diasporic aspirations threatens the Sikh transnation's acceptance as a global political actor and the very survival of the Sikh diaspora. In rejecting its application, the UN Committee, consisting exclusively of sovereign states, felt that NGO status would undermine 'the sovereignty of a member state', i.e. India. Would the Committee have rejected an application which sought to deterritorialise Khalistan by asserting sovereignty over all Sikh peoples rather than the Punjab? And what would be the status of those Sikhs who choose to live and work outside of an independent Punjab? Would they

still be considered part of a Sikh nation?

Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to illustrate the ways in which the transnational Sikh qaum may be viewed as a nation without a state. Following Anderson, the Sikhs constitute a nation in that Sikhs *imagine* themselves to be a people possessing their own separate religion, history, institutions and territory. Although Sikh 'national' institutions may be seen as exercising sovereignty over the Khalsa Panth, their sovereignty does not extend to the political institutions of the 'ancestral homeland'. This brings the self-appointed overseas representatives of the Sikh qaum in conflict with the Indian state which claims a monopoly of the legitimate use of force¹²⁶ within the Union State of the Punjab. It has been argued that the driving force behind the demand for Khalistan is a politics of recognition located in the alienation of overseas Sikh communities from the mainstream in Britain and, to a lesser extent, in North America. Whilst Sikh elites in the Punjab, particularly the Badal faction of the Akali Dal, have been accommodated into the Indian state's strategy of hegemonic control, overseas Sikh nationalist elites have employed the language of national self-determination to delegitimise the claims of the Indian state to the Punjab. Consequently, Sikh diasporic nationalism has a territorial character. Its function is to bring international pressure to bear on the Indian state over its treatment of the Punjabi people with a view to 'liberating' the Punjab from the tyranny of the Hindu Raj. In so doing, Sikh diasporic nationalism constitutes a partial challenge to the Westphalian international order. This territorialisation of Sikh diasporic activity, however, limits its ability to act as a global political actor and address issues facing Sikhs across the diaspora.

Alternatively, the overseas Sikh diaspora, acting as a 'delocalised transnation', have the potential to challenge the Westphalian order in a more profound way, by asserting the sovereignty of the Khalsa Panth whilst abandoning territorial claims to the 'ancestral homeland'. In so doing, Sikh conceptions of deterritorialised sovereignty sever the relationship between nation and state. As a 'nation without a state', the Sikh qaum may be constitutive of a newly emerging alternative international order; an order in which transnational communities and other transnational social movements are seen as participants in a global civil society¹²⁷ existing alongside a system or society of states.

Notes

1. The first draft of this paper was presented at the conference on Migration, Urban development and Demographic Change in Punjab 1890s-1990s, held at Coventry

University, 20 February 2000. The second draft was presented at a departmental seminar at SOAS. I am grateful to Professor Ian Talbot, Professor Gurharpal Singh, Dr John Sidel, Dr. Sudipta Kaviraj, Dr David Taylor and Dr Stephen Hopgood for their comments.

2. Montserrat Guibernau, *Nations without States: Political Communities in a Global Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), 16.

3. See Giorgio Shani, 'The Construction of a Sikh National Identity', *South Asia Research*, 20,1 (2000) 3-18, for an account of how a Sikh national identity may be seen as constructed.

4. Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays* (trans. Ben Brewster) (London: New Left Books, 1971), 162.

5. See Verne A. Dusenberry, ' 'Nation' or 'World Religion'?: Master Narratives of Sikh Identity' in Pashaura Singh and N. Gerald Barrier (eds.) *Sikh Identity: Continuity and Change*, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1999), 127-142, for an account of the first two discourses.

6. See W.H. McLeod, *Who is a Sikh? The problem of Sikh Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 96.

7. See Parminder Bhachu, *Twice Migrants* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1985) for an account of the experiences of ramgharias from East Africa.

8. This distinction was suggested to me by Professor Gurharpal Singh. See Gurharpal Singh, 'Culture and Economy in the Indian Diaspora; the case of the Sikhs', a paper presented at a conference on *Culture and Economy in the Indian Diaspora*, International Centre, New Delhi, 8-10 April 2000, 23.

9. Council of Sikh Affairs, *Compendium of Statements and Resolutions* (Chandigarh, 1983), 18.

10. Singh Sabhas, associations or societies of Keshdhari Sikhs, played a key role in the construction of ethno-religious boundaries in the Punjab. See Rajiv A. Kapur, *Sikh Separatism*, (Oxford, 1986) and Harjot S. Oberoi, *The Construction of Sikh Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994) for an account of the 'Tat Khalsa' movement.

11. See Giorgio Shani, 'The Construction of a Sikh National Identity', *South Asia Research*, 20,1 (2000) 3-18.

12. J.S. Grewal, ' Nabha's *Ham Hindu Nahin*: A Declaration of Sikh Ethnicity' in Pashaura Singh and N. Gerald Barrier (eds.) *Sikh Identity: Continuity and Change* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1999), 250.

13. A Panth may be seen as a term particular to Northern India used to identify the devotees of a specific spiritual leader. It consists of those religious ideas and practices concerned with spiritual experience, and with the way in which followers tend to gather around a charismatic spiritual master.

14. Mehar Singh Chaddah, *Are Sikhs a Nation?* (New Delhi: 1982), 79.
15. Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: UCL Press, 1997), ix.
16. Deterritorialised in this context merely refers to movement from a 'homeland' irrespective of whether the migration was forced or voluntary.
17. Transnational in this context refers to interstate or global flows and networks.
18. James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), p.244.
19. Khachig Tölölian, 'The Nation State and its Others: In Lieu of a Preface', *Diaspora* 1(1) 1991, 4-5.
20. Steven Vertovec, 'Three Meanings of 'Diaspora', Exemplified among South Asian Religions', *Diaspora* 6 (3) 1997, 277-308.
21. *Ibid.*, 277-8.
22. William Safran, 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return', *Diaspora* 1(1) 1991, 83-99.
23. Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, 180.
24. See Darshan Singh Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora: The Search for Statehood* (London: UCL Press, 1999), 5-8.
25. Paul Gilroy, 'Diaspora and the Detours of Identity', in Kathryn Woodward (ed.) *Identity and Difference* (London: Open University, 1997), 318.
26. Robin Cohen in his introduction to the series of global diasporas, had earlier distinguished between victim, labour, trade, imperial and cultural diasporas. Unlike the vast majority of South Asian diasporas, the Sikhs were not indentured labourers and therefore do not correspond to Cohen's definition of a labour diaspora. A case could, however, be made for including the first wave of male, *Jat* Sikhs into the UK as a labour diaspora, with *Khatris* forming a trade diaspora.
27. Darshan Singh Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora*, 6.
28. Urvashi Butalia, *The other side of silence: voices from the partition of India*, (New Delhi: Penguin, 1998), 3.
29. *ibid.*, p.3.
30. Darshan Singh Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora: The Search for Statehood* (London: UCL Press, 1999), 28.
31. Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997), 53.
32. Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, *Millennium Message to the Sikh Nation*, 18/1/00 (<http://www.khalistan.com/message2000.1>)
33. Paul R Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974) p.277.
34. Stanley J. Tambiah, 'Transnational Movements, Diasporas and Multiple

Modernities', *Daedalus*, Winter 2000: 175.

35. *Ibid.*, 176-7.

36. The bombing of an Air India airplane in 1985 is seen to have been carried out by the Indian state itself, according to the book *Soft Target*, written by two Canadian journalists.

37. Karen Leonard, 'Pioneer Voices from California: Reflections on Race, Religion and Ethnicity' in N. Gerald Barrier and Verne A. Dusenberry (eds.) *The Sikh Diaspora: Migration and Experience Beyond the Punjab* (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1990), 120.

38. The Indian state of the Punjab is itself seen as a colonial construct.

39. Verne A. Dusenberry, 'A Sikh Diaspora? Contested Identities and Constructed Realities', in Peter Van der Veer (ed.), *Nation and Migration* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 23-4

40. Daniele Conversi, 'Nationalism, Boundaries, and Violence', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 28, 3 (1999), 583.

41. See Shinder Singh Thandi, 'Counterinsurgency and Political Violence in the Punjab' in Gurharpal Singh and Ian Talbot (eds.) *Punjabi Identity: Continuity and Change* (Delhi: Manohar, 1996), 159-184, for an account of counterinsurgency operations in the Punjab.

42. See Gurharpal Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India: A Case-Study of Punjab* (London: Macmillan, 2000), 45-50, for a discussion of 'hegemonic' and 'violent' control.

43. Government of India, *White Paper on the Punjab Agitation* (New Delhi: Government of India Press, 1984), 35.

44. Paul Gilroy, 'Diaspora and the Detours of Identity' 329.

45. Roger Ballard, *The South Asian Presence in Britain and its Transnational Connections*, Culture and Economy in the Indian Diaspora, India International Centre, New Delhi, 8-10 April 2000.

46. Benedict Anderson, 'Exodus', *Critical Enquiry*, 20, 2 (1994), 324.

47. Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, 193.

48. *Ibid.*, 208-9.

49. Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora*, 72-3.

50. Benedict Anderson, *Long-Distance Nationalism: World Capitalism and the Rise of Identity Politics*, (Amsterdam: Centre for Asian Studies, 1992), 11.

51. Roger Ballard, *The South Asian Presence in Britain*, 2000.

52. Stanley J. Tambiah, 'Transnational Movements, Diasporas and Multiple Modernities', *Daedalus*, Winter 2000: 167-8.

53. Roger Ballard, *The South Asian Presence in Britain and its Transnational Connections*, Culture and Economy in the Indian Diaspora, India International

Centre, New Delhi, 8-10 April 2000.

54. Roger Ballard, 'The Emergence of *Desh Pardesh*', in Ballard (ed.) *Desh Pardesh: The South Asian Presence in Britain* (London: Hurst and Co., 1984) p. 8.

55. Ballard, *Desh Pardesh*, 28.

56. Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora*, 43.

57. Liberty, Race Equality organisations testify to UN on human rights violations by UK Government, 14/8/00 (<http://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk>)

58. Vikram Dodd, 'Labour hit by race row', *The Guardian* 31/8/00, p.1.

59. Piara Singh Khobra, a former activist of the Indian Workers' Association, was elected MP in 1992 and re-elected in 1997. Although he is not a Keshdhari Sikh and is hostile to the Khalistan movement, he is still considered a 'sikh' MP by the community in Southall.

60. Johan Galtung, 'A Structural Theory of Imperialism', *Journal of Peace Research*, 1971, Vol 8 (2), 81-117.

61. See Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: contesting identities* (London: Routledge, 1996).

62. See Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora*, p. 100-2.

63. The 'Turban Victory' refers to the Motorcycle Crash Helmets (Religious Exemption) Act which exempted Keshdhari Sikhs from having to wear crash helmets when riding a motorcycle. The passing of the Act after a successful campaign which saw many Keshdhari Sikhs attempting to ride a motorcycle for the first time was seen as a public affirmation of the separate identity of the Sikhs, and helped first construct ethno-religious boundaries between Sikhs and other South Asian minorities. See Sydney Bidwell MP (Ealing-Southall), *The Turban Victory* (Southall: Sikh Missionary Society, 1987) for an account of the passing of the Act.

64. Smooha cited in Gurharpal Singh 'Re-examining the Punjab Problem', in Gurharpal Singh and Ian Talbot (eds.) *Punjabi Identity: Continuity and Change* (Delhi: Manohar, 1996), 121.

65. This is not to deny that important distinctions exist between the Nehruvian and post-Nehruvian periods. For contending accounts of the secular credentials of India's democracy, see Sudipta Kaviraj, 'On State, Society and Discourse in India' in James Manor (ed.) *Rethinking Third World Politics* (Harlow: Longman), 72-99 and Gurharpal Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India: A Case Study of the Punjab* (London: Macmillan, 2000), 35-55.

66. Gurharpal Singh, 121.

67. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol.2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 305.

68. Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, *Millennium Message to the Sikh Nation*, 18/1/00 (<http://www.khalistan.com/message2000.1>)

69. Bill Morris, 'The Racism that lies at the heart of the government', *The Independent*, 14 April 2000:4 (Friday Review section).
70. BBC News/Europe, *UNHCR criticises approach to asylum seekers*, 8/4/00 (http://news6.thdo.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/europe/newsid_706000/706544.stm)
71. The UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was established in 1965 to monitor compliance with the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination.
72. Participating organisations included the Association of Muslim Lawyers, Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland, Black Employment Institute, Black Training and Enterprise Group, Black Workers' Group, National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux, Birmingham Racial Attacks Monitoring Unit, Chhokar Family Justice Campaign (Scotland), Chinese in Britain Forum, Ethnic Minorities Representatives Council, The Gypsy Council, INQUEST, Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, JUSTICE, Liberty, Muslim Council for Britain, The Muslim Network (Scotland), National Assembly Against Racism, NACRO, Newham Monitoring Project, Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities, Operation Black Vote, Refugee Legal Centre, Runnymede Trust, Trade Union Congress Race Relations Committee, United Friends and Family Campaign, Welsh Refugee Council, Working Group Against Racism in Children's Resources and the 1990 Trust.
73. Liberty, *Race Equality organisations testify to UN on human rights violations by UK Government*, 14/8/00 (<http://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk>)
74. Ibid.
75. John Rex, 'The Political Sociology of a Multi-Cultural Society', *European Journal of Intercultural Studies* 2, 1991:13.
76. John Rex, 'The Concept of a Multi-Cultural Society' in Montserrat Guibernau and John Rex eds. *The Ethnicity Reader* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997) p.209.
77. F. Tonnies, *Community and Association (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft)* (Routledge and Keegan Paul, London, 1955) p.87.
78. Darshan Singh Tatla (1999), *Sikh Diaspora*, p.59.
79. BBC News/UK Politics, 'Sikh 'Terrorists' remain in UK' 31/7/2000, (<http://news6.thdo.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/uk%5Fpolitics/newsid%5F860000/860179.stm>)
80. Shinder S. Thandi, 'Sikh Youth Aspiration and Identity: Some Perspectives from Britain', in Pashaura Singh and N. Gerald Barrier (eds.) *Sikh Identity: Continuity and Change* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1999) p.352.
81. Ujjal Dosanjh was sworn in as British Columbia's 33rd Premier on February 24, 2000. He is Canada's first Indo-Canadian Premier. He had previously served as Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism, Immigration and

Human Rights; Minister of Government Services; and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism, Human Rights, Sports and Immigration.

82. Verne A. Dusenbery, 'A Sikh Diaspora?', 1995.

83. See Richard G. Fox, *Lions of the Punjab: Culture in the Making* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

84. N. Gerald Barrier, 'Sikh Politics in the British Punjab', in O'Connell, Israel and Oxtoby (eds.) *Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988) 160.

85. Harjot S. Oberoi, *The Construction of Sikh Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994) .131.

86. *Ibid.*,31.

87. J.D. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs from the Origins of the Nation to the Battles of the Sutlej*, (Delhi: John Murray, 1966) 92.

88. See Charles Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition', in Charles Taylor et al., *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

89. Charles Taylor, *Politics of Recognition*, 39.

90. See Harish Puri, *The Ghadar Movement: Ideology, Organisation and Strategy* (Amritsar; Guru Nanak Dev University Press, 1993).

91. Mark Jurgensmeyer, 'The Ghadar Syndrome: Nationalism in an Immigrant Community', *Punjab Journal of Politics*, 1,1(1977), 2.

92. Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora*, 208.

93. Montserrat Guibernau, *Nations without States*, 16. {italics mine}.

94. A.D.Smith, 'Memory and Modernity: reflections on Ernest Gellner's theory of nationalism' *Nations and Nationalism*, 2, 3 (1996), 383.

95. Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, *Resolution of Sikh State*, Amritsar, March 9th, 1946.

(http://www.maboli.com/sikh_hr/pages/documents/1946resolution.html).

96. A.D.Smith, 'Memory and Modernity', 383.

97. Harjot Oberoi, 'From Punjab to 'Khalistan': Territoriality and Metacommentary', *Pacific Affairs*, 60, 1, (1987), 39-40.

98. Surjan Singh, *Case for Republic of Khalistan*, (Vancouver; Babbar Khalsa, 1982), 15.

99. *Ibid.*, 15.

100. Kuldeep Singh, *Khalistan*, Vishav (World) Sikh Council – USA (<http://syf.jaj.com>).

101. Kuldeep Singh, *Khalistan*, Vishav (World) Sikh Council – USA (<http://syf.jaj.com>).

102. Panjab FM was initially on air from April 1st to April 28th 2000 in the Southall area west of London. Regular service resumed on September 1st 2000.
103. Dr. Jagjit Singh Chohan was in conversation with the author 17/2/00.
104. See Paul Wallace, 'Religious and Secular Politics in Punjab: the Sikh dilemma in competing political systems', in P. Wallace and S. Chopra (eds), *Political Dynamics of the Punjab*, Amritsar; Guru Nanak Dev University Press, 1-32, for a discussion of the Sikh political system.
105. Hedley Bull, 'The Anarchical Society' (London; Macmillan, 1977), 8.
106. *Ibid.*, 13.
107. *Ibid.*, 9-10.
108. *Ibid.*, 16.
109. *Ibid.*, 17.
110. Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, *Millennium Message to the Sikh Nation*, 18/1/00 (<http://www.khalistan.com/message2000.1>).
111. A.D. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 159.
112. Hudson Meadwell, 'Stateless Nations and the Emerging International Order', in T.V. Paul and John A. Hall (eds.) *International Order and the Future of World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 262.
113. James Mayall, *Nationalism and International Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 50.
114. Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 164.
115. James Mayall, 'Territory, Statehood and Nationalist Pathology', paper presented at ASEN's Tenth Annual Conference, Friday 24th March, London School of Economics and Political Science.
116. Anthony Giddens, 'Globalisation and the Future of the Nation-State', paper presented at ASEN's Tenth Annual Conference, Friday 24th March, London School of Economics and Political Science.
117. See D. Held & A. McGrew, D. Goldblatt & J. Perraton, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).
118. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), 36-46.
119. Tom Young, 'A Project to be Realised: Global Liberalism and Contemporary Africa', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 24, 3 (1995), 529.
120. Kenneth Waltz in R.O. Keohane (ed.) *Neorealism and its critics*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 89.
121. Verne A. Dusenbury, 'Nation or World Religion?: Master Narratives of Sikh Identity', in Pashaura Singh and N. Gerald Barrier (eds.) *Sikh Identity: Continuity and Change*, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1999), 138.

122. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 172.
123. Tatla , *The Sikh Diaspora*, 180.
124. www.khalistan.com/un-test 2.htm
125. Tatla , *The Sikh Diaspora*, 180.
126. Max Weber, *From Max Weber*, (trans. and eds). H.H.Gerth and C.Wright Mills (London: Routledge, 1991), 78.
127. See Stephen Hopgood, 'Reading the Small Print in Global Civil Society: The Inexorable hegemony of the Liberal Self', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 29(1), 200: 1-27 for a discussion of the possibilities of a Global Civil Society.

The Globalization of Identity Politics: The Sikh Experience

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Utilising new research in the area of International Relations theory, this paper addresses questions on the place of ethnicity in global politics. Based on fieldwork in the UK and North America, it takes a case study of the Khalistan Movement to illustrate how marginalised diaspora communities attempt to internationalise their real or perceived grievances. The paper starts with a discussion on the evolution of the Sikh diaspora and then moves to look at the influence of homeland politics on diasporic politics and how these in turn influence homeland politics. By focusing on Operation Bluestar – ‘the critical event’ – it identifies the changing context of diasporic politics and identifies a chronology for the eruption of Sikh ethnicity in the international arena. The author identifies the crucial role of *Jat* Sikhs in the Khalistan Movement and concludes that the appeal of Khalistan amongst this group is unlikely to disappear as it is crucially linked to the politics of recognition in their host states.

England has always been a breeding ground for our revolutionists (...) What would Pandit Nehru have been without Harrow? Or Ghandiji without his formative experiences here? Even the Pakistan idea was dreamt up by young radicals at college in what we then were asked to think of as the Mother Country. Now that England's status has declined, I suppose it is logical that the quality of the revolutionists she breeds has likewise fallen. The Kashmiris! Not a hope in hell. And as for these Khalistan types, let them not think that their evil deed has brought their dream a day closer.

Salman Rushdie, ‘Chekov and Zulu’, in *East, West*.¹

Since the end of the eighties, International Relations theory has been affected by major changes. The dominant paradigms of the discipline, Realism, Liberalism and Marxism have been challenged by new perspectives, emphasizing the transformation of social, spatial and temporal dimensions of world politics. It is in this context that the issue of identities in the international society has begun to be acknowledged by IR scholars². So far, the place of identity and so-called ‘ethnic groups’ in world politics had been widely neglected. The Marxists feared to address the issue because, at least theoretically, ethnicity³ was thought to be antithetical to communism. Realism, for its part, focused on state-centric power politics, neglecting social issues. Liberalism, at last, asserted the following syllogism: western modernity tends to become universal; western

modernity reposes on the nation-state, state-oriented loyalties and bordered territories; hence, the western model of the nation-state tends to become the universal answer to the old quest for *thymos*, or social recognition (this is the 'End of History' predicted by Francis Fukuyama.⁴ In this perspective, the nation-state was then perceived as the only viable mode of governance of the people, and the hegemonic receptacle of their loyalties, contained by well-defined borders.

The economic, social and political changes associated with the recent acceleration of the globalization process and the erosion, if not the disappearance, of the Westphalian system of world politics, make the dominant paradigms of IR theory obsolete.⁵ *Globalization*, in the words of Roland Robertson, can be defined as 'the concrete structuration of the world as a whole'⁶ due to the emergence of a 'global' social space, where borderless interactions and interdependencies develop between persons. Due to the acceleration of this process but also to the dynamics of fragmentation *seemingly*⁷ opposing it, the nation-state is presently assaulted from all sides: at the sub-national level by the multiplication and transfers of the citizens' loyalties; at the transnational level by global financial, cultural and migratory flows and finally, at the supranational level by the progression of post-national modes of governance. The State is in turmoil. Borders do not contain identities any longer, which rather overlap or undermine them. Identities are changing, swinging between the pre-national (as the neo-medievalists suggest) and the post-national (this is James Rosenau's and the post-modernists' hypothesis).

It is in this context that the place of ethnicity - and especially diasporic ethnicity - is now being recognized, the modern equation between identity and statehood as well as the old distinction between 'local' and 'global' categories being increasingly challenged. The new politics of space and identity of diasporic communities, both influenced by the globalization process and influencing it in return, especially fascinates the post-modernists, who present the diasporic modes of localization and socialization as the embodiment of the post-modern condition.⁸ Yet, this increasing attention given to diasporic identities and their relation to the globalization process should not obscure its limits. So far, very few studies have detailed, through case studies, the global-local nexus at work in 'new ethnicities'⁹, in which diasporas play a decisive role, according to : (1) the nature of the cultural, economic and political bondage linking home societies and diasporic communities; (2) the configuration of the relationships between diasporas, home states and host states and, more theoretically, the diasporas' relation to the notions of nationhood and statehood; (3) the ability of diasporas to organize themselves as coherent actors in the international public sphere (mobilizing ability at the multilateral and supranational level).¹⁰

The first dimension of diasporic politics is focused on its manifestation at the transnational level; the second underlines the relations between diasporas and the world of state-centric ideas and bilateral relations; the last questions the potential for diasporic microactivities to produce macropolitical outcomes at the global level (i.e. through their mobilization of international public opinion and

their growing presence in multilateral and supranational institutions). One could also put it this way: diasporic politics is related to *the place of diasporas in the transnational space of the Liberal theory, in the state-centric world of the Realist theory and, finally, in the post-national polity of the Idealists*. This perspective is rather different from post-modern analysis of globalization, generally evaluating its process at the transnational or sub-national level and underestimating its expression at the state-centric level, although the nation and the State are said not to have vanished yet. Hence, in my perspective, the place of states in the globalization process should be addressed more thoroughly and the definition I propose of 'the globalization of identity politics' is *the process through which groups modify their sense of belonging under the influence of transnational relations, ideas or events, the reshaping of their ethnicity affecting in turn world politics, at the national, international and supranational level*. More simply, it is characterized by two intertwined dynamics: the irruption of global flows in the formerly¹¹ territorialized space of identities and, retroactively, the incidence of these newly 'glocalized'¹² identities on the international and global level. Hence, in the globalized world, as Jan Aart Scholte suggests, 'The local co-exists with, is not wholly subordinate to and indeed shapes the global at the same time that it is shaped by the supraterritorial realm'¹³. In this perspective, it is clear that identities or 'ethnicities' are not given but socially constructed. This is the meaning of 'politics of identity': identities are *'en route* rather than rooted'¹⁴ and on their way, they are now bound to be increasingly influenced by the global changes of the world-system and by the answers of groups and individuals to these macro evolutions.¹⁵

In the case of India, the global dimensions of identity politics (whether at the national, regional or 'communal' level) cannot be limited to the intervention of overseas expatriates in the national polity¹⁶. Yet, since the end of the nineteenth century, this phenomenon has become an ever more decisive factor in Indian politics of identity, as suggested by the epigraphic dialogue taken from Salman Rushdie's short story *Chekov and Zulu*. However, unlike Rushdie's character, Chekov, an Indian diplomat committed to crushing Sikh separatist groups abroad, my purpose here will not be to assert whether the quality of overseas Indian revolutionists is on the low, but more to emphasize how one community of Indian emigrants, the Sikhs, has been committed to a complex dialogue with its home society and to a violent confrontation with its home state. The globalization of Sikh identity politics will then be analyzed as a two-fold process: (1) it is characterized by the increasingly complex interaction between the Sikh diaspora's *politics of the homeland* and the Punjabi *homeland politics*; (2) secondly, now discussed at a transnational level *between* Sikhs all over the world, Sikh ethnicity is also being mobilized *by* Sikhs in the international public sphere, where their main targets are NGOs, public opinion and states. Against all odds, as we will see, the virtual disappearance of borders between Sikhs of the Punjab and their diaspora has not signaled the erosion of social and political frontiers between them. Sikh diasporic politics of the homeland and homeland politics are *seemingly* more interconnected than ever; yet, they have not merged together and sharp differences remain between them,

which have increased rather than decreased in recent time. The irruption of Sikh ethnicity in the international public sphere is then the result of the increasing autonomy of Sikh diasporic politics of the homeland rather than the outcome of its convergence with Punjabi homeland politics.

The Sikh Diaspora and its Home Society: From Economic Contribution to Political Domination?

The presence of Sikhs outside India is probably as old as the Sikh faith itself, shaped by the ten *Gurus* between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. Indeed, Sikh *Khatri* traders developed small colonies in Afghanistan, Persia and Sri Lanka. Yet, the rise of Sikh mass migration outside South Asia did not take place before the enlistment of Sikhs in the British colonial army, after the annexation of Punjab (in 1849) and the Mutiny of the Sepoys (1857-1858). The Sikhs were then declared a 'martial race' by the new colonial power and many Sikh soldiers were subsequently posted to places in British-held South-East Asia (mostly Singapore and Hong Kong). From there, early pioneers ventured to further lands: *Telia* (Australia, where the Sikhs began to settle in the 1880s) and *Milkan* (America, where they arrived 10 years later, especially in California and British Columbia). The first decade of the twentieth century saw the rise of Sikh communities on the western coast of North America, but Canada started controlling the migratory flows in 1908 and in the US, South Asian immigrants were denied entry by the Immigration Act of 1924. At the same time, the Sikhs also settled in East-Africa, taking part in the building of the East African Railway between 1896 and 1901. However, the Sikhs who settled in East Africa belonged to a different caste than the majority of Sikhs settled in the rest of the world. This was to play a major role in their ethnicity during their stay in Africa and later, when they would be expelled from Uganda, Kenya or Malawi in the 1970s and 1980s. At that time, East African *Ramgharia* Sikhs (belonging to the craftsmen group) would then resettle massively in Britain, where they would have to face the hegemony of the *Jats* (land owners, of a higher social rank) arrived in *Vilayat* in the 1950s and 1960s. After the Second World War, Sikhs also started moving in large groups to North America, where a change of immigration policy was implemented in 1962 (in Canada) and in 1965 (in the US). By that time, the migrants entering North America were generally more qualified than the ones who had arrived there fifty years earlier, and they generally preferred to settle on the East Coast (Ontario in Canada; New York and Washington DC in the US). The new immigrants were also more skilled than those who arrived at the same time in the UK. After the attack of the Indian Army on the Golden Temple in 1984, the massive repression of separatist guerillas and the slaughter of Sikh civilians following the murder of Indira Gandhi, a flow of Sikh refugees also started arriving in Western Europe and North America: around 10 000 in Germany, 8000 in the US, 6000 in Canada and the UK, 5000 in Belgium and 4000 in France.

Today, the global Sikh diaspora numbers one million individuals (13 million Sikhs still living in India). Three-quarters of this group are established in

the UK (between 400,000 and 500,000 individuals), Canada (147,440) and the US (125,000).¹⁷

The interactions between overseas Sikhs and Sikhs of the Punjab have taken several forms since the nineteenth century. The most obvious is economic, induced by the emigrants' economic remittances to their home society, which have both contributed to its prosperity and to its social turmoil. The second is religious, the diaspora importing religious staff from the Punjab and remaining under its spiritual guidance although becoming increasingly autonomous in its religious affairs. Lastly, the Sikh diaspora and its home society have developed complex political relationships through the century, their respective positions on the political destiny of the Sikh community now becoming increasingly polarized, if not antagonistic.

Sikh transnational economy

As cited by trading patterns discussed above, the Sikh transnational economy is almost as old as the Sikh faith itself, due to the geographic position of Punjab at the crossroads of historic trade routes to Central Asia, Persia and the Middle East, which culminated in highly developed trade links with these regions. However, it is only with the rise of British colonial power in the Punjab that the 'overseas factor' started playing a role in the Punjabi economy. The colonization of Punjab sustained its integration into the modern international economy: while agrarian changes encouraged by the British led to Sikh internal migration from East to West Punjab, recruitment in the colonial army led to overseas emigration. From the 1860s onwards, an increasing number of Sikhs, especially *Jats*, swarmed the docks of Calcutta to board ships sailing to Hong Kong, where they would settle down or transit through on their way to other countries of the Far East and later to Australia and North America. These early emigrants remitted a great part of their incomes to their relatives in the Punjab. Through these remittances¹⁸, they intended to promote the *izzat* - or prestige - of their extended families and since they planned to return to their homeland, they also expected these contributions to ensure them a 'comfortable family life'.¹⁹ Most of the emigrants' remittances then went to buying land and expanding farms, in accordance with the *ethos* of *Jat* Sikhs, who favor land as a source of social prestige and social security. It is on the same pattern, although not on the same scale, that the Sikh diaspora became involved in the Green Revolution of the 1960s. According to Darshan Singh Tatla, 'though little documented, the 'green revolution' strategy in the Punjab was partly financed by emigrants' remittances. The financial clout provided by relatives abroad helped many Punjabi peasants to take risks with the newly introduced hybrid varieties of wheat in the 1960s. In parts of Jalandhar and especially Hoshiarpur, where waterlogging formed a major hindrance to farm productivity, overseas funds provided for many preventive measures'.²⁰ Similarly, investments in new agricultural machinery, seeds, harvesters and tube wells were made possible by overseas contributions. Hence, the Sikh diaspora played a decisive role in the modernization of the Punjab economy and, in the 1980s, emigrants' remittances

were estimated to be between 200 and 500 million US dollars a year (with a peak of 1.8 billion dollars in 1983-1984).²¹ However, capital inflows also had their negative features: they brought inflation - the price of land rising drastically in the districts of emigration - inequalities of development (between the areas with overseas connections and others without) and social tensions due to the challenging of traditional leadership by the 'emigrant group', i.e. families with relatives abroad. Hence, as noted by Arthur Helweg, 'the middle class element began to decline - the rich became richer and the poor became poorer'.²² Helweg goes even further, suggesting that 'Punjab as a state developed (...) an 'external economy' - that is, the economic survival of the community is dependent on the influx of outside capital'.²³ In this perspective, emigrants' remittances would have reshaped economic and social patterns of power in Punjab, by giving a dominant position to emigrants' relatives and by leaving landless and unemployed, a growing number of people, many of whom were getting better educated due to the opening of new schools with emigrants' money.

The first explanation of the Khalistan²⁴ Movement could then be the following : under the guidance of the diaspora, the emigrant group embraced the cause of Punjabi independence because it saw in it an opportunity to strengthen its rising hegemony and to mobilize the underprivileged of the new external economy of Punjab. A growing elite, shaped by global economic and ideological flows would then have embraced nationalism for the sake of its hegemony. Such instrumentalist demonstrations, documented by Abner Cohen²⁵ and more recently by Paul Brass²⁶, are now common. But they underestimate several factors : does economic power always equate socio-political leadership? How do ideas travel from one place to another? For example, how did the Khalistani project evolve between the diaspora and the Punjab and vice-versa? Which resources did the movement find inside the Indian political system and how did it resonate in Sikh history and culture? Finally, what was the role of the 'critical event' (operations Bluestar²⁷ and Woodrose²⁸) in the mutation of a demand for greater autonomy into a war of liberation? I do not pretend here to answer all these questions, some of which have already been well addressed.²⁹ However, I would like to get beyond a purely instrumentalist point of view on Sikh separatism and look more precisely at the positions of emigrants on non-economic arenas of social life in the Punjab.

The religious marginalization of the Sikh diaspora

If the Punjabi economy has become more and more dependent on emigrants' remittances in the last decades (just as India as a whole was becoming increasingly dependent on Punjabi wheat), this process has not affected the social status of the diaspora as dramatically as some suggest. Indeed, on religious and regional political levels, central to Sikh identity politics, the diaspora largely remained a marginal factor, at least until recently.

Until the twentieth century, the *Khalsa* only recognized one ultimate authority, the *Guru Grant Sahib*.³⁰ The highest institution of Sikhism, the *Akal*

Takht, built in 1606 by the sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind, did not command all the Sikhs and many of them rejected its temporal authority.³¹ Hence, the Gurdwara Reform Movement of the early 1920s reshaped the *Panth*: the Sikh Gurdwara Act of 1925, which was its main outcome, transferred the ownership of 'historic' Sikh shrines to a newly elected³² institution, the Shiromani Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), which became the supreme temporal authority of Sikhism, 'subject only to the overriding supremacy of the *Guru Granth Sahib*'.³³ Although the SGPC would quickly become a very contested institution, biased by its electoral process and limited in its authority to Sikhs of the Punjab (as the *Akal Takht*), it is doubtless an important arena for Sikh politics of identity. Both of the institutions have the power to give their opinion on matters of faith and social conduct, whether in India or abroad, and they are very often consulted by Sikhs from all over the world³⁴, although they do not seem ready yet to answer any kind of diasporic request.³⁵ Hence, the spiritual and temporal institutions of Sikhism are based in the Punjab and Sikhs of the diaspora still rely on them for religious advice, even as they are being marginalized in their decision-making process³⁶. Under the guidance - if not the authority - of Punjabi temporal and spiritual institutions, Sikh emigrants are not 'non-resident gods'³⁷ whose intervention in the Punjabi polity would have led to war. Although the Sikh diaspora illustrated itself by financing the construction of many *gurdwaras* in Punjab and by producing many a good researcher on Sikhism³⁸, it is still marginal in major Sikh institutions and very often suspected of having traded the Sikh faith for 'westernization'. Moreover, it still relies on *sants* (holy men), *gyanis* (preachers) and *granthis* (*gurdwara* employees) of the Punjab for the conduct of its religious activities.³⁹ This spiritual reliance of overseas Sikhs on the Punjab was attested to during my fieldwork by the President of WSO Canada, who told me:

'Lots of people here they want to marry their children still back home. Not all the time but sometimes they prefer. So by doing that, they always have the fresh generation from Punjab, the children who have been brought up in Punjab and has been taught in the Punjabi Universities, when they come here, they have more basic values in their blood than the children who have grown up here'.⁴⁰

Hence, the Sikh diaspora cannot be seen as the hegemon of modern Sikh ethnicity, which was more shaped by endogenous evolutions of the Punjabi political scene (through the Singh Sabha Movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Gurdwara Movement of the 1920s, the 1962 split in the Akali Dal⁴¹ and the Punjabi Subha Movement) or by patterns of the Indian political system than by the influence of overseas Sikhs. The growing economic power of emigrants and their families did not impose these families' leadership on Sikh ethnic discourse, which is more polycentric than ever (being at the crossroads of socialism, secular nationalism and religious fundamentalism, as articulated from several centers: Amritsar and Anandapur in Punjab, London and Birmingham in England, Toronto and Vancouver in Canada, New York,

Washington and Yuba City (CA) in the US). Hence, the mobilization of the diaspora in favor of Khalistan does not mean that all elements of the diaspora have endorsed it, nor that those who did, had common motivations. Neither can it be assumed that the home society has simply imported and adopted these ideas through the emigrant group. The relative marginalization of the diaspora in modern institutions of Sikh ethnicity limits its ideological influence in Punjab and the militancy years of 1984-1992 were more probably activated by the endogenous evolutions of the Punjabi polity than through the importation of a diasporic strategy of state-building.

The political involvement of overseas Sikhs in the Punjab: an endless failure?

If the hegemonic position of the Sikh diaspora in the Punjab fades away after careful analysis, a clear appreciation of its political involvement in its home society still requires systematic investigation. Indeed, it is these links, rather than the religious and economic ones, that have furnished the ideological (if not the historical and cultural) background of the Khalistan Movement. Much of the Khalistani rhetoric has been imported from Britain, Canada and the US. Yet, it is only because it found fertile ground in the Punjab that it could take root there, at least for a few years. These local opportunities were two-fold: (1) Sikh history furnished past examples of Sikh 'sovereignty'⁴² and the Sikh 'naturalization' of nationalism has been in development since the end of the colonial period at least;⁴³ (2) mistakes of the Center in handling federalism in general and Sikh regionalism in particular led to massive dissatisfaction with it; after Operation Bluestar, the fury of Indian repression also inflamed the cause of separatism.

Initially, the political mobilization of the Sikh diaspora was inspired by organizations or political parties of the Punjab. The Chief Khalsa Diwan of Amritsar, founded in 1902, in the aftermath of the Singh Sabha Movement, constituted the main reference of early diasporic organizations, such as the Khalsa Diwan Society, founded in 1907 in Vancouver and later developed in California. Singh Sabhas were also set up in South East Asia and they provided funding and advertising to Punjabi causes. The Gurdwara Reforms Movement launched by the Akalis also received support from the diaspora, although it was merely symbolic.⁴⁴

Hence, in the early decades of the twentieth century, the Sikh diaspora was more mobilized by political activists of the Punjab than it mobilized them. Patterns of political organization and issues of mobilization were derived from the Punjab and diasporic politics did not yet have a life of its own. This was to change with the Ghadr Movement. Initiated by the racist policies of Canada and the US, this revolutionary movement started developing on the West coast of North America from 1912 onwards. It was led by two intellectuals : Lala Hardayal, who mobilized California's Sikh students, and Taraknath Das, addressing Vancouver Sikhs. Around Hardayal, a Hindi Sabha was formed in 1913, which soon published the weekly *Ghadr* (Revolutionary), clearly

advocating the liberation of India through armed struggle. In August 1914, Hardayal tried to convince his militants to return to India and embrace the fight for independence. 3,200 Indians, mostly Sikhs, answered his call and tried to start up an uprising in the Punjab, sadly unaware of the Punjabi peasants' loyalty to the *Raj*. The attempt was soon crushed in 1915 and revolutionaries were tried in 12 special tribunals, where they received particularly harsh sentences meant to serve as an example to others contemplating civil disobedience. Although the movement was short lived, it had important outcomes: it 'inspired a spirit of freedom, secular and socialist ideology, and helped in the establishment of the Communist Party and the rise of leftist thought among the Punjabi peasantry'.⁴⁵ Moreover, it was the sign that the Sikh diaspora was entering its modern political age, not only influenced by political actors and issues of the Punjab but developing politics of its own. Finally, the failure of the Ghadr movement suggests that political interventions of the diaspora in the Punjab must be closely monitored if they are to succeed. Indeed, the main teaching of the Ghadr was that no diasporic intervention in the Punjab can succeed without the support of local political groups and public opinion. Diasporic revolutionaries cannot operate in a vacuum and hope to be effective: they must root their action in their homeland politics or expect quick failure. As we will see, seventy years later, this command was not taken seriously enough by overseas Khalistanis, whose movement faced major setbacks in the Punjab due to their failure to recognize this reality.

Thus, from 1915 onwards, political links between the Punjab and the diaspora developed in two directions : political actors and issues of the Punjab mobilized the diaspora, benefiting from its funding and advertising; retroactively, the diaspora started developing politics of its own, sometimes influencing the Punjabi polity in return.

In the first instance, the Congress (I) developed an Indian Overseas Congress (IOC) in Britain and Canada in the 1970s. The Akali Dal, for its part, opened a branch in Britain in 1968 and in the US in 1977. This transnationalization of mainstream parties active in Punjab was not inspired by electoral politics: overseas Indians, recently labeled 'Non Resident Indians' (NRIs) or 'Persons of Indian Origin' (PIOs), do not have the right to vote in their homeland. Hence, their mobilization can only serve to enlarge the financial wherewithal and enhance the external world's perception of the political activists based in the Punjab.

In the second instance, a section of the diaspora 'autonomously' committed itself to the cause of independence of 'Khalistan', although it is not very clear yet whether the Khalistan Movement was initiated in the diaspora or in the Punjab. The first major actor of the Movement, Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan, was a medical practitioner and a one-time finance minister of Punjab, belonging to the Akali Dal (Tara Singh faction). In 1971, he sought a British passport and went to Pakistan to develop an entity for the management of Sikh shrines, similar to the SGPC. Some also say that he took this opportunity to approach Pakistani intelligence agencies and set up a 'Rebel Sikh Government at Nankana Sahib'⁴⁶, although this was denied to me by Chauhan himself. From then on,

Chauhan became the principal thinker and organizer of what would come to be known as the Khalistan Movement. In September 1971, he held a press conference in London where he denounced the oppression of the Sikhs in India. On October 13, 1971, he arranged for publication of a one-page advertisement of Khalistan in *The New York Times*. In 1977, he went back to India and led a small group of activists in Jullunder for three years. In April 1980, one of his men, Balbir Singh Sandhu, announced in Amritsar the creation of an eleven member Council of Khalistan committed to strive for a sovereign Sikh state. In June, Chauhan also supported the first radio broadcasting program from the Golden Temple and, later, he encouraged the diffusion in Punjab of Khalistan passports, bank notes and stamps designed in Canada, now archived in London, where he has been living for the last twenty years. Hence, the political career of Chauhan presents many characteristics of the 'diasporization' of a politician formed in mainstream Punjabi politics. Prevented from returning to India since 1980, he has taken roots in the diaspora, although it took him a long time to do so. Interestingly, it is the same man who would become the main advocate of Khalistan abroad that took part in the economic mobilization of the diaspora at the time of the Green Revolution. Herein then lies - in all probability - the essential unity of his political life : Chauhan has always perceived the diaspora as the main resource for the transformation of Punjab, whether economically or politically. Disappointed with his fellow men in his homeland he then turned to the '*richer and more politicized*'⁴⁷ Sikhs of the diaspora, and finally became sufficiently within it to promote his views and have them heard. Yet, Chauhan was not the only early promoter of Khalistan. Ganga Singh Dhillon, a naturalized American Sikh, also has committed himself to the promotion of Khalistan since the beginning of the 1980s. In March 1981, he visited India and was elected president of the Sikh Educational Conference organized in Chandigarh by the Chief Khalsa Diwan. The main outcome of this conference was the adoption of a resolution which authorized pursuit of associate membership in the United Nations for the Sikhs.

Although the idea of Khalistan was advocated early on by some individuals in the diaspora, two things should be made very clear here. First, although discussed and designed in the UK, the US and Canada since the 1970s, the idea of Khalistan did not receive much popular support either in the diaspora or in the Punjab before the Sikh homeland became enmeshed in a vicious circle of agitation-repression, begun in 1978, culminating in the 1984 attack on the Golden Temple and followed by almost ten years of terror. Secondly, it must be made clear that the Sikhs' questioning of their collective status is already ancient. Successive Sikh reformative movements have not ceased, since the end of the nineteenth century, to confront the identity of the Sikh *Panth* to Western theories of ethnicity. At the time of Partition, the idea of a sovereign Sikh state, 'Sikhistan', received support from both the Sikh elites and the public at large. In 1946, for instance, in a synthesis of secular nationalism and religious communalism, the Akali Dal asked for the recognition of political sovereignty of the 'Sikh nation' over Punjab, 'the Sikhs being attached to the Punjab by intimate bonds of holy shrines, property, language, traditions, and history' and

claiming it 'as their homeland and holy land which the British took over as a 'trust' from the last Sikh ruler'.⁴⁸ Indeed, the Sikhs did rule an Empire before the two Anglo-Sikh wars of 1845-1846 and 1848-1849. They were later colonized, but colonization brought integration in the international economy of goods, persons and ideas. Modern theories of nationalism were imported into the Punjab in the process and Sikh history began to be reinterpreted through this new paradigm, one which Hindus and Muslims would also learn to use effectively. Hence, when the Sikhs resigned to join India in 1947, some of them expected that, within a few years, the Congress leadership would grant the Punjab either independence or a satisfactory degree of autonomy. With their growing prosperity in independent India, the cry for independence quickly led way to a demand for greater autonomy, the main outcome of which was the 1966 creation of the present state of Punjab. But Sikh regionalism did not remain a mainstream movement for long. In 1973, the Akali Dal reanimated the debate on the 'Sikh nation' in its controversial Anandapur Resolution. At the same time, the dangerous games of Indira Gandhi, secretly supporting the very militant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale against the more moderate Akalis, contributed to the rebirth of Sikh nationalism. The entry of Punjab into the cycle of agitation, from 1978 onwards, the 'critical event' of 1984 and the subsequent mobilization of the diaspora, would do the rest; that is, cause the mutation of a peaceful demand for greater autonomy within India, into a war of liberation in the name of both nation *and* religion.

The reasoning developed above should have made clear that, although the contribution of some diasporic individuals to the project of Khalistan was clear from 1971 onwards, these activities should be appreciated cautiously. Sikh nationalism takes roots in the colonial encounter, although it was only formulated from the 1940s onwards, and finds many resources in Sikh history. It is not a creation of the diaspora, although it seems to have perpetuated itself longer overseas than in the Punjab, where the cause of Khalistan was only endorsed for a few years, from 1984 to 1992, broadly.

In conclusion to this first section, let me summarize my main arguments as follows :

(1) The Sikh diaspora is not the 'non-resident god' of the Punjab's economy nor of its politics; rather, the diaspora has long been marginal on the religious field and was never instrumental in shaping Punjabi political thought, except as an adjunct to, and with the support of, local political activists.

(2) The Sikh diaspora did play its role in the conceptualization and, as we will now see, in the global promotion of a sovereign Sikh state; however, the diasporic endorsement of Khalistan was slow and cannot be understood outside its Punjabi contextual history. Sikh nationalism takes roots in the pre-colonial and colonial period and was only reactivated in the 1970s, then exacerbated in the 1980s, due to the radicalization of the various protagonists of Punjabi politics.

(3) Consequently, it appears that Sikh ethnicity has been affected by the *interaction* of local politics and global flows, rather than by the irruption of overseas politics on the Punjabi political scene. In other words, *Sikh diasporic*

politics of the homeland interfere with and is influenced by Punjabi homeland politics yet neither is entirely subordinate to the other: these two dynamics, both at the core of modern Sikh ethnicity, can only become congruent in exceptional circumstances (as in the aftermath of operations Bluestar and Woodrose).

(4) Hence, from the Sikh experience, it is apparent that actors and ideas shaped in the global realm must imbue themselves with a local identity if they are to succeed. Global actors and flows must become integrated in the socio-political environment(s) where they operate if they are to prosper, just like micro-actors and micro-grievances need to be understandable and mobilizing at the global level if they are to be recognized. This is probably nothing new. Colonial encounters throughout the globe exemplified this early. Yet, with the recent acceleration of the globalization process and the virtual disappearance of geographical if not social borders, the global-local nexus has acquired a new complexity and an ever-increasing influence on politics of identity throughout the world.

In the Sikh case, we have seen that this process - one that we have called the 'globalization of identity politics' - operates primarily at the transnational level with the complex economic, religious and political interaction of a diaspora with its home society. We must now analyze the result of this process, i.e. the Sikh identity come to fruition in the global realm, due to the lobbying activities of the Sikh diaspora. As I suggested in the introduction, these are the two facets of Sikh global politics of identity: (1) due to the revolution of communication, transport and finance, Sikh emigrants' contacts with their home society tend to get more intense, Sikh identity being discussed transnationally between Sikhs all over the world; (2) beyond being discussed transnationally *between* the Sikhs, the irruption of the diaspora in Sikh politics of identity leads to it being promoted *by* the Sikhs in the global world of states, multilateral organizations and international public opinion. In the first stage (that of the diasporic irruption on the local political scene of its home society), the diaspora tends to be marginalized but in the second one (that of the spread of Sikh ethnicity in the global realm), it is definitely the emigrants who have the lead.

The Eruption of Sikh Ethnicity in the International Arena

As I attempted to explain in the first part of my discussion, the idea of an independent Sikh state did not receive much support in the diaspora or in the Punjab before the Indian attack in June 1984 on the Golden Temple. In 1946-1947, a group of Sikh ethnic entrepreneurs asked for a Sikh homeland but between Partition and Operation Bluestar, Sikh ethnicity largely turned into mainstream regionalism, oblivious of its more militant past. In the 1970s, seeds of discontent were planted by the perverse effects of the Green revolution and the inept governance of New Delhi. The Akalis' Anandapur Sahib Resolution of 1973 then revitalized the call for greater autonomy but, with the exception of Dr. Chauhan who flew to England in 1971, very few overseas Sikhs adopted the secessionist rhetoric before the three major crises of 1978, 1982 and, most of all, 1984. Bhindranwale himself, who took shelter inside the Golden Temple with

his comrades in arms at the end of 1983, was not a Khalistani.⁴⁹ He remained convinced until his brutal death that the Sikhs' future remained in India, despite their 'oppression' in the hands of the Hindu leadership at the Center. Hence, most of the analysts of Punjabi politics and of the Sikh diaspora agree with the idea that, to a large extent, it was the military crackdown on Bhindranwale, the resulting desecration of the holiest Sikh shrine and its resultant, brutal repression, that radically altered the Sikhs' attitude towards India, although, as Joyce Pettigrew suggests, it was probably 'during the 1970s that the bonds of the Sikhs with the state began to loosen'.⁵⁰ It is not my purpose here to explain what led to the Indian army operations and how a local insurgent movement was activated by the violence of state repression. The role of this 'critical event' in the reshuffling of Sikh ethnicity has already been well studied⁵¹ and, unfortunately, I do not have the time here to present the details of these earlier works. Moreover, my point is not so much to reiterate the endogenous origins of 'Khalistanism' in the Punjab as to elucidate the concept and significance of its endorsement by the diaspora, which led to the irruption of Sikh identity politics in the international public sphere. But let me clarify one point before presenting the nature of and the rationale for the Sikh diaspora's 'private diplomacy'. Initially, although some individuals settled abroad had asked for Khalistan and tried to export secessionism to the Punjab from the 1970s onwards, the rise of the Khalistan Movement, from 1984 to 1992, found its origin in Punjabi homeland politics rather than in diasporic politics of the homeland. In other words, whether in India or abroad, the support for Khalistan was initiated by the evolution of the Punjabi and Indian political scenes rather than by an improbable diasporic interference within them. Hence, Sikh nationalism was more exported from India to the diaspora than the opposite, unlike what some authors suggest.⁵² However, as is explain below, once endorsed by a large section of Canadian, British and American-based Sikhs, the Khalistan Movement gained worldwide attention and, by controlling access to foreign authorities and media, overseas Khalistani militants quickly acquired the leadership of a movement which would soon lose the support of Sikhs in the Punjab, even while it was becoming a crucial and permanent element of Sikh diasporic politics.

From emotional shock to international lobbying: the origins of the Sikh diaspora's private diplomacy

Almost all the Khalistani activists that I met during my fieldwork in Britain and Canada related the same story when asked about the dynamics that led to their involvement in the separatist movement: prior to the Golden Temple attack, they were *mona* (clean-shaven) or *sahajdhari* (latitudinarian) Sikhs and easily inclined toward frequenting pubs and bars (alcohol and tobacco consumption being against the *rahit*), without internal conflict regarding their religious or national identity. Until the 80s, for overseas Sikhs established in Canada, Britain and the US, the issue was social and economic integration and the daily efforts in this direction did not leave much room for politics of identity,⁵³ although Sikh

mobilization in favor of the recognition of the turban as an efficient protection and an indispensable article of Sikh faith started as early as the 1960s in Britain.⁵⁴

In this context, in which some will recognize the process of 'acculturation' and other such dynamics of 'integration', the irruption of Indian soldiers in the Darbar Sahib complex, on June 6th, 1984, produced a shock-wave among overseas Sikhs. For instance, the President of the World Sikh Organization (WSO) Canada told me:

'I used to cut my hair before 1984. When the Golden Temple attack occurred, not only me, lots of other Sikhs in Canada, in England, in America, they came back to their faith... But very strongly came back because their faith was hurt, their faith was attacked by the government of India'.⁵⁵

Most of the people I interviewed who were old enough to recall the events told me that, in the days preceding Operation Bluestar, they had been closely following the evolution of the 'Bhindranwale affair', on TV or on the radio. On June 6th 1984, as the Punjab was cut off from the rest of the world, they learned from BBC that, against all odds, the Indian *jawans* had finally resolved to invade the holiest Sikh shrine, thereby laying siege against the Sikhs' holiest religious and highest temporal authority. Upon hearing the news, crowds of weeping and shaking Sikh men, women and children immediately rushed to the closest *gurdwara* they could find, where they all gathered to pray and share their trauma - one often recalled by physical metaphors. For instance, the President of WSO Canada related the impact of the attack like this: '*It really hurt me. Like somebody really shook me and somebody physically attacked me though I was seating here 10 000 miles away...it was really a physical attack on me*'. However, the 'critical event' not only produced grief, but anger too. For instance, on the 6th of June, one Khalistani cadre that I met in London, on the hearing of the news, ran to the Indian high commission, attacked it and started setting it on fire. As a result, he was sentenced to two years of prison in Britain but was also elected President of one major diasporic organization backing the militant outfits, which would soon rise in the plains of the Punjab.

Hence, as my fieldwork and that of some authors attests, Operation Bluestar appears to have been a 'critical event' that led many Sikhs abroad to look back towards their homeland and religious traditions. The events that followed (the military crackdown on the Punjab's rural areas, Indira Gandhi's assassination, anti-Sikh riots in Delhi and Haryana), all fuelled this collective movement that would inappropriately be described as 'revivalist', since there was precious little in the way of identity politics to even *be* revived in the Sikh diaspora, prior to 1984.

However, one cannot stop here, attributing all blame for the realm of terror unleashed in the Punjab between 1984 and 1992, to the Indian central leadership. Besides psychological considerations, two socio-political dynamics actually explain why a collective trauma gave birth to the largest and longest political mobilization ever animated by the Sikh diaspora. The first such

dynamic is the social and geographical origin of the emigrants which have played a significant role in their support of, or their opposition to, the movement. The second dynamic is the transformation of Canadian, American and British public policies regarding immigrant communities, as well as the new trends in these countries' foreign policies. These structural changes have offered institutional encouragement to the politics of identity of the 'new' Sikh diaspora, not merely defined by its dispersion anymore, but also by its new degree of political mobilization and the renewed intensity of its cultural and political bondage with the Punjab, however imaginary it may be.

Differentiation among the Sikh Diaspora and its impact on the diasporic endorsement of Khalistan

In order to understand which fractions of the Sikh diaspora became most supportive of Khalistan in the aftermath of Operation Bluestar, one must first look at the social and geographical origins of the immigrants. Throughout the diaspora, it is generally *Jat* Sikhs, and among them *amritdhari* (or initiated Sikhs), who have been the most adamant in promoting Khalistan. What, then, can explain the elective affinities of *Jat* Sikhs to the Khalistan Movement? Three factors seem to have been causally intertwined: First is the traditionally devout religious conviction of the *Jats* (who are encouraged to become initiated and to remain *keshdari* Sikhs - keeping unshorn hair - although many had become *mona* or *sahajdhari* in the diaspora) and the fact that the attack on the Golden Temple induced a new religious fervour in their ranks. Therefore, the initial phase of the Khalistan Movement, which clearly advocated the foundation of a sovereign Sikh theocracy⁵⁶, spoke eloquently to formerly or newly baptised *Jat* Sikhs. They were then highly supportive of a Sikh theocracy, given that the individual spiritual transformations many of them experienced after Operation Bluestar were equated with the necessary transformation of the Punjab. The physical and spiritual transformations they underwent were projected onto the Punjabi body politic.⁵⁷ Second, as a caste of farmers and landlords, *Jats* are the Sikhs who keep the strongest economic, cultural and political links with the Punjab; many of them maintain property as well as strong family ties in their homeland, such that 'good governance' in the Punjab is tantamount to preservation of their economic prosperity and that of their relatives. Moreover, some *Jats* who hold land in the Punjab maintain the dream of returning to their homeland in their advanced years; and this desire for eventual return convinced many, after Operation Bluestar, that the Punjab had now fallen prey to poor governance, and that the only solution was secession from India. Even corruption of Sikh bureaucrats or politicians in the state was attributed to India's control over the Punjab, which would have obliterated the Panthic spirit. Third, having prospered economically and socially in the diaspora, some *Jats* forged strong economic and political ties with the established power structure of their host states. These connections strengthened their status as community leaders in the early days of the Khalistan Movement, because they were the only ones who had access to the host state media and

authorities, and were therefore the only ones who could express the grievances of less privileged Sikh immigrants. Hence, the rise of the Khalistan Movement offered the *Jat* elite an occasion to assert its domination over the diaspora. However, this instrumentalist perspective should not obscure the fact that many *Jats* who dedicated themselves to the Khalistan Movement expected no personal benefit from it: their commitment was often activated by the Hindu-Sikh notion of *seva* (benevolent service to the community) and such politics of charity can never be reduced exclusively to the promotion of self-interest.⁵⁸

Hence, the *Jats* have been more responsive to the project of Khalistan than any other community in the diaspora. All over the world, Sikh religious minorities (*Namdharis*, *Nirankaris*, *Radhasoamis*) and Sikh outcasts (*Ravidasis*) have been very critical of the Khalistan Movement⁵⁹, in which they saw a new attempt by the *Jat* elite to reassert its dominant position, not only in the Punjab but also in the diaspora.⁶⁰

Another group which has been suspicious of the separatist component of Sikh ethnicity is the *Ramgharias*. They belong to the craftsmen caste and many of them are 'twice migrants', having resettled in Britain after their expulsion from East Africa in the 1970s-1980s. As a result, they developed their own diasporic identity and organizations. The myth of return is less important in their ranks than among the *Jats*; since their settlement in Africa, their direct links with the Punjab have weakened, and they have 'preserved' their religious traditions and kinship patterns rather autonomously.⁶¹ Having prospered economically in the diaspora, they enjoy a much higher social status abroad than in the Punjab and consequently, contest the leadership of overseas *Jats* whom they accuse of using Sikh homeland politics solely to reinforce their hegemony.

Multiculturalism and the rise of Khalistan in the diaspora

Beyond the social and geographical origins of the immigrants, the evolution of the immigrants' host states, policies regarding immigrant communities as well as the changes in their diplomacy, played a great role in the new politics of identity of the Sikh diaspora. In the three major countries where the Sikh emigrants have established rooted communities, multicultural policies began to be implemented from the 70s onward,⁶² offering Sikh 'ethnic entrepreneurs' a great opportunity to promote their views in governmental circles. It was Canada which first opened the way. In October 1971, Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau announced to the Canadian Parliament that multiculturalism was to be promoted to the level of official government policy. Since then, 'Federal multiculturalism has evolved from an all-party agreement with minimal formal authority, to the status of statutory and constitutional law with the potential to funnel government-ethnic relations into yet unexplored realms'.⁶³ Although Britain and the US did not adopt such a formal, institutional framework designed to uphold the cultural diversity of their societies, they can still be regarded as multicultural states since they have both adopted measures expected '...to assist individuals in preserving their language, culture, and identity, to educate the public about the virtues of tolerance and the benefits of cultural

diversity; to sensitize the delivery of social services such as health or education, to culturally diverse clients; to promote national unity, identity and integrity by reconciling diversity with common goals and aspirations; and to transform diversity into a resource with potential political and economic benefits at home and abroad'.⁶⁴ Through this process, 'new' diasporas have emerged in Canada, Britain and the US, as well as in Australia. Nicholas Van Hear recently described these new diasporas as 'people with multiple allegiances to place'.⁶⁵ This phenomenon is not unique to diasporic individuals nor to transnational communities in general, and Georg Simmel already noted its emergence in Europe in the nineteenth century. However, the 'new ethnicities' of immigrants in Western Europe and North America, largely influenced by multicultural policies upholding 'cultural' diversity, clearly constitute the climax of this process that Bertrand Badie calls the 'volatility of identities' (*'la volatilité identitaire'*).⁶⁶ Whether multicultural policies were successful in this context is an issue beside my point. What I wish to suggest here is that the adoption of more or less formal multiculturalist policies in Canada, Britain and the US had a great influence on their immigrant communities. As far as the Sikhs are concerned, while Operation Bluestar triggered a renewed interest among the Sikh diaspora for its religious identity, the institutional framework of its major host states not only legitimated such politics of identity in the private sphere but also in the public one. Praise of bilingualism and 'unity in diversity' encouraged immigrants to reinterpret their 'traditions' and to have them recognized by state or federal authorities, in a context of economic and social uncertainty.⁶⁷ From an internal perspective, multiculturalism then sustained the emergence of new grievances regarding the protection of minorities' religious rights, leaving to community leaders (who were generally supportive of Khalistan) the power to define their community 'traditions'. As far as Canadian Sikhs are concerned, Verne Dusenbery suggests that the advent of such multicultural policies could be the main explanation for the diasporic endorsement of Khalistan: 'much as Ghadar party members sought to end the disgrace following their treatment in North America by changing the colonial map of India, so too Khalistan supporters in the diaspora can be seen to gain a measure of respect and power in countries of the diaspora by changing the contemporary political map of South Asia'.⁶⁸ In this perspective, also developed by Mark Juergensmeyer,⁶⁹ Sikh diasporic politics of the homeland have more elective affinities with 'troyan nationalisms' described by Arjun Appadurai than with the 'long distance nationalism' model of Benedict Anderson. For Anderson, 'one might be inclined to view the rise of nationalist movements and their variable culminations in successful nation-states as a project for coming home from exile, for the resolution of hybridity, for a positive printed from a negative in the darkroom of political struggle'.⁷⁰ In a previous article⁷¹, Anderson had also been speaking of 'nationalism from afar' as a radicalized form of nationalism: it would assume 'a heavy sense of guilt and overcompensation, a ritualistic and symbolic fervour often found in the attempt to retain the old ethnic ingredients'.⁷² Such a paradigm, although interesting, is probably not the best clue to interpret Sikh diasporic politics of the homeland. Indeed, the concept of

'troyan nationalism' proposed by Arjun Appadurai seems much more accurate to describe it: 'territorial nationalism is the alibi of these movements and not necessarily their basic motive or final goal'.⁷³ In the case of the Sikh diaspora, the claiming of Sikh sovereignty over the Punjab then seems to contain politics of recognition⁷⁴ in the host states rather than the exportation of a clear strategy of state-building to the Punjab.⁷⁵ Hence, according to John Rex, the kind of interest in the homeland retained by overseas Sikhs suggests 'some applicability of the concept of a nationalist diaspora' to Sikh communities abroad, but 'this is balanced by the seeking of whatever economic [and political] opportunities are available in the transnational community'.⁷⁶

Among overseas Sikhs, the externalization of such localized politics of recognition was encouraged by the diplomatic evolutions of their host states. The end of the cold war and the new uncertainty of world order associated with it has deeply affected American, Canadian and British foreign policies and, to some extent, regarding certain regions, ethnic and/or corporate lobbying, has been filling their strategic and ideological vacuum. This is particularly obvious in the case of the US, where Yossi Shain recently detailed the nexus that exists 'between multicultural developments in the domestic front and US foreign affairs',⁷⁷ resulting in the fact that 'US based diasporas are increasingly playing a greater role in US foreign policy with significant consequences for international conflicts and US domestic affairs'.⁷⁸

It is in this context that some members of the Sikh diaspora have been setting up their own 'private diplomacy', providing information to influential advocacy networks⁷⁹ and intending to change their perceptions of the political situation in Punjab, in order to activate a 'boomerang effect'⁸⁰ which would constrain the Indian government to negotiate with them.

The advent of Sikh private diplomacy

As François Constantin recently showed, the privatization of foreign policy involves two distinct dynamics: (1) individual actions with an international outcome, inducing an answer from states; (2) private relations supported by governments, in order to implement a public or personal policy.⁸¹ In the case of the Sikh diaspora, although the Indian government is said to have used private informers and infiltrators in the ranks of overseas Sikh separatist groups, it is mainly the first dynamic which has been decisive. Hence, I will only discuss this first point here, i.e. the macropolitical outcomes of the Sikh diaspora's microactivities in favor of Khalistan.

The active lobbying animated by Sikhs of the diaspora during the last two decades has been targeted at public opinion and at politicians of their host states (at the parliamentary or governmental level), to global human rights NGOs and, finally, to international organizations. The main protagonists of this lobbying are six organizations based in the diaspora: the Khalistan Council (founded in 1980 in the Punjab but led from London by J.S. Chauhan); the Dal Khalsa (founded in the Punjab in 1978 but now based in Britain since the exile of its leaders in 1984); the Babbar Khalsa (also founded in the Punjab in 1978

but based in Canada and Britain since the beginning of the 80s); the International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF, founded in 1984 in Britain and now active in the UK, Canada, the US and Pakistan); the World Sikh Organization (WSO, founded in New York in 1984 and soon operating from the US, Canada and, to a lesser extent, the UK) and, finally, the Council of Khalistan (founded in 1987 in the US by Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh). Of these six organizations, the four first ones have supported, more or less directly, the armed struggle in the Punjab, providing funds⁸² and, less frequently, men⁸³, to guerrilla groups. The Babbar are known for their advocacy of violent means,⁸⁴ and they were suspected in the bombing of an Air India flight in 1985, although others attributed the planning of the bombing to Indian agents.⁸⁵ The Dal Khalsa and the Council of Khalistan, which work closely in Britain, have also supported armed struggle until recently, and one militant of the Khalistan Commando Force even told me in London that it is Chauhan who suggested the name for the Punjabi guerrillas in the aftermath of Operation Blue Star. The same person, working for the Council of Khalistan and the Khalistan Commando Force at the same time, although having lost direct contact with the Punjab for three generations, provided training and arms to guerrillas in Pakistani camps in the middle of the 80s; he is now the spokesperson of the Panthic Committee⁸⁶ in Britain. The ISYF also supported violent means in the Punjab until recently, in support of the underground militants of the All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF). Hence, only the WSO and the Council of Khalistan denounced violence as a way to achieve Sikh sovereignty over the Punjab, committing themselves 'to strive through peaceful means, for the establishment of a Sikh Nation, KHALISTAN, in order to protect the Sikh identity and faith as ordained by the Guru Panth in the daily prayer 'RAJ KAREGA KHALSA'.'⁸⁷

Since most of Khalistani organizations based overseas lent both moral and financial support to violence for a time, and since violent incidents erupted among different overseas Sikh factions, they soon had to clarify and justify their positions to their host state authorities. After the early attempts by Chauhan and a few diasporic individuals to mobilize international public opinion in favor of Khalistan from the 70s onwards, this was the second source of Sikh international lobbying. As supporters of a particular organization became involved in legal or even criminal cases due to various disputes, especially involving members of the ISYF and Babbar Khalsa, the involvement of police and governmental agencies has forced its leaders to respond.⁸⁸ The two other origins of Sikh international lobbying are, firstly, the rise of human rights violations in Punjab, which led to the foundation of many human rights groups, and to the publicizing of these violations by all Khalistani organizations, in the foreign media, in front of parliamentarians or government officials, at the yearly meeting of the UN Subcommission on human rights and, finally, in front of global human rights NGOs, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, etc.. This is not to say that human rights violations led to a genuine and instinctive mobilization of the diaspora, but rather that it was an instrumental resource for the promotion of Khalistan in western countries and in the UN. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, the Indian government's pressure on

host states to control what it termed 'Sikh terrorism' has prompted community leaders to rebut 'India's disinformation campaign' at international venues.⁸⁹

The outcome of these international campaign for Khalistan are widely diverse, although all were activated in order 'to promote and protect Sikh interests all over the world by participating in the formulation and implementation of the policies of the Sikh nation', as stated in the 5th objective of the WSO's constitution.⁹⁰ It is then the definition of such Sikh interests, in the Punjab and abroad, as well as the motives, resources, methods and targets of each organization and sometimes of each leader, which have created the diversity of Sikh international lobbying. In the 70s, Jagjit Singh Chauhan tried to promote Khalistan all over the diaspora and to lobby all major host states. He used the media's voice, by publishing materials in support of Khalistan in American newspapers, or by giving interviews to the BBC in Britain; he approached parliamentarians, such as US Senator Mark Hatfield, Senator Jesse Helms (presently Chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee), Senator Sam Nunn, Charles Percy and Alexander Haig. In 1982, while in the US at the invitation of Jesse Helms,⁹¹ he led a demonstration of 200 Sikhs representing about 10 organizations of Canada and the US on Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, in front of the UN building in New York, asking for a UN intervention in the Punjab. To get the support of the UN, Chauhan has also attended the yearly meeting of the UN Subcommittee on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (SPPHR). Finally, Chauhan opened contacts with retired army officers in the US, such as General Daniel Graham, Co-Chairman of the American Security Council, a far-right organization affiliated with the World Anti-communist League. Interestingly, it is through the ASC that Chauhan seems to have opened contacts with Pakistani officials. Hence, Chauhan's lobbying, which is now much less active due to his advanced years, was a complex process. He presented his 'consistent case for sovereignty by emphasizing a secular vision' which would have abhorred violence.⁹² Indeed, Chauhan told me: '*we never wanted to create a State on the basis of religion. We want only nationhood, national, democratic, secular. That befits the principles of Sikhism*'.⁹³ Yet, in order to achieve such a 'secular' and 'democratic' project, he did not hesitate to solicit the support of American far-right activists or Congressmen, to call on the BBC for Indira Gandhi's murder, to support KCF guerrillas and to unite his efforts with the Pakistani Jama'at-i-Islami and the Afghan groups abroad. Apart from these contradictions, Chauhan's international lobbying effort appears remarkable in the sense that he was the first leader to advocate Khalistan abroad and the last to promote it on an all-diasporic scale, travelling tirelessly between Britain, Canada and the US, between Sikh communities and host state authorities, before settling down permanently in Britain, where he opened a 'Khalistan House'.

Since Chauhan failed to establish his organization as the undisputed power center of the Khalistan Movement abroad, every major Khalistani organization has chosen to limit the scope of its major activities to only one or two countries, though there may sometimes be 'branches' (that is an office and a handful of workers) in several others.

Beyond promoting Khalistan in western media and parliamentary committees, building ties with states (from Pakistan⁹⁴ to Ecuador⁹⁵) or opening contacts with transnational actors as diverse as global human rights NGOs, mercenary firms⁹⁶ and anti-communist activists, some diasporic Sikh leaders have adopted other methods to promote their cause in the international public sphere. In January 1993, the Council of Khalistan, led from the US by GS Aulakh, joined the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO),⁹⁷ based in Den Hague, before being expelled from it.⁹⁸ The WSO, for its part, has tried (unsuccessfully) to obtain the status of consultative member (as an NGO) in the UN Economic and social council (ECOSOC) from 1987 to 1994.⁹⁹ It has also financed and arranged the visit of three Canadian MPs to the Punjab, from January 15 to January 22, 1992.¹⁰⁰ The ISYF, for its part, organized several demonstrations on Capitol Hill (Washington D.C.), along with Kashmiris, and it supported memoranda sent to the Secretary of the UN by the Panthic Committee of Amritsar.¹⁰¹ Many Khalistani organizations based in the diaspora have also started up web sites on which they advertise Khalistan, their workers' achievements, and biographies of their leaders.¹⁰²

To what extent can this complex, fragmented and often contradictory lobbying be considered a success? At the global level, it has succeeded in convincing transnational human rights NGOs to investigate and publicize human rights violations in the Punjab.¹⁰³ Its influence on international public opinion¹⁰⁴ is much harder to evaluate and, to a large extent, it seems that the Khalistanis have lost that battle so far, being too often thought of as 'terrorists' or 'fundamentalists'. Sikh separatists also encountered difficulties in the UN, where the WSO - despite its use of Canadian lawyers to present itself as an NGO - was denied the status of consultative member in the ECOSOC, because 'there has been no change reflected in the scope, aims and objectives of the WSO that would clearly show it is not a liberation or separatist movement. The WSO's constitution clearly states that it seeks to establish a Sikh Nation, Khalistan, in order to protect the Sikh identity ...we should like to again draw WSO's attention to paragraph 17 of Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) wherein it requires that organizations should have a general international concern in matters of human rights, not restricted to the interests of a particular group, a single nationality or a single State or restricted group of States'.¹⁰⁵

Finally, at the national level of their host states, the outcome of Khalistani entrepreneurs' mobilization depended on the lobbying system of each country. Therefore, everything suggests that, despite the strong links between the Sikhs and Britain resulting from their intimate past colonial relationship, it is in the United States that their campaign for a sovereign Sikh state has received the greatest political support, while economic rationality and promotion of national security have driven Canadian authorities to be more receptive to India's plights against 'overseas terrorists' than to Sikh immigrants' denunciation of human rights violations, allegedly perpetrated by Indian armed forces on Punjabi civilians.

Beyond the significance of ethnic lobbying in each of these countries, the outcome of Sikh mobilization in their host states has also been affected by the

nature of the bilateral relationship existing between India and the respective host states of the Sikh diaspora. In Britain, despite historical relations with India, 'Indo-British relations were thought to be of little value and limited impact'¹⁰⁶ for a long time. Their intensity was only revived in the 1980s, due to the new challenges posed by the UK-based diaspora to Indian economic and political authorities. Why the economic success of Indian emigrants established in Britain attracted the envy of India and how Indian authorities tried to benefit from it is not the subject of this discussion,¹⁰⁷ but the renewed intensity of Indo-British ties in the aftermath of Operation Bluestar definitely is. This new pattern of Indo-British proximity was largely linked with the activities of Khalistani militants active in Britain, to whom British authorities applied a double standard. In the case of militants violating British laws, 'the punishment given was strong and stiff' but in the case of those whose activities were affecting India only, 'no action was taken against those who collected arms, sent vast amounts of funds for terrorists, organized training of terrorists or armed them or made inflammatory statements on radio or in print media'.¹⁰⁸ From 1986 to 1992, the relationship between the two countries was strained by the difficult negotiation of an extradition treaty which would have enabled India to put overseas Sikh militants on trial - and place them in detention - on its soil. Finally, after years of mutual suspicion and accusations, the Suppression of Terrorism Act was signed on 21 July 1993, opening a new age of mutual trust and closer economic ties between the two countries.

Indo-Canadian relations were also affected by and decisive for Khalistani militancy. In the aftermath of the attack on the Golden Temple, Indira Gandhi pressed Canada 'not to help Sikh separatists'.¹⁰⁹ After the Air India disaster of 1985, the Canadian government, suspecting Canadian Sikhs to be implicated in the bombing, started considering the whole community as a threat to its national security and a supporter of international terrorism. An extradition treaty was subsequently signed between India and Canada on 6 February 1987 and the Canadian authorities have not been receptive to Sikhs' call for Khalistan ever since¹¹⁰, although state and federal officers have been lobbied more successfully in favor of the protection of Sikh religious rights on Canadian soil, which is becoming the main activity of most Sikh Canadian organizations.¹¹¹

In the US, Khalistani militants have been heard with greater attention, due to several factors: (1) as Yossi Shain shows, 'the fact that Congress, and therefore constituency politics, has an important voice in U.S. foreign policy, compounded with the ready access of ethnic groups to American and thus global media, provides a fertile base for an organized and strongly committed diaspora which may transform itself into a powerful political player with transnational implications'¹¹²; (2) as suggested by Darshan Singh Tatla, 'the poor history of Indo-US relations has also provided the Sikh lobby with a space for argument'.¹¹³ Indeed, since 1959 and until recently, American diplomats have based their policies for South Asia on the support of Pakistan rather than India, who greatly annoyed the U.S. with its policy of non-alignment, its support for the Communist block and 'its habit of 'moral pontification' at the United Nations'.¹¹⁴ From a practical viewpoint, Sikh lobbyists in America have

obtained the active support of many Congressmen with Sikh constituents, such as Norman Shumway (Stockton), Wally Herger (Yuba City), as well as that of major Congress members such as Republicans Jesse Helms and Dan Burton¹¹⁵. The issue of human rights violations in the Punjab and the right of the 'Sikh nation' to sovereignty were also debated in congressional resolutions (such as H. Con. Res. 343 of August 1988, related to 'human rights of the Sikhs in the Punjab of India' or H. Con. Res. 37 of March 1997, related to the right of self-determination of the 'Sikh Nation'¹¹⁶). Debates have often focused on amending aid programs to India according to its compliance of international standards of Human rights. In 1991, Dan Burton suggested the termination of foreign aid to India if it continued to refuse the presence of international human rights organizations in Punjab. In 1992, another resolution of this type was passed and it led to a small reduction in US developmental aid to India. Sikh lobbyists have even received the attention of the President and the Vice-President. In 1993, in answer to a letter by Gary Condit co-signed by 22 Members of Congress, Bill Clinton wrote 'I am aware of the chronic tensions between the Indian government and the Sikh militants, and share your desire for a peaceful solution that protects Sikh rights.... It is clear that abuses still occur ...and we regularly raise our concerns about them with senior officials in the Punjab government. Human rights is an important issue in US-Indian relations. We will continue to make our concerns known to the New Delhi authorities, and I will look forward to your continuing advice as we proceed'.¹¹⁷ On February 5, 1997, in answer to GS Aulakh, Al Gore wrote 'a high priority of this nation's foreign policy agenda is to strengthen efforts to promote democracy and uphold human rights in regions across the globe. Such efforts not only reflect American ideals, but they also represent the best strategy to ensure our security and to build a durable peace... Your views are important to us as the President and I formulate policies to advance the cause of peace around the world'.¹¹⁸ Hence, as long as they express their grievances in terms of human rights diplomacy¹¹⁹ and American national interests,¹²⁰ Sikh lobbyists or American Congressmen supporting them seem to have encountered some success, although it is still difficult to evaluate it fully.

Through this brief presentation of Sikh private diplomacy, it appears that although they are not constituting a transnational advocacy network by themselves, Khalistani entrepreneurs have adopted three tactics which are generally associated with such networks: (1) *information politics*, or 'the ability to quickly and credibly generate politically usable information and move it to where it will have the most impact'; (2) *symbolic politics*, or 'the ability to call upon symbols, actions or stories that make sense of a situation for an audience that is frequently far away'; (3) *leverage politics*, or 'the ability to call upon powerful actors to affect a situation where weaker members of a network are unlikely to have influence'.¹²¹ However, the Khalistani advocacy group has failed to become a real network, although it enjoys the support of various parliamentary or executive officials in the host-states of the Sikh diaspora. It has received the attention of some 'powerful actors' active in global advocacy networks, whether private or public, but the information it provided them with

was not always trusted, while its symbolic and leverage politics (relying on the magic but also banal formulae of 'self-determination' and 'human rights violations') failed to produce the 'boomerang effect' that a larger and better coordinated network could have expected.

Interestingly, it also appears that host states' officials and global human rights NGOs have been keener on responding to the requests of Khalistani organizations than multilateral organizations and international public opinion. However, at the host states' level, the outcomes of Sikh lobbying have been related to the place of multicultural policies in their domestic and foreign affairs and to the answer of host governments to India's offensive against expatriate Sikh separatists. Therefore, far from being detached from the state-centric world, Khalistani militants of the diaspora have constantly interacted with it, provoked it, lobbied it, and initiated new domestic and new diplomatic policies, either on the host or home state side.

Conclusion

Driven to politics in their host states by war in their homeland (reversing the Clausewitzian proposition that 'war is the continuation of politics'), Sikh ethnic entrepreneurs of the diaspora have finally acted in continuity rather than in disjunction with 'identity blind' politics of integration which Sikhs, in their various countries of residence, had adopted until the 80s. Far from detaching their community from its host state politics, Khalistanis of the diaspora have succeeded in making Sikhs more visible in their host states. This local politics of assertion and recognition has simultaneously swept into the international public sphere, where it contributed to the emergence of a global Sikh voice.

However, on the Punjabi field, the result of the Sikh diaspora's leadership on the Khalistan Movement has been much less successful. Indeed, everything suggests that the popularity of the Movement has faded among Sikhs of the Punjab. As one elderly Sikh living in Amritsar told me:

'It is mostly Sikhs abroad who support Khalistan. Because they are not under pressure. They can talk anything they like. But Sikhs who live in India, they cannot talk of Khalistan. No country ever allows separation...Educated people don't want bloodshed...Sikhs in India, they suffer from movements launched without thought'.¹²²

This increasing gap between Sikh diasporic politics of the homeland and homeland politics is unlikely to lead to the end of the Khalistan Movement abroad. My fieldwork suggests that the idea of an independent Sikh State is still very popular among *Jat* Sikh immigrants settled in London, Toronto and Vancouver, whatever their age or gender. The main reason for this is that diasporic endorsement of Khalistan, at least among the *Jats*, has been primarily linked with their politics of recognition in their various host states. In a sense, Sikh diasporic politics of the homeland is primarily an amalgamation of local politics of recognition which has successfully come to the fore in host state

policies and, to some extent, in the international public sphere; however successful it has been in creating a global Sikh *voice*, the coalescence of such local politics of recognition has provoked an *exit* reaction from Sikhs of the Punjab towards the Khalistan Movement.¹²³ Hence, in the global village where Khalistani militants purport to be active,¹²⁴ globalizing a local voice seems far easier than localizing a globalized one. With simply an office, and a computer connected to the World Wide Web, every individual can become a transnational ethnic entrepreneur whose actions may induce an answer from states. Yet, it seems much harder for such long distance nationalists to adapt their globalized rhetoric and activities to the very different local contexts of their host and home states. Indeed, nothing attests yet to the fact that long distance nationalism is becoming 'the ground on which an embattled ethnic identity is to be fashioned in the ethnicized nation-state that [long distance nationalists] remain determined to inhabit'.¹²⁵ In the Sikh case, long distance nationalism was not so much linked with the myth of return and 'the resolution of hybridity' as with *local* politics of assertion and integration sustained by the politics of hybridity and *encouraged* by the multiculturalist movement, which deeply affected the Sikh diaspora's relation with its host and home states. Indeed, the rise of multiculturalism has encouraged what we could call the 'extraverted integration' of the Sikh diaspora. Since the 80s, overseas Sikhs are more interconnected than ever with the Punjab; yet, they remain distinct from Sikhs of their homeland and so do their politics *vis-à-vis* Punjabi politics. In the Sikh diaspora, the main issue remains local integration, although the advent of multiculturalism has given a new shape to this quest for recognition, allowing it to be completed through the assertion of an ethno-religious identity at the national level¹²⁶ and to be externalized at the international level by the growing legitimization of ethnic diplomacy. In that perspective, 'diaspora denotes a condition rather than being descriptive of a group'.¹²⁷ Diasporas are probably transnational *societies* rather than transnational *communities* of emigrants, defined by the experience of being 'from one place and of another'.¹²⁸

[This paper is the result of a field work project in the UK (Southall and London) and in Canada (Toronto, Ottawa and Vancouver), during which I interviewed thirty individuals. Half of my interlocutors were political activists involved in the Khalistan Council, the Khalistan Commando Force (KCF), the Dal Khalsa, the World Sikh Organization (WSO) and the International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF). My other interviewees were involved in anti-racist groups (Southall Monitoring Group), community newspapers (*Desh Pardesh* in Southall, *Punjabi Times* in Surrey, B.C.), religious organizations (the Khalsa Diwan Society, managing the prestigious Ross Street *gurdwara* in Vancouver; the Sikh Missionary Society and the Trust in charge of the Sri Guru Singh Sabha *Gurdwara*, in Southall) and youth groups (Ontario Sikh Students Association, in Mississauga, Ontario). I also interviewed the most popular Sikh lawyer of Canada (Palbinder Kaur Shergill) and three young Sikh students who had just taken part in a charity bike ride from Birmingham to London.]

Notes

1. Salman Rushdie, *East, West* (London: Vintage), 1995, 164.
2. Michael Brown *et al.* (eds.), *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1997; Ted R. Gurr and Barbara Hall, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (University of California Press, 1985); Jill Krause and Neil Renwick (ed.), *Identities in International relations* (London/New York: MacMillan/St Martin's Press, 1996); Manus I. Midlarsky, *The Internationalisation of Ethnic Strife* (London: Routledge), 1992; Stephen Ryan, *Ethnic Conflict and International Relations* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1995).
3. Let us clarify that the term 'ethnicity' will not be taken here as a biological, cultural or historical given, but as a deeply social process linked to the politics of assertion and recognition of the Self and the Other. This dynamic conception of ethnicity is based on the assumption that 'a group or an individual has no one identity, but a variety (a potentially very large variety) of possibilities, that only incompletely or partially overlap in social time and social space'. Cf. Elizabeth Tonkin, Maryon McDonald and Malcolm Chapman, *History and Ethnicity* (London: Routledge), 1989, 17.
4. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Avon, 1992).
5. On this issue, cf. Bertrand Badie, *Un monde sans souveraineté*, Paris : Fayard, 1999; Mathew Horsman and Andrew Marshall, *After the Nation-State* (London: Harper Collins, 1995); Gene Lyons and Michael Mastanduno, *Beyond Westphalia*, Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995; Susan Strange, *The Retreat of the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
6. Roland Robertson, 'Mapping the Global Condition: Globalization as the Central Concept', in Mike Featherstone (ed.), *Global Culture. Nationalism, globalization and modernity* (London: Sage Publications), 1990, 20.
7. As Roland Robertson points out, 'In numerous contemporary accounts ... the globalizing trends are regarded in tension with 'local' assertions of identity and culture'. This approach is clearly exemplified by the tribal 'Jihad' world of Benjamin Barber. In an opposite perspective, Robertson suggests that although dynamics of homogenization and heterogenization are *seemingly* opposed, they are *actually* complementary and interpenetrative : 'what is called local is in large degree constructed on a trans- or super-local basis' and 'much of the promotion of locality is in fact the local expressed in terms of generalized recipes of locality'. Cf. Roland Robertson, 'Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity', in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities* (New Delhi/London: Sage Publications, 1995), 33 and 26 and Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs. Mcworld* (New York: Andrea Schulz, 1996).
8. Cf. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Elazar Barkan and Marie-Denise Shelton (eds.), *Borders, Exiles, Diasporas* (Stanford:

SUP, 1998); Chetan Bhatt, *Liberation and Purity. Race, new religious movements and the ethics of post-modernity* (London/Bristol: UCL Press, 1997); Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora. Contesting Identities* (London/New York: Routledge, 1996); Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora. Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993); Sean McLoughlin and Virinder S. Kalra, 'Wish you Were(n't) Here? Discrepant Representations of Mirpur in Narratives of Migration, Diaspora and Tourism', in Raminder Kaur and John Hutnyk, *Travel Worlds. Journeys in Contemporary Cultural Politics* (London and New York: Zed Books, 1999).

9. I am referring here to Stuart Hall's work. According to Hall, in Western multicultural states, old identities built on nation, race and class are fading away, while 'new cultural politics' emerges, engaging rather than suppressing difference. This new 'politics of ethnicity predicated on difference and diversity' is directly related to the diasporic experience and 'the consequences which this carries for the process of unsettling, recombination, hybridization and 'cut-and-mix' - in short the process of diaspora-ization ... which it implies'. Cf. Stuart Hall, 'The new ethnicities', in James Donald and Ali Rattansi (eds.), *Race, Culture and Difference*, London: Sage, 1992, p. 256-258. Cf. also Stuart Hall, 'Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities', in Anthony D. King (ed.), *Culture, Globalization and the World-System. Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

10. On the place of diasporas in international relations, cf. Aline Angoustures and Valérie Pascal, 'Diasporas et financement des conflits', in François Jean and Jean-Christophe Rufin, *Economie des guerres civiles* (Paris: Payot, 1996); Milton J. Esman, 'Diasporas and International relations', in Gabriel Sheffer, *Modern Diasporas in International Politics* (London: Croom Helm, 1986); Myron Weiner (dir.), *International Migration and Security* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993).

11. Since 1648 at least. The question of identities in pre-modern times is not my topic here and thus, I will not enter the debate on 'neo-medievalism', dealing with the following question: is the increasing disjunction between ethnicity, statehood and nationhood the sign of a return of mankind to medieval times, to a 'nouveau Moyen âge sans Pape et sans Empereur' as Pierre Hassner suggests? Cf. Pierre Hassner, 'Par-delà le national et l'international: la d'érision et l'espoir', in Pierre Hassner, *La violence et la paix. De la bombe atomique au nettoyage ethnique* (Paris: Editions Esprit, 1995), 339.

12. The ugly term 'glocalization' was coined from the Japanese word *dochakuka*, originally defining the local adaptation of foreign agricultural techniques. It became popular among Japanese businessmen in the 1980s, then referring to their global outlook adapted to local conditions. For Roland Robertson, the term conveys the actual nature of the globalization process, which has involved 'the simultaneity and the interpenetration of what are

- conventionally called the global and the local'. Cf. Roland Robertson, 'Glocalization', *op cit*, 30.
13. Jan Aart Scholte, 'Globalisation and Collective Identities', in Jill Krause and Neil Renwick (ed.), *Identities in International relations* (London/New York: MacMillan/St Martin's Press, 1996), 50.
14. *Ibid.*, 69.
15. On the new place of the individual in IR theory, cf. James Rosenau, *Turbulence in World Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990) and Michel Girard (dir.), *Les individus dans la politique internationale* Paris: Economica, 1994)
16. Other factors could be: the global structure of the world-system, both economically and politically (at the three levels); the access of local ethnic entrepreneurs to transnational tools of communication and to the multilateral arena (*idem*); the level of penetration of transnational corporations in the country and the degree of politicization of the issue (which can affect national or regional ethnicities); the economic dependence of the country towards international financial institutions (affecting national ethnicity); global or local evolutions affecting the *Umma* (decisive for Muslim communal ethnicity), etc.
17. The figures given are for 1990. Cf. Darshan Singh Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora, the Search for Statehood* (London: UCL Press, 1999), 43.
18. On the issue of emigrants' remittances and their socio-political impact in South Asia, cf. *The effects of migration and remittances on inequality in rural Pakistan*, *Pakistan Development Review*, Winter 1992 ; Richard H. Adams, 'Remittances investment and rural asset accumulation in Pakistan', *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, vol. 47, no.1, 1998 ; Deepak Nayyar, *Migration, remittances and capital flows: the Indian experience* (New Delhi: OUP), 1994.
19. Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora, op cit*, 64.
20. *Ibid.*, 65.
21. Arthur W. Helweg, 'Sikh Politics in India. The Emigrant Factor', in N. Gerald Barrier and Verne A. Dusenberry (eds), *The Sikh Diaspora, Migration and the Experience Beyond Punjab* (Delhi: Chanakya, 1989), 308.
22. *Ibid.*, 309.
23. *Ibid.*, 310.
24. *Khalistan*, 'the Land of the Pure' or 'the State of the Khalsa', is the name of the sovereign nation-state that Sikh separatists have been asking for since the 1970s. The term seems to have been created by a former Oxford student and member of the Indian Civil Service (ICS) settled in Britain, Kapur Singh, born in 1909. However, it is Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan and his organization based in Britain, the Khalistan Council, who made it popular from the 1970s onwards.
25. Cf. Abner Cohen, *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).
26. Cf. Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism* (New Delhi: Sage, 1991).
27. Operation Bluestar took place on June 24 and 25, 1984. Although seventy thousand soldiers had started laying siege to the Golden Temple Complex

(including the Golden Temple itself, the *Akhal Takht*, the Sikh Reference Library, a communal kitchen and hostels for pilgrims) and to thirty-seven other *gurdwaras* suspected to shelter Sikh militants from the month of May onwards, the attack was unpredicted. The rationality of this brutal attack (which destroyed the *Akal Takht* and the Sikh Reference Library and killed at least a thousand people) can be questioned since it reminded the Sikhs of the massacre and the subsequent destruction of the Golden Temple by Ahmed Shah Abdali in 1762, an event remembered as the *ghallughara* (Great holocaust). Moreover, the fact that the operation took place on the martyrdom day of Guru Arjun 'not only meant that thousands of pilgrims would be worshipping at the shrine at the moment of the attack, but also invited a comparison between this first Sikh martyr and the modern-day martyrs defending the Golden Temple'. Cf. Cynthia Mahmood-Keppley, *Fighting for Faith and Nation. Dialogues with Sikh Militants* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996, 97. On the place of martyrdom in Sikhism, cf. also Joyce Pettigrew, 'Martyrdom and Guerilla Organization in Punjab', *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, vol 30, no. 3, November 1992.

28. Following the attack on Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and his armed militants sheltered in the *Akal Takht* since 1983, the Indian army stormed the rural areas of the Punjab, looking for young Sikh militants. Arbitrary house-searches and detentions, as well as rape, torture and extra-judicial killings became routine of Punjabi life from then on.

29. On the role of the Congress (I) in the rise of Sikh militancy in the 1980s, cf. Anne Vaugier-Chatterjee, 'Le rôle de l'Etat-Congrès et des acteurs extérieurs dans la montée du séparatisme sikh', *Cultures & Conflits*, no. 15-16, Fall-Winter 1994; on the impact of operations Bluestar and Woodrose on Sikh ethnicity, cf. Dipankar Gupta, *The Context of Ethnicity* (New Delhi: OUP, 1996); Cynthia Mahmood-Keppley, *op cit*; Joyce Pettigrew, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, *op cit*; on the origins of the 'Sikh homeland' issue, cf. Gopal Singh, *Politics of Sikh Homeland (1940-1990)*; Ram Narayan Kumar, *The Sikh Unrest and the Indian State: Politics, Personalities and Historical Retrospective* (New Delhi: Ajanta, 1997).

30. The holiest Sikh scripture, including devotional poems of the first *gurus*, earlier medieval texts as well as Sufi hymns, gathered and printed by the fifth *guru*, Guru Arjun. In 1604, the book was placed in the Golden Temple but the sixth *guru*, Guru Hargobind, removed it from the shrine and kept it in his own house. The last *guru*, Guru Gobind Singh, reprinted it, relying upon his memory.

31. Since Guru Hargobind (1595-1644), Sikhs recognize two manifestations of divine power: *miri* (or temporal power) and *piri* (or spiritual authority). The *Akal Takht*, as well as four other *Takhts* (two in the Punjab, one in Bihar and one in Maharashtra) stand for the first and the Golden Temple for the latter. The last Sikh *Guru*, Guru Gobind Singh, went further, merging the divinity and the sword and developing the notion of righteous war (*dharma-yuddha*). Since then, Sikhs have been divided on the interpretation of the *miri-piri* duality, some historians such as Gopal Singh pointing out that the two sovereignties were

intended by the *Gurus* to remain distinct, while the fundamentalists emphasize the inseparability of religion and politics that the sixth and tenth personal *Gurus* would have encouraged. On this issue of temporal and spiritual authority in Sikhism, cf. Gopal Singh, *History of the Sikh People* (New Delhi: World Book Center, 1988), 830; T.N. Madan, 'The Double-edged Sword: Fundamentalism and the Sikh Religious Tradition', in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.), *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991).

32. Only the 'proper' (baptized and keeping unshorn hair) Sikhs are allowed to take part in its election.

33. Hew McLeod, *Sikhism* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 265.

34. The *Hukamnammas* (or orders) of the *Jathedar* of the *Akal Takht*, although theoretically binding Sikhs of the Punjab only, are generally taken very seriously by Sikhs of the diaspora. Recently, the *hukamnama* requiring Sikhs to ban tables and chairs in the *langars* (or community kitchen of *gurdwaras*, where Sikhs are supposed to take their *langar* on the floor, to signify their equality) initiated a great debate among overseas Sikhs. The order, issued in 1998, was supposed to settle the conflict on tables and chairs in overseas *gurdwaras*, especially in British Columbia. On May 20 1999, GS Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan, wrote to Ranjit Singh to 'request that the decision on the manner of seating of *Sangat* during the distribution of *Guru Ka Langar* should be left to local *Sangats* with a general directive that the concept of equality must be maintained', in order to 'preserve the unity of the *Sangat* at this crucial time of crisis of the Sikh Nation'. Cf. 'An appeal to Akal Takht Jathedar', <http://khalistan.com>. Beyond issuing *hukamnammas* affecting overseas Sikhs, *Jathedars* of the Akal Takht also tour the diaspora regularly.

35. Last year, a Canadian-Sikh organisation wrote to the *Jathedar* of the Akal Takht to enquire about the position of Sikhism toward homosexuality. No answer ever came.

36. After the World Sikh Convention held in Amritsar in 1995, the SGPC founded a World Sikh Council to settle socio-religious issues concerning the Sikhs worldwide. However, this institution has yet to designate its diasporic members.

37. Cf. *India Today*, September 1983.

38. Such as Harjot Oberoi, Gurinder Singh Mann or Nikki Gunninder Kaur Singh. Moreover, some diasporic individuals committed themselves to creative religious works, such as the translation of the *Guru Granth Sahib* in English and French, or the production of an encyclopedia of Sikhism on CD-Rom (which was the work of Raghbir Singh Bains, living in Surrey, British Columbia).

39. *Sants* of the Punjab started visiting the diaspora from 1908 onwards, although these visits have become common since the 1970s only. Most of these visiting *sants* were heads of religious centers based in Jullunder and Ludhiana. Some of them settled abroad and opened *gurdwaras*, such as Mihan Singh in Vancouver, Gurdev Singh in the English Midlands and Toronto and Amar Singh in Britain, Singapore and Canada.

40. Interview, Brampton (Ontario), 12/08/99.
41. Which marginalized the historical Tara Singh faction of the Akali Dal and opened the era of *Jat* hegemony over the Punjabi political scene, confirmed in 1965 by the election of Sant Fateh Singh at the head of the Akali Dal.
42. The Sikhs ruled over Punjab from 1709 to 1716, from 1762 to 1790 and finally from 1801 to 1849. The greatest period of Sikh sovereignty over the Punjab was under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, from 1801 to 1839.
43. Cf. Harjot Oberoi, 'From Punjab to "Khalistan": Territoriality and Metacommentary', *Pacific Affairs*, Spring 1987, where the author shows that the 'undeniable nexus between the Punjab and Sikh consciousness' has only been established since Partition, through the Punjabi Subha movement, the Green Revolution and the recent Khalistan Movement.
44. For instance, one Canadian Sikh delegation took part in the *Jaito Morcha* of 1923-1925. The *Jatha* from Canada started from Vancouver on July 13, 1924 and reached Jaitho, in Punjab, on February 1925. Several Sikhs from Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore and Penang joined the Canadian *Jatha* on its way.
45. Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora*, *op cit*, 90.
46. Cf. Arthur Helweg, *Sikh Politics in India*, *op cit*, 314.
47. Interview with Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan, Southall, 16/07/99.
48. Quoted by Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora*, *op cit*, 19.
49. Cf. Mark Juergensmeyer, 'The Logic of Religious Violence', in T.N. Madan, *Religion in India* (Delhi: OUP, 1991), 383-384.
50. Joyce Pettigrew, *The Sikhs of the Punjab, Unheard Voices of State and Guerilla Violence* (London: Zed Books, 1995), 7.
51. Cynthia Mahmood-Keppley, *Fighting for Faith and Nation. Dialogues with Sikh Militants* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 97.
52. Cf. Arthur W. Helweg, 'Sikh politics in India', *op cit*; Aline Angoustures and Valérie Pascal, 'Diasporas et financement des conflits', *op cit*, where the two authors suggest that overseas Sikhs belong to a 'matrix diaspora', at the origin and at the lead of a conflict tearing apart its homeland.
53. This does not mean that there were no Sikh overseas organizations before the 1980s, but rather that there were no organizations emphasizing Sikh ethnicity in the host states public sphere; indeed, until the advent of the Khalistan Movement, concomitant with the advent of multicultural policies in Britain, Canada and the US, there were three types of organizations active in the Sikh Diaspora: (1) religious organizations, generally in charge of the *gurdwaras* (such as the KDS in Canada); (2) communist workers' associations (such as the Indian Workers Association, active in Britain); (3) foreign branches of mainstream political parties based in the Punjab (such as the Indian Overseas Congress and overseas branches of the Akali Dal, operating in every major country of Sikh immigration). Hence, the Sikh diaspora has a long tradition of economic and political mobilization on a community basis and John Rex suggests that 'The development of class-based industrial and political organizations is not something new to the Sikhs and they are quite capable of exploiting the opportunities available to them within the politics of the nation-

state of settlement. Part of the culture of the community is concerned precisely with ensuring that its members have maximum rights in their country of settlement'. Cf. John Rex, *Ethnic minorities in the Modern Nation State, Working Papers in the Theory of Multiculturalism and Political Integration* (MacMillan/St Martin's Press, 1996), 106.

54. From 1959 to 1968, Manchester and Wolverhampton Sikhs successfully campaigned for the right of Sikh bus drivers to wear a turban on duty, and the case of T.S. Sandhu even affected Indo-British relations. Later, between 1973 and 1976, British Sikhs campaigned against a 1972 law requiring every motorcyclist to wear a crash-helmet and denying Sikhs the right to wear a turban instead. In 1976, the law was amended and allowed Sikhs to wear turbans instead of crash-helmets, since the turban was recognized to be as protective as a proper helmet. The main protagonists of this case were the Sikh Missionary Society (UK) and M.P. Sydney Bidwell (elected from Ealing-Southall). Yet, beyond these early successes, in Britain, Canada and the US, lobbying in favor of Sikh religious rights only rose in the 1980s, and even more in the 1990s.

55. Interview, Brampton (Ontario), 12/08/99.

56. Although most of the Khalistani militants that I met in Britain and Canada told me that Khalistan would not be a Sikh theocratic state, the *Document of Declaration of Khalistan* (issued from the Golden Temple on April 29, 1986, by the five-member Panthic Committee) clearly states that 'Control of religion over the State shall be constitutionally established and Sikh Religion will be the official religion of Khalistan. It will be the duty of the Government to promote Sikhism in Khalistan'. Ironically, this document was given to me by a top militant of the International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF) of Canada who told me that Khalistan would never become a theocratic state.

57. On Sikh politics of the body, cf. P. Hershman, 'Hair, Sex and Dirt', *Man*, no. 9, 1974; Patrick Olivelle, 'Hair and society: social significance of hair in South Asian traditions', in Alf Hiltebeitel and Barbara D. Miller, *Hair: Its Power and Meaning in Asian Cultures* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), J.P.S. Uberoi, 'Five Symbols of Sikh Identity', in T.N. Madan (ed.), *Religion in India, op cit.*

58. Such politics of charity cannot be limited to the promotion of self-interest because it may involve two other interpenetrative dynamics: a sincere commitment to the community, offering a sense of identification; class- or caste-based motivations, encouraging community leaders or prestigious individuals to offer funds or benevolent work to the underprivileged of their community, in order to prevent their denial of the prevailing social order. On this second point, cf. Christophe Jaffrelot, 'La stratégie de bienfaisance des nationalistes hindous. Conjurant l'aspiration égalitaire des basses castes', *Critique internationale*, no. 5, Fall 1999, where the authors suggests that the *Seva* politics of the *Sangh Parivar* is clearly linked with the desire of dominant castes to maintain a socio-political status-quo preventing the scheduled castes from joining caste-based political parties committed to the reshuffling of the social order.

59. On this issue, cf. Roger Ballard, 'Differentiation and Disjunction among the Sikhs' and Eleanor Nesbitt, 'Valmikis in Coventry. The Revival and Reconstruction of a Community', in Roger Ballard (ed.), *Desh Pardesh. The South Asian Presence in Britain* (London: Hurst, 1994).

60. The *Jat* political leadership is not an 'old tradition' of Punjabi politics: it has only been established since 1962, after the Akali Dal split which led to the marginalisation of Master Tara Singh's faction. Until then, it was the urban *Khatri* and *Arora* castes that dominated Punjabi politics. Cf. Hamish Telford, 'The political economy of Punjab: Creating Space for Sikh Militancy', *Asian Survey*, vol 33, no. 11, November 1992, where the author also suggests that the conflict between the 'moderate' Akali Dal and the 'fundamentalists' gathered around Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and the AISSF, in the 1980s, was mainly a class-conflict between *Jats*.

61. Cf. Parminder Bhachu, *The Twice Migrants* (London: Tavistock, 1985); Parminder Bhachu, 'The East African Sikh Diaspora: The British Case', in Steven Vertovec (ed.), *Aspects of the South Asian Diaspora* (Delhi: OUP, 1991).

62. In 1968, the British Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins envisaged « not a flattering process of uniformity, but cultural diversity, coupled with equal opportunity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance ». However, the implementation of such a multicultural program only began in the 1980s, with the investigations of the Rampton and Swann Committees on education. In the US, multiculturalism started being debated in the late 1980s, following the failure of the 'colour-blind' approach of the Civil Rights Movement. Let us also point out that in Canada, multicultural policy, which attained a much more institutional rank than in the two other countries, was initially expected to settle the Quebec issue, and not to promote non-European cultures. On the rise of multiculturalism in Britain, Canada and the US, cf. John Fraser, 'Multiculturalism in Britain: Fragmented Reality or Policy Option?', *Affari sociali internazionali*, no.1, 1993; Nathan Glazer, *We Are All Multiculturalists Now* (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1997); Denise Helly, 'Le multiculturalisme canadien' and Raymond Breton, 'Les nouveaux modes d'organisation ethnique au Canada', *Hommes & Migrations*, no. 1200, July 1996; Christian Joppke, 'Multiculturalism and immigration: A comparison of the United States, Germany, and Great Britain', *Theory and Society*, vol 25, no. 4, August 1996. Bhiku Parekh, 'Equality in a Multicultural Society', *Citizenship Studies*, vol 2, no. 3, November 1998; John Rex, 'Multiculturalism in Europe and North America', in John Rex, *op cit*.

63. Angie Fleras and Jean Leonard Elliott, *Multiculturalism in Canada. The Challenge of Diversity* (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1992), 68.

64. *Ibid.*, 267.

65. Nicholas Van Hear, *New Diasporas. The mass exodus, dispersal and regrouping of migrant communities* (London: UCL Press, 1998), 4.

66. Bertrand Badie, 'Réseaux transnationaux et instabilité mondiale', *Relations internationales et stratégiques*, no. 20, Winter 1995.

67. The rise of the Khalistan Movement in the diaspora was concomitant with a period of economic recession and violent racism in Britain, Canada and the US. As noted by Ballard in the British case, during the 80s, 'Sikhs...found themselves disproportionately vulnerable to a severe industrial recession', particularly in the textile and engineering sectors. As a result, in Britain, 'by the mid-1980s as many as half of all middle-aged Asians industrial workers had lost their jobs', while they were becoming increasingly vulnerable to racist crimes and racial riots. Cf. Roger Ballard, *Desh Pardesh, op cit*, 100. Harry Gouldbourne also suggests that, in Britain, 'any sense of insecurity...tends to encourage articulate Sikhs to support the demand for an independent and secure homeland in the subcontinent'. Cf. Harry Gouldbourne, *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Post-Imperial Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 152.

68. Verne A. Dusenbery, 'A Sikh Diaspora? Contested Identities and Constructed Realities', in Peter Van Der Veer, *Nation and Migration, The Politics of Space in the South Asian Diaspora* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 34.

69. According to him, overseas Sikhs would suffer from a 'Ghadar syndrome' which he defines as 'a militant nationalist movement...created abroad by expatriates, for whom the movement is also an outlet for economic and social frustrations, and a vehicle for their ethnic identities'. Cf. Mark Juergensmeyer, 'The Ghadar Syndrome: Nationalism in an Immigrant Community', *Punjab Journal of Politics*, October 1979, 14. In another article published nine years later, the author articulates his thoughts and suggests that the Khalistan Movement was endorsed in the diaspora mainly because overseas Sikhs were 'socially marginal to the [home] community [in Punjab]' and 'were looking for a center to Sikhism and wanted to be associated with it' in order to gain 'a sense of belonging'. Cf. Mark Juergensmeyer, 'The Logic of Religious Violence', *op cit*, 385.

70. Benedict Andersen, *The spectre of comparisons. Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (London/New York: Verso, 1998), 65.

71. Benedict Andersen, 'Ice Empire and Ice Hockey: Two Fin de Siecle Dreams', *New Left Review*, 214 : 146-150, 1995.

72. Such as described by Floyia Anthias, 'Evaluating "Diaspora": Beyond Ethnicity?', *Sociology*, vol 32, no. 3, August 1998, 565.

73. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 165.

74. On this issue, cf. Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and 'the Politics of Recognition'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism, Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Linda Nicholson, 'To Be or not to Be: Charles Taylor and the Politics of Recognition', *Constellations*, vol 3, no. 1, 1996.

75. None of the Khalistani leaders that I met in Britain and Canada (belonging to the Khalistan Council, the Dal Khalsa, the Khalistan Commando Force, the World Sikh Organization and the International Sikh Youth Federation) could present me with a clear reflection on state-building and political sovereignty,

their emphasis being put on the 'Sikh Nation' rather than on the theorization of the Khalistani state. This was also noticed by Ram Narayan Kumar, *The Sikh Unrest and the Indian State: Politics, Personalities and Historical Retrospective*, (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1997), 391-392, where, after extensive fieldwork, the author states that 'Khalistan is not a serious concept even with those who engage in terrorism in its name. Although the resolve to fight is undaunted, the goal is not necessarily Khalistan'.

76. John Rex, *Ethnic minorities in the Modern Nation State, Working Papers in the Theory of Multiculturalism and Political Integration* (MacMillan/St Martin's Press, 1996), 106-107.

77. Yossi Shain, *Marketing the American Creed Abroad. Diasporas in the US and their Homelands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 197.

78. *Ibid.*

79. As argued by Margareth Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, 'A transnational advocacy network includes those relevant actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchange of information and services'. The authors suggest that such networks may include the following: (1) international and domestic nongovernmental research and advocacy organisations; (2) local social movements; (3) foundations; (4) the media; (5) churches, trade unions, consumer organizations; (6) parts of regional and international intergovernmental organizations, and intellectuals; and (7) parts of the executive and/or parliamentary branches of governments. Margareth Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders. Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), 2 and 9.

80. For Margareth Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, 'When channels between the state and its domestic actors are blocked, the boomerang pattern of influence characteristic of transnational networks may occur: domestic NGOs bypass their state and directly search out international allies to try to bring pressure on their states from outside', *ibid*, 12. Although the authors only mention domestic NGOs as the initiators of the process, any socio-political actor denied a political voice at the domestic level can potentially activate it, by creating its own transnational advocacy network or by relying on already existing ones.

81. François Constantin, 'La privatisation de la politique étrangère. A partir de la scène africaine', *Pouvoirs*, no. 88, 1999.

82. According to Arthur Helweg, *gurdwaras* in Canada, Britain and the US sent thousands of dollars weekly to guerrillas operating in the Punjab. He also quotes Manbir Singh Chaheru, top militant of the KCF, who claimed to have received 60 000 US dollars from Sikh organizations based in Britain and Canada. Cf. Arthur Helweg, *Sikh Politics in India, op cit*, 322.

83. I personally met two British Sikhs who are members of the Khalistan Commando Force and who remain very close to the exiled leader of the KCF, Wasson Singh Zaffarwal. These two individuals have been visiting the training camps set up in Pakistan for the Khalistani militants. However, they never took part in any armed operation on Indian soil and told me that, at the time of their

visit, there were hardly any Sikhs from the diaspora in the guerillas' ranks, who mocked the inability of boys from Britain and Canada to fight 'without a bottle of Coke'. Yet, it seems that a handful of overseas Sikhs did get involved in acts of violence in India, with the help of the Pakistani intelligence agencies, who would now try to enlist young Sikh immigrants entered illegally in their countries of residence. Cf. Praveen Swami, 'Journeys into terrorism', *Frontline*, September 19, 1997.

84. The 50-member group, based in Vancouver, claims responsibility for 40 murders in the Punjab between 1979 and 1981.

85. Zuhair Kashmeri and Brian McAndrew, *Soft Target. How the Indian Intelligence Service Penetrated Canada* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1989).

86. The five-member group that declared the independence of Khalistan in the Golden Temple on April 29, 1986, composed of Dhanna Singh, Gurbachan Singh Manochal, Wasson Singh Zaffarwal, Arur Singh and Gurdev Singh Usmanwala.

87. World Sikh Organization, *Constitution and By-Laws*, Los Angeles, 13th of January 1985, p2. Literally, Guru Gobind Singh's phrase 'Raj Karega Khalsa' (included in the daily *Ardas* prayer) means 'The *Khalsa* shall rule' and is often quoted by Khalistanis as the proof that the last Guru was in favor of Sikh political sovereignty. However, the phrase is very diversely interpreted and all Sikhs, whether in India or abroad, do not read it the same way. Moreover, Khalistanis rarely use the religious term '*Khalsa*' to refer to the Sikh nation and prefer the more political Urdu word '*Quaum*'.

88. Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora, op cit*, 155.

89. *Ibid.*, 156.

90. WSO, *op cit*.

91. Although denied a visa at first, Chauhan was invited by Jesse Helms to testify before the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee.

92. Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora*, 141.

93. Interview, Southall (UK), 16/07/99.

94. Beyond the close contacts between Chauhan and G.S. Dhillon and the Pakistani army and intelligence agencies, since the beginning of the 1980s, several training camps set up in Pakistan for Khalistani militants have been spotted by the Indian intelligence services in Kothatia, Niazberg, Sargodha, Attock, Gujranwalla, Sobha Singh, Rawalpindi, Nankana Sahib and Rahmiyar Khan. Cf. Anne Vaugier-Chatterjee, *op cit*, 84, as well as her article 'Le Pendjab: du séparatisme à la normalisation démocratique', *Hérodote*, no. 71, 1993. The Pakistani support to Khalistanis does not seem over yet: a few months ago, Ganga Singh Dhillon was invited in Pakistan to set up a religious body similar to the SGPC, and some people suggest that he might have used this opportunity to revive Sikh militancy in Pakistan, with the full support of the ISI. Moreover, several top Khalistani militants remain active in Pakistan, such as Lakbir Singh, President of the main faction of the ISYF, based in Canada and the US. Hence, although several overseas Khalistanis told me that they have lost

confidence in the sincerity of Pakistan's support to their cause, it is obvious that young Sikhs - from the Punjab and, to a lesser extent, from the diaspora - are still trained in Pakistani camps. As always, the strategy of the ISI is to train these militants in very small groups, prevented from keeping contacts one with another so that the Pakistanis keep them under control. This is precisely what led the two KCF militants that I met in London to argue with Pakistani agents and, subsequently, to be expelled from Pakistan.

95. At one time, J.S. Chauhan's organization claimed to have the support of Ecuador for the establishment of a sovereign Republic of Khalistan. An Ecuadorian diplomat took part in a rally organized by the Khalistan Council in Birmingham but things never went further. Cf. *Observer*, 5 May, 1985.

96. In the middle of the 1980s, Gurpartap Singh Birk and some of his followers from New York and New Orleans attended the Merc School, offering courses in guerilla warfare to various mercenaries. Later, these Sikhs also selected a site for a guerilla training camp in Columbia, New Jersey. Cf. the various reports by Lynn Hudson in *India Abroad*, 1985-1986.

97. The UNPO was founded in 1991 by 'representatives of occupied nations, indigenous peoples, minorities, and other disenfranchised peoples who currently struggle to preserve their cultural identities, protect their basic human rights, safeguard the environment or regain their lost countries', in order to 'provide a voice for the oppressed, captive or ignored peoples of the world, those who cannot otherwise address the international community in its primary international fora, such as the United Nations'. The organization's covenant also specifies that the UNPO shall provide its 52 members with 'assistance in effectively utilizing available procedures of United Nations bodies and specialized agencies and of other international and regional organizations' (Title I, Article 2, point b), as well as 'training in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, including United Nations diplomacy and the principles of international law' (point c). Cf. UNPO homepage: <http://www.unpo.org/>

98. Although the Sikhs' claim to join the UNPO was recognized, the representativity of Aulakh and his organization was questioned.

99. After seven years of unsuccessful lobbying to obtain consultative status in the ECOSOC, Ram Raghbir Singh Chahal, International President of the WSO, asked for sanctions against the Chief of the NGO Unit of the UN, Farida Ayoub. On May 13, 1994, he wrote to Mr. Nittin Desai, Under Secretary General of the UN Department of Policy Coordination of Sustainable Development. The letter reads: 'as a contributing member of Canadian, American and International Society, we expect to be treated fairly and with respect on all occasions by the UN, and have been sorely disappointed in the unprofessional behaviour of Ms. Ayoub...we therefore respectfully request a full review of Ms. Ayoub current status with the UN, and recommend appropriate disciplinary action'. A copy of the letter was also sent to the Permanent Mission of Canada to the UN and to Boutros Boutros Ghali.

100. The three MPs were: Barbara Greene (Progressive Conservative Party), elected from Don Valley North; Derek Lee (Liberal Party), elected from

Scarborough-Rouge River; Svend Robinson (New Democratic Party), elected from Burnaby-Kingsway. Cf. the report *The Canadian Parliamentary Delegation Visit to India*, January 15-22, 1992.

101. Cf. *Memorandum to the Secretary General of the United Nations*, presented on December 10, 1993 by the Panthic Committee and 'the Global Sikh community'.

102. <http://www.khalistan.com>; <http://www.burningpunjab.com>;

<http://www.khalistan.net>;

<http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Makeup/2732/Youth.htm>;

<http://khalistan-affairs.org>; <http://syf.jaj.com> <http://www.khalistan.demon.co.uk>;

<http://www.dalkhalsa.org>

103. Cf. 'India: will past human rights violations in Punjab remain forgotten?', Amnesty International, 10 August 1999; 'India: a Vital Opportunity to End Impunity in Punjab', Amnesty International, August 1999; 'India, a mockery of justice: The case concerning the « disappearance 'of human rights defender Jaswant Singh Kalra severely undermined', Amnesty International, 20/07/98; 'Dead Silence. The Legacy of Abuses in Punjab', Human Rights Watch, 5/94. All these reports can be found on the web sites of the two organizations. Cf. <http://www.amnesty.org> and <http://www.hrw.org>

104. On the nature and the influence of global public opinion, cf. Frank Louis Rusciano *et al.*, *World Opinion and the Emerging International Order*, Westport/London: Praeger, 1998, where the authors suggest that 'World opinion defines the boundaries of an international public; it creates global markets and global identities; it affects the behavior of nations'. Hence, alongside national interests, an 'imagined international community' would be emerging, which 'heralds the end of an idea of history as evolutionary, and replaces it with a series of encounters defined by constantly shifting definitions of the Other' (p. 8-11).

105. Letter of Mrs. Farida Ayoub, Chief, Non-Governmental Organizations Section of the ECOSOC to Mr. Ram Raghbir Singh Chahal, International President of the WSO, 6 June 1994.

106. K.N. Malik, *India and the United Kingdom, Change and Continuity in the 1980s*, New Delhi : Sage, 1997, 20.

107. *Ibid.*, 121-140.

108. *Ibid.*, 108.

109. *Toronto Star*, 18th of June 1984.

110. On October 24, 1994, another treaty was even signed between the two governments on 'mutual assistance in criminal matters', highly criticized by Khalistani organizations based in Canada. The WSO, for instance, published the text and critics of the Treaty on December 9, 1994.

111. In Canada and the US, since the beginning of the 90s, the WSO has been increasingly involved in lobbying for the recognition of the Sikhs' right to wear turbans in public jobs and *kirpans* (Sikh daggers) in schools or airplanes. The most famous of such campaigns was animated in favor of the allowance of *amritdhari* Sikhs in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), while

retaining their articles of faith, especially the turban. The campaign began in 1987 and succeeded in 1990, when Solicitor General Pierre Cadieux officially adopted a new policy to allow Sikh religious articles of faith in the RCMP. On this issue, cf. Laurent Gayer, 'Un turban pour les Mounties? Multiculturalisme canadien et politiques du corps sikhes', *raisons politiques*, no. 3, Fall 2000 (to be published).

112. Yossi Shain, *op cit*, p. 52. However, according to Shain, the power of such diasporas relies on their ability to 'justify their actions in terms of American national interests and values, answer to their U.S. ethnic compatriots, and prove their loyalty to their home country'.

113. Tatla, *op cit*, 165.

114. *Ibid.*

115. On lobbying activities targeted to the U.S. Congress, and especially to its 'leaders', cf. Christine A. Degregorio, *Networks of Champions. Leadership, Access, and Advocacy in the U.S. House of Representatives* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997).

116. Presented by Gary Condit (D-CA) and Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) and 'Expressing the sense of Congress that the Sikh Nation should be allowed to exercise the right of national determination in their homeland, Punjab, Khalistan'.

117. Reproduced in Khalistan Affairs Center, *Lest We Forget*, Washington D.C. On May 12 1994, Condit wrote another letter to President Clinton, co-signed this time by 37 MCs, on the occasion of Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's visit to the US. The letter read '...We believe that the world has turned its back on the Sikhs of Punjab, Khalistan long enough. As the United States did in Puerto Rico, India should allow the right of self-determination in the Sikh homeland so that a peaceful and lasting solution to the dispute may be forged'.

118. Reproduced on the web site of the Council of Khalistan:

<http://www.khalistan.net/washtimes.htm>

119. On human rights diplomacy, cf. Nigel Dower, 'Human rights and International Relations', *International Journal of Human Rights*, vol 1, no. 1, printemps 1997; Rein A. Mullerson, *Human rights diplomacy* (London: Routledge, 1997); Carol O'Halloran, 'Human rights as *realpolitik*: the US in the CSCE', *RUSI and Brassey's Defence Yearbook*, 1991.

120. In October 1987, the Congressional Research Service pointed out how the conflict of the Punjab was affecting US interests: '(a). Because the crisis has exacerbated India-Pakistan relations, it has made it all the more difficult for the US to pursue its policy of supporting Pakistan militarily in its stance against the soviet occupation of Afghanistan. (b) The crisis affects the lives of thousands of immigrant Sikhs in the US, who are troubled and fearful for the fate of their relatives and friends, and it appears to be stimulating a greater flow of Sikh immigration, both legal and illegal. (c) The conflict also appears to have brought another terrorist movement to the US, and possibly given scope for counter intelligence operations by Indian intelligence agencies here' (quoted by Tatla, *op cit*, 167).

121. Margareth Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, *op cit*, 16.

122. Interview, Southall, 18/07/99.

123. We are here referring to Albert Hirschmann's categories. Cf. Albert Hirschmann, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

124. Almost all the Khalistani militants that I met, especially in Canada, referred to McLuhan's phrase. However, does this mean that Canadian Sikhs are more globalized than their counterparts in Britain or, that they are more localized (McLuhan being Canadian and his works being well advertised in every decent bookshop throughout the country)?

125. Benedict Anderson, *The spectre of comparisons*, *op cit*, 74.

126. Clearly expressing this desire of integration through the assertion of Sikh ethno-religious ethnicity the President of the WSO told me how proud he was of his daughter born in Canada since: 'She's always covering her hair when she goes to school... She's taken the French immersion... She's a very brilliant student... She won a Gold medal in Elementary School... And she's very committed to the faith'.

127. Floyia Anthias, 'Evaluating "Diaspora": Beyond Ethnicity?', *Sociology*, vol 32, no. 3, August 1998, p. 565.

128. *Ibid*.

Constructing Cybernationalism: Sikh Solidarity via the Internet

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In the last two decades, the notion of 'diaspora' (broadly defined as international migrants and their progeny who preserve strong material and emotional ties to their lands of origin) has recaptured some of its old theoretical currency within the multifarious debates on globalization and its impact on state sovereignty. The Internet and its attendant communications innovations have revolutionized the way in which groups conceptualize notions of 'community' and 'otherness.' As Benedict Anderson (1991) claims, 'Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.' In the information age in which we live, 'imagined communities' are increasingly being reconstituted as cybercommunities, thereby allowing for the maintenance of ties between and the reinforcement of solidarity among coethnics living thousands of miles apart. Paradoxically, cyberspace constitutes a site in which nationalist movements based on territory become, in essence, deterritorialized. Employing the case of the Sikh diaspora and their agitation for a sovereign state of Khalistan, this paper examines the ways in which the Internet has opened up a fresh 'space' for nationalist discourse.

Introduction

The globalizing qualities of the Internet and its attendant communications innovations have revolutionized the way in which groups conceptualize notions of 'here' and 'there,' of 'community' and 'otherness.' As numerous geographers (Adams 1998, 1997; Kitchin 1998; Adams and Warf 1997; Batty 1997; Batty and Cole 1997; Jiang and Ormeling 1997; Taylor 1997; Batty and Barr 1994) highlight, the predominance of 'real' geography as a force in shaping community is waning, with the explosion of communication networks and the emergence of a new 'virtual geography.' In the words of Jonathan H. Spalter and Kevin Moran, '[J]ust as the printing press did five hundred years ago, the global information infrastructure has the potential to revolutionize communities and empower millions of people around the world by facilitating the free flow of ideas and information' [http://www.cisp.org/imp/may_99/05_99moran.htm].

According to cyberspace pioneer Howard Rheingold (1993), the emergence of this new space reinforces the notion of community by creating a site for the

construction of a Habermasian transnational 'public sphere' - a global civil society with a shared consciousness in which the notion of community will be transformed and social intercourse will no longer be local but global. Such exchanges have the potential to help engender fresh sites for the creation and forging of new kinds of social formations. Echoing this, noted globalization scholar Saskia Sassen maintains that '[C]ivil society, whether it be individuals or NGOs, is a very energetic presence in cyberspace. From struggles to support human rights, the environment and workers strikes around the world to genuinely trivial pursuits, the Net has emerged as a powerful medium for non-elites to communicate, support each other's struggles and create the equivalent of insider groups at scales going from the local to the global' (1999, 53).

The proliferation of what Robert M. Kitchin (1998, 386) refers to as 'transformative technologies' has significant implications for diasporan politics. Because of their ability to collapse modernist dimensions of time and space, these technologies have the power to create a new space for human interaction.¹ This phenomenon has led numerous marginalised groups to strategically employ technological tools in order to mediate power relationships, pose challenges to the status quo, and accomplish a wide range of social, economic, and political objectives (see the work of Bunt 1999; Fandy 1999; Jeganathan 1998; Froehling 1997; O' Lear 1997; Smith 1997; Warf and Grimes 1997). As Benedict Anderson's well-known aphorism maintains, 'Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined' (1991, 6). In the post-Information Age in which we live, 'imagined communities' are increasingly being reconstituted as cybercommunities, thereby allowing for the maintenance of ties between and the reinforcement of solidarity among coethnics living thousands of miles apart.² The emergence of these new communication technologies, have, in essence, turned us into nomads who are always in touch (Benedikt 1991, 10).

David Resnick posits that politics in contemporary cyberspace comprises three distinct types (1997, 47). The first constitutes 'Intra-Net' politics, which is politics within the Net that deals with the internal operation of the Internet including relations between its online subscribers or 'Netizens.' The second kind concerns politics that shape the governance of the Internet, such as state regulation in the form of telecommunication/First Amendment/privacy policies. The third type centers on the political uses of the Internet and the mode in which cyberspace is employed as a tool to influence political life offline. This study falls under the latter rubric and examines the social, political, and cultural implications of reorganizing the spatial sites in which ethnonationalist discourse takes place.

This paper analyses the ways in which the Internet has opened up a new 'space' for separatist Sikh groups to promulgate their agendas and forge a 'hyperreal'³ Khalistan. Given the novelty of the theoretical insights that have accompanied these revolutionary developments in the field of information technology, the first part of the chapter focuses on the spate of recent writings that deals with the subject. In what ways do the new communication technologies

transform societies? How is the conveyance of location via the Internet different from other conventional communication media? More broadly, what impact does this have for state borders and issues of sovereignty? And finally, what kinds of sociopolitical implications result from this radical transition, from a 'resource-based society' to an 'information-based society'?"⁴

The second substantive section of this paper examines nine web sites that unambiguously reflect a pro-Khalistan stance. Predictably, many of these sites are the official web sites of formal organizations that comprise the wider Khalistan movement. They include the Council of Khalistan, World Sikh Organization (WSO), Sikh Youth Federation (SYF), Dal Khalsa International, Khalistan Affairs Center, and the Khalistan Government-in-Exile. Other sites include Fort Panth Khalsa, Burning Punjab, and Khalistan.Net, which are administered by individuals who are also unequivocal in their endorsement of a separatist agenda. The questions that are raised in this segment of the analysis include the following: How does the Internet facilitate a sense of kinship and solidarity among individuals who are physically estranged? How is the Sikh 'nationalist imagination' cast in cyberspace? How does the cyber-portrayal of 'homeland' impact the formation and consolidation of diasporan identities and sensibilities? And finally, what implications does this uncharted terrain have, more broadly, for theoretical issues pertaining to nationalism?

Part I: On the Cusp of Virtuality

Cyberspace: A New Site for Civil Society

According to Timothy Luke, we are living in extraordinary times—while we may not be standing at the end of history, we are in the process of experiencing the beginning of virtuality (1998, 3). The last decade's revolutionary advances in information and telecommunications technologies, such as the Internet, have the potential to generate drastic sociospatial change and render conventional certainties obsolete in ways hitherto thought impossible. As David Holmes postulates:

...the expanding use of the Internet as an imagined means of total knowledge in a globalized world empties out the identity of its participants and, therefore the 'social' context in which the pursuit of knowledge can be thought of as a shared goal. Information, communication and media technologies which make this simulation possible should be seen not as instruments with which we do things, but as technologies which renovate the frameworks within which we do things, including what it might mean to do them (1997, 3 [emphasis mine]).

The term 'cyberspace' was originally coined by science fiction writer William Gibson in his fictive work *Neuromancer* (1984), a novel that fused cognitive science

with popular culture.⁵ Gibson employed the expression to depict an elaborate science fiction scenario in which individuals could directly link their nervous systems to a global network referred to as the 'matrix' and experience a form of virtual reality. In the novel, Gibson, states that cyberspace may be considered '[A] consensual hallucination...a graphic representation of data abstracted from the bank of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights receding' (1984, 51). More recently, Gibson's neologism has become embedded in our global vocabulary to denote 'a computer generated public domain which has no territorial boundaries or physical attributes and is in perpetual use' (Loader 1997a, 3). The Internet is a vast collection of computers linked by common communications protocols (ways of exchanging data) to networks within larger networks that span the globe.⁶ Like any network, the Internet is not a physical object with a tangible existence, but is itself a set of network protocols that has been adopted by a large number of individual networks allowing for the transfer of information among them (Jordan 1999; Kitchin 1998; Post 1996).

Until the explosion of the World Wide Web in the mid-1990s, cyberspace was essentially a realm of words, not images. Accessing information from data files and text reports was possible, but in most cases too daunting and time-consuming for the average, non-technical user. However, the invention of HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language) by British physicist Tim Berners-Lee in 1991, led to the creation of a user-friendly, image-driven Web that expanded accessibility in an unprecedented fashion. The term 'Hypertext' refers to the non-linear documents, in which text nodes are linked to other relevant pieces of information, forming a textual network (Strate, Jacobson, and Gibson 1996, 10). 'Hypertext' forms the basis of interactive multimedia design, linking text nodes - words, phrases, or images - to other text nodes. Selecting or clicking on a hypertext term or image allows the user to move from one location to the other. According to Michele H. Jackson and Darren Purcell, 'Hypertext has created the capacity for multilinear, interactive story forms. Hypertext both enables and limits exploration. The way in which a user jumps from link to link is undetermined and open to the user, but, by deciding what jumps will be offered, the designer controls possible paths' (1997, 221). Thus, what is now popularly referred to as 'the Net,' is dominated by the World Wide Web (Toulouse 1997). In the pre-Web era, as Michele H. Jackson and Darren Purcell observe, 'Discussion groups, bulletin boards, and chat rooms teemed with conversations, manifestos, diatribes capable of conveying a sense of place; but they were soapboxes or salons not posters, flyers, or newsreels. Now, however, the Web allows cyberspace to be a realm of imagery as much as ideas' (1997, 217). Today, popular browsers such as Microsoft's Internet Explorer® and Netscape Navigator® enable even the most technically unsophisticated computer user to effortlessly access pictures and information and jump from web site to web site with the mere click of a mouse. In Nicholas Negroponte's words, 'In the same way that hypertext removes the limitations of the printed page, the post-information age will remove

the limitations of geography. Digital living will include less and less dependence upon being in a specific place at a specific time, and the transmission of place itself will start to become possible' (1995, 165).

Cyberspace transcends Cartesian notions of space and enables the most temporally and spatially diffuse populations to communicate almost instantaneously. Virtual space constitutes a public space that may serve as a representational space or 'electronic agora'⁷ for struggles that may then be expanded beyond local confines. In cyberguru Bill Gates's vision, '[A]s documents become more flexible, richer in multimedia content, and less tethered to paper, the ways in which people collaborate and communicate will become richer and less tied to location' (cited in Brunn and Cottle 1997, 240). The linkage via global computer networks of coethnic groups strung across distance means that place-based relations are being increasingly transplanted by transnational universalised interactive communications. According to Barney Warf and John Grimes:

... easy access to e-mail and the World Wide Web allows many politically disenfranchised groups to communicate with like-minded or sympathetic audiences, publicizing causes often overlooked by the mainstream media and offering perspectives frequently stifled by the conservative corporate ownership of newspapers, television, and other media outlets. Many such outré groups, though far from homogenous, subscribe to opinions that are effectively outside the mainstream and are not always taken seriously by the larger public (1997, 260).

David Resnick further exhorts that '[O]ne of the greatest advantages of the Web for political activists is that it enables them to access up-to-the-minute information on a huge variety of topics are [sic] relevant to developing their own policy positions and political strategies. Policy relevant research developed by one group and put up on the Web can also be of great value to other groups which share their general political orientation' (1997, 63). The elimination of geographical constraints in cyberspace is underscored in a series of Microsoft commercials that enticingly ask, 'Where do you want to go today?'⁸ (Shapiro 1999, 84-101; Graham 1998, 166). Because of the ability to technologically circumnavigate the constraints of time and space, the Internet also eviscerates conventional distinctions between private and public, and creates significant dilemmas in issues pertaining to geographic location and jurisdiction (McIntosh and Cates 1997). According to Kitchin (1998), 'space in cyberspace is wholly socially produced with no physical, objective counterpart' and this is one of the main reasons it has captured the attention of so many scholars. The emergence of such 'spaceless' "placeless" social spaces⁹ has the potential to engender a paradigmatic shift in the constellation of power relations between states and non-state actors as state boundaries become increasingly eroded.

Negroponte further predicts that '[A]s we interconnect ourselves, many of the values of the nation-state will give way to those of both larger and smaller electronic communities. We will socialize in digital neighborhoods in which physical space

will be irrelevant and time will play a different role' (1995, 7). As location is easily traversed, and less of a factor in determining social interaction and political collaboration between dispersed groups, established forms of governance based on territory, hierarchical control of populations, and policing are becoming weakened (Loader 1997a, 9-10). The power of these information and communication technologies to facilitate the creation of a new transnational realm of civil society in which all groups and individuals (at least theoretically) have equal access, poses fundamental challenges to the traditional concept of state sovereignty (Fandy 1999; Friedlander 1999). Luke declares that:

Digitalization, then is a new machine regime. Like cities, networks are simultaneously the containers and contents of human thought. Civil societies are communities that are citified, and their urban spaces thrive on the symbiotic coevolutionary development of their own expanse and rural places. Cities are physical structures to gather, store, and process information, material and energy; civilization, at the same time, is the refined product realized from such successful operations. Digital networks are new communal connectives that are data structures, and their bit spaces thrive on a coevolutionary symbiosis of their own domains and atomic analog zones. Digital networks are data structures to gather, store, and process information, material and energy; digitalization, therefore, is a new processed world generated out of these effective practices' (1998, 11).

Traditional social scientific modes of inquiry, thus, need to be reevaluated and adjusted to understand the contours and dynamics of this exponentially changing world.¹⁰

The Dissolution of Traditional Boundaries

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, millions of people around the globe¹¹ are getting online and entering a virtual world, a nebulous, uncharted realm in which the notion of boundary, whether administrative, legal or territorial, is essentially non-existent. As Amy Friedlander (1999) claims, the notion of 'boundary' is integral to a wide range of social, economic, political and judicial concepts. It forms the very core of the idea of the nation-state and embodies notions of jurisdiction, authority and control within a delimited territory. Moreover, boundaries in the form of borders are central to the notion of sovereignty because they establish the category of citizen and alien, of insider and outsider, which is the fundamental element of sovereignty (Mills 1996, 77).

Processes that generate collective culture and group solidarity are now being carried out by vast informational networks that are increasingly converging in the digital domain (Luke 1998). This movement from the national into the transnational also leads to the blurring of putative state and territorial boundaries. The ability of

the new digital technologies to dissolve physical distance and national boundaries means that the nation as bounded territory becomes, increasingly, unbounded. As Spalter and Moran contend, 'instantaneous communications, near-ubiquitous information, and ever more pervasive and integrated systems are blurring traditional boundaries, creating new types of diplomatic issues, and giving rise to a host of new non-state actors' (1999, 1). A consequence of this electronic incursion (alongside other globalizing invasions) is that state boundaries are becoming less impermeable and impregnable than the traditional concept of sovereignty implies. Cyberspace with its inherent globalizing tendencies is, as Friedlander (1999) characterizes it, 'a fungible medium in which old boundaries among content, communications, and control are collapsing.' Friedlander adds that it might be more constructive to conceptualize 'boundaries' 'as permeable membranes that encircle shared values rather than as battlements and moats' (1999, 2).

This has far-reaching political and analytical implications, one of which is that existing models of territorial sovereignty must be reconceptualized and adapted to correspond with the prevailing reality.

Challenges to State Sovereignty

Walter Truett Anderson (1999) claims that we are now entering into an 'age of open systems' in which long-held notions of 'state' and 'community' are undergoing a radical metamorphosis. In the past, communities tended to be closed systems with relatively clear, impermeable boundaries, stable memberships, and few linkages to other communities (Anderson 1999, 458). Moreover, in the previous 'closed-system,' as Mills points out, 'communities which were coterminous with the state were absolutized while individuals who were not members were forgotten' (1996, 77). However, technological advances in electronic media and satellite systems coupled with an upsurge in global migration have dramatically transformed this scenario. As human interaction becomes liberated from the constraints of space and the frictional effects of distance, exile and far-flung expatriate communities are in constant and continuous contact with their kinfolk 'back home.' Consequently, in recent years, homeland governments have not only acknowledged the existence of their erstwhile citizens but have actively striven to cultivate close relationships with them.¹²

Chronicling recent social developments that are a corollary of advancements in information and communication technology, Anderson states that

Cyberspace has become a new kind of social terrain, crowded with 'virtual communities,' in which people come together for sexual flirtation, business, idle gossip, spiritual exploration, psychological support, political action, intellectual discourse on all kinds of subjects—the whole range of human interests and needs. This kind of interaction can be described by two key terms—disintermediation and aggregation. The first means simply the elimination of the middleman;

in the same way that the Reformation sought to cut through the religious hierarchies that mediated between individuals and God, the new technologies permit people to make direct connections with others. The second means that people can seek out the like-minded, form groups and networks of all sorts—which they are clearly doing so with gusto. This is an entirely new dimension of human interaction. And the experts are desperately trying to evaluate its potential for expanding or diminishing the quality of life. But whatever its value, *it appears to be here to stay*—not only an interesting addition to human society, *but a fundamental force in it* (1999, 459 [emphasis mine]).

The 'new social terrain' that constitutes cyberspace has the power to sustain potent 'ethnopolitical imaginaries.'¹³ This 'new interaction,' as Anderson suggests, is characterized by 'disintermediation and aggregation', which means that exile diasporan groups are now afforded easier access to other dispersed coethnic groups while being simultaneously accorded an increasingly important role in the politics of their former homelands. Citing recent electronic developments, Paul F. Starrs further maintains that

Boundaries of sovereignty once traditional and stolid, casting states in the shapes decreed by great colonial powers more than a hundred years ago, are ever more challenged: shot through like a colander by an information-moving system of unmitigated complexity, unparalleled efficiency, and redoubtable power. The subversions of information, flowing swiftly across those boundaries are culturally unsettling. That is one of the reasons why the 'unwired' - off the Internet - countries include a large portion of the world's authoritarian regimes' (1997, 199).

In the present digital epoch, people from New York to New Delhi are instantly connected with the stroke of a computer key and are transported (with a little help from Microsoft and AT&T) to *wherever* they want to go on *any* given day. The ability to easily access and disseminate large volumes of information results in people having instant and intimate knowledge of occurrences on the other side of the globe. As space shrinks phenomenologically, people in widely dispersed places experience the same events at the same time (Fandy 1999, 124). With the elimination of the 'middleman,' diasporan groups now have the power to effect political and economic change thousands of miles away, from their laptops, within the comfort of their living rooms. Moreover, according to Fred Riggs, the Internet has the power to transform migrants into nationalist 'transmission belts' - as they increasingly encounter nationalist exclusiveness in their hostlands, they become more passionately nationalistic vis-à-vis their homelands (1997, 7). As Neil Barrett (1996, 220) concludes, while the Internet will not *destroy* separate states, it has the potential to make them considerably less relevant.

The Rise of Non-State Actors

As discussed earlier, the ability of the new information technologies to make geographical borders redundant and consequently diminish state sovereignty has significant political implications, particularly in the conduct of foreign policy (Friedlander 1999; Spalter and Moran 1999). In Friedlander's articulation 'the result is that the conduct of international relations is no longer the sole province of formal diplomacy among the Wise Men but can take place unpredictably, through multiple parties, at multiple levels, and in a cacophony of radio and television broadcasts, newspapers, web sites, and electronic bulletin boards and discussion lists' (1999, 1).

The Internet facilitates the organization of resistance, particularly diasporic and exile movements, because it produces new modes of large scale organization that are available to individuals, private associations, political factions, states, and multinational corporations, regardless of institutional affiliation or composition. Moreover, as Barney Warf and John Grimes observe, '[F]or activists in the Third World, the Internet allows cheap access to sympathetic counterparts abroad, without the need to obtain an exit visa' (1997, 264). The changing dynamics and the effects of the new, technologically-driven systemic interactions between state, non-state, and international organizational actors can be clearly seen in the recent peasant uprising in Chiapas. As Oliver Froehling (1997) recounts in his article, 'The Cyberspace 'War of Ink and Internet' in Chiapas, Mexico,' this case provides a vivid example of the Internet's ability to destabilise conventional territorialisation and state control of information. In the case of Chiapas, Zapatistan guerilla commandants made strategic use of the Internet to present their demands to the Mexican government while simultaneously highlighting their grievances to the international community. As many authors (Froehling 1997; Kellner 1997, 184-5; Cleaver 1996) suggest, international scrutiny coupled with global moral outrage were largely responsible for compelling the Mexican government to end the shooting war and to protect the Zapatistas from extermination. The Zapatistas were extremely successful in employing the Internet to incite widespread sympathy, mobilise international support for their cause, and influence both domestic and international policy. This resulted in an otherwise obscure group being propelled on to the center stage of international politics. Further, it plainly exposed Mexico's inequitable treatment of a segment of its citizens and opened the State's domestic politics to the scrutiny of international public opinion. The power of the Internet is thus exemplified in the transformation of these localised, disenfranchised indigenous peasants (who are barely aware of its existence) to a visible political presence. It also underscores the point that the regime was unable to control electronic dissent, and in turn, effectively harness its indigenous 'rebellious' factions. This is appositely captured by Luke's statement that, '...the Internet, and all of its many parallel or successor networks, also constitute a new supra-national, post-territorial, anti-sovereign, machinic formation, whose destabilizing effects can be experienced

everywhere and anytime, its on-line virtual practices pervade off-line real existences' (1997, 124).

The recent mushrooming of nationalist/social movement websites evince that other disenfranchised groups have taken note of the power of the 'Zapatista Effect'¹⁴ and are increasingly resorting to modes of 'cyber resistance' in their own struggles. As Luke asserts, 'in boosting human actions into the digital domain, new modes of identity and community, territory, sovereignty, culture and society are emerging on-line in the constructs of cyberspace' (1998, 3). For many nascent ethnonationalist movements, cyberspace constitutes an ideal site in which to re-imagine the homeland and concretize the abstractions of nationalist myth. Moreover, the very nature of cyberspace makes it particularly conducive to the creation and maintenance of ethnonationalist imaginations. As Luke claims:

All spaces are reconstructed out of human discourse, including the expanses of cyberspace. Cyberspaces, however, seem to be even more like constructs, because they are continuously fabricated out of the telemetries of telecommunication/telecomputation networks as they elaborate products of programming function, data systemization, and system interoperations in large informational grids used to gather, store, manage or interpret bits of information. All spaces are produced by human subjects and nonhuman objects, *but cyberspace compels human beings to reimagine their spatial situation in the simulations of many sorts of 'virtual' being* (1998, 3 [emphasis mine]).

Cyberspatial technologies have the potential to become the catalyst for a radical transformation of the political status quo, and this serves to make many regimes (particularly authoritarian ones) deeply apprehensive. This fear is further exacerbated by the palpable lack of governmental control of what is produced in the cyberspatial world. Many states have attempted to insulate its citizenry from budding cyber-nationalist formations and other cyber-oppositional movements by employing several mechanisms—from regulating the rhythm, intensity, and type of information that is made accessible to completely restricting access to certain Internet nodes (Froehling 1997, 294; Warf and Grimes 1997, 262-3).

The potential of these technologies was most powerfully felt by China's authoritarian regime during the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre when students used fax machines and e-mail to mobilize support. One network in particular, ChinaNet (that operated out of Stanford University and was popular among dissidents), rankled the Chinese government to the extent that in early 1996 it began to curtail access to sites it deemed subversive (Mueller and Tan 1997). It has additionally blocked access to many other sites, including those that are critical of its human rights record. Certain Arab states, such as Saudi Arabia, have also instituted stringent controls to stem the influx of anti-Islamic alien values (Gher and Amin 1999) while simultaneously repressing Islamic fundamentalist challenges to the political status quo (Fandy 1997). Paralleling this, Singapore, Thailand, and

Malaysia have all attempted to restrict private satellite dishes and heavily monitor Internet usage, motivated by a fear of 'foreign contamination' (Warf and Grimes 1997, 263). German prosecutors have used threats of legal sanctions to pressure on-line services to restrict access to web sites providing neo-Nazi propaganda and information useful to terrorists (Resnick 1997, 57). In April 1996, Guatel, the state-owned telecommunications corporation in Guatemala, decreed that private satellite or telecommunications links were illegal.

Similar to the cases cited above, many states in the developing world are wary of cyberspace's destabilizing potential and contend that, for them, at this stage of their political development, freedom of expression is an unaffordable luxury. In countries in which ethnic conflict or other oppositional movements threaten the stability and viability of the state, this issue gains further salience. This is exemplified by the Spanish government's shutting down of the Basque separatist Euskadi and Freedom movement's (ETA) web site, ostensibly due to its very tangible effectiveness (Warf and Grimes 1997, 266). Despite such governmental efforts to monitor and control seditious elements, there is an incessant proliferation of websites that challenge the authority and legitimacy of several states. For example, numerous 'countrysnets' report human rights abuses perpetrated by repressive regimes in China, Burma, East Timor, and Kenya. Other sites are maintained by 'aspirant nations' such as the Chechens, Kurds, Kosovars, Kashmiris, Tamils, and Sikhs. In addition to documenting human rights violations, many of these sites provide other kinds of information unavailable through the mainstream media. Employing the case of Khalistani Sikhs, the following section examines the way in which such groups deploy cyber-technologies to disseminate their ideas and promulgate their cause.

Part II: The Construction of a 'Hyperreal' Khalistan¹⁵

Representation of Place in Cyberspace

For several years, geographers engaged in the study of space and place imagery have noted the strategic representation of space (Ryan 1990; Harley 1992; Pickles 1992). However, the conveyance of place through the Internet is starkly different from other traditional communication media because of the evisceration of time and space distinctions. This enables groups to distribute images of varying authority and power and across space in order to establish a hegemonic, indisputable representation of a particular place or space.

Thus, the potential of the Internet is not only to convey an image or representation of place but also to define that place, and this gains particular salience when there may be no authoritative or official definition in existence (Jackson and Purcell 1997). Representations may compete to define what is 'real' or 'official' and those groups that have access to web technology are accorded free rein to fashion a 'virtual' understanding and subsequently make their interpretation available to a

global audience that ultimately shapes 'real' geography. According to Stanley D. Brunn and Charles D. Cottle, the 'sense of place is converted from a 'grounded' reality to one that is not only virtual but artificially constructed' (1997, 243). Many ethnonationalist groups, in particular, have recognized the technological potential of cyberspace and attempted to create 'authoritative' representations of non-electronic, political spaces through the strategic use of technology. Paradoxically, cyberspace also constitutes a spatial site in which nationalist movements based on territory become, in essence, deterritorialised (Jeganathan 1998).

In the case of the Sikh struggle for Khalistan, international imaginings linking similar historical experiences provide a context that forges a sense of pan-Sikh solidarity and nostalgia for a geographically distant Punjab. For members of the Sikh diaspora, many of whom have never physically set foot in the Punjab, this imagination has most recently been fashioned out of information provided on numerous web sites designed to preserve 'Sikh culture' and promote the Khalistan ideal. Several of these sites employ various images and audio-visual technologies that bring to life the sights and sounds of 'the Punjabi homeland' and its people via a realm of realistic imagery. Most sites also incorporate linguistic, religious, and cultural symbols such as photographs, maps, and other 'national' emblems into their overall design, that evoke a particular emotional response and imbue the space with meaning for Sikhs, regardless of their location.

Presently, there are a great number of Internet sites devoted to various aspects of Sikh culture, society, and politics.¹⁶ While there is a certain amount of overlap in the kinds of information provided, these web sites can be roughly classified into three general categories: (1) 'Generic' sites, such as Sikhnet [<http://www.sikhnet.com>], that provide a variety of informational services such as chat rooms, discussion lists, and electronic news, and are designed to form a social forum for the Sikh diaspora; (2) 'Religious' sites such as The Sikhism Homepage [<http://www.sikhs.org>] whose main mission is to disseminate information pertaining to Sikhism and that serve as a resource for individuals (both Sikh and non-Sikh) interested in exploring the religion further, and finally, (3) 'Political' sites such as Khalistan.net [<http://www.khalistan.net>] that expressly advocate the creation of a separate Sikh state and dedicate much of their space to highlighting political developments and state repression in the Punjab. As stated at the outset, most of these sites are produced by prominent Khalistani organizations that comprise the larger separatist movement, and they form the focus of the following section.

Analysis of Web Sites

To illustrate the ways in which Sikh separatist groups attempt to intentionally and strategically fashion space and create an authoritative representation of 'a Punjabi homeland,' the content of nine pro-Khalistan websites was analyzed.¹⁷ The purpose of examining the content of these sites was not to ascertain the veracity of the presented information but rather to evaluate the symbolisms pro-Khalistani groups

invoke in broadcasting their message. Searches were conducted using web directories and search engines such as Yahoo [<http://www.yahoo.com>], Altavista [<http://www.altavista.com>], and Alltheweb.com [<http://www.alltheweb.com>] during the latter part of 1999 and the early part of 2000. The selection of the sites was based on the following criteria: (1) Political affiliation - the site had to be clearly oriented towards Sikh separatism; (2) Multiple cues - the site had to incorporate text, graphics, and other audio-visual techniques to convey information; (3) Depth of content - the web site had to comprise more than a couple of pages. Given that all these sites contain graphics of Sikh symbols, brief descriptions of three of the most commonly used emblems are provided in Figure 6.1.



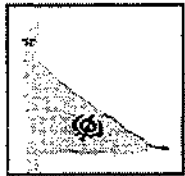
Khanda

The Khanda, analogous to the cross in Christianity or the Star of David in Judaism, is a symbol that is common in Sikhism and constitutes the modern insignia of the Khalsa. Its name derives from the vertical double-edged sword (also referred to as a Khanda) that lies at its center. The Khanda symbol comprises a vertical double-edged sword (Khanda) over a quoit (Chakkar) flanked by two crossed sabers (Kirpans). The double-edged sword (Khanda) is a symbol of divine knowledge; its sharp edges are viewed as cleaving truth from falsehood. The Chakkar or circle without a beginning or an end symbolizes God's eternity. The two Kirpans represent the dual concepts of Meeri and Peeri - temporal and spiritual authority - and highlight the importance of both spiritual duties and societal obligations. The Khanda appears on the Sikh flag (Nishan Sahib - see below) and on various religious objects and publications.



Ik Oankar

Like the Khanda, the Ik Oankar is a symbol that is widely used by Sikhs on a variety of items such as religious artifacts, books, stationery, buildings, and apparel. It is a combination of the figure 1 and the letter O in Gurmukhi script and forms the first part of several verses in the *Adi Granth*. Ik Oankar represents the unity of God - 'One Oanker' meaning 'One Being.'



Nishan Sahib

The Nishan Sahib refers to the triangular saffron (sometimes dark blue) flag containing the Khanda emblem, which is displayed in front of all gurdwaras. The mast (Chola) is usually covered with the same material as the flag and is topped by a Khanda or a double-edged sword.

Figure 6.1. Common Sikh Symbols¹⁸

The first six sites analyzed in this section are administered by formal organizations that comprise the broader Khalistan movement. Given that English is dominant on the Web, all these sites are scripted in English although many of them contain a few lines of text in Gurmukhi. Composites of each site are provided in alphabetical order and include the Council of Khalistan, Dal Khalsa International, the Khalistan Affairs Center, the Khalistan Government-in Exile, the Sikh Youth Federation, and the World Sikh Organization (WSO).

Council of Khalistan (<http://www.khalistan.com/>)

The Council of Khalistan self-proclaimed 'of and for the Sikh Panth' web site is largely text-oriented and provides comprehensive information on activities pertaining to the struggle for Sikh self-determination. The home page opens to one of Guru Gobind Singh's aphorisms 'Recognize ye all the Human Race as One' and this is bordered by two black Khandas (see Figure 6.2). Beneath this, a large orange and white banner (similar to 'Free Tibet' placards) contains the text: 'India: Free Khalistan Self-Determination Now!'¹⁹ Sikhism's traditional colors of blue, saffron, and white are used throughout the site.

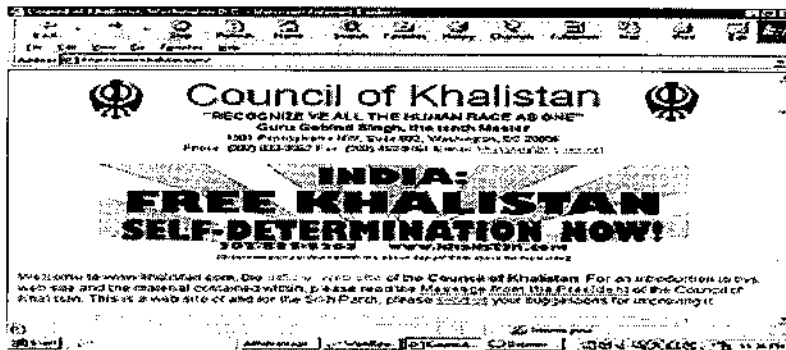


Figure 6.2. Council of Khalistan Web Site Home Page
[<http://www.khalistan.com/>]

The page scrolls down to several sub-categories: 'Recent News & Features,' 'US Congressional Record Statements,' 'US Department of State Reports,' and 'Khalistan Archives.' These, in turn, link to various news reports, articles, press releases, and other public relations materials. The hypertext link titled 'Today's Hukamnama' directly links to the Burning Punjab site. An appeal for financial support states that United States residents can contribute to the cause via their

donations to the United Way. Another link opens up a page that contains President Gurnit Singh Aulakh's message (see Figure 6.3), of which selections follow:

Welcome to the sovereign cyberspace of Khalistan! As the government *pro tempore* charged with leading international efforts to free Khalistan from Indian Government occupation, we have the responsibility to provide you with the most accurate and up-to-date information on the Sikh freedom struggle...Amid Indian government disinformation, negative stereotypes and downplay of the Sikh perspective, the Council of Khalistan offers this web site as a reliable source of information on our peaceful struggle to end the Indian government's genocide campaign and to establish a sovereign, independent Khalistan....Like the Sikh independence movement, this web site will change and evolve, often on a daily basis. We will also carry critical news and developments of other South Asian minority peoples and Nations, including the plight of Christian Nagas, Kashmiris, Assamese and Dalits...[<http://www.Khalistan.com/pres-mes.htm>].

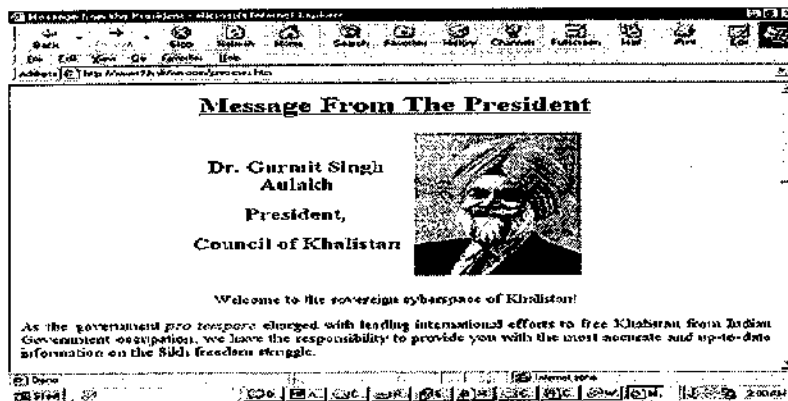


Figure 6.3. Council of Khalistan Web Site: President's Message
[<http://www.Khalistan.com/pres-mes.htm>]

Given the Council of Khalistan's role in the wider self-determination movement, it is unsurprising that the site's content is overwhelmingly political and strident in voicing its separatist position. In order to enhance the organization's authority, considerable space is devoted to summaries of United States congressional proceedings and other western journalistic accounts that are sympathetic to the Sikh predicament. The site is relatively easy to navigate and there are few graphics to distract the reader from the organization's central message of the paramount urgency in procuring Sikh sovereignty. Jingoistic language is employed and the tone is

almost belligerent in certain places. Loaded phrases such as 'the Indian government's genocide campaign,' 'the Indian terrorist state' and 'the massacre of Sikhs' are peppered throughout the site.

Dal Khalsa International (<http://www.dalkhalsa.org/>)

As represented in Figure 6.4, the Dal Khalsa International web site's homepage pitches the group as the 'The Pioneer Organization of Khalistan Movement' [sic]. Above this declaration, a freestanding statement proclaims 'Khalistan A Future Reality.' A bright saffron and green flag (containing an official seal that is somewhat illegible) is positioned on the upper left-hand corner of the page. Shades of saffron and green also dominate the site's color scheme, while text and hypertext links are blue or black. Towards the top part of the home page, there is a framed link to *Paigam* - the Dal Khalsa's monthly bilingual Internet magazine. Underneath this, there is a section containing several hypertext links to Sikh-related recent news articles.

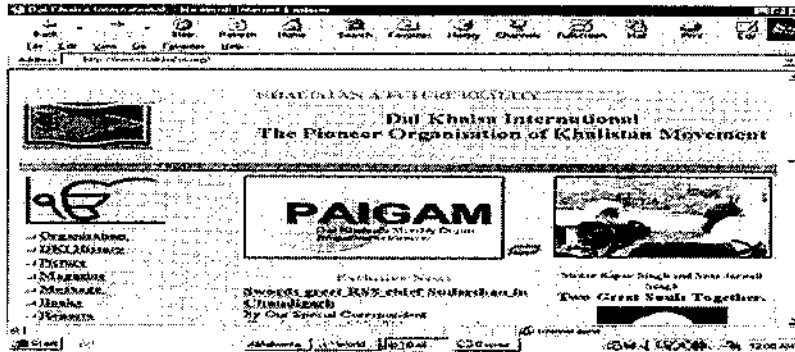


Figure 6.4. Dal Khalsa International Web Site Home Page
[<http://www.dalkhalsa.org/>]

The right section of the page as seen in Figure 6.5 is occupied by two coloured photographs (which may be enlarged by clicking on the respective graphic). The first, captioned 'Two Great Souls Together' depicts a laughing Bhindranwale conversing with an older man identified as Sirdar Kapur Singh. The second picture is a formal portrait of the Chairman of Dal Khalsa International, Gajinder Singh.

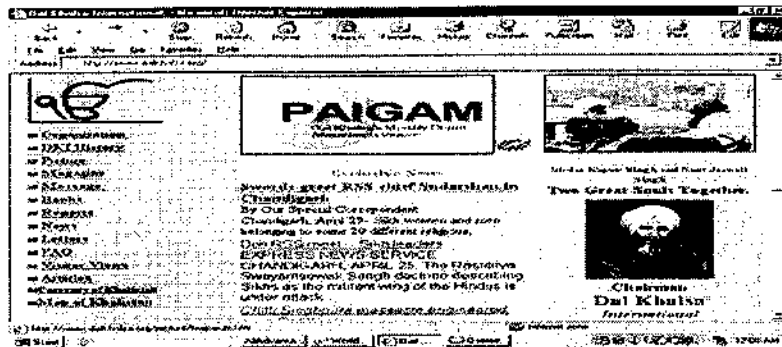


Figure 6.5. Dal Khalsa International Web Site Home Page: Photographs
[<http://www.dalkhalsa.org>]

Underneath Singh's photograph, a frame contains the words 'An Appeal' in bold black type, which is followed by a link to another page that contains the text of the appeal. In his petition, Gajinder highlights the Dal Khalsa International's role in 'reviving and reorganizing' the movement for Sikh national independence and exhorts Sikhs of the diaspora to contribute financially to the cause [<http://www.dalkhalsa.org/magazine.funds.htm>]. To this end, in addition to the organization's e-mail address, contact names and telephone numbers are provided in both India and Australia. Major links to various sections of the site are organized into a series of bullet points contained in a frame on the left-hand corner of the page under a black Ik-Oankar symbol. Each of these hypertext links opens to other web pages containing text and graphics that elaborate further on the fourteen bulleted topics. Clicking on the 'Organization' link opens up a page that provides an overview of the group's mission. Parts of the summary, reads as follows:

Dal Khalsa International, is an organization committed to struggle for establishment of Sovereign State of Khalistan...Dal Khalsa International, is in favour of shaping Khalistan Movement as a National Liberation Movement, through political and democratic means, and is working hard for the same. Dal Khalsa International, is for Nuclear Free world, and particularly Nuclear Free South Asia, and is dead against employment or storage of Nuclear [sic] Warheads in our Homeland, Punjab, Khalistan.

Dal Khalsa International, sympathizes with all the National Liberation Movements struggling against Delhi's Hindu Imperialism, considers practical coordination among them [sic], beneficial and imperative for all. Dal Khalsa International considers it it's [sic] responsibility to raise voice against Delhi regime's bullying attitude against it's [sic] smaller and weaker neighbours.

Dal Khalsa International considers it its [sic] responsibility to promote literature representing National Liberation Movement.²⁰
[\[http://www.dalkhalsa.org/organization/organization.html\]](http://www.dalkhalsa.org/organization/organization.html)

The heading titled 'Message' links to a letter from Gajinder Singh, and provides information surrounding the creation of the web site. Singh maintains that the website was launched in 1998 to coincide with Dal Khalsa's 20th anniversary commemorations. The organization's self-proclaimed mission is twofold: first to share the organization's views with the Sikh brotherhood scattered around the globe and second, to put the case of Sikh independence before the international community. It is interesting to note that the link to 'Books' opens to a page containing a work, by a retired Kashmiri Major General Tariq Nizami, that chronicles the current conflict in Kashmir. Nizami's correspondence is also reproduced in the 'Letters' section in which he declares the following:

We the Kashmiris have been generally target of atrocities of the Indian Armed Forces for the past over fifty years. There has been tremendous increase in the intensity of torture, rape, custodial killings and arson etc since 1989. Rape and custodial killing of late have been used as tactics to coerce the freedom fighters into submission or to lower their morale.

All this has made us realize as to what atrocities must our Sikh brothers would have faced in east Punjab. The setting of religious sites on fire or their desecration is a common thing with the Indian Army. Naturally our sympathies are with the Sikh movement in India and our aims and objectives coincide i.e. freedom from Indian Yoke.

The Kashmir Liberation Cell felicitates Dal Khalsa International in general and Bhai Gajinder Singh in particular for raising the flag of Khalistan against Indian occupation. We are busy in projecting the Kashmir cause through print and electronic media.²¹

[\[http://www.dalkhalsa.org/mess.nizami.htm\]](http://www.dalkhalsa.org/mess.nizami.htm)

Nizami further states that various Kashmiri liberation publicity materials have been uploaded to his group's web site and provides the relevant universal resource locators [<http://www.kashmir.org> and <http://www.klc.org.pk>] to the respective sites.

Other links include 'Currency of Khalistan' that connects to a graphic of a green and white Khalistan one hundred dollar bill bearing the likeness of Jamail Singh Bhindranwale (see Figure 6.6).

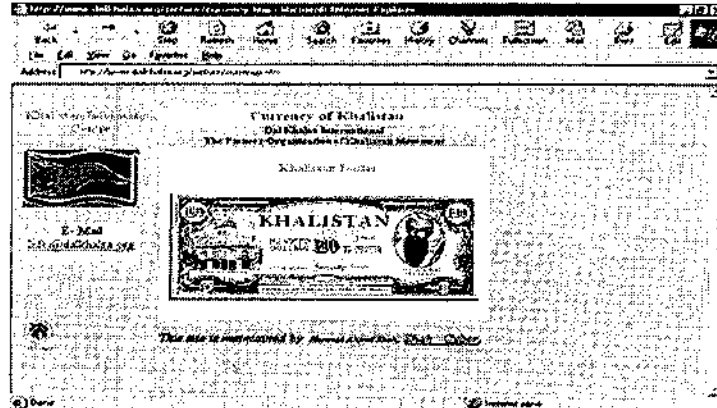


Figure 6.6. Dal Khalsa International Web Site: Khalistan Currency
[<http://www.dalkhalsa.org/picture/currency/htm>]

Another link transports the reader to a map of Khalistan that depicts the territorial boundaries of the aspirant state flanked by two Nishan Sahibs (see Figure 6.7).

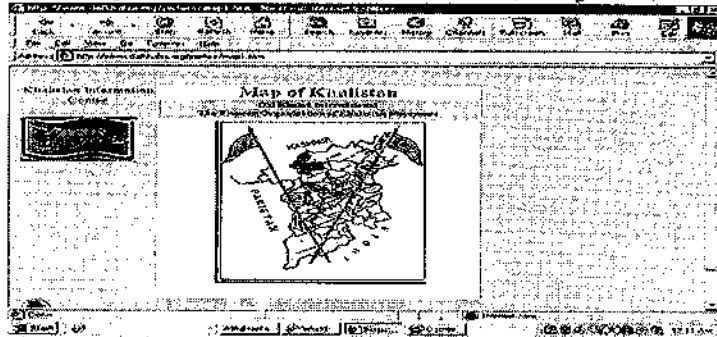


Figure 6.7. Dal Khalsa International Web Site: Map of Khalistan
[<http://www.dalkhal.org/picture/map/htm>]

The news headlines on the home page link to articles on recent developments in the Sikh community. One recent news item (dated April 2nd, 2000) titled 'RSS Literature 'denigrating' Sikhs' outlines measures to counter the anti-Sikh propaganda circulated by the ultra-nationalist Hindu Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Patriotism Organization, more commonly referred to by its acronym 'RSS'). The home page also provides a link to a British Broadcasting Corporation

Sahib' and scrolls down further to three more hypertext links: 'Why Sikhs Demand Khalistan,' 'About Khalistan Affairs Center (KAC),' and 'How do I get Involved?' (see Figure 6.9).

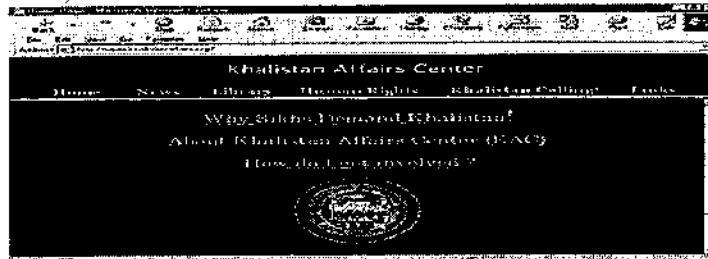


Figure 6.9. Khalistan Affairs Center Web Site Home Page: Hypertext Links [<http://www.Khalistan-affairs.org>]

Clicking on the 'About Khalistan Affairs Center' opens to a page containing the following statements by Dr. Amarjit Singh, Spokesperson for the Panthak Committee:

Khalistan Affairs Center is a not-for-profit Organization dedicated to raising the level of knowledge in the United States about the heroic Struggle of the Sikh nation, captured in India as a result of British Colonial 'map-making,' in 1947.

As the political Arm of the Panthak Committee, appointed by the Sarbat Khalsa (Sikh Commonwealth), the Khalistan Affairs Center undertakes efforts to draw the attention of the United States administration and Congress to take a fair and just stand on the right of self-determination of the captive Sikh nation. The Khalistan Affairs Center supports the concept of an independent democratic Khalistan stretching from Pakistan border on the west of River Jamuna on the East. It seeks the active involvement of international human rights organizations in order to condemn State sponsored terrorism in India. The Center brings to the attention of the civilized world the Indian social order and its fascist caste system, the massacres, the practice of summary executions, torture and political prisoners, acts of rape and incidents of bounty hunting by the minions of the Indian state particularly in Occupied Punjab, Occupied Kashmir and Assam.

The Khalistan Affairs Center calls upon the world community to utilize its diplomatic and material leverage to:

- stop India's flagrant Human Rights abuses against the Sikhs;
- force India to release thousands upon thousands of Sikh political prisoners held incommunicado for years under Draconian Laws, which override the presumption of innocence, in India's sub-human jails;

- pressure India to facilitate access to Punjab, Khalistan for human rights organizations;
- request the United Nations to designate representatives to visit the Sikh homeland to investigate the situation and
- to establish the necessary conditions for the holding of a free and impartial plebiscite to ascertain the views of the oppressed Sikh nation about its future. [<http://www.Khalistan-affairs.org/>]

Under the 'Human Rights' section, there are numerous official and unofficial sources documenting Indian state repression and abuse, including American anthropologist Cynthia Mahmood's 'Writing the Bones' which appeared in the June 1999 issue of *Human Rights Review*. Additionally, the link 'Khalistan Calling!' opens up to regularly updated news briefs. Recent headlines included: 'Indian Army Shoots Twelve Kashmiri Muslims Protesting 'Fake Encounter' Orchestrated to Cover Up the March 20 Sikh Massacre,' 'Bloody Monday'-Massacre of 35 Sikhs in Kashmir By the Indian Occupation Army,' and '35 Sikhs Murdered on March 20, 2000 in Indian Occupied Kashmir. Fingerprints of Indian Intelligence are all Over' [<http://www.Khalistan-affairs.org/>]. These hypertext links are juxtaposed against small flashing banners that depict a saffron Khanda on a blue background and include the proclamation 'Khalistan Calling' (see Figure 6.10).

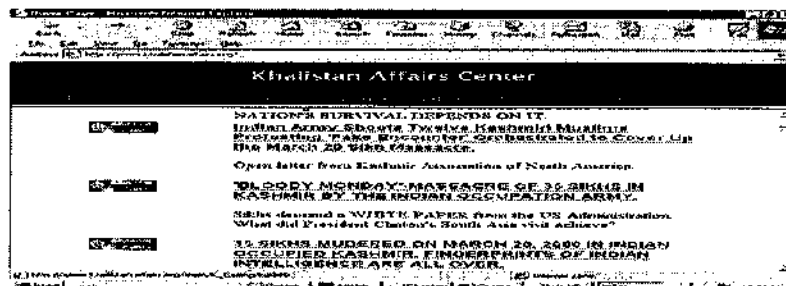


Figure 6.10. Khalistan Affairs Center Web Site. Khalistan Calling: Recent New Headlines [<http://www.khalistan-affairs.org>]

The Khalistan Affairs Center site aims to present a rational basis for the creation of a separate Sikh state and employs several non-partisan third party accounts (including western scholars, human rights agencies such as Amnesty International, and other independent institutions) to bolster its position. Considerable space is also devoted to highlighting the potential dangers of India's nuclear capability vis-à-vis the security of the South Asian region. The web site has clean lines and is well organized and graphics tend to enhance rather than detract from the text. Except for the Khanda emblem, the site is devoid of nationalistic symbols and textual information is both articulate and well presented. However, the language and tone

are viscerally anti-Indian, and phrases such as 'Indian desinformatsiya,' 'Brahmin-fundamentalist Indian government,' and 'Nehru Dynasty Raj,' are routinely used to describe the Indian government.

Khalistan Government in Exile (<http://www.Khalistan.demon.co.uk>)

The Khalistan Government-in-Exile is headed by Gurmej Singh Gill, a member of the militant Babbar Khalsa. He is referred to as the 'Prime Minister' in various places on the Khalistan Government-in-Exile web site. The home page (which has a white background) is headed by the slogan 'Khalistan: Government-in-Exile' and the word 'Khalistan' is colored bright saffron. A chain of barbed wire borders the text as seen in Figure 6.11.

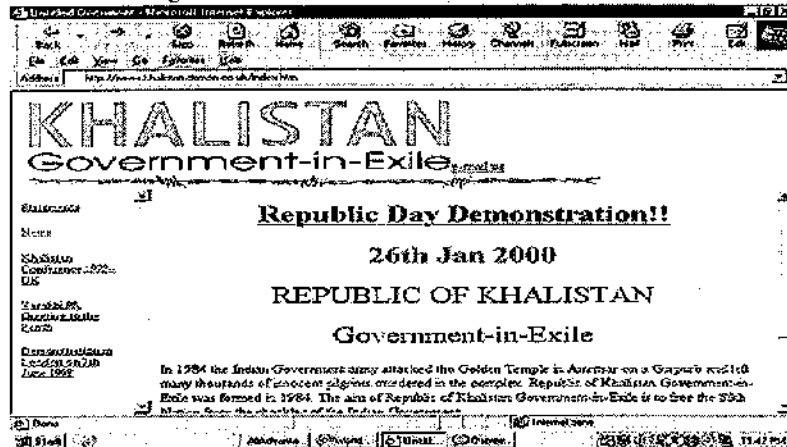


Figure 6.11. Khalistan Government-In-Exile Web Site Home Page
[<http://www.khalistan.demon.co.uk>]

The hypertext links framed to the left section of the home page include: 'Statements,' 'News,' 'Khalistan Conference 1998 UK,' 'Vaisakhi 98,' 'Greetings to the Panth,' and 'Demonstration in London on 7th June 1998.' The home page states: 'In 1984 the Indian Government army attacked the Golden Temple in Amritsar on a Gurburb and left many thousands of innocent pilgrims murdered in its complex. Republic of Khalistan Government-in-Exile was formed in 1984. The aim of Republic of Khalistan Government-in-Exile is to free the Sikh Nation from the shackles of the Indian Government' [<http://www.khalistan.demon.com.uk/index.htm>].

In a statement released on January 1st, 1998 (the most recent available on the site as of February 2000), 'Prime Minister' Gurmej Singh further affirms that

'[E]lected members of Khalistan-Government-in-Exile stand by the promise of 23 June 1984 to take the Sikh nation to its destination of an independent Khalistan' [<http://www.Khalistan.demon.co.uk/state198.htm>]. The hypertext link titled 'Demonstration in London on 7th June 1998' opens to several photographs of the rally, in which Sikh protesters carrying anti-Indian placards burn the Indian flag (see Figure 6.12).

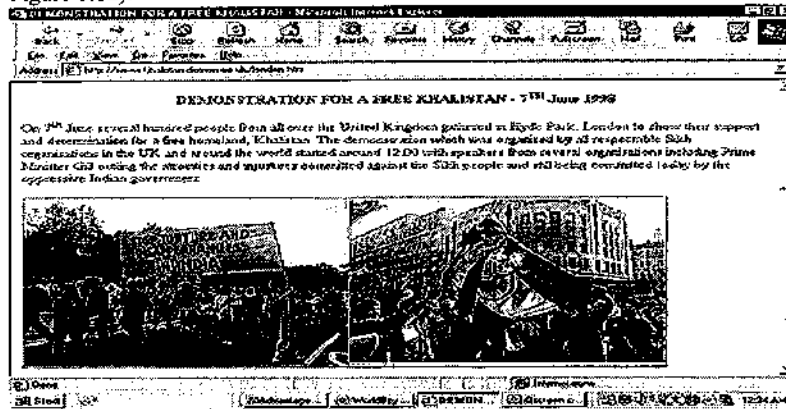


Figure 6.12. Khalistan Government-in-Exile Web Site: Demonstration in London, June 1998 [<http://www.khalistan.demon.co.uk/london/htm>]

While the Khalistan Government-in-Exile web site attempts to project a sense of authority and legitimacy about the organization, it fails for several reasons. First, information relating to the separatist struggle is scarce and there are few links to external sources or third party accounts. Second, much of the information available on the site is from 1998, which clearly indicates that the site is not routinely updated. Finally, there is a heavy reliance on words, with few graphics or other kinds of audio-visual media. Moreover, even subpages containing photographs are hastily assembled and sometimes incomplete. These all contribute to the site's, and by extension, the organisation's, overall lack of credibility. While trying to seem authoritative, the site ends up seeming hollow, given its amateurish design and unprofessional image.

Sikh Youth Federation (<http://syf.jaj.com>)

The Sikh Youth Federation web site is mainly text-based with graphics almost exclusively limited to photographs. The home page opens to a black background with the heading 'Sikh Youth Federation HomePages' inscribed in white (see Figure 6.13). Four white headers titled 'Camps,' 'Programs,' 'Retreats' and 'SYF Chat'

form hypertext links that may be used to access further information. The left part of the page is a separate frame that depicts the letters 'SYF' in large saffron text and large gold Khandas in the background. Six more hypertext links titled 'Sikhism Overview,' 'Panthic Matters,' 'File Section,' 'Links,' 'About Us,' and 'News Archive' may be clicked on for more information. The 'About Us' Link opens to the organization's self-proclaimed mission, which is as follows: 'Established in 1968, the purpose of the SYF is to educate the future generations of the Sikhs about our heritage [sic] and to acquaint the inhabitants of North America about the Sikh value system and way of life' [<http://syf.jaj.com/aboutus.htm>].

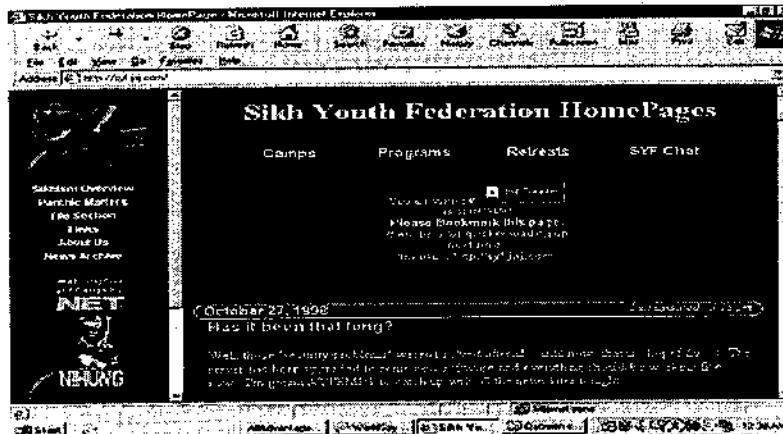


Figure 6.13. Sikh Youth Federation Web Site Home Page (<http://syf.jaj.com>)

Scrolling down the page takes the viewer to several links to several press releases; the most recent one is dated October 1998. There is information on Sikh camps, support groups, and an article describing the killing of a Sikh by skinheads in Vancouver. Clicking on the hypertext link 'Panthic Matters' leads to a subpage with several more hypertext links including links to the World Sikh Organization and Council of Khalistan websites. Some of the headlines include 'Ohio Kirpan Case Verdict,' 'India-A Terrorist State?,' (see Figure 6.14) 'The Construction of Religious Boundaries,' 'Are Sikh Chairs Serving Sikh Interests?' and 'The Future of Sikh Studies at the University of Michigan.' While the articles are not dated, it may be surmised that the latter three articles reflect the furor caused by several academic works published in the mid 1990s, considered heretical by many Sikhs.

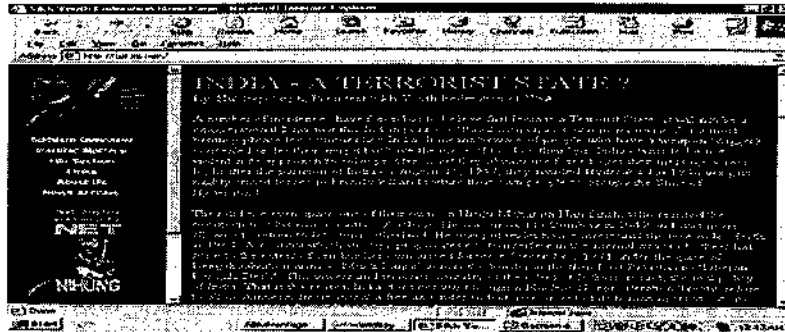


Figure 6.14 Sikh Youth Federation Web Site: India – A Terrorist State?
[http://syf.jaj.com/]

In the section titled 'Current Struggle and Human Rights' there are links to other web sites that document Indian state repression, including Khalsa Human Rights, Khalistan Affairs Center, and Khalistan.Net (see Figure 6.15).

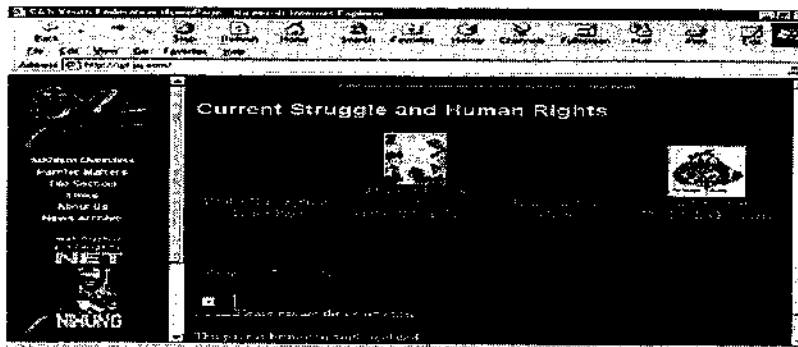


Figure 6.15. Sikh Youth Federation Web Site: Current Struggle and Human Rights
[http://syf.jaj.com/]

Clicking on the header 'Abuse of Human Rights of the Sikhs in India' leads to a subpage with a link to a 'Picture Gallery' that contains explicit photographs of torture (see Figure 6.16).

Darshan Singh Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora: The Search for Statehood* (London: UCL Press, 1999), xiv +327 pp. \$22 (pb). ISBN: 1-85728 301-5. \$40 (hb). ISBN 1-85728-300-7.

Diaspora studies are well on their way to becoming a scholarly cottage industry. Tatla's volume stems from his Ph.D. thesis at the University of Warwick. It is a notable contribution to a growing list of scholarly publications on overseas Sikhs that includes N. Gerald Barrier, Verne A. Dusenbery, Pashaura Singh, Shinder Thandi, Narindar Singh, and Arthur Helweg. Moreover, it is part of a series edited by Robin Cohen which already has published two general books as well as specific cases studies on Italians, Greek and Japanese.

Earlier, Tatla co-authored an annotated bibliography on *Sikhs in North America* and also co-authored an annotated bibliography on *Sikhs in Britain*, and a book on Sikhs in North America. In *The Sikh Diaspora* his extensive, well-organised bibliography is buttressed by extensive personal interviews in Britain and North America; the areas which provide the focus for this volume. Table 2.1 provides a world-wide perspective as it lists estimates for countries throughout the world for Sikhs in both the colonial as well as the contemporary period (pp. 42-43). Specifically, the author is interested in the relationship between migrant Sikhs, Punjab and India.

What constitutes a diaspora involves a spectrum of definitions and interpretations. For this review, it is sufficient to state that overseas Sikhs do not meet the strictest criteria involving 'forced separation,' according to Tatla. But, he points out, Sikhs do meet other criteria of dispersion including 'reluctant hosts, contest over homeland and maintenance of an active relationship with their mother country' and thus qualify for inclusion. Moreover, the author emphasizes that developments stemming from the 'destruction of the Akal Takhat' resulted in 'hundreds' fleeing abroad (pp. 3-4).

Important distinctions are made between the stages of ethnic identity in political terms. Thus, Tatla categorizes Sikhs as 'evolving' from an ethnic community under British colonial rule into a 'nationality' in independent India (p. 30). Operation Blue Star in June 1984, according to the author, had a 'traumatic effect' as it radically changed the relationship of Sikhs to the Indian polity. Military action by the Indian army in the Golden Temple resulted in a wholesale Sikh reaction and the diaspora's support for a Sikh homeland. Sikh support for an independent country, Tatla estimates, now is held by a 'distinct minority of Sikhs' (p.211). Nonetheless, he concludes that support for the Khalistan movement by Sikhs abroad will fluctuate according to two factors.

One factor revolves around future developments in India. Reinstitutionalization in Punjab of the political system, courts, bureaucracy and the press enabled normalcy to resume. Sikh politics returned with the Akali Dal not only reemerging, but winning almost landslide election victories in alliance

photographs leads to several other subpages that contain, as cautioned at the outset, graphic photographs of the 1984 riots, police brutality, and the destruction of the Golden Temple (see Figures 5.18, 5.19, 5.20)

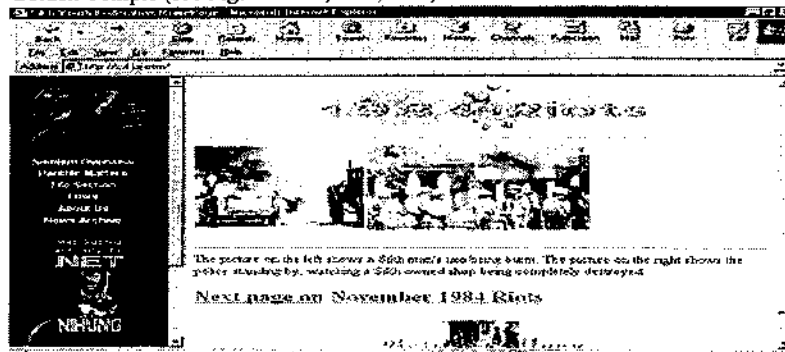


Figure 6.18. Sikh Youth Federation Web Site: The Delhi Riots and Police Collusion [<http://syf.jaj.com/>]

Numerous pages are devoted to the Delhi riots of 1984 and detail the many atrocities that were inflicted on the Sikh community. Several photographs show angry mobs pulling Sikhs off trains and beating them. Others depict burning people, buildings, and vehicles. Some of the more disturbing images include photographs of decomposing (allegedly Sikh) bodies being eaten by dogs. Figure 6.18 shows a vehicle and building on fire while police impassively observe the scene. The photo caption reads: 'The picture on the left shows a Sikh man's taxi being burned. The picture on the right shows the police standing by, watching a Sikh owned shop being completely destroyed' [<http://syf.jaj.com/>].



Figure 6.19. Sikh Youth Federation Web Site: Victims of Torture [<http://syf.jaj.com/>]

The 'Torture' section depicts graphic photographs of victims of police brutality and includes several pictures of individuals allegedly killed while in police custody.



Figure 6.20. Sikh Youth Federation Web Site: Operation Blue Star
[<http://syf.jaj.com/>]

Numerous subpages provide details of the military attack on the Golden Temple (Operation Bluestar). Several pages contain photographs of the aftermath of the military operation and include Sikhs being mistreated by army personnel and a badly-burned, heavily-damaged Akal Takht.

The Sikh Youth Federation web site contains a copious amount of information pertaining to both the political situation in the Punjab and immigrant Sikh concerns. The site has a number of internal and external links that direct the viewer to other relevant resources. Certain points justifying the pro-separatist position are laboriously detailed and argued out in a series of articles by Kuldeep Singh, the organization's President. Additionally, numerous photographs portraying the more brutal aspects of the Indian state apparatus are employed to highlight Sikh subjugation. Topics guaranteed to elicit a strong emotional response from all Sikhs (regardless of political affiliation), such as Operation Bluestar and the Delhi Riots, are accorded considerable space. While the site adopts an authoritative tone, the outdated information it provides considerably undermines its authoritativeness. This site attempts to provoke a strong emotional reaction in order to garner support for the Khalistan movement. Given that it also contains information on Sikh youth camps and activities in North America, the Sikh Youth Federation may have the potential of attracting young diasporan Sikhs to its cause.

World Sikh Organization (<http://www.world-sikh.org/>)

The official World Sikh Organization web site is administered by the Canadian branch of the organization, headquartered in Ottawa. The website's white home page is tastefully designed and depicts the organization's seal, a blue Khanda containing a blue globe in the background, with the text 'World Sikh Organization' inscribed across it in dark saffron (see Figure 6.21). Below this, a line from the *Guru Granth Sahib* proclaims: 'O Nanak, God's name be exalted. And by Thy will, may all prosper.'

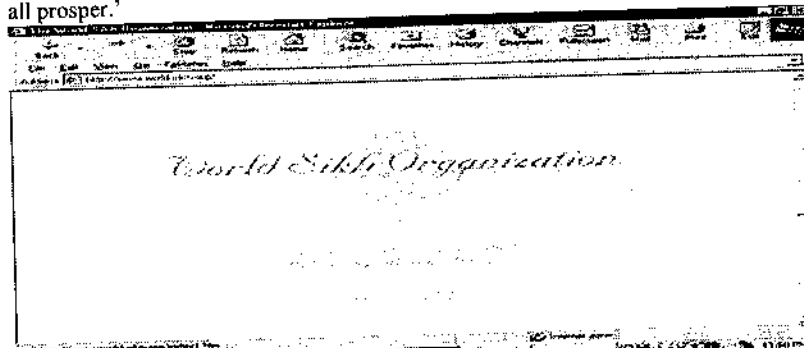


Figure 6.21. World Sikh Organization Web Site Home Page
[<http://www.world-sikh.org/>]

By clicking on the Khanda icon, the viewer is transported to another page that forms the site's hub. The top of the page has a black border with saffron text proclaiming 'The World Sikh Organization.' In addition, several animated gold khandas rotate in the foreground (see Figure 6.22).

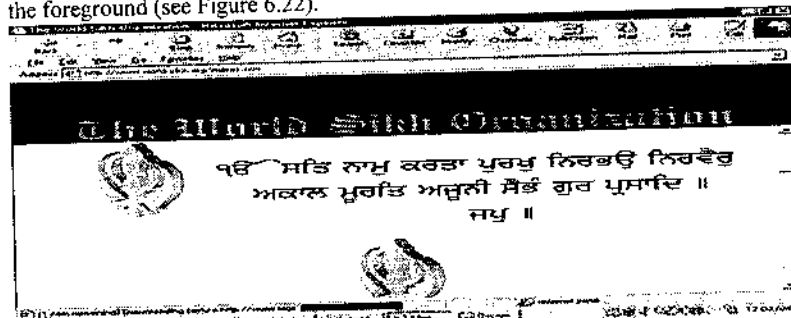


Figure 6.22. World Sikh Organization Web Site Main Page
[<http://www.world-sikh.org/index1.htm>]

This main page scrolls down to several framed hypertext links that open to various types of information related to Sikhism (see Figure 6.23). Some of these links include: 'WSO,' 'WSO Activities,' 'WSO Projects,' 'WSO Intervention,' 'A Glimpse Into the Sikh Religion,' 'Information for Lawyers,' 'Sikh Unrest and the Indian State,' 'Fact About India,' '100 Years Proudly Canadian,' 'Parliament,' and 'Khalsa Schools.' There is also a link titled 'Listen to Katha' that can be used to download audio files that broadcast homilies on Sikh scriptures.



Figure 6.23. World Sikh Organization Web Site Main Page: Links
[<http://www.world-sikh.org/index1.htm>]

The WSO link opens to a page that provides the following synopsis of the organization's mission and objectives. The site states that: '[T]he World Sikh Organization was founded on July 28, 1984, in Madison Square Gardens, New York, at a gathering attended by representatives of Sikh organizations from around the world. The goal was to create an organization that would be the representative voice of the Sikhs' [<http://www.world-sikh.org/Content/Wso.htm>]. Its self-proclaimed mission is 'to work for the promotion of ideas of universal brotherhood, peace, justice, freedom of worship and speech, respect for cultural diversity and human dignity, without distinctions, as set out in the instruments and covenants of the United States' [<http://www.world-sikh.org/Content/Wso.htm>].

The 'Fact About India' hypertext link opens to a subpage that highlights India's human rights abuses and claims that '[T]he Indian Constitution allows the government to suspend the rights of civilians at any time. This is in total violation of International Covenants to which India is a signatory' [<http://www.world-sikh.org/Content/Facts.htm>]. The page also cites several Amnesty International Reports and facts on 'disappearances' and police atrocities in the Punjab. Clicking on the link 'Sikh Unrest and Indian State' leads to an abstract of a book (by the same name) by Ram Narayan Kumar, identified as an Austrian-based political scientist and human rights activist.

Another link titled '100 years Proudly Canadian' opens to a press release dated October 1, 1997, that recounts the centenary settlement experience of Sikhs in Canada. Additionally, the main page contains a photograph of Canadian-Sikh boxer Pardeep Singh Nagra, with a link titled 'Help the Sikh Boxer!' (see Figure 6.23). This link opens up to a page that provides information on a pending civil rights case waged by the WSO on behalf of Nagra. The case focuses on the rights of athletes to have beards when competing in international sporting competitions.

The WSO website clearly exhibits its dual commitment to the cause of Sikh separatism and to more immediate immigrant Sikh concerns. It stands out among the sites examined in terms of design, organisation, and the clarity of information presented. The site contains numerous internal and external hypertext links that allow the viewer to access different types of information. There is a considerable amount of non-political data on Sikhism and Sikh populations that may be accessed. Graphics and images are used to enhance text rather than as ends in themselves. While the site clearly advocates the creation of a separate state, it attempts to support its position by appealing to various credible nonpartisan observers such as journalists, scholars, and human rights agencies. Moreover, although the site's anti-Indian bias is readily discernible, the tone and language used are marked by a reasoned persuasiveness and are less acerbic in comparison to other pro-Khalistan sites.

The three web sites examined in the next section, while strong advocates of Sikh separatism, are not officially affiliated with any of the main Khalistan organizations. In order of analysis, they include the Burning Punjab site, the Fort Panth Khalsa site, and the Khalistan.Net site.

Burning Punjab Site (<http://www.burningpunjab.com>)

The Burning Punjab web site's purported mission is to highlight human rights abuse in the Punjab. To this end, the site contains graphic images chronicling various aspects of this violence. The home page states that it is 'Panjab's first ever media site on Sikh holocaust' (see Figure 6.24) and maintains that it is being operated by the International Human Rights Forum [<http://www.burningpunjab.com/>]. The site's designer is identified as Sukhbir Singh Osan 'a Law graduate from Punjab University, Chandigarh' [<http://www.burningpunjab.com/>].

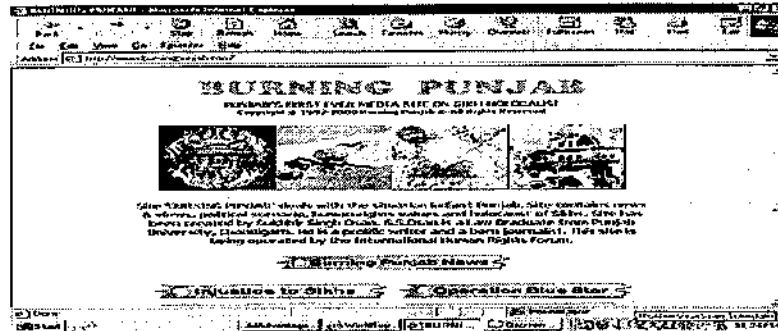


Figure 6.24. Burning Punjab Web Site: Home Page
[<http://www.burningpunjab.com/>]

The site's home page opens to portray four graphic colored images of violence perpetrated against the Sikh people. The first constitutes a representation of the Akal Takht encircled in flames. The second picture depicts tortured bodies (presumably Sikh) strewn upon the Indian flag. The third is a portrait of a Sikh man whose body is engulfed in flames while a dagger is simultaneously thrust into him, leaving a trail of gushing blood. A photograph of the badly burned Akhal Takht, in the immediate aftermath of Operation Blue Star, forms the fourth image.

Scrolling down the page leads to a cluster of fifteen buttons that connect to numerous other sub pages. The include: 'Burning Punjab News,' 'Injustice to Sikhs,' 'Genocide of Sikhs,' 'Glorifying Sikhism,' 'Khalsa shall Rule,' 'Your Views,' 'Punjabi Media,' 'Operation Blue Star,' 'Human Rights,' 'Role of Intellectuals,' 'India's Secular Face,' 'Daily Hukamnama,' 'Carnage of 1984,' and 'Know About Osan' (see Figure 6.33).

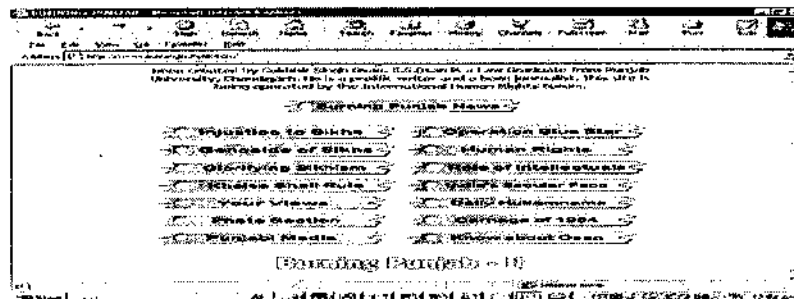


Figure 6.25. Burning Punjab Web Site: Home Page Links
[<http://www.burningpunjab.com/>]

The site has a large section devoted to Operation Bluestar that contains several photographs of the damaged Golden Temple. This section's main page depicts a burning Akal Takht. The right part of the page shows a destroyed Akal Takht set against a background containing a visage of a weeping woman (see Figure 6.26).

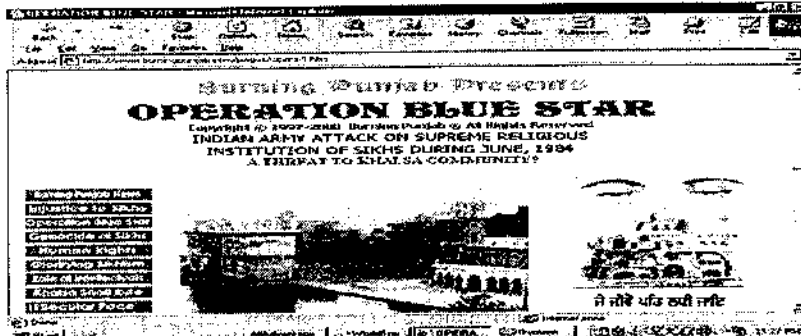


Figure 6.26. Burning Punjab Web Site: Operation Blue Star
 [http://www.burningpunjab.com/pages/opera-1.htm]

Several other pages also open to graphic photographs and eyewitness accounts of Operation Bluestar and the Delhi massacres. A vividly colored picture of a man's blood-drenched hands bound by the Indian flag appears at the top left hand corner of all the pages in the Operation Bluestar section. These subpages contain detailed photographs of the Akal Takht's destruction. Additionally, the pages include numerous photographs of Sikhs who were detained and killed during the military assault.

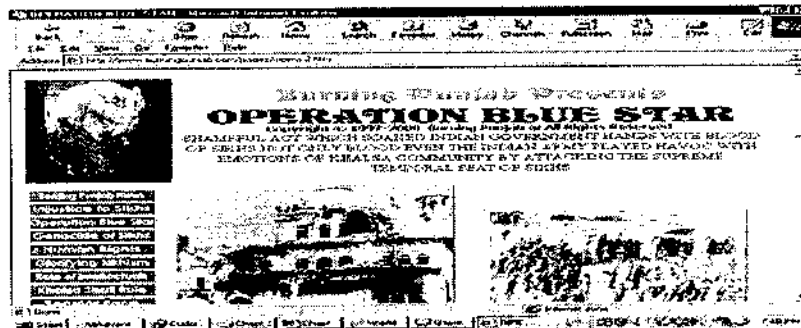


Figure 6.27 Burning Punjab Web Site: Operation Blue Star
 [http://www.burningpunjab.com/pages/opera-2.htm]

Two entire pages are dedicated to Bhindranwale (who is described as the 'Great Martyr of Sikh community') and contain numerous photographs and excerpts from his speeches (see Figure 6.27). An oft-quoted aphorism of Bhindranwale is inscribed below his photograph: 'Physical death I do not fear, death of conscience is a sure death' [<http://www.burningpunjab.com/pages/opera-2.htm>].

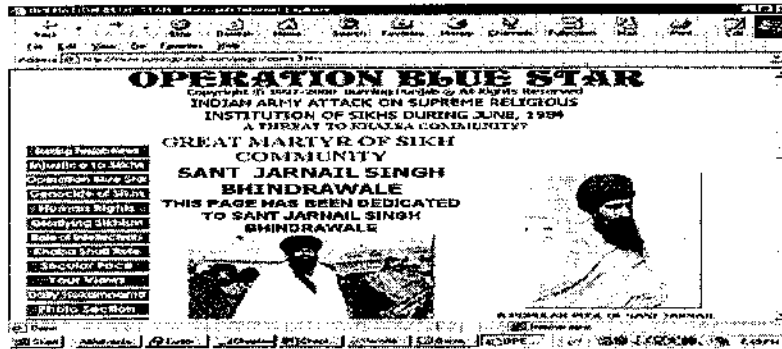


Figure 6.28. Burning Punjab Web Site: Page Dedicated to Bhindranwale [<http://www.burningpunjab.com/pages/opera-3.htm>]

The site also dedicates considerable space to the 1984 anti-Sikh riots and provides a timeline detailing events that occurred in the immediate aftermath of Indira Gandhi's assassination. Explicit photographs, pictorials, newspaper reports, eyewitness accounts and other personal testimonials that recount the atrocities committed against the Sikh community are also included. Figure 6.29, for example, shows photographs of Sikh-owned taxis being set ablaze and looting mobs rampaging through the streets.

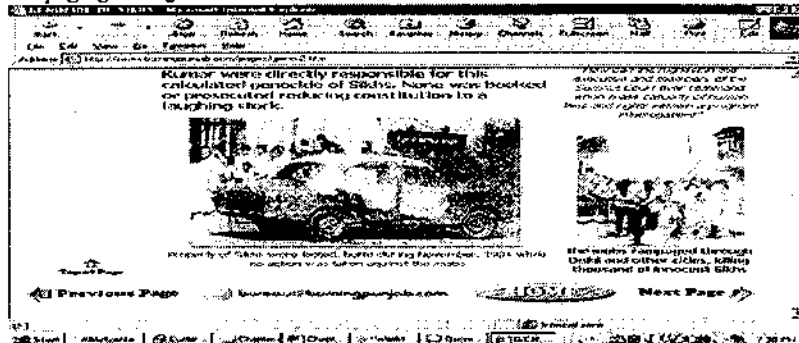


Figure 6.29. Burning Punjab Web Site: 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots [<http://www.burningpunjab.com/pages/geno-2.htm>]

Several other pages contain gruesome photographs that are sometime almost too disturbing to view. They include Sikhs murdered on trains, Sikhs being burned alive, and decomposing Sikh corpses being eaten by dogs. The site quotes the mobs as saying: ‘Kill them. Burn them. Get all the bloody Sardars. Let no Sikh survive. Loot them and burn their houses. Let nothing remain of the community, not a trace. They killed our leader, let no child of their live. Burn their turbans’ [http://www.burningpunjab.com/pages/carnage-1.htm].

Rajiv Gandhi’s official response to the riots, ‘the earth shakes at the fall of a big tree,’ is inscribed above photographs of weeping Sikh women and children [http://www.burningpunjab.com/pages/geno-1.htm]. Other photographs show burned-out gurdwaras and Sikh-owned stores and houses (see Figure 6.38). Reports of refugees and women and children left widowed and orphaned, as a result of the massacre are also documented (see Figure 6.30). Numerous articles highlight the complicity of the police and government officials and note the pogrom-like quality of the riots. Numerous government officials are identified by name and harshly condemned.



Figure 6.30. Burning Punjab Web Site: 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots [http://www.burningpunjab.com/pages/geno-3.htm]

Clicking on the link ‘Photo Section’ opens with a page with the caption ‘Who is Faithful?’ This section contains photographs and brief descriptions of various Akali Dal and Khalistani leaders and observes the ways in which each has betrayed the Panth. The site maintains that Didar Singh Bains, Dr. Sohan Singh, Simarjit Singh Mann, and Dr. Jagjit Singh Chohan among others, have been occasionally ‘used by anti-Panthic elements’ and have not been faithful to the ideals of the movement

[<http://www.burningpunjab.com/pahes/photo.htm>]. In particular, Didar Singh Bains and his recantation of the Khalistani cause is accorded much attention. The 'Your Views' section, for example, contains numerous letters sent via e-mail that condemn his actions.

The site also contains a link titled 'Daily Hukamnama' that provides an updated letter of command from the Akal Takht. Incidentally, several North American and European-based web sites provide hypertext links to the Burning Punjab web site's 'Daily Hukamnama' link. It is also interesting to note that the Burning Punjab website, which is ostensibly dedicated to highlighting human rights abuse, also aspires to commercial gain. As Figure 6.31 indicates, one of the subpages provides a price sheet listing fees for commercial insertions on the site. The appeal states that: '[B]urning Punjab is the first ever crusade launched to bridge the gulf between Sikhs living all over the world. It may help the Sikh Community as a whole to remain united. Now is the time for Sikh entrepreneurs and organizations to insert advertisements on various pages of Burning Punjab web site to promote business interests. Also, this gesture will be of immense help to Burning Punjab....' [<http://www.burningpunjab.com/pages/construct.htm>].

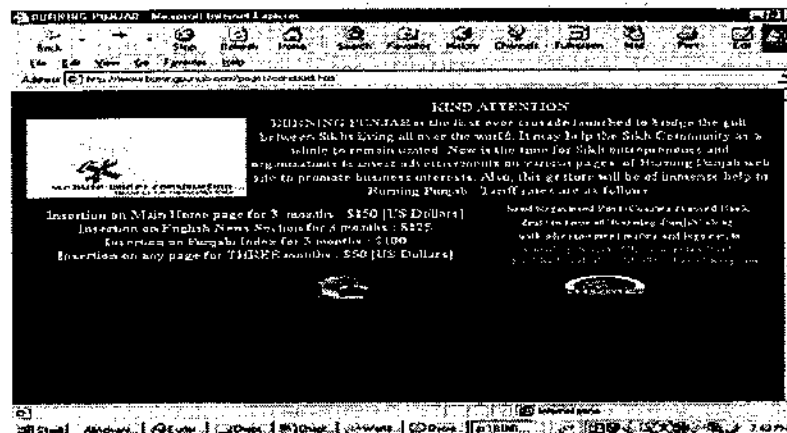


Figure 6.31. Burning Punjab Web Site: Appeal
[<http://www.burningpunjab.com/pages/construct.htm>]

Even a cursory glance at the Burning Punjab site reveals that it constitutes the cyberspatial equivalent of a rabidly anti-Indian soapbox or alternative publication. Graphic images of state brutality or suggested brutality are pervasive and are some times so extreme they end up caricaturing the very violence that is intended to elicit sympathy from the viewer. Additionally, the language used throughout the site is

extremely hyperbolic and vitriolic with phrases like ‘Sikh holocaust,’ ‘Sikh genocide’ and ‘Government organized carnage’ routinely employed in numerous headers, descriptions, and articles. Nationalistic symbols are adopted strategically—one image portrays blood-soaked hands bound by the Indian flag while another graphic depicts the bodies of three men (allegedly Sikh victims of state repression) lying on the Indian tri-color.

While the site is fairly well-organized and easy to navigate, the heavy reliance on poor-quality, highly-exaggerated visuals (such as the opening page’s picture of a bleeding, burning Sikh man who is simultaneously being stabbed to death with a sword) results in the site appearing outlandish and incredible. Additionally, numerous grammatical errors and the inclusion of photographs chronicling the site designer’s (Sukhbir Singh Osan), visits abroad further contribute to the site’s overall amateurish appearance. The site makes graphic use of two events that indelibly marked the Sikh psyche - Operation Bluestar and the Delhi riots - in order to garner support for a separate state. Practically every page contains a direct or veiled reference to the Indian Government’s ominous intentions vis-à-vis the Sikh community. However, even viewers who agree with the site’s claims regarding Indian state repression may find its overall impact somewhat overwhelming. The blatant bias and the overt attempt to provoke strong emotions ultimately serve to undermine any credibility or authority it might have.

Fort Panth Khalsa (<http://www.panthkhalsa.org/index.asp>)

Fort Panth Khalsa (a loose English translation meaning ‘The Sikh Nation’s Fort’) is a website that appears to focus heavily on the orthodox religious aspect of the Sikh separatist struggle. The white home page depicts a picture of a fort with a Nishan Sahib flying from one of its turrets. Below this, a large blue inscription proclaiming ‘Fort: Panth Khalsa’ is followed by more blue text that contains the words: ‘Information on the Sikh Nation.’ Underneath this, a group of seven headers titled ‘The Sikhs Spirit,’ ‘Code of Conduct,’ ‘Sikh Sovereignty,’ ‘Famous Sikhs,’ ‘HukamNama,’ ‘Gurmat articles,’ and ‘Panthic Information’ open to various subpages. Two additional buttons titled ‘On this Day,’ and ‘About this Site’ form links to other pages. An image of a Khanda interspersed with Gurmukhi text lies equidistant from these buttons. A news item stating ‘Anti-Sikh activities of RSS in occupied Panjab sets off alarm’ is emblazoned across the home page (see Figure 6.32).

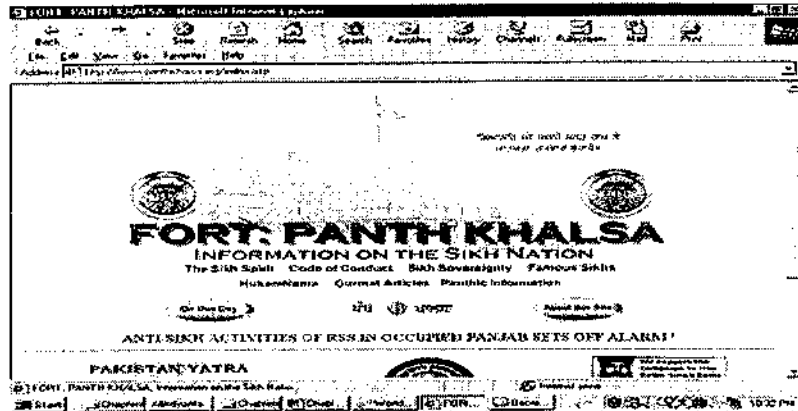


Figure 6.32. Fort Panth Khalsa Web Site: Home Page
[\[http://www.panthkhalsa.org/index.asp\]](http://www.panthkhalsa.org/index.asp)

The page scrolls down to include more links, including one that states 'We support the campaign to free Balbir Singh Bains.' Another frame contains information highlighting the murder of an American Sikh leader, Ajmer Singh. The other links include 'Pakistan 1999 Yatra,' 'Disappearances in Punjab: Religious Genocide in 'Democratic' India,' and 'Operation Bluestar: The Untold Story - Eyewitness accounts of the 1984 Sikh Holocaust.' Clicking on each of these entry points leads to several other subpages that contain detailed information.

The 'Information on the Sikh Nation' section contains a statement on the website's mission:

Since the mid-1990's, with Akal Purakh Sahib's Kirpa, one of the site's goals has been to provide the most unique [sic] information it can find on the Sikh Nation to the global Internet audience. This includes, the Panth's glorious history, past and current struggles, and future challenges....One of the site's main objective is to provide information and subject matter on the Sikh Panth that is purposely neglected or avoided by other sources, and thus not readily available.

This site does *not* have any political affiliations or allegiances to any individual, group or Jatha except to the *Khalsa Panth* (Sikh Nation). The Sikhs are an independent sovereign people that receive guidance from Sri Guru Granth Sahib through Sri Akal Takht Sahib, the Spiritual and Temporal Throne of Sikh Power.
[\[http://www.panthkhalsa.org/about_fpk.html\]](http://www.panthkhalsa.org/about_fpk.html)

While the web site devotes most of its space to issues relating to the religious aspect of Sikhism, it also provides extensive information on Punjab's past and present political situation. Like many of the sites examined thus far, it provides comprehensive accounts of various facets of Indian state repression. One statement maintains that:

To create chaos and destabilize the Freedom Movement, the Indian government, has planted its agents (pseudo-Sikhs) in all Sikh organizations in Punjab. Many agents are actually Punjabi Hindus disguised as Sikhs. They have also infiltrated most of the Sikh Organizations and Temples abroad [sic]. The main goal of these agents is to discredit the Independence Movement and create confusion among the general public.

[http://www.panthkhalsa.org/raj/raj_Khalsa.html]

Sub-sections captioned 'Facts About the 1984 attack on Darbar Sahib Amritsar,' and 'The Indian Government's totalitarian efforts to exterminate the Sikh way of life' are designed to trigger a strong emotional reaction. The former link opens a page that provides a detailed account of the Indian army assault and contains a photograph of the burning Akal Takht (see Figure 6.33).

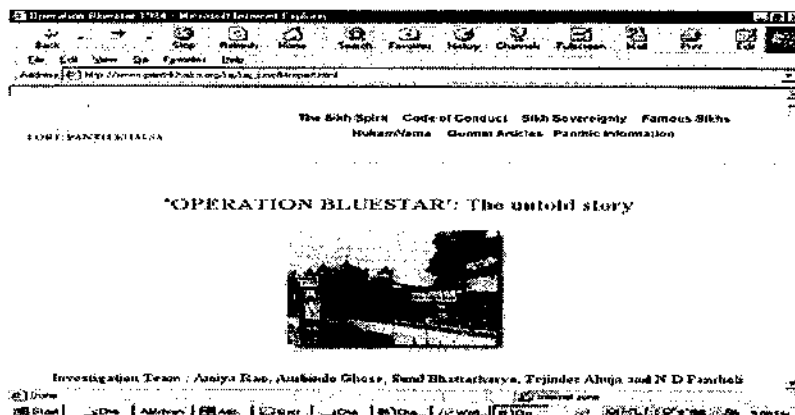


Figure 6.33. Fort Panth Khalsa Web Site: Operation Bluestar: The Untold Story
[http://www.panthkhalsa.org/raj/raj_June84report.html]

Under the 'Sikh sovereignty' section, a link named 'The Current Struggle' opens to numerous accounts of Indian human rights violations. These include various western newspaper reports: 'the Indian Government has been the major cause of bloodshed in the state (Punjab)...' (*The New York Times*, September 16, 1985) and 'A member

of the Indian government's 'Red Brigade' confessed to state sponsored terrorism against the Sikhs' (*The Ottawa Citizen*, February 12, 1989) [see Figure 6.34].

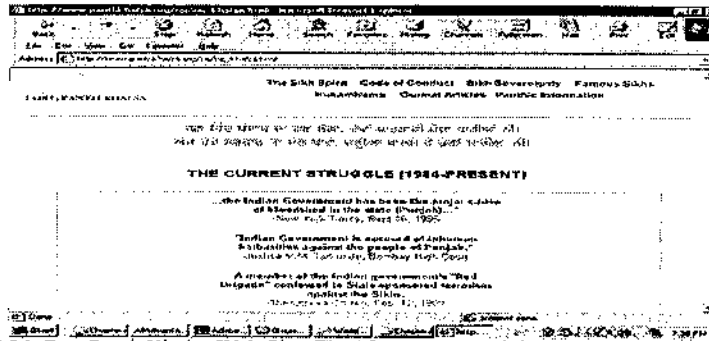


Figure 6.34. Fort Panth Khalsa Web Site: The 'Current Struggle'
[http://www.panthkhalsa.org/raj/raj_Khalsa.htm]

This page also links to another subpage that contains a long list of Sikh *shaheeds* or 'martyrs' who have lost their lives in the 'freedom struggle.' Clicking on a name opens a page with the person's photograph and a summary of their background. A selection of some of the 'shaheeds' who were members of the militant Babbar Khalsa are shown in Figures 5.35, 5.36, and 5.37.



Figure 6.35. Fort Panth Khalsa Web Site: Shaheed Sukhdev Singh (Babbar Khalsa International) [http://www.panthkhalsa.org/gursikh/gs_bhaisukhdevsingh.html]



Figure 6.36. Fort Panth Khalsa Web Site: Shaheed Jasbir Singh (Babbar Khalsa International) [http://www.panthkhalsa.org/gursikh/gs_bhajjasbirsingh.html]



Figure 6.37. Fort Panth Khalsa Web Site: Shaheed Talvinder Singh (Babbar Khalsa, Canada) [http://www.panthkhalsa.org/gursikh/gs_bhaitalvindersingh.html]

There is also considerable space devoted to the most famous ‘martyr’ of the struggle, Bhindranwale (identified in Figure 6.38 as Shahid Bhai Jarnail Singh Khalsa). The caption beneath the photograph reads: ‘Bhai Sahib and his companions fought bravely against the invading Indian forces during the military occupation in June 1984. Thousands of Sikh men, women, and children were murdered in cold blood during this attack’.

[http://www.panthkhalsa.org/gursikh/g_s_bhajarnailsingh.html].

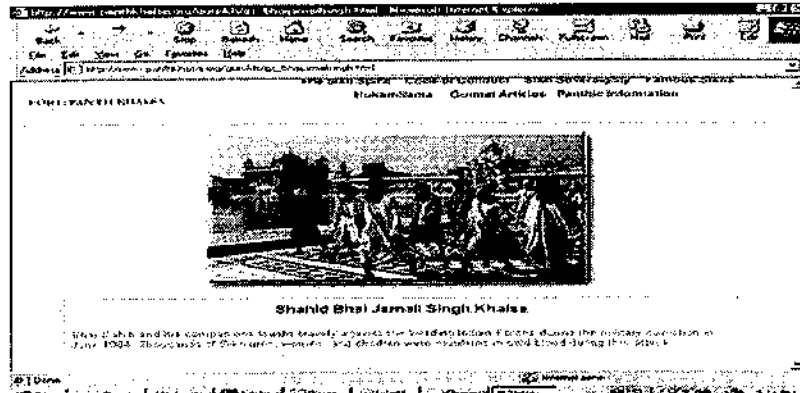


Figure 6.38. Fort Panth Khalsa Web Site: Bhindranwale with Associates at the Golden Temple [http://www.panthkhalsa.org/gursikh/g_s_bhajarnailsingh.html] Other hypertext links open to articles written by nonpartisan observers such as Indian human rights activist Ram Narayan Kumar, and American anthropologist Cynthia Mahmood (see Figure 6.39).

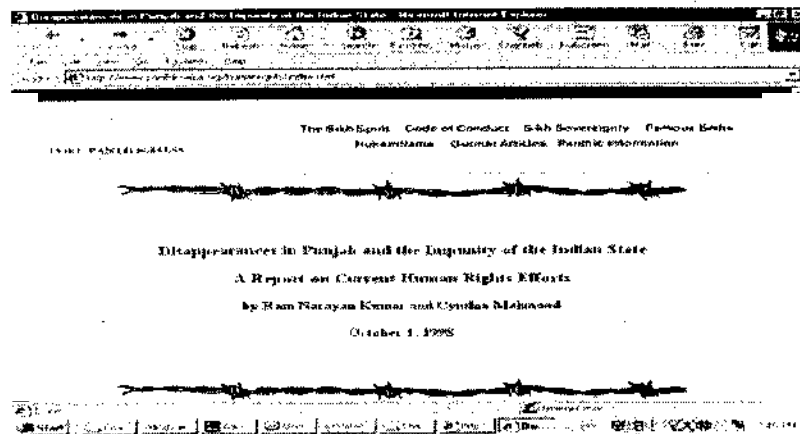


Figure 6.39. Fort Panth Khalsa Web Site: October 1998 Human Rights Report [<http://www.panthkhalsa.org/humanrights/index/html>]

This site is similar to several others, in its inclusion of a large gallery of photographs that contain images of graphic torture and police brutality. Clicking on a thumbnail under the header 'Graphic Tales of Torture' enlarges the image to full size that dominates the entire page. Some of the photo captions include 'Tortured Gurusikh who was boiled alive' and 'Tortured Gurusikh burned by a hot iron.' The explicitly-detailed, colored photographs are disturbing in their intensity and viewing them is a difficult task (see Figures 5.40 and 5.41).

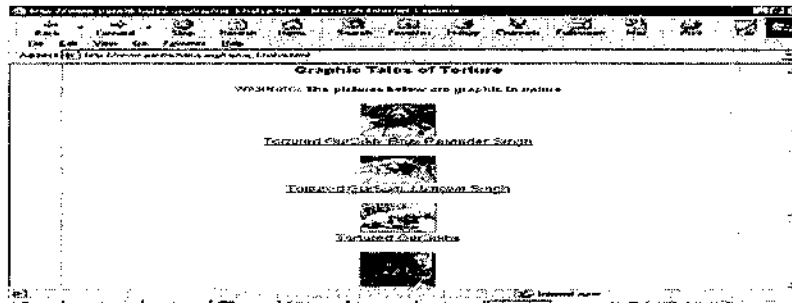


Figure 6.40. Fort Panth Khalsa Web Site: Torture Victims I
[http://www.panthkhalsa.org/raj_rajkhalsa.html]

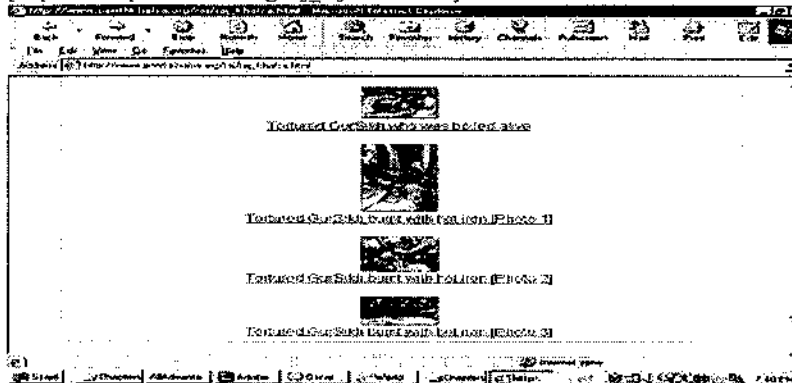


Figure 6.41. Fort Panth Khalsa Web Site: Torture Victims II
[http://www.panthkhalsa.org/raj_rajkhalsa.html]

The Fort Panth Khalsa web site is uncluttered and contains a wealth of information on Sikh religious issues. Ostensibly, its objective is to inform viewers on the religious and political aspects of Sikhism. However, although the site claims in its

mission statement to 'not have any political affiliations or allegiances to any individual, group or Jatha except to the *Khalsa Panth* (Sikh Nation),' several factors indicate that it may, in fact, be administered by a faction or a member of the Babbar Khalsa organization. Some of these indicators include the site's noticeable preoccupation with Sikh orthodoxy and the fact that several of the martyrs portrayed were members of various branches of the fundamentalist organization.

The site contains numerous hypertext links to external sites and information that support its separatist position. It attempts to be rational and authoritative in its portrayal of the Sikh struggle and the political situation in the Punjab. However, its adoption of highly-colored, visibly-biased language that frequently include phrases such as 'Indian tyrants' and 'fascist Indian government' does much to undermine its authority and further highlights its militant ethos.

Khalistan.net (<http://www.khalistan.net>)

The Khalistan.net web site is a relatively elaborate site that includes numerous subpages that contain detailed information and colorful graphics. As Figure 6.42 illustrates, the home page opens to a world map, across which the phrase 'Khalistan: The New Global reality' is emblazoned in blue and yellow. Below this, a red Ik-Oankar symbol is framed by blue borders. Additionally, the symbols of two Khandas and globes are positioned on each side of the page.



Figure 6.42. Khalistan.net Web Site: Home Page
[<http://www.khalistan.net>]

The home page contains a montage of photographs and pictures that represent important figures, symbols, and events in Sikh history, including a map of Khalistan (see bottom middle picture in Figure 6.43).

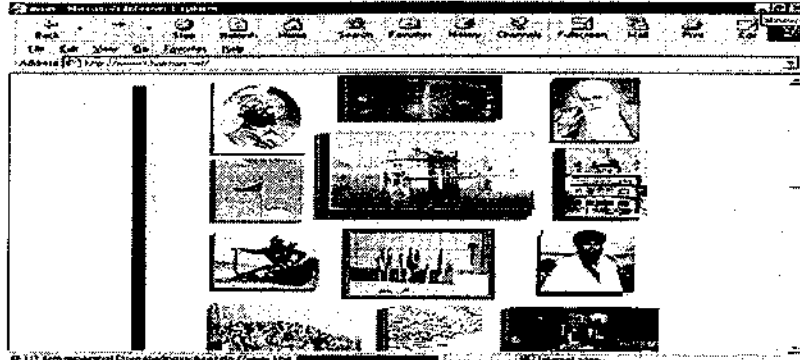


Figure 6.43. Khalistan.net Web Site: Photo Montage
[<http://www.khalistan.net>]

Scrolling down the page leads to a succession of bright saffron buttons that form hypertext links to other pages (see Figure 6.44). The four large buttons are titled: 'Hukamnaama,' 'Council of Khalistan,' 'Daily News From Khalistan,' and 'Khalistan: The Only Solution.' A cluster of smaller buttons appear below these headers. They include: 'Indian State Terrorism,' 'UNPO,' 'Khalsa Raj Party,' 'Human Rights Violations,' 'Operation Blue Star,' 'Sikh Scriptures,' 'Antidefamation Council,' 'Cong. Dan Burton,' 'Sikh History,' 'Sikh Youth,' 'United States Congress,' 'Writers' Column,' 'Miscellaneous,' 'Sikh Leadership,' 'Sikh Scholars,' 'Send Comments,' 'Sikh Martyrs,' 'Vision of the Future,' and, finally, 'New Pages.' All of these hypertext links lead to more detailed information that chronicles various aspects of the Sikh separatist struggle. Various United States Congress resolutions as well as a variety of publicity materials such as articles, press releases, and correspondence that pertain to Khalistan are included on the site. A selection of some of the articles includes, 'Is Punjab (Khalistan) economically viable?,' 'Sikhs are Sikhs and not Hindus: A Separate Religion and Identity,' and 'Collapse of Brahminist Empire.'

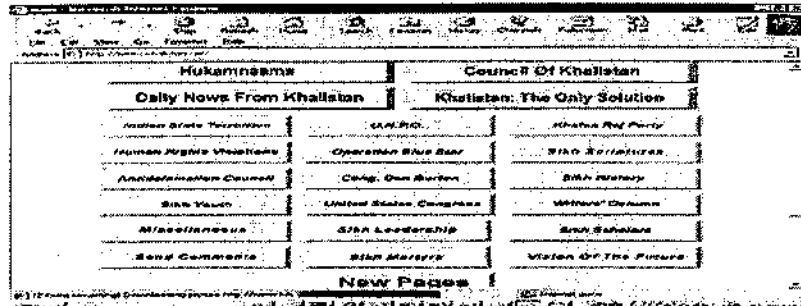


Figure 6.44. Khalistan.net Web Site: Hypertext Links
 [http://www.Khalistan.net]

Clicking on the 'Operation Blue Star' button leads to a series of articles and photographs that recount events surrounding the Indian army's invasion of the Golden Temple. Figure 6.45, for example, shows smiling Indian army personnel standing in front of a badly burned Akal Takht. The caption above the photograph (which is not visible here) states: 'Attack on the heart of Sikhism.'



Figure 6.45. Khalistan.net Web Site: Destruction of the Akal Takht
 [http://www.Khalistan.net/obs.htm]

The link 'Indian State Terrorism' opens to another page that contains several other hypertext links to books, articles, and photographs that graphically illustrate some of India's human rights violations. Figure 6.46 represents a page entitled 'Glimpses of Genocide' that provides explicit colored photographs of victims of both the Delhi riots and of police torture.



Figure 6.46. Khalistan.net Web Site: Glimpses of Genocide
[<http://www.khalistan.net/genocide.htm>]

Below the main group of saffron buttons, a paragraph of text states: 'Welcome! Thanks for visiting Khalistan, the New Global Reality. This site is dedicated to the Khalsa Panth, and to the men and women who have laid down their lives to uphold the principles of freedom, justice, and righteousness, and for the liberation of Khalistan' [<http://www.khalistan.net>]. Beneath this, an animated marquee with the slogan 'Wahe Guru ji Ka Khalsa! Wahe Guru Ji Ke Fateh. Khalistan Zindabad!' (Sikh proclamations meaning, 'The Khalsa belongs to God and to God alone belongs the victory,' 'Long live Khalistan!') rotates on the page.²² The site further maintains that, 'Khalistan.Net is a non-profit Sikh Nation's cyber-site, projecting the vision of the future for the Khalsa Panth into the next millennium' [<http://www.khalistan.net>].

Until recently, the Khalistan.net home page opened to a graphic portrait of a bleeding Punjab.²³ While this has since been replaced with a world atlas, the bleeding Punjab icon (deep red on a bright saffron background) is employed in several places throughout the site (see Figures 5.47 and 5.48).

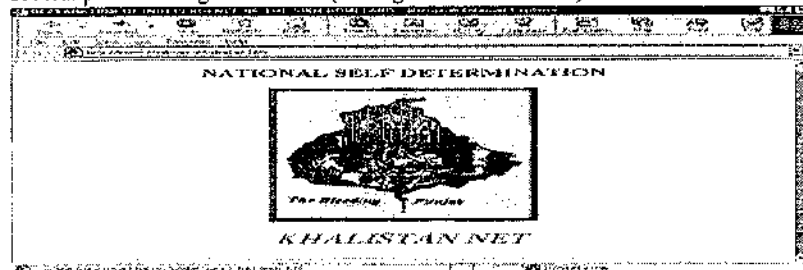


Figure 6.47. Khalistan.net Web Site: Burning Punjab Symbol
[<http://www.khalistan.net/solution.htm>]

Incidentally, a forthcoming section on 'Khalistani cuisine' and 'Khalistani turbans' is also included on the site (see Figure 6.48).



Figure 6.48. Khalistan.net Web Site: Khalistani Cuisine & Turban
[<http://www.khalistan.net/misc.htm>]

As may be expected from the site's name, the Khalistan.net site contains a large volume of information relating to the Khalistan movement and has several hypertext links to external sources of information. While it is not given to as many excesses as the Burning Punjab site, it nevertheless retains some of the latter's soapbox-like quality. Like several of the other sites examined, the tone and language employed is flagrantly anti-Indian with much space accorded to highlighting 'Indian State Terror' and the 'Torture and Genocide of the Sikhs.' This is a site that makes no effort to hide its underlying agenda and strategically uses graphic nationalistic symbols (such as the bleeding Punjab icon) to trigger a powerful emotional response. The site's motivations are patently transparent - it is a site of cyber resistance, single-mindedly dedicated to the creation of a sovereign state of Khalistan.

Cyber-Symbolism and Cyber-Nationalism

As certain authors (Brunn and Cottle 1997; Jackson and Purcell 1997) observe, the adoption of symbolism confers authority and legitimacy on political communication, and the Khalistan web sites examined thus far illustrate this point well. All of the sites (to varying degrees) make use of symbols such as the Khanda, Nishan Sahib, and Ik-Oanker in order to carve out a space that is palpably and intrinsically 'Sikh.' Additionally, national colors such as bright saffron and blue, and common Sikh salutations such as '*Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh,*' are employed to enhance this sense of 'Sikh-ness.' Most significantly, the symbolism associated with the territorial Punjabi homeland is also readily apparent on all of these sites.

According Jackson and Purcell, 'Cyberspace technology offers a toolbox to communicators who wish to send out a specific version of the truth. Through the strategic use of technology, the message can be made *more authoritative, more legitimate, more correct*' (1997, 236-7 [emphasis mine]). For diasporan groups in general, and for separatist diasporan movements in particular, the 'truths,' myths and symbols of homeland take on epic proportions. The authoritative definition of space on the Internet thus serves to make a place become familiar and unambiguous and strengthens the viewer's perception of, and ties to, that place.²⁴ Questions such as 'What is the Punjab?' or 'Where is the Punjab?' are, in essence, settled by the web designer's interpretation and authorship of place. In many of these web sites, 'Sikh history,' 'Sikh culture,' and a 'Sikh homeland' become synonymous with 'Punjabi history,' 'Punjabi culture,' and a 'Punjabi homeland.' Moreover, groups and individuals that operate these Khalistan web sites are aware that symbols of a Punjabi motherland invoke a deep longing for home and that these nostalgic feelings have the potential of translating into tangible support for the Khalistan movement. Many of these sites employ a powerful iconography of homeland centered on graphic pictures of a violated Punjab and a tyrannized Punjabi, *i.e.*, Sikh people, in order to promulgate their agenda. Illustrative of this, is the Burning Punjab site, which explicitly invokes the image of a subjugated Punjabi homeland that needs to be restored to its former glory. Another example is the Khalistan.net site that contains icons of a map of the Punjab enveloped in dripping blood.

While the promotion of new imagery is important in creating and projecting a sense of place, as illustrated by images of Khalistan maps and currency and references of 'Khalistani cuisine' and Khalistani turbans, the preservation of certain other collective memories is equally, if not more, fundamental to the sustenance of a pan-Sikh identity. The politics of memory forms the cornerstone of much of the material provided in these sites. The imagery of certain events must *never* be erased and this is highlighted by the fact that all the sites accord considerable space to Operation Bluestar and the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. These two events have indelibly marked the collective Sikh psyche that manifests itself in the representation of the brutality of Indian state repression in these web sites. Graphic pictorials of an obliterated Akal Takht, brutally tortured political detainees, and women and children rendered husbandless, fatherless, and homeless in the wake of anti-Sikh violence, serve to ensure that events of 1984 will never, and *should* never, be forgotten.²⁵ Eyewitness accounts, human rights organizational reports, and other scholarly testimonials are also heavily relied upon to further reinforce the importance of remembering.

Many of these sites use these collective memories as a springboard for political mobilization. The sites enjoin Sikhs of the global diaspora to join in the struggle against Indian 'Brahminical tyranny' and create a refuge for Sikhs, the Sikh religion, and Punjabi culture. By framing the Khalistan issue, in terms of providing a safe haven for Sikhs around the world (many of whom are increasingly marginalised and alienated from mainstream society in the western countries in which they live) there

is an attempt to fashion a pan-Sikh solidarity that is not bounded by geography or physical territoriality.

The ability to access common information and interact with fellow Sikhs across the globe has certain implications with regard to the creation of a global Sikh consciousness. First the notion that Sikhs are cut off from each other is gradually beginning to diminish. There is now a sense that although they are separated territorially, in terms of the exchange of information and ideas, the ability for rapid and inexpensive communication has shrunk the geographic space between them. Second, this type of transnational communication will have a corresponding psychological effect. Sikhs will increasingly view themselves *first* as members of the Sikh community, rather than as citizens of the territorial state in which they reside. Additionally, because many diasporan members of the second-generation have little knowledge about the political developments of the homeland, such sites provide many separatist groups an opportunity to present their version of history while promoting their particular brand of nationalism. The Internet thus provides a space in which elites can simultaneously construct a pan-Sikh identity and disseminate this new-found consciousness. Most importantly, this new space also constitutes what the diaspora collectively remembers as 'the Punjab'. The complexities of the representation of the homeland are, therefore, rooted in the pragmatic exigencies of separatist politics.

Conclusion

In 1992, just before the explosion of the World Wide Web, Benedict Anderson presciently argued that political participation in exile movements would increasingly take on the form of 'long distance nationalism' - that is nationalism waged via e-mail and fax modems. Anderson was vocal in his condemnation of this brand of quasi-participatory politics, in which a person's 'political participation is directed towards an imagined *heimat* in which he does not live, where he pays no taxes, where he cannot be arrested, where he will not be brought before the courts - and where he does not vote: in effect, a politics without responsibility' (1992, 19). While he softens his stance in a subsequent essay, and concedes that '[I]t would obviously be a mistake to assume that long-distance nationalism is necessarily extremist,' he goes on to state that '...in general, today's long-distance nationalism strikes one as a probably menacing portent for the future' (1994, 327). Whether one agrees or disagrees with Anderson's denunciation, it is apparent that he was accurate in his initial assessment that nationalism has now entered into a new geographical phase.

As Anderson (1991) claimed in his famous earlier work, the emergence of nationalism was one of the most important epiphenomena of industrial capitalism. The construction of single mother tongues, marked territorial borders, and cohesive mass populations, evolved as a direct consequence of the development of a national press (Anderson 1991, 37-46). Print media allowed people to move out of the local into the national by enabling them to imagine fellowship beyond the kith and kin

communities of small villages. The commodification of the printed word, in Anderson's analysis, constituted *the* essential building block on which the modern nation state was founded. This idea prompted Ulrich Beck's assertion that 'nations are therefore nations of people influenced by the same newspapers' (quoted in Luke 1997, 72). If, as Anderson contends, 'print-literacy already made possible the imagined community floating in homogeneous, empty time' (1991, 116), then computer literacy allows for a hitherto unimagined type of 'imagined community,' one which is characterized by a 'plurality of worlds' and 'multiple realities.' In terms of modern-day nationalism, a parallel may be drawn, therefore, between the emergence of print capitalism and the development of the Internet.²⁶ Luke captures the essence of this situation when he states that '[A] new technics of communication coupled with expansive markets and cadres of nation-building realities all generated the synergies of modernizing nation-states. Digital media, in turn, now are pulling many people out of the national and into the transnational and translocal nodalities of the global' (1998, 18-9).

Beginning with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, people have predominantly lived in territorial collectives under the governmental auspices of national states encompassed by a nationalizing cultural identity (Luke 1998, 5). In this century, however, the status quo of the state is increasingly being challenged by the Internet and the transformative power of its technologies. As Luke claims, '[T]ime and space, capital and labor, power and knowledge, even the market and the state are not natural givens that authority holds in constant check. Instead, they are forces that must be reshaped constantly as historical constructs' (1998, 2). The Internet constitutes such a 'reshaping' force and has significant implications for the way in which resistance movements operate in the future.

The potential of the Internet to radically empower marginalised groups, or alternatively to further perpetuate the hegemony enjoyed by dominant forces, has been at the heart of considerable debate and generated a significant body of literature (Shapiro 1999; Eisenstein 1998; Holderness 1997; Žižek 1998; Carter 1997; Kellner 1997; Loader 1997; Luke 1997; Poster 1997; Wise 1997; Barrett 1996, 220-8). The 'utopian' view emphasizes the decentralized, non-hierarchical, democratic, citizen-empowering aspect²⁷ of the Net while the 'dystopian' view fears technocratic domination and stresses its ability to harness global power for the major corporations. The divide between the utopians versus the dystopians or what I refer to as the 'cyber-optimists' versus the 'cyber-pessimists' is rooted in issues of power and accessibility. Cyber-optimists such as Nicholas Negroponte (1999, 1995), Howard Rheingold (1993), Alvin Toffler (1999), and Bill Gates (1995) view these technologies as inherently empowering and egalitarian. In the vision of these 'Digerati',²⁸ cyberspatial technologies constitute the panacea for a wide range of social, economic, and political problems. In contrast, cyber-pessimists such as Jean Baudrillard (1997, 1983) and John Streck (1997) fear that these same technologies have the potential to widen the gap between the information haves and have-nots and reinforce hegemonic values even further. Moreover, the Internet is essentially

still a largely Anglophone world,²⁹ and many that comprise the latter group feel that '[A]s virtual reality comes to mirror the real world, cyberspace simply becomes another arena for the ongoing struggle for wealth, power, and political influence' (Resnick 1997, 53).

How do these two views translate into the context of ethnonationalist politics? There are two divergent outcomes. The first is that oppressed peoples become increasingly empowered to challenge the hegemony of coercive regimes in various territorially bounded states. Thus, there is the potential for the emergence of bottom-up, grass roots movements (*ala* the Zapatistas), in which otherwise marginalised peoples are afforded a voice to air their grievances, communicate with coethnics and sympathizers around the world, and make their case to the international community. Conversely, given that from a global perspective, only a privileged minority now enjoy access to on-line services, ethnonationalist movements also have the potential of being increasingly elite-driven (and in some cases diaspora-driven) and waged from the top down.³⁰ The digital phase of nationalism might then enable elite blocs to impose their own particularistic sets of rules and interpretations, as a result of continuously operating the ethnonationalist websites and controlling the kinds of information disseminated in cyberspace.

While a wholesale celebration of the Internet as an agent of liberation and empowerment is unwarranted and premature at this point, it needs to be acknowledged that it possess significant socially transformative capabilities. As a tool that may be employed strategically by marginalised groups to sustain counter-hegemonic discourses and challenge established systems of domination, the Internet has the power to alter the course of resistance movements. For diasporan resistance groups (who are generally wealthier than their native counterparts and have access to such technologies) in particular, cyberspatial technologies allow for a quick and intimate link to homeland politics. In conclusion, although diasporas have a long history of being involved in the political fortunes of their homelands, technological advances have and will continue to exponentially expand their scope of influence.

Notes

1. Margaret Wertheim provides a fascinating history of the way in which the notion of 'space' has been conceptualised through the ages. See, *The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace: A History of Space from Dante to the Internet* (1999).

2. An interesting early analysis is provided by Amit S. Rai, in his work on the creation and maintenance of a Hindu diasporic consciousness. See 'India On-Line: Electronic Bulletin Boards and the Construction of a Diasporic Hindu Identity,' in *Diaspora*, 4, 1, 1995.

3. Term attributed to French social theorist Jean Baudrillard. According to Baudrillard, '[A]bstraction today is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no

longer precedes the map nor survives it. Henceforth it is the map that precedes the territory... (1983, 2). In Baudrillard's conception, the shift from the real to the hyperreal occurs when representation gives way to simulation. In this articulation, cyberspace marks the end of the symbolic distance between the metaphoric and the real. It ultimately abandons the 'real' for the 'hyperreal' by presenting an increasingly real simulation of the world. Thus, the boundary between the image, or simulation, and reality implodes and the image or simulation becomes the thing itself. For a further exploration of Baudrillard's ideas, see Mark Nunes (1997, 1995) or go to [<http://pomo.freesevers.com/Baudrillard.html>].

4. Phrase used by Spalter and Moran (1999, 2)

5. Gibson's novel generated a new genre of fiction – Cyberpunk - a science fiction sub-genre that blends high technology with outlaw culture. An example of this type of fiction is Hafner and Markoff's (1995) *Cyberpunk: Outlaws and Hackers on the Computer Frontier*.

6. The origins of the present Internet may be traced to 1969, the height of the Cold War, when the United States Department of Defense designed its precursor ARPANET (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network). ARPANET was intended to provide a secure (*i.e.*, insulated from nuclear attack) medium in which information could be exchanged between computers in a mechanism not dependent on the physical movement of magnetic tape along freeways. Despite its governmental origins, the Internet has no center and is considered an anarchic space. For a comprehensive account of the Internet's history, see Barrett (1996, 17-33), Giese (1996) or go to [<http://info.isoc.org/guest/zakon/Internet/History/HIT.html>].

7. Phrase coined by Fisher, Margolis and Resnick (1996, 400).

8. The feeling that the world is rapidly shrinking is further captured by IBM's ubiquitous tag line 'big solutions for a small planet.'

9. Term used by Kitchin (1998, 403).

10. A significant body of research (particularly in the sub-field of Cultural Studies) has recently emerged that examines some of the sociopolitical implications of cyberspace. See, for example, the Fall 1997 issue of *New Political Science* whose theme centered on 'The Politics of Cyberspace,' eds. Chris Toulouse and Timothy W. Luke. Also articles in the following edited volumes: Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash, eds., *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World* (1999); Brian D. Loader, ed., *Cyberspace Divide: Equality, Agency and Policy in the Information Society* (1998); David Holmes, ed., *Virtual Politics: Identity and Community in Cyberspace* (1997); Brian D. Loader, ed., *The Governance of Cyberspace: Politics, Technology and Global Structuring* (1997); Lance Strate, Ronald Jacobson, and Stephanie B. Gibson, *Communication and Cyberspace: Social Interaction in an Electronic Environment* (1996); Susan Leigh Star ed. *The Cultures of Computing* (1995).

11. As of March 2000, it was estimated that the total world population of Internet users equaled 304.36 million. Regional online usage breaks down as follows: Canada and the United States (136.86m), Europe (83.35m), Asia/Pacific (68.9m), South America (10.74m), Africa (2.58m), and the Middle East (1.90 m) [http://www.nua.ie/surveys/how_many_online/index.html]. However, even a cursory

glance reveals the exponential pattern of the Internet's expansion. To keep accurate track of online users, any census needs to be updated daily or weekly not monthly or yearly.

12. This phenomenon is illustrated by the advertisements for Indian governmental schemes and policies directed to Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) that routinely appear in any given issue of *India Abroad* (a diasporan weekly newspaper).

13. A twist on the term 'ethnocidal imaginaries' used by Appadurai (1998, 243)

14. Term used by Spalter and Moran (1999, 3).

15. For interesting discussions that parallels some of the points made in this section, see Aleksandar Boskovic's essay 'Hyperreal Serbia' in *Digital Delirium* (Kroker and Kroker 1997, 143) and Mamoun Fandy's (1999) work on 'Hyperreal Kuwait'.

16. The author has compiled a list that is not included in this article. This list comprising 56 links but is by no means exhaustive but includes most of the main Sikh web sites.

17. For an interesting discussion on the dilemmas of 'doing ethnography' on the Web, see, David Hakken's *Cyborgs@Cyberspace* (1999).

18. Information for these descriptions is derived from W. H. McLeod's *Historical Dictionary of Sikhism* (1995) and the Sikhs.org web site: [<http://www.Sikhs.org/khanda.htm>].

19. This is a graphic of a bumper sticker that is distributed by the Council of Khalistan.

20. Given the volume of spelling and grammatical errors on this site, I only highlight the most obvious.

21. Again, because of the large number of errors in the original text, I do not highlight errors in the citation.

22. This popular Sikh salutation appears on several other sites as well.

23. The homepage of the Khalistan.Net website opened to a large icon of a bleeding Punjab as recently as December 1998.

24. See Jeganathan's discussion on how a specific sense of 'place' is constructed by the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora (another 'aspirant nation') in 'eelam.com: Place, nation, and Imai-Nation in Cyberspace' (1998).

25. For a study of how collective identities are constructed and reconstructed using electronic technology, see Dona Kolar-Panov's work on a migrant Macedonian/Croatian community in Australia: *Video, War, and the Diasporic Imagination* (1997).

26. Michael W. Giles (1996), for example, compares the communication revolution engendered by Gutenberg's invention of moveable type to the current informational revolution produced by the development of the Internet.

27. Not every one agrees on the value of the power of these technologies to empower all groups equally. Some authors maintain that the power that outré groups have to operate websites and disseminate information is not an entirely positive phenomenon. Michael Whine (1999) argues, for example, that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) greatly extend the range and scope of extremist/terrorist groups and constitutes a new brand of terrorism.

28. Term coined by Timothy Luke (1997, 125).

29. The author has compiled statistics relating to language use on the Internet which are not included in this article.

30. For a comprehensive analysis of Internet use in the developing world, see John A. Daly, 'Measuring Impacts of the Internet in the Developing World,' in *Information Impacts Magazine*, May 1999.

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Vilayati Paisa: some reflections on the potential of diaspora finance in the socio-economic development of Indian Punjab

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There is now considerable literature which identifies the various mechanisms through which diaspora communities maintain their links with their homeland. These linkages take a variety of forms and often lead to the development of extensive networks of political, cultural and economic interactions. The rapid development in the enabling technologies of globalisation has led to further strengthening of such transnational linkages. The present paper examines the changing nature of Punjabi diasporic linkages and assesses their impact on economic and social well being. It then attempts to evaluate the attempts by Indian authorities to persuade diaspora based Non Resident Indians (NRIs) to invest in their homeland especially within the context of newly liberalised economic environment. Finally, the paper takes a case study of the Punjab state governments attempt to promote investment by diaspora Punjabis especially from those settled in European and North American countries.

Introduction: Research Project on Diasporic Linkages

This paper is part of a broader research programme aimed at identifying the various forms, channels, networks, mechanisms and policies which are leading to the widening and deepening of the diasporic economic linkages developed over the past forty years or so. A major focus of the present study is to consider how the transnational Punjabi community, particularly the business community and the Punjab state are responding to the changed economic and business environment and how this, in turn, is affecting capital (and technology) transfers. It considers how the state government is promoting Punjab as the right location in terms of its (a) infrastructure, (b) incentives and (c) political leadership. This aspect of the research was undertaken through examining promotional literature and policies and through in-depth interviews with senior civil servants, political leaders of Punjab and NRI investors during the summer of 1997. This fieldwork essentially covered four main areas; (a) the administration's perceptions relating to the potential role transnational Punjabi NRIs are/could play in Punjab; (b) initiatives taken to promote NRI investments; (c) nature of overseas marketing and networking and (d) examples of effectiveness of policies. The interviews with senior civil servants followed a similar structure, with an added emphasis on commitment at the policy implementation stage. The UK-based aspect of the

research project is still ongoing and examines the changing perceptions and attitudes among the Punjabi community, especially the business community's potential for undertaking investment projects in the Punjab state of India. An attempt was made to ascertain whether the decision to invest or not to invest was influenced by the nature of the Punjab state's promotional activities, the institutions and networks utilised to market Punjab or whether there are other forms of informal mechanisms, networks or information exchanges which remain important determinants in the decision making process. A major objective is to establish whether the new liberalised environment in Punjab, coupled with extra safeguards and opportunities offered to NRIs, is seen as a significant factor in their investment decision in Punjab.

UK - Punjab Diasporic Linkages

Britain is home to a large - well over a million in number - relatively well settled and well off Indian community. One of the largest group among them comprises the Punjabi community, predominantly Sikhs, who have their origins in the truncated state of Punjab located in India. The main settlement period for this community began in the early 1950s although there is evidence of a substantial presence in the earlier period.¹ In the late 1960s and early 1970s this community was re-invigorated by the arrival of thousands of Asians, including Sikhs, from East Africa. These 'twice migrants' tended to be more educated and have professional or business background. These migrant characteristics were important in consolidating an Asian entrepreneurial culture that eventually led to the development of a vibrant, successful and diversified Asian business sector. The earlier stereotype of the 'Asian corner shop' has now become somewhat outdated with the emergence of very powerful Asian business houses operating in different sectors of the British economy. Asians can now boast their own list of mega rich persons.² And it is not only in the self-made business sector that Asians are doing well. Over the past ten years, Asian representation in politics, media and arts has also become much more visible.³ Furthermore, recent migrations coupled with globalisation processes have led to the emergence of powerful intra-diaspora triangular social and economic networks which are leading to complex hybrid of deterritorialised Punjabi transnational identities.⁴

Although having settled in the UK in large numbers nearly half a century ago, the Punjabi diaspora community have not severed their link with their homeland of Punjab. Since the majority of the 1950s migrants came from the rural areas, they continued to maintain their links with their villages through regular visits and by sending remittances for further accumulating household assets. These remittances had a profound economic and social impact on the receiving villages.⁵ Other forms of diasporic linkages have included cultural and social exchanges, increasing investments in philanthropic projects and building of political networks. These political networks were further strengthened during the decade after 1984 when Punjab saw, first the emergence, and then the quashing of the Sikh separatist

movement.⁶ Academic research on the nature and evolution of these different forms of diasporic linkages still remains rather limited and yet as technological advances and increased competition make air travel and telecommunications faster and relatively less expensive, these linkages are likely to strengthen, deepen and widen over the next decade.⁷

It is important to recognise that this deepening and widening is facilitated by changes in the economic environment, both in the 'homeland' as well as in the migrant's place of residence. For instance, it is difficult to imagine how many of the new forms of transnational activities would have appeared or could be sustained without the liberalisation of the Indian economy and the general rise in economic prosperity and growing consumerism. For example, economic affluence has now enabled many rural households in Punjab to have access to a telephone line at home and for wealthier household to have access to the Internet. Whilst traditional linkages will continue to be maintained, new forms of transnational activities based around the use of electronic mediation are likely to become more dominant. These include the enhanced role of print and multi-media, especially in e-business and in strengthening of 'advocacy networks' especially among pro-Khalistan and Human Rights groups. Figure 1 below attempts to capture the major categories and the variety inherent in these emergent networks. It is worth emphasising here, that whereas previously the links with the homeland were mainly uni-directional, that is, diaspora communities attempted to maintain links with their villages back home, nowadays the links are very much multi-directional and circular. In this process, strong intra-diaspora networks are beginning to emerge and migrants no longer see themselves as mere sojourners, who will eventually return to their homeland.⁸

Figure 1: Examples of Linkages within the Punjabi Transnational Community

Economic	Social/Cultural	Religious	Political
<p>Family and Personal Networks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tangible Remittances - Income - gifts - services <p>Social Remittances (Intangibles)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ideas - behaviour patterns - identities - social capital <p>Government/Institutional/Regulatory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilities for NRIs - trading opportunities - financial services - property transactions/services - educational services - Asian e – business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cultural tourism - sports exchanges - musical exchanges - wedding and bridal services - video/audio/CD exchanges - print media - arts/theatre <p>Community/ Village level networks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - philanthropic projects and charitable donations - hospitals - educational establishments - village infrastructure - village sports tournaments - Pinglawaar/Guru Arnaar Dhas Mission - Village Websites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - visiting religious leaders - visiting Shais - visiting Kiran/Dhadi /yathas - video/audio cassettes/CDs - live media broadcasts from Amritsar/ Anandpur Sahib on important religious festivals - Websites on Sikhism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - overseas branches of main political parties and other political organisations - links with factional groups eg pro Khalistan groups - Human Rights Organisations - Development of 'Advocacy Networks' with other NGOs

Fiscal Crisis, Liberalisation and the Promotion of Foreign Direct Investment

The Indian economy grew at a rate of about 5 per cent per annum during the 1980s. Despite this growth the country faced an acute economic crisis, reflecting domestic problems but primarily external ones relating to pressure on balance of payments. Major domestic problems related to inflation, which peaked at 17 per cent in 1991, and a central government fiscal deficit that stood at an all time high of 8.4 per cent of GDP. On the external front, foreign exchange reserves continued to fall - plunging to \$1.2 billion - just enough to pay for two weeks of imports. The current account deficit widened to almost \$8 billion (2.6 per cent of GDP). It was inevitable that such symptoms should result in loss of confidence by international investors and the debasing of India's credit risk ranking. Given such conditions India had to be financially supported by the IMF and the World Bank, but only on the condition that a Stabilisation and Structural Adjustment economic package was implemented. Faced with such economic difficulties, a new government, which came into power in June 1991, had little option but to ask the IMF and World Bank to bail it out. Thus, given these bleak economic conditions, India had little choice but to embark on a liberalisation and globalisation drive. This whole process was to be managed by an able and World Bank experienced Finance Minister, Manmohan Singh.

The new statement on Industrial Policy, announced in July 1991, marks a radical departure in India's post-independent industrial strategy. A crucial element of the new industrial policy was the dismantling of the archaic licensing policy regime that placed much emphasis on regulating entry and exit of firms into an industry. The licensing or permit *raj*, which had dominated independent India, was finally abolished through the following significant changes:

- [a] removal of industrial licensing from all but a few industries (which only accounted for 15 per cent of the value added in manufacturing;
- [b] reduction in the number of industries reserved for the public sector to only six;
- [c] elimination of separate permission for investment and expansion under the MRPT Act;
- [d] liberalisation of policies for drugs and pharmaceutical industries;
- [e] revision of the natural minerals policy and amendment of the Mines and Mineral Development Act to open the sector to private and foreign investment and
- [f] extension of the RBI-based automatic approval policy for foreign investment to mining, subject to a limit of 50 per cent on foreign equity.

An important component of India's 'open door' liberalisation policy has been to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). It was argued that besides providing much needed capital investment and employment, FDI would lead to the import of latest technology and thus promote efficiency through enhanced competition in both the domestic and international sectors. The Ministry of Industry initiated a number of measures and set up specialist units to promote and facilitate foreign

direct investment for overseas investors and to streamline and speed up approvals procedures. Recent government figures provide a short overview of the government's achievements in terms of attracting Foreign Direct Investment. The top four investors are USA, UK, Korea and Japan although Mauritius pushes the latter three to third, fourth and fifth position – see the interesting explanation for this below. The major sectors attracting FDI from 01/08/1991 to 01/07/2000 were Energy (29.38%), Telecommunications (17.08%), Transportation Industry (8.04%), Metallurgical Industries (6.30%), Chemicals (5.40%), Electrical Equipments (7.28%), Service sector (6.07% and Miscellaneous Others (21.45%).⁹

Available data shows that there still remains a large gap between approvals and actual investment. Many blame the persistence of bureaucratic hurdles for this but others, more optimistically, point to the long gestation period of some of the large infrastructural projects. Power stations and telecommunications networks take several years to complete and investment comes in several tranches. Eventually, it is argued, approvals will match actual inflows. Although the major investors are American and European, Japan and South Korea are also becoming important investors especially in the auto and consumer electronic sectors. The ranking of Mauritius as one of the largest investor is interesting and provides convincing evidence for those commentators who believe that since liberalisation Indian businessmen have used Mauritius's status as a tax haven its dual tax avoidance agreement with India, to convert 'black' money into 'white'.¹⁰ Such investments, they argue, therefore cannot be regarded as fresh inflows. As far as sectoral distribution is concerned, as stated previously, a bulk of the FDI is flowing into the energy and telecommunications sectors.

There is now ample literature that examines both the achievements and major constraints of the liberalisation process of India.¹¹ Most commentators seem to be unanimous in their view that the 1991 reforms did provide a short-term spurt to economic activity, but India's inability to maintain the momentum has led to sluggish growth in more recent years. There appears to be considerable difficulty in kick-starting 'second-generation' reforms. There is also now a growing literature that evaluates the impact of foreign direct investment on Indian economic performance, the sectoral composition of such FDI and the bureaucratic hurdles still constraining FDI. Literature on assessing the role of NRIs in inward FDI, is however, rather scanty and still limited to journalistic treatment.

Growing economic compulsions and the search for the 'Holy Grail' of Diaspora Finance

Until recently the Indian authorities never saw their diaspora communities in a positive light. If anything they were often regarded as a thorn in the side as many of these communities and the organisations that represented them were very critical of India's domestic and foreign economic and political policies. Many migrants were also perceived in wholly negative terms, as part of an unfortunate 'brain drain' over which India was powerless to act. At other times, these migrants

were perceived as exiles who should somehow feel sorry for having jumped ship. These patronising and arrogant attitudes towards NRIs have now begun to change.¹²

The Indian government's initial attempts to promote NRI investment dates back to the 1970s. As far back as 1978, the R. N. Malhotra Committee set up by the Finance Ministry of India had recommended that positive measures were needed to attract NRI remittances but there appeared to be no concerted effort made to implement them until Indira Gandhi returned as Prime Minister in 1980. Under her direction, a number of initiatives by the Reserve Bank of India resulted in an increased inflow of remittances. The increased pre-occupation with the Punjab militant movement in the post-1984 period and the ongoing 'Kashmir issue' made further improvement in the economic relations with the diaspora rather problematic. If anything, government relations with overseas Sikhs based in Europe and North America went from bad to worse. In the political and diplomatic spheres, however, Indo-British relations improved considerably with both governments concluding a number of treaties and agreements to deal with alleged overseas-funded terrorism in Punjab and Kashmir.¹³

Despite the continuing political problems, a number of other developments, beyond the control of India, were instrumental in persuading India that it needed to have a much more positive and pro-active policy towards its diaspora communities especially given their tremendous potential in the future economic development of India. An early change in attitude is associated with the changing international aid environment. Countries such as India, which had relied heavily on soft loans from multilateral and bilateral aid agencies, were badly affected by cut back in aid budgets and hence their access to vital foreign exchange. Diminishing aid budgets also coincided with the onset of the world recession and an increase in trade protectionism, especially through the use of non-tariff barriers. This further restricted India's ability to earn foreign exchange. Neither did the Gulf war of 1989 help matters. With thousands of Indian migrants caught in the crossfire and many forced to return home, the income remittance flow, a vital foreign exchange earner, evaporated quickly. Thus to maintain their development expenditure and achieve stated development objectives, India was forced to resort to commercial borrowing which was more expensive, of short-term nature, and more volatile. Further, this period also coincided with the appearance of research literature which talked in glowing terms of the economic success of Indian diaspora communities in different parts of the world but especially so in Europe, North America and in South-east Asian countries.¹⁴ These economic successes were noted not only in business but also in science and technology and in the education sector. Why then could India not utilise the skills, finance and technology offered by these NRIs? How could India tap the assets, both tangible and intangible, of the NRIs and use them to act as catalysts for increasing efficiency and competitiveness?

Finally, this was also a period when researchers emphasised the potential role that overseas based business groups could play in their country of origin. There

was much discussion of the role of Overseas Chinese business groups and networks in contributing to the 'miraculous' success of the coastal regions of China.¹⁵ Even today, Indian policy-makers are fond of making comparisons between the Overseas Chinese communities and their contribution to the inward investment success of China and the potential of the overseas Indian communities to do likewise for India.¹⁶ As I shall argue later, this comparison is rather superficial and misplaced as it fails to recognise the important differences in the composition of the two communities and the fundamental differences in the way in which their diasporas came into being.

As a result of the above factors, India increasingly begins to view NRIs in a different light and started pursuing a number of policies that would enhance India's access to finance, capital, technology and export growth. If, as estimated by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the overseas Indians had investible funds of around \$20.8 billion in 1993, every effort needed to be made to arouse their patriotism and attract these funds.¹⁷ Despite this recognition, however, success in attracting these funds remained limited especially as the Indian economy remained highly regulated until 1991.

Compositions of Migrant Capital Inflows in the 1990s

There are many different types of inflows but for simplicity we can categorise three forms of 'official' inflows of NRI capital. The first type of financial flows is personal or family remittances, sent through either official or 'unofficial' means. These are extremely difficult to estimate but are important in sustaining the bulk of the activities identified in Figure 1.¹⁸ The second form of financial inflow is that which takes advantage of the attractive and risk free return offered on bank deposits. This inflow has been administered by the state controlled Indian banks, which remain under the overall supervision of the Reserve Bank of India. A major incentive offered in recent years has been for NRIs to hold their savings in specially designated NRI bank accounts, variously named as Non Resident or Non-Repatriable Accounts. These accounts offer very attractive rates of interest, usually 2-3 percent above the rate for domestic savers, but in the case of Non-Repatriable deposits, the money deposited cannot be taken back to the NRI's country of residence. There was an appreciable increase in the build up in balances under various schemes in the immediate post-liberalisation period - balances rising from \$13.7 million to \$17.1 million between 1991 and 1995 but as Table 1 below shows these inflows began to slow down thereafter. A fresh impetus to such inflows has been given by the new wave of knowledge worker migration especially to the USA.¹⁹ According to a more recent RBI source, NRI resources make an important contribution to the country's balance of payments. Direct contribution by the NRIs grew four-fold from \$3.6 billion in 1990-1991 to \$14.3 billion in 1999-2000, although there were marked fluctuations in inflows from year to year.²⁰

Table 1: NRI Deposits (US \$ million)

Schemes	1991 (March)	1992 (March)	1993 (March)	1994 (March)	1995 (Feb)
A. FCNR(A)	10,103	9,792	10,617	9,300	7,134
B. NR(E)A	3,588	2,527	2,862	3,590	4,543
C. FCNR(B)	-	-	-	1,075	3,013
D. NR(NR)RD	-	-	610	1,797	2,386
E. FCON	-	-	1	18	7
Total	13,691	12,319	14,090	15,780	17,083

Source: Reserve Bank of India, *Report on Currency and Finance* (various issues).

Note: A. Foreign Currency (Non-Resident) Accounts – FCNR(A)-scheme introduced in November 1975 and completely withdrawn in August 1994.
 B. Non-Resident (External) Rupee Accounts – NR(E)A-introduced in February 1970.
 C. Foreign Currency (Non-Resident) Accounts (Banks) – FCNR(B) – introduced in May 1993.
 D. Non-Resident (Non-Repatriable) Rupee Deposit – NR(NR)RD – introduced in June 1992.
 E. Foreign Currency (Ordinary Non-Repatriable) – FCON – introduced in June 1991 and withdrawn in August 1994.

The third type of NRI inflows comes under the category of NRI Foreign Direct Investment. This is a recent form of inflow since prior to liberalisation there were stringent controls on foreign investment activity, whatever the source. Through a number of policy initiatives and incentive packages, both the Indian government and Indian states compete in attracting NRI investment. The New Industrial Policy statement identified special provisions for attracting NRI investment and investment by Overseas Corporate Bodies (OCBs) owned by NRIs (ie companies in which NRIs hold at least 60 per cent of the equity). The government provided a liberalised policy framework and simplified procedures for approval of NRI investments by both the automatic route and through government approval. As regards the former, the Reserve Bank of India accords automatic approval to all proposals from NRIs and OCBs predominantly owned by them, permitting investment of up to 100 per cent equity in high priority industries. This basically means automatic approval for almost all industries except those still reserved for the public sector. The procedure for clearing such proposals is the same as for other foreign direct investment proposals. Where the proposals do not meet the criteria for the

automatic route they are referred for government approval. The government has pledged to approve both 100 per cent equity participation and 100 equity investment with full repatriation benefits. Furthermore, 100 per cent equity investment in industries reserved for the small sector was now also permitted, provided that the export obligation criterion ie export of 75 per cent of the total production, was met. Details of the trend in such inflows and the sector-wise distribution of NRI proposed projects are difficult to obtain although whatever data is available shows that textiles, food processing and services, including health services, are favoured areas of NRI investment. Table 2 below shows the very apparent discrepancy between FDI and NRI inflows. As can be seen from the table, both total FDI inflows and NRI inflows as a percentage of total flows began to tail off after 1996.

Table 2: Statement of Actual Inflows of Foreign Direct Investment Including NRI Investment
(Rs Billion)

Actual inflow of FDI	1992	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Government's Approval	4.8	15.0	38.7	57.6	101.3	82.4	61.9
RBI Automatic Approval	0.5	3.6	.3	6.2	8.7	6.8	7.6
NRI Schemes	1.5	11.1	19.7	20.6	10.4	3.6	3.5
Total	6.8	29.7	63.7	84.4	120.4	92.1	73

Source: Indian Investment Centre, September 2000

Rhetoric versus Reality in attracting NRI Investment

Earlier I intimated that the Indian policy-maker's comparison of NRIs with the Overseas Chinese community was overplayed and misplaced. One can understand the hype, given that the NRIs do represent quite a significant and under-exploited pool of investment funds, estimated to vary between \$130 to \$200 billion. The Overseas Chinese population number around 55 million, concentrated mainly in the east and south-east Asian region, compared with the Indian at around 10-12 million. But the total income of overseas Indians is estimated at around £202.3 billion compared with that of the overseas Chinese at around £500 billion.²¹

There are a number of reasons one can identify to explain the lukewarm interest shown by NRIs towards investment in India and Punjab. Firstly, the Indian and Punjabi NRI community is both highly politicised and fractious and therefore the carrot of financial incentives alone may be inadequate.²² Secondly, unlike in China, India has a well established, politically connected business community, some of whom had a strong vested interest in opposing the entry of NRIs, as for example, Lord Paul's experiences in acquiring Escorts demonstrate.²³

Thirdly, although the Indian and Punjabi diaspora may appear large in number, the number of successful industrialists are still small. A perusal of the UK Asian rich list reveals that majority of Asians are still involved in relatively low technology businesses. If we exclude the four leading Asians, the next top 15 are mainly in trading, fashion retailing and food manufacturing where value added is small. Most are still finding their feet in the British market where sporting an 'ethnic' badge helps them in finding a niche market. Overseas Indians have been more successful in professions and at middle levels of management and business. Thus, although there may well be a large number of individuals owning \$5 million or more, the number owning large business groups is small, especially compared with the well established Overseas Chinese business groups and networks. Besides, those who have invested back home until recently, tended to invest in shares, real estate and bank deposits. Fourthly, the attitude of the Indian government, especially in granting approvals for projects has been more obstructionist than helpful. A number of potential investors shy away from becoming caught in a web of corruption in order to gain secondary clearances for such things as water, environment, power or port facilities at different levels of the bureaucracy. Finally, a number of NRIs have advocated further improvements in communications with the government. Some have tried to persuade the Indian government to allow appointment of nominees to Parliament or to the Advisory Council for Industry, to better represent the interests of the overseas Indians. Others have argued for the immediate granting of dual citizenship and a right to vote in Indian elections especially for those who have chosen to continue to hold Indian passports. In fact the last Union budget went quite a long way in granting some of the above concessions. As announced in the budget, the Home Minister issued a card for Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) which could be purchased for US\$1000 and which would be valid for 20 years. This development raise two important points. Firstly, given that the PIOs are defined as persons who at any time have held Indian passports; or whose parents, grandparents or great-grandparents were born in India or permanently resident in the country; or spouses of citizens of India or PIOs, this widens the net *via-a-vis* potential NRI investors to four generations, estimated at around 15 million. Secondly, the card represents an important step towards concession of full dual citizenship to foreign passport holders and grants the card-holders the same status and rights as the NRIs including any future extension of such rights.²⁴

Given the above constraints and growing concerns over the level of future exchange reserves in the wake of post-nuclear sanctions, the Indian government has recently attempted to lure NRI savings through the successful bribe of an attractive interest rate on holding Resurgent India Bonds.²⁵

Punjab's Promotion of Diaspora Finance

Like the Indian government, the Punjab government has also attempted to encourage Punjabis settled abroad to invest in Punjab. Since a majority of the overseas migrants came from rural areas and from an agricultural background, until recently the main forms of income remittance was either of personal form to accumulate household assets or to build family owned businesses in nearby towns. Many also took advantage of the Reserve Bank of India's favourable schemes to attract Non Resident Indian (Non Repatriable) bank deposits. The main forms of non-farm remittance utilisation appeared to be the buying of real estate - plots - in a nearby city, investment in transport and trucking business, hotels, opening up of cold storage units and more rarely, in industrial workshops.²⁶ Until the 1990s, instances of investment in small to medium size manufacturing units were very rare. This partly reflected the stringent regulation on overseas investment and partly the nascent nature of Punjabi entrepreneurial activities overseas. It is ironical that when Punjabi businesses did begin to flourish overseas, especially in the UK in the 1980s, investment in Punjab could not be seriously contemplated because of the greater risk and uncertainty associated with the intensification of the militant movement.

During the 1980s a number of prestigious conferences were held which attempted to attract investment from overseas Punjabis but unfortunately they yielded very few tangible results. The Congress Party, given their close link with the Overseas Congress groups, also attempted to woo investment from overseas Punjabis through high level ministerial visits to the UK and also through granting of special assurances and incentives for potential investors. Again, these also yielded very few positive results. The prolonged political turmoil in Punjab which lasted for around fourteen years until 1992, not only had the effect of slowing down the rate of industrialisation in Punjab, but also had the effect of deterring industrial investors, whether Indian, multinational or NRIs. When the New Industrial Policy was issued by the Centre in 1991, the Punjab government also revised its industrial policy accordingly. The new policy was issued in 1992 and introduced new incentives and made special provisions to attract foreign direct investment in targeted areas. Despite the appearance of a new liberalised environment and concerted attempts by the Congress-led state government, the legacy of terrorism continued to portray a poor image of Punjab. According to the Delhi-based Center for Monitoring the Indian Economy, Punjab offers the best infrastructure anywhere in India and yet it is merely tenth in terms of attracting foreign direct investment. Since August 1991 the state has only managed to attract 5.06 per cent of the total investment proposals made in the country. Punjab also lags behind in the state-wise distribution of Export Oriented Units - it was again placed 10th, having received a mere 2.56 per cent of the proposals between August 1991 to May 1996.²⁷

A real change in the economic environment of Punjab came with the election of a new Akali led coalition government. In an attempt to market

Punjab and compete for foreign investment with more successful states like Maharashtra, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, the Punjab government issued a new Industrial Policy in April 1996.²⁸ Under this policy, besides encouraging the development of large to medium scale manufacturing units, various incentives have also been extended towards the development of agro-based units, tourism, electronic industry and modernisation of the existing export oriented units. Various focal points and growth centres have been identified to attract industrial units at an estimated cost of Rs. 200 crores. A further outlay of Rs. 42.50 crores had been allocated towards providing different incentives. As regards foreign investment, the policy acknowledges the potential role such investment can play in providing latest technology to help international competitiveness and in generating of much needed employment opportunities.

The new industrial policy also has a section on promotion of investment by NRIs. According to the policy document a large number of NRIs of Punjabi origin have shown a keen interest in investing in the state. As a response to this and to encourage such investment, a number of special facilities were to be offered. These include: (a) setting up of an exclusive Focal Point in Mohali for NRI entrepreneurs; (b) reservation of industrial plots for allotment in all Focal Points and Industrial estates in the State; (c) preference to NRI entrepreneurs by State Industrial Development and other Promotional Corporations while finalising proposals for joint ventures or assisted sector projects and (d) creation of a Special Cell in the Udyog Sahayak, Directorate of Industries, to provide a Single Window Facility and to ensure time-bound clearance of all investment proposals received from NRIs. Both the Chief Minister, Parkash Singh Badal and the Finance and Planning Minister, Capt. Kanwaljit Singh have expressed a keen interest in persuading Punjabi NRIs to invest in Punjab. The latter in fact went on an extended visit to the USA, Canada and the UK in July-August 1997 to sell Punjab to potential investors. On his return he reported that the 'emotional and sentimental' ties of overseas Punjabis with their 'motherland' were as strong as ever but due to NRI perceptions of corruption both in the political executive and the bureaucracy, they were shy of investing. A major concern of Punjabis abroad was that of safeguarding the legal protection for their investment in agricultural and urban land from tenants on the same basis as protection offered to defence personnel. More recently, a short stint by Sukhbir Singh Badal, Chief Minister Badal's son, as Union Minister of State for Industries, provided a limited boost to Punjab administration's attempts to attract NRI investment.²⁹

Some Preliminary Conclusions

This paper started with the assumption that liberalisation and globalisation of the Indian economy would presumably lead to the deepening and widening of the economic linkages that had already been developed in the post independent period. Then it has attempted to assess the response of the Punjabi diaspora

1980-1994' in Gurharpal Singh and Ian Talbot (eds.) *Punjabi Identity: Continuity and Change*, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1997).

7. Air travel to India from the UK has fallen substantially in real terms in the last few years as a result of both increased competition between numerous carriers and overcapacity in seats. Similarly, telephone-calling charges to India have also plummeted, falling from around £6 for a one minute call to between 30-40 pence. Furthermore, charges on transatlantic calls are now almost at parity with domestic calls at around 6-10 pence per minute.

8. As part of this project the present author is trying to draw up profiles of villages where there has been a substantial amount of NRI investment. A similar list is being drawn up for the major philanthropic projects underway in the central areas of Punjab. A current fad among *doabi* migrants is to contribute towards sponsoring a village sports tournament, mimicking the successful sports, especially *Kabbadi* and football tournaments, which have become an important part of British Punjabis' lives during the summer months, since the early 1960s. According to news reports there were 137 village sports tournaments in 1997 alone and the number keeps increasing. For details see Ramesh Vinayak, 'Grateful Sons', *India Today*, January 31, 1977 and I. S. Saluja, 'The NRI Connection and Sports Melas', *The Tribune*, 9th March, 1999.

9. Figures taken from Indian Ministry of Industry's *SIA Newsletter*, August 2000.

10. Although India signed the Avoidance of Double Taxation Treaty with Mauritius way back in 1982, it was only after foreign and exchange rate liberalisation after 1991-1992, that Indian investors could take full advantage of it. A large number of Indian companies open offshore companies in Mauritius and then re-invest in India.

11. There is a vast literature evaluating the Indian economic reform process. For selected readings see Kirit S. Parekh (ed.), *India Development Report, 1999-2000* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999). For an earlier assessment see Chopra, A., Collyns, C, Hemming, R and Parker, K, (1995), *India: Economic Reform and Growth*, Occasional Paper 134, December (Washington: IMF).

12. India's lack of concern and indifference towards the welfare of her diaspora communities was amply illustrated during the expulsion of Indians (especially British passport holders) from several East African countries in the 1960s and 70s; during the dilemma facing Hong Kong based Indians at the time of transfer of Hong Kong to China and more recently problems faced by Fiji based Indians during a military coup which toppled a democratically elected Indian-dominated government.

The changed mood towards NRIs became very noticeable after Amartya Sen - a world renowned economist now based at Cambridge - won the 1998 Nobel Prize for Economics. What was significant about this event was the fact that although Amartya Sen had migrated abroad three decades earlier, he still retained his Indian citizenship. An editorial in *India Today International* made an impassioned plea to the Indian

government to look upon NRIs as their greatest unharnessed resource base. For details see 'Home and the World' in *India Today International*, October 26th 1998, 5.

For another interesting perspective which discusses how even Bollywood has changed its representation of NRIs see Patricia Uberoi, (1998) 'The diaspora comes home: Disciplining desires in DDLJ' in *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (ns), vol. 32, no. 2, p.305-336. This paper discusses the issue of Indian-ness and maintenance of tradition and cultural values in the diaspora.

13. For details and discussion of the Indo-British Extradition Treaty, see Thandi(1996) *op. cit.* and for discussion of the Indo-Canadian Treaty, see Tatla (1999) *op. cit.*

14. There is a vast literature on the rise of ethnic and Asian business in the UK and the United States. In the UK there are now also specialist research centres focussing on Asian business. Some of the largest metropolitan areas also have their own Ethnic/Asian Business Directories. From a diasporic perspective see Joel Kotkin, *Tribes* (New York: Random House, 1992), Arthur Helweg, *An Indian Emigrant Success Story*, (New York: Random House, 1996); see also K. N. Malik, *India and the United Kingdom: change and continuity in the 1980s* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997) and Deepak Nayyar, *Migration, Remittances and Capital Flows*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994)

15. There is extensive literature on Chinese business networks. For a comprehensive set of case studies see G. G. Hamilton, *Asian Business Networks* (De Gruyter Studies in Organisation, 1996); J. Kao (1993) 'The World wide Web of Chinese Business', *Harvard Business Review*, March-April; East Asia Analytic Unit (1995) *Overseas Chinese Business Networks in Asia*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra and Kienzle and Shadur, Mark (1997) 'Developments in business networks in East Asia' in *Management Decision*, vol. 35, no. 1, p. 23-32. For a discussion of the diasporic contribution, of overseas Chinese to the development and integration of Greater China, see Chang, M. H. (1995), 'Greater China and the Chinese Global Tribe' in *Asian Survey*, vol. XXXV, no. 10, October, p. 955-967 and Bolt (1996).

16. At a recent international conference on the Indian Diaspora, many delegates uncritically compared the contrasting experiences and potential for economic contribution of the Indian and Chinese diasporas. This conference – Culture and Economy in the Indian Diaspora – was held in New Delhi on 8-10 April 2000 and was jointly sponsored by the ESRC Transnational Communities Programme, University of Hull's Singhvi Centre for Indian Studies and the India International Centre.

17. Figures quoted in KN Malik (1997) *op. cit.*, 123

18. It is extremely difficult to estimate the size of the total inflows as the recorded figure fails to capture the significant amounts of personal and private flows. Only micro-level studies at the point of utilisation and impact can capture their significance. Recent work by ILO researchers has suggested that unrecorded remittances can be

anything up 40% of total remittances. For estimates and their implications for micro-finance and informal economy activities see Shivani Puri and Tineke Ritzema, 'Migrant Worker Remittances, Micro-finance and the Informal Economy: Prospects and Issues', Social Finance Unit, Working Paper No. 21, International Labour Office, 1999.

19. For the first detailed study on the recent wave of skilled worker migration see Binod Khadria, *The Migration of Knowledge Workers: second-generation effects of India's brain drain* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000).

20. Figure taken from a news report in *Business Line* (financial daily of *The Hindu* group of publications) entitled 'NRI contribution up \$14 billion in 1999-2000', 21 July 2000.

21. Quoted in Malik (1997), *op. cit.*, 123

22. Diaspora theorists cannot take the NRI community as a homogeneous category, despite the attempts. Caste, class, language, politics and religion divide these communities and evidence shows that different Indian communities use such symbols extensively in mobilisation strategies. For a recent evaluation of the concept of diaspora see Floya Anthias, (1998) 'Evaluating 'Diaspora': Beyond Ethnicity' in *Sociology*, vol. 32, no. 3 p. 557-580.

23. For details of the frustrations faced by Swraj Paul – a most successful doabi NRI entrepreneur based in Britain – during his attempts to invest in India see chapter 8 of his semi-autobiographical book *Beyond Boundaries: A Memoir* (New Delhi: Viking-Penguin India, 1998).

24. For details of the new concessions see 'Privileges at a Price' in *India Today International*, 12th April 1999, 24.

25. The Resurgent India Bonds issue proved to be a resounding success and is estimated to have led to a \$4.2 billion transfer of funds from NRI accounts to the Government, well above the original target of about \$2 billion. However this is potentially a risky and costly form of boosting foreign exchange reserves. For discussions of the potential risks see 'Resurgence at a Price', *India Today International*, August 31, 1998 and 'Indian Bond: calling all Patriots' in *The Economist*, July 25, 1998.

26. For a discussion of the impact of remittances on the village agrarian economy see Thandi (1994) *op cit.* and Helweg (1986) *op.cit.*

27. For details see Punjab's *Economic Survey of Punjab*, Economic Adviser to Government of Punjab, 1998.51. See also Joglekar, S., Sriram, N., et al., (1994), 'The Ten Best States for Business', *Business India*, June 6-19, 54-65.

28. Government of Punjab, Department of Industries and Commerce, *Industrial Policy 1996*.

29. Although Bada's government established a NRI cell in the central secretariat to deal with NRI matters, the most active body appears to be the NRI Sabha, Punjab. This body holds an annual convention attended by many NRI members and aims to promote economic, social, educational and cultural links between Punjab and Punjabis abroad. It launched its own website with much fanfare last year and has designated this year as 'VISIT PUNJAB - YEAR 2000'.

Dramas of Diaspora

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Whilst multiculturalism has been institutionalised as a saccharine celebration of 'exotic other' culture or as a means of adding 'ethnic diversity' to national culture, this article argues for a more fluid and politically informed view of cultural interactions. Popular culture is less formulaic than models proposed by Governmental, educational and Arts Council funding, and is better re-envisioned as *multiculture* to properly take account of its inherent promiscuity. Furthermore, the top-down perspective on hybridity tends to suppress the political potency of cultural alliances. This article considers diasporic Asian dramatic arts to develop a theory of the *corpo-political* - politics based on lived and organic experiences rather than their institutionalised concretions premised upon bounded notions of ethnicity, even though the two aspects are not mutually exclusive. The discursive domain of theatre alongside other expressive arts provides the grounds for, on the one hand, the affirmation of diasporic identities in the public arena and, on the other, challenges to virulent stereotypes of Asians as insular, passive, barbaric, inscrutable and so forth. The article focuses in particular on some of the author's own artistic contributions to the crucible of diasporic expressive arts pertaining to identity and representation.

Dramas of Diaspora

'Books, theatre, film and radio all retain what [Walter] Benjamin called the 'utopian trace' (at least in *potential*) – the last vestige of an impulse against alienation, the last perfume of the imagination' (Bey 1994: 36, his italics).

"'British Asian' is an attitude that has formed over thirty years by two generations of South Asian people who were born or brought up in England. It is not simply swapping a sari for a pair of jeans. Experiences of racism, hostility and violence against the Asian community are some of the experiences that define the British Asian. The community has struggled long and hard to have its rich and varied voices heard. But...any accepted representation of British Asians is still stereotypical' (Parv Bancel, playwright).

Crossing continents, encountering ignorance and physical resistance, making new homes, and building hopeful futures are all some of the ingredients that plot the 'dramas of diaspora'. The term, drama, is not just to refer to the theatrical arts. It is also intended to convey the physicality of (e)motion, and the

catalyst of excess, surplus, and poesis that is an intrinsic part of the quotidian, but often overlooked in the 'lemon-squeezer' of the social science literature on the British Asian diaspora.¹ The literature focusing on the very early decades of mass migration from the subcontinent to Britain from the 1950s prioritises religious praxis, issues to do with social policy, and economic conditions (eg Watson 1977).² This is in contrast to that on the African-Caribbean migration: whilst policy and economic matters are still the mainstay of the foci, there is also significant attention paid to the expressive arts of these groups – mainly music, dancing and sport performance (eg Hebdige 1976, Cohen 1980). The recent attention to the fifty year anniversary of the Empire Windrush merchant ship docking in Britain is another test-case, with its focus not just on the economic difficulties of their arrival, but also their expressive media, particularly music, carnival and sport (Phillips and Phillips 1999). Despite recent changes, colonial tropes persist with a hardy vengeance: at the risk of simplification, the 'all work and no play' Asians, and the 'all play and no work' African-Caribbeans. When faced with the choice of expressions of *restraint* or *excess*, it is the latter, associated with African-Caribbean diasporas, that becomes the more attractive 'honey pot' of global popular culture and media representations. Nevertheless, we only need to ask members of the first generation Asians to get a sense of other more eclipsed narratives in these early days of diasporic settlement. Theatre/film actors, Surendra Kochar and Badi Uzzaman, for instance, reflect on the community plays, *mehfils* (musical gatherings) and folk dances they enjoyed amongst other activities in their homes, religious or community centres, away from the eyes of the Swinging Sixties hipsters that dominated the metropolitan landscape (personal communication). There were a number of reasons why such activities were overlooked. Firstly, linguistic ignorance and ethnocentrism made them seem at best incomprehensible, and at worst despised for being disruptive and even barbaric. Secondly, they were not investigated due to the then lack of academic interest in popular culture. This was the case until at least the 1980s when 'play', ironically, began to be taken seriously. Thirdly, the majority of Asian migrants themselves saw such activities as secondary to work, although that is not to say that they were deemed insignificant.

Although this early period of mass migration is not the main focus here, this article provides not just an analysis of the socio-political phenomena of Asian presence in Britain, but plots further journeys by focusing on how, and what kinds of stories, fantasies, desires get produced out of diasporic populations in the public domain. How do they negotiate the fantasies and phantasms of a multi-racial Britain in post-imperial decline for public representations? And, on a more global scale, how can the hegemonies of whiteness and fetishised notions of Otherness in the West be challenged?³ Live performance is a seminal creative outlet for diasporic populations, hampered as they are by institutional disinterest and inadequate funds for the expressive arts. Many of the Asian theatre groups emerged from the late 1970s primarily to give

space and voice to Asian concerns that were not represented elsewhere, or if represented, frequently presented in a limited and stereotypic manner. As the art critic, Manick Govinda, summarised, these included 'Asian woodentops in *East Enders*, exotica in *The Far Pavilions*, Asians as barbarians and savages in *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, Asians as silly 'Pakis' in *Mind Your Language* etc.' (*Bazaar*, Spring 1988). It is performance and drama that mediated British Asian identities long before mainstream media began to take an interest in their self-crafted stories as picked up, particularly in the 1990s, in films, television dramas, and the hugely successful comedy series, *Goodness Gracious Me*. This period was also characterised by the coming of age of the second generation, who were able to utilise South Asian points of reference along with a skilful negotiation of the avenues of British public culture to whet the appetites of an emergent 'mainstream multiculturalism'.

Multiculturalism has been touted as a catch-all to describe and manage the hybrid cultures associated with a diasporised nation since at least the 1970s beginning first as a management strategy to look at the educational requirements for multiracial schooling (Goldberg, 1994). It has commonly been understood as discrete packages of culture attached to distinct ethnic groups, easily lending itself to the compartmentalised gaze of state governance. Multiculturalism and its latter-day avatar, cultural diversity, in its crudest manifestations, have become institutionalised as a saccharine celebration of 'exotic other' culture or as a means of adding 'ethnic diversity' of the saris, steel drums and *samosas* kind to an otherwise bland monoculture (Sharma et al 1996: 1). Assumptions about collective and ethnic identities have subsumed dynamic appreciations of cultural traffic such that we often have the combination of essentialist attributes coming together like boxed-off categories. However, popular culture is less formulaic and needs to be re-envisioned as *multiculture* to properly take account of its inherent promiscuity. This is in distinction to the more rigid definitions prevalent in much of the institutionalised discourses associated with the academy, Arts Council funding and Government educational policy. Additionally, the top-down perspective on hybridity and creativity tends to suppress the political potency of cultural alliances. On an international level, multiculturalist exercises seem to be even more virulent in their entrenchment of rigid cultural essentialisms based on ethnicity, region and nation. This follows from the relative ease of transnational flow of packaged products more so than the people associated with them. As Lisa Lowe states: 'The production of multiculturalism, following the logic of 'commodification' is concerned with 'importation', not immigration' (Lowe 1996: 87). It is about the movement of goods (including, to a lesser extent, valued or 'commodified' people such as business executives and entertainers) to be utilised and consumed, rather than 'ordinary' migrants and the dynamism of their everyday interventions.

Parallels might also be made with the aforementioned reference to *multiculture* and Robin Kelley's notion of a polycultural history, which Vijay Prashad develops into an argument about polyculturalism:

The theory of the polycultural does not mean that we reinvent humanism without ethnicity, but that we acknowledge that our notion of cultural community should not be built inside the high walls of parochialism and ethno-nationalism. The framework of polyculturalism uncouples the notions of origins and authenticity from that of culture (Prashad 2000a: 7).

With the uncoupling of the colonial legacy of origins and authenticity, culture becomes a more liquid entity attuned to the 'mind-fluids' of a more unpredictable creativity. Stuart Hall has remarked, 'Cultural identity is not an essence, but a positioning' (Hall 1990: 226). We might well add that this is not taken to imply a cognitive positioning, but a bodily one that necessitates imaginative approaches to an investigation of the articulation of selves in the public domain. Prashad's elaboration on the 'instinct of polyculturalism' pertaining to the racialised politics of Kung Fu and the icon of Bruce Lee also alludes to the vehicle of bodily expression and empathy – that is, the fantasy of projection and desire are implicit to the contingencies of social positioning.⁴

Acknowledging the difficulties of avoiding terms of classification, it is the corpo-political significance of expressive cultures to do with British Asian arts that are addressed in this article. Corpo-political refers to politics based on lived and organic experiences rather than their institutionalised concretions, even though the two aspects are not mutually exclusive. It is the liquidity of alliances that are explored here, rather than *a priori* expectations based on simplistic models of ethnicity, region or nation. The range of cultural work that can be cited here is enormous, being as it is a dynamic arena constantly in the making. Here, an attempt is made to still the waters somewhat by focusing on some of the artistic work that I have been involved in as a partial reflection on currents in diasporic cultural productions. It is one person's response to expressing identity and political alliances in what is often an overly essentialised discourse of 'Asianess' or 'Indianess' in the migrant context. I take heed of Ishmael Reed's slogan 'writing is fighting' and assess it in light of the minutiae and micro-politics of fictionalised worlds. By focusing on some of the arts projects that I have been involved with, the junctures between the psychic, the expressive and the socio-political worlds that I have inhabited are probed. This is not intended to be an exercise in navel-gazing, however, but more a focus on the chord between diasporic selves and the amniotic contexts of production around the theme of multiculturalism. Nor is this article simply a product of the school of audience receptivity as a means to counter views of authorial presence and originality (Barthes 1972, Foucault 1979). Rather I see myself as enmeshed in a series of discursive formations, where I too have been subjected to, as much as I have been actively engaging with their outcomes. In a sense, it parallels Michel Foucault's (1982) later views on subjectivity – not only subjected *upon* but subject *of*. But before exploring the intricacies of these projects, a brief

background of the dramatic arts as it pertains to the diasporic Asian presence in Britain is provided.

Dramatic Beginnings

Asian theatre in Britain - that is, theatre with an Asian orientation in subject matter, participants and targeted audiences - began to come into prominence in the 1970s, mainly through performances in community centres and as part of theatre-in-education work in multiracial schools.⁵ Full justice to the wealth of work that has been produced in the last few decades cannot be done within the parameters of this article - only to note significant players as well as general thematic features. Many of the works could be placed on a continuum that links the subcontinent with Britain. On one end are dramas that are located firmly in South Asia, with implicit or explicit reference to diasporic circumstances. On the other end are plays that are firmly located in Britain, with inspirational debts paid to the subcontinent in a variety of ways. In both cases, reference is made to the mutability of identity that relates more to the agency of Asian practitioners than it does to institutional understandings of ethnicity.

Of the early theatre groups Tara Arts is notable, being founded by a Kenyan Punjabi migrant, Jatinder Verma, in the late 1970s. Initially, Verma, a University of York History graduate, pursued agit-prop theatre in contrast to the comparatively anodyne farces that characterised community plays of the times. Early Tara productions included *Inkalaab* 1919 (1980), *Lion's Raj* (1982), *Ancestral Voices* (1983), and *Chilli in Your Eyes* (1984). With these plays, anti-colonial history was resurrected for its strategic role in countering contemporary racism in the heart of the post-imperial centre. By the mid-1980s, the company had evolved a counter-practice to dominant Western theatrical performance. Other interpretations of well-known dramas were sought in order to relate them to the experiences of the migrant in an adopted country. Amongst the productions were a number of devised or adapted productions including *Little Clay Cart* (1985-6), *This Story is Not for Telling* (1985-6), *Danton's Death* (1989), and *The Government Inspector* (1989-90).⁶

The Theatre Royal Stratford East (under the Artistic Direction of Phillip Hedley) in East London and the Watermans Arts Centre (under the initiative of Hardial Rai) in the far-flung sites of West London became launch pads for many Asian artists in the 1980s. They include the playwrights Harwant Bains and Parv Bancel and co-productions with numerous Asian companies. Another group that made a mark was Tamasha Theatre group (founded in 1989 by Kristine Landon-Smith, born of an Indian mother and Australian father, along with the actress, Sudhar Buchar). They first directed an English performance of Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*, and then went on to collaborate with Oxfam to produce *Majdur* and *Women in the Dust*. Other notable productions include *House of the Sun*, *Romeo and Juliet* set in Bombay, and the hugely successful

stage production of *East is East*, which later went on to becoming a Channel Four film production in 1999.

Understandably, the dramatic voices are many as a testament to the numerous facets of diasporic positionings and imaginings. HAC Theatre (founded by Hardial Rai and Ravinder Gill) thrived on satire, making a point about the joys and pains of multiracial London and exploring stories to do with violence and racism from the mid-1980s. Keith Khan's Moti Roti company as part of the London International festival of Theatre in 1991 also made a mark, not least for its flamboyant use of various types of arts including cinema and carnival on stage. Tanika Gupta's playwriting (produced by Soho Theatre Company and the National Theatre) tended to prioritise mythical themes in mundane circumstances. Asian women's drama was particularly promoted by Kali Theatre (founded by Rukshana Ahmed), Chandica Theatre (founded by Raminder Kaur) and Mehtab Theatre (founded by Parminder Sekhon) in the 1990s. These entailed not just the exploration of stories to do with gender, sexuality and racism amongst other themes, but also involved women in key roles as writers, producers, directors, designers and actors. Comedy particularly took off with the platform, *One Nation*, at Watermans Arts Centre from 1993, propelling the careers of some of the participants of the series, *Goodness Gracious Me*, such as Sanjeev Bhaskar and Nina Wadia. This residential platform was after a decade of the company touring to present 'topical issues written by streetwise second generation Asians' (*One Nation* publicity material).

Main centres of Asian theatre production outside of the capital include Leicester (The Haymarket Studio, and the Red Ladder Theatre Company), and Birmingham (The Drum and recently The Birmingham Rep). Indeed, wherever there was a critical mass of Asian residents, groups of all persuasions engaged in performances of one kind or another. This was enhanced by the latterday 'outreach' work by several regional theatres to attract new audiences. What is interesting about such work is that whilst several of the protagonists set out to challenge virulent stereotypes of the Asian community, another orthodoxy was set up where themes such as arranged marriages, intergenerational (mis)understandings, the crossroads of East and West, and figures such as the domineering Aunti Ji and the oppressive father became *de rigeur*. However, as is the nature of creative output, these themes were themselves, with the flow of time, modified or directly challenged. Now in the third millennium, Asian theatre practice is mature and confident enough to determine some of the shots, however limited this might be by continuing ethnocentrism and the need to fulfil funding quotas.

In a bid to reconsider the more fluid articulations, rather than categories of identity pertaining to Asian art, dramas that touch upon three continents are considered here - India, Europe and the United States. The works are examples of expressions and practices that unsettle fetishized notions of religious, regional or racial identities and the categories of South Asian, Indian or even British Asian for a performative politics of alliance.⁷ As will be apparent, such

descriptive forms of identity are only ever provisional categories, for in the drive to tackle particular kinds of essentialisms, others have a habit of creeping in through the back door. Liquidity is easily contained, solidified or momentarily 'frozen'. But this is not my main concern: it is more to provide a critique of dominant and static ascriptions in order to highlight other possible axes of identity formation as possible in creative works.

The works are: first, a multi-media drama project that provides a transnational focus on the aftermath of the storming of the Golden Temple (Harmandir Sahib), Amritsar in 1984, *Bullets through the Golden Stream* (1994 and 1997); second, a film collaboration that interrogates hegemonic notions of whiteness in the US, *Nacione de Rocas* (1996); and third, a workshop and drama project that highlights continuities and discontinuities between Irish and Indian subjectivities, *Ploughing the Stars* (1999).⁸ With these examples, the provisional and strategic basis of identity formations in *multiculture*, one which resists the fetishisation of Otherness in hegemonic infrastructures of *multiculturalism* is considered. Each of the examples cited serve different but complementary purposes: the first, *Bullets through the Golden Stream*, uproots the reification of Asian culture both from without and within. It is a truism to say that colonial legacies have led to the internalisation of communal categories where myopic affirmation is sought in one another. With this project, the latter-day reifications of Hindu and Sikh were challenged through a transnational lens. This situation particularly arose in the aftermath of the storming of the Golden Temple (Harmandir Sahib) in Amritsar, Punjab in 1984. The second example, *Nacione de Rocas*, is itself a transnational venture (aided by the Internet) intended to be set up against nation-state blinkers that screen comparable class and racial oppressions from one another. With my own thoughts and feelings about the experiences of racial minorities, I teamed up with an Ecuadorian director living in the US to develop a filmic symphony against white supremacy. The third example, *Ploughing the Stars*, entails a leap over the racial horizons to look at strategies of alliance against (neo-)colonial oppression with the example of Ireland and India. This was done without trying to romanticise the struggle, and a focus on the peculiarities and shortcomings of fictionalised, yet full-bodied characters, developed in collaboration with an Irish playwright, permitted me to do this.

The Brew after the Storm

The first work considered in detail here is a theatre and video production called *Bullets through the Golden Stream* produced by Chandica Arts which I wrote and directed.⁹ *Bullets through the Golden Stream* was first written in 1994 as a reflection on the preceding decade of political turmoil in India as well as in Britain. The 1980s are uncanny for representing two of the most dictatorial female prime ministers in both countries - Indira Gandhi in India's Congress up until her assassination in 1984, and Margaret Thatcher in Britain's Conservative

party, both exercising their own version of right wing centralised governance. It was apparent that under increasingly right-wing governance in the UK, community solace became even more viable. With the discrepant splintering of the anti-racist campaigns into geographical (eg African-Caribbean and Asian), and religious constituencies (eg Hindu, Muslim, Sikh), the ground was fallow in the UK for a turn towards more particularistic movements. Allied with the attention paid to the politics of authoritarianism and resistance groups in the subcontinent, this tendency towards religio-ethnic particularism was given a further boost.

Increasing centralisation in India led to several regionalist uprisings. Complex political shenanigans entailing Congress's initial backing of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale as a counter-force to the regional Akali Dal party, led to further turmoil in Punjab. Bhindranwale and his supporters grew to be anti-Congress and used the Golden Temple complex as their base to campaign for a separate state carved out of Punjab and called Khalistan. On June 5th, 1984, military forces raided the temple complex, in an exercise code-named Operation Bluestar. The military storming resulted in many civilian deaths, including that of Bhindranwale and his men.¹⁰ People across the South Asian diaspora were distressed and angered at the desecration of their foremost shrine and the death of pilgrims on the fifth Sikh guru's, Guru Arjan Dev's, martyrdom anniversary.¹¹ This particularly applied to those who were Sikh, for at this point, religious cleavages further undermining the egalitarian ideals of the religion were already apparent. Such was the anger unleashed that two of Indira Gandhi's Sikh bodyguards shot her at point-blank range on October 31st, 1984. Soon after there was a wave of pogroms against Sikhs throughout the cities of India, much of which was Congress-backed.

In view of these atrocities committed against people and places, it was all too easy to fall into the political safety of essentialised identities of Sikhs against Hindus, which obscured the oppressive relations between centre and state, and state and people across the subcontinent. Much of the political discourses in the diaspora took on similar essentialised connotations around the notions of militant Sikh or chauvinistic Hindu.¹² This dominated the transnational political landscape regarding the fall-out from Operation Bluestar. Writing the play was my way of trying to develop a vehicle of critique against the hegemony of centralised nation-states, without wanting to fall into reactionary politics of religious essentialism. As someone who had grown up in the Sikh faith, I was disturbed by the turmoil and massacres of Sikhs in India but I also recognised its close affinities with other religions in the subcontinent, namely Hinduism and a branch of Islam, Sufism. Another reason for producing the play was to raise awareness of human rights abuse. A draconian law called TADA (Terrorists and Disruptive Activities Act) was brought into action in the mid-1980s to deal with the Punjab situation. TADA allowed the police and authorities to intern people for up to a year without trial. This was where being located in Britain was a distinct advantage in that it enabled the play to be

produced and toured nationally in 1994 and again in 1997 without too much fear of recrimination.¹³ But it was also a potentially explosive project as it did not strictly heed the rules of transnational Sikh nationalist movements (Tatla).¹⁴ After all, to stick to strict agendas does not make for a creative project; rather it makes for expressions curtailed by the stranglehold of didactic propaganda.

The story of *Bullets through the Golden Stream* crosses continents and time periods. Despite the political tensions, Mohan, a Sikh, and his Hindu wife, Devi, make plans to go from England to Punjab in 1984 to see Devi's ailing mother, Maya (*mata ji*), who is dying of cancer. When they get to Punjab in June, the situation literally blows up. There are curfews and military and police oppressions across the state, with severe consequences for the couple trapped there. The play begins in June 1984 when the temple grounds were stormed, and continues to November 1984 - the period shortly after Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards, leading to widespread pogroms. This is all seen through the eyes of Mohan and Devi's daughter, Reshima, who reflects back on the time when she was left in England at the age of fourteen. The opening scenes of the play show Reshima as a young woman in the present, reminiscing about her family in 1984. Later the story follows the characters of her mother and father in Punjab at the time of their visit.

The choice of a clean-shaven Sikh man married to a Hindu woman was intended to display the development of essentialised politics out of cognate religious cultures, and as a result, the growing rift between the couple due to the heat of circumstances. At one moment in the play, Mohan is beaten up by ruffians in the neighbouring town shortly after the storming in June 1984. Devi tries to reason with him to take off his steel bracelet, the *kara*, one of the five key emblems of the Sikh faith:

Devi Mohan, why don't you take that *kara* off? Next time you might not be so lucky.

Mohan This is what brings me luck. It's part of my heritage.

Devi But you're not a practising Sikh!

Mohan Whether I'm 'practising' or not makes no difference.

Devi Well, if it makes no difference, then why don't you take it off?

Mohan Devi, I can feel every bullet hole that went through that place in my body.

Devi I feel the same. But that doesn't mean to say that I start getting religious all of a sudden. Please take the bracelet off for my sake and for your own.

Mohan It's not just a bracelet! It has the steel of pure strength...and valour passed down the years... to protect against every evil...against the angels of death!

Devi Well, it didn't protect you from those 'angels'!

Mohan If I can't wear it in Punjab, then where can I wear it?

Devi I don't want to go back to England as a widow!

Mohan No, I'm not going to take it off! If anything, you should be putting one on as someone who stands by her husband all the time.

Devi Why? I'm not someone you can take for granted just like that! I don't have to go with it.

Mohan Haven't you heard what they're saying about you in the village? That you're too headstrong for your own good?

Devi Well, I think they're being pretty pathetic if they start comparing me to that Indira!

Mohan Devi, these are village people. They think from their guts.

Devi With their guns, you mean!

Mohan It's a life and death situation out there, as simple as that. And you have to make choice as to what side you want to fight on.

Devi So, what are the choices?

Mohan Sikh or Hindu?

Devi Huh! Some choice!

Mohan Those that fail to make a choice are going to fall.

Devi When has the fact that we're Hindu or Sikh ever come in between us before?

Mohan I'm only thinking about your safety?

Devi And what about *mata ji's* safety?

Mohan She's too old and weak...and that's her strength...her protection. They'll leave her alone.

Mohan and Devi are whipped up into a vortex of emotions, heightened by the fact that they do not quite belong in Punjab any more. On the one hand, Devi's primary point of reference is at 'home', Hounslow in West London, where their daughter awaits them. On the other, Mohan feels compelled to stay, and at this point, reads the turmoil around him as a simplistic Hindu-Sikh friction – a tension that he projects onto his relationship with his wife. Her mother's, Maya's, cancer becomes a metaphor for the communal rage. In an earlier scene, Devi tries to write a letter to her daughter in England, but ends up being consumed by a catatonic stupor where she lets rip with Maya:

'Her cancer doesn't seem to be affecting her too much on the surface...I suppose the cancer now is in the country...A cancer of violence, wild justice, killings and counter-killings...Hatred is being fanned in all directions under a religious garb...Even your father is going slightly loopy in this heat....It seems that there isn't any pen I can borrow off anyone that isn't dipped in the blood of innocents!'

Effectively the nation was mirrored in the family unit, and its confusions and dilemmas poignantly highlighted by the character of Reshima in one of her reminiscences: 'Dad, what am I then? Sikh or Hindu?'

This questioning spirit is also apparent in the dramatisation of verse from the Sikh Sacred Book, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, in its English translation. Rather than simply treating the text as a religious icon, it is used to comment upon and intervene in events in the play and in life. For example, scenes of violence are accompanied by an atmospheric recital of verses to do with the evils of the

world, and a scene of healing is accompanied by verses praising the beauties of nature. The verses are performed to music and movement on the stage, with suitable imagery projected on the screen behind. Thus the text's richness in history, poetry, philosophy and dramatic potential is vividly explored. This lends the text a different, although not irreverent, inflection. Whilst recognising the unique character of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the influences of varied sources from the *Upanishads* and *Vedas* to Sufi mystical poetry are noted and become integral to the verses and the tone of the production as a whole. For instance, verses to the Sufi mystic, Farid, are significant not only for moving the plot forwards, but their debt to the mystical branch of Islam, Sufism. To theatre-goers, they almost conveyed a Shakespearian quality once performed in English against video projections:¹⁵

O Farid, tread the path the Guru shows | What takes six months to
quicken with life | Dies an instant death | It is as swift as the flight
of swans in the spring | And the stampede of beasts in a forest fire |
It is a flash of lightening amid the rains | And transitory as the
winter hours | When maidens are in love's embrace | All that is
must cease: on this ponder.

The projections are employed at five key points in the play to permit movements from one space, time or mood to others. They help convey the idea of travel through space and time; represent floating and submerged imagery which lend further insights to the story-line; reflect the changing temperaments of the characters and the movements of the waters; carry us down into its depths to explore both its curative and deathly powers; and towards the end of the play, convey a sense of terror and the unknown.

In the final scene, after the murder of Devi caught in gunfire, Mohan resorts to avenging her death. He recites the sacred verse (*shabad*) *Deh Shiva bar mohe ehai*, evocative of the tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh's call to arms. Despite appearances of turning to Sikh militancy, Mohan addresses god as Shiva, typically viewed as Hindu, but as it is expressed in the original text:

Grant me, Oh Lord Shiva this boon | That I may not falter from
doing good | May I entertain no fear of the enemy | when
confronted by him in battle; | And may I be sure of my victory! |
May my mind be so trained, | As to dwell upon thy goodness; |
And when the best moment of my life shall come | May I die in the
thick of battle.

The current way of translating this verse is to use the general honorific, God or Lord, in place of Shiva. But the original verses along with others in the *Guru Granth Sahib* do make references to the spirit of Hindu gods (Kohli 1993: 151). This has become a contentious point for those who are critical of the contemporary hegemony of the Hindu-oriented state and society in India. In a highly charged political arena, to highlight references to Hindu deities in Sikh

verses is myopically seen as an admission of support for Hindu governance. However, the state is itself a machinery of violence: whether it be described as Hindu, Muslim or Christian misses the point, as the state's use of religion amounts to its palpable distortion in the machinations of power. Thus, with the invocation of Shiva in a retributive verse, Mohan challenges straightforward equations of state and Hinduism, to associate himself with people that are the victims of state epistemic and physical violence, be they defined best as Sikh or Hindu. The dramatic recital of the verse becomes the means by which Mohan resolves to avenge the death of his Hindu wife, not through the murder of other Hindus, but through a struggle against state oppressors. Mohan appeals to a force that is larger than any ascribed religious or communal identity for this task. Identities based on straightforward communal registers are supplanted by other registers of oppressed and oppressor, good and evil, however simple these dualities might sound. The drive for justice provides the prime motivation, rather than resorting to the sanctity of religious sectarianism, or what might be described as a retreat to the safe space of an imagined purity (Banerjea and Barn 1996).

The actual reception of the drama hit numerous registers, seen as it was by people from all kinds of backgrounds, not just those of an Asian or Punjabi background. In brief, these registers included those that responded to the play primarily on an emotional level as a story about a family caught in sectarian wildfire, with some audience members comparing the situation with the examples of Northern Ireland, Bosnia, and parts of Africa, for instance. Others saw the play in technical terms, paying attention to the interaction of live performance and video projections as a dramatic way of relaying different types of information and experiences. Still others saw it as part of a pedagogical exercise and even came up to me to correct the foibles and opinions that they noted with some of the characters. Connected to this there were also political points to be picked up – most of the audiences keyed in to the futility of religious divides, but some with other agendas allied the play to their own Sikh or Punjabi nationalist sentiments, seeing the play as a rare opportunity to have such issues publicly aired with which to ally their own invective. Such responses were of course as interesting as the production process, but its fuller examination lies outside the remit of this article.

Cast in Stone

The second example of the politics of a dynamic multiculturalism is a short film *Nacione de Rocas* (Nation of Stones) produced in Utah, USA.¹⁶ The project was initiated through an alliance with an Ecuadorian director, Fabian Redrovan, living in the US. I acted as assistant director and worked on concept development as there is little of a conventional script in the film but much use of allusive metaphors. The commonality in the creative partnership came about through our resistance to the spectrum of blatant racism to abject ignorance in

the West. *Nacione de Rocas* looked at the surfacing of repressed histories in the midst of a Euro-American hegemony with the use of a Native American mythical figure of the Coyote. The project also alludes to the denial of a colonised peoples' full rights as citizens of Western countries. Rather than assuming that there was an *a priori* essence, the project enabled a rethinking and rearticulation of the notions of Indian and Asian, as well as broadening the political category of Chicano/Latino with its political proclamation of 'brown and proud'.¹⁷

The history of racialised migrants in the US is quite distinct from the one in Britain. The presence of racial groups have been a significant part of the development of the US, but in Britain, large-scale migration from former colonies only really escalated in the 1950s. Yet the effects of racial exclusion and repression have been similar in both countries. Asians in the US had a history of being ineligible for citizenship until the period between 1943-1952 (Lowe 1996: 7). Institutional and physical racism in Britain ensures that Asians in Britain too are treated as second-class citizens, despite the token gesture towards their supposed 'model minority' status.¹⁸ It might be recalled that the term Asian in the US is more often applied to people from the Philippines, Japan, Hong Kong, China, Korea and Vietnam. This goes hand in hand with the racist articulations of Orientalism that has raised its ugly head in the US colonisation of the Philippines, the war against Japan, the war in and partition of Korea, and the war in Vietnam. The historical relations between the US and South Asia have been comparatively limited and mediated by the former imperial power of Britain, although migrancy from the subcontinent to the US has been noteworthy since the nineteenth century (Prashad 2000b). Those from South Asia or the diaspora resident in the US often refer to themselves as Indian or other regional or national equivalents. In the US context, however, Indian also connotes Native American experience, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak elaborates in her book, *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. She describes Indian as: 'Subterfuges of nomenclature that are by now standard have almost (though not completely) obliterated the fact that, that name lost some specificity in the first American genocide' (Spivak 1993: 54). In brief, Native American now has replaced the problematic term, 'Red Indian', which was the legacy of a European adventurer's grand mistake of the last millennium: for as we all know, Columbus, having come to the conclusion that he could reach Asia by sailing westwards, landed on a series of islands nowhere near Asia. Nonetheless, it was a mistake that in the end was valorised by naming the islands the West Indies.

It is the rolling back of history that becomes the prime trigger in the film project. The film's plot is quite straightforward: Coyote - an animal that is common in indigenous myths as a trickster figure - emerges out of the ancient earth as a man-wolf. He walks around, takes a look at the mayhem of US cities and its people, enters the fairground banality of a casino, takes a dislike to the destruction and control of the land by WASP (White Anglo Saxon Protestant)

Americans, calls upon the forces of nature, and turns them all into stones. Redrovan, the director, further explains:

The spirit of the Coyote breaks the dimension of time and space. That's why Coyote can travel from the past to the future then back to the past again keeping the harmony of the universe intact. Coyote can also represent the new concept of the Aztlan for Chicanos. In the past, Aztlan was a physical place, the land itself. But after the nineteenth century when Europeans took the land away from Mexico, the concept of Aztlan became a mythical, magical place - a place without borders and boundaries. Chicanos find their identity in this new Aztlan. From there they can project to the past, retake the land, and enjoy the present in a universe of harmony.

Aztlan, the legendary homeland of the Aztecs, was claimed by Chicano nationalists as the mythical homeland of the Chicano nation – 'a voyage back to pre-Columbian times' (Fregoso and Chabram 1990: 205). In the film, Coyote becomes the dynamic embodiment of a much more fluid Aztlan, and a metaphor for a return to an era before Western conquest and subjugation. But this is not intended as, simply, a turning back of the clock; rather to reclaim the past, seize the present and re-imagine and work for another sense of community based on common politics rather than assumed ethnicities. As the Spanish shouting in the Utah canyon went in the film narrative: 'Born of your origins, brother Coyote, you transform the dark essences, freeing the Great River to fill its infinite course' (*'Desde tus origenes, hermano Coyote transforma las obscuras esencias en rocas para que el gran river siga su curso infinito'*). For me, this was a statement with cross-cultural fluidity: one that could be usefully compared to a history of Euro-American colonial impositions on the South, and an affirmation against racist hegemonies imposed upon people of colour in the colonial centres, both physical and institutional.

As Edward Said (1978) and Homi Bhabha (1994) make clear, the trickster figure has been likened to the wily and untrustworthy 'native' in Euro-American colonial narratives. Similarly Jean Baudrillard highlights US accusations of Saddam Hussein as 'a liar, a traitor, a bad player, a trickster' (Baudrillard 1995: 57). Yet such perspectives, on the one hand, preclude the West from the treachery associated with their own trickery, and on the other hand, obscure the counter-strategy that the trickster trope provides for the subaltern category. The latter perspective can be likened to James Scott's (1990) notion of 'hidden transcripts' which he uses to explore the more ambiguous aspects of political affirmation by subordinate groups. Nonetheless to reduce the trickster trope to just a political strategy is also to discount its multi-layered character. With the examples of Esu-Elegbara and the Signifying Monkey, Henry Louis Gates identifies the trickster figure as a pan-African and diasporic 'repository of figuration and interpretation' (Gates 1988: ix). These figures are

both double-voiced utterances, intertextual, and represent a metadiscourse inherent in 'black tradition' as opposed to Euro-American cultural hegemonies. Similarly Coyote too is a highly promiscuous signifier: courageous, stupid, evil, comic, playful, heroic, 'a kind of divinity', or as his name implies 'the owner of the earth', but above all a trickster-transformer (Hymes 1987: 52-56). In effect, Coyote is the embodiment of elusiveness that provides the key narrative journey in the film.

Beginning and ending with Coyote as a trickster-transformer, the film emphasises the poetic/political reclamation of the land. The film's ending, in which WASP Americans are turned into stone, is also an ironic take on the imperative to carve faces of 'white heroes' onto the side of Mount Rushmore (South Dakota) that has giant portraits of the US presidents Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt. This was a permanent signature of whiteness on the land, paving the way for conquest and a circumscribed democracy. Introductory scene-setting captions and shouting in Spanish in the Utah mountain valleys in the film narrative allude to the historical fact that this area up to the mid-nineteenth century was part of Mexico. Other takes on the US landscape are provided: ones which were distinct to those prevalent in John Wayne movies and the like, where cowboy adventures and panoramic scopic vision over mass landscapes especially around the Grand Canyon, Utah canyons and other mountain-scapes, act like a glorified tribute to the nation. The message here is 'this is all for the taking, so long as you're of European stock'. Koushik Banerjea elaborates on this phenomenon which he describes as 'propertied whiteness':

If trickery, pragmatism and coercion styled their own syncretic pact to appropriate Indian territories in the 'Old World', then this was merely coterminous with pioneering strategies of the 'pilgrim fathers' to assume Indian lands in the 'New'. This would be achieved through a legitimisation discourse premised on investment in whiteness as uniquely valuable property in a society predicated on the power differentials inscribed in phenotype. And, significantly, this would appear most frequently as a metaphysical assertion informing the physical claim to the rights and privileges conferred by 'ownership' of land and, for that matter, of the law of the land. (Banerjea 1999: 19)

The landscape becomes tied to a legitimisation discourse founded on whiteness. But rather than offering scopic views of the US landscape, *Nacione de Rocas* concentrates on the earth from which history and myth surfaced in ancient times. Along with scenes of Coyote emerging from the earth, staccato images of the Utah landscape pepper the film. The film's project was formulated as a challenge to the imagistic monopoly exercised by WASP narratives in recent history. It was also an attempt to reformulate the ethnicised and essentialised

differences between oppressed members of society, and demonstrate the formation of strategic alliances attuned to diasporic politics in the West.

'The Blacks of Europe'

A few comments on a project in the making conclude these dramatic journeys. The project involves my collaboration with an Irish playwright, Brian McAvera, on a theatre production. There is a growing need for comparative accounts of diasporic experiences in all kinds of sites as a means of further developing a foci on 'diasporas of exclusivism' referring to particular groups of migrants. Ajay Mishra (1994) describes this as 'diasporas of the border' (cited in Clifford 1997) referring to alliances between groups which has also been exemplified in the above project. Avtar Brah (1996) discusses the need to also consider 'diaspora spaces' as locations for the interchange between migrants and those considered 'indigenous' to the region. Such theoretical notions inform this project. It is not simply about making parallels such as comparing racism against the Asians and the Irish in England, or proclaiming the Irish as the 'Blacks of Europe'. It is of course the case that 'Black' can be an opportunistic category for the Irish, one which they can easily slip out of as and when they want to, unlike Blacks and/or Asians who carry indelible markers on their skins. Furthermore, to present the Irish as autochthonous 'Blacks' is to promote a dubious politics of indigeneity, and to add further violence to state legislation and policy against people of colour. Nonetheless, there is a level at which the notion of racism is applicable to Irish immigrants in England, even if the Irish can sometimes be complicit in the prevalence of racism against people of colour. The latter is particularly the case when histories are forgotten and in post-1990s Dublin, for instance, with its new migrants and refugees of colour who have become subjected to racially-motivated attacks. Similarly, the arrival of Asians into the then English and Irish dominated area of Southall, West London, led to the further sharpening of racial difference (McGarry 1990).

Additionally, there is a history of relationships between India, Ireland and Britain where, on the one hand, the Irish partook in the brutal oppression of Indians as part of colonial structures, one of the more extreme being the case of General Reginald Dyer who was responsible for the massacre of hundreds in the Jallianwala Bagh incident in India in 1919. On the other hand, however, the freedom struggle of the Republic of Ireland against British colonialism, especially in the 1920s, allowed for alliances between political figures in India (Holmes and Holmes 1997; Kapur 1997). The nationalist struggles against colonialism in both countries were largely supportive of each other. Udham Singh's arrival in London in 1934 with ambitions to kill the Punjab Governor, Michael O'Dwyer, is renowned for his fraternisation of Irish pubs, comrades and girlfriends. This was a revenge attack against O'Dwyer's role in the massacre at Jallianwallah Bagh in 1919. The easy replacement of the 'Paki' or the 'Hindoo' with the 'Paddie' was all too prevalent in the colonial menagerie

of representations. This persisted after India's independence in the failing heart of the (post-)imperial capital when notices were put up around several hotels in the 1950s and 1960s: 'No Blacks, No Irish, No Dogs' - quite ironic as we were always led to believe that the Englishman's best friend was his dog. It was no surprise that it was largely earlier migrants such as the Irish who had accommodation to rent for people from the former colonies. In contemporary times, such histories are easily forgotten in the blinkered antagonisms of the moment. One notable example is whilst we might begin to be seeing a relatively more benign relationship between Irish Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, the rise of racist attacks against Ireland's minorities in both Northern Ireland and the Republic are beginning to emerge. This might well be due to the increased attention to racial matters, especially in light of the only recent extension of the UK Race Relations Act (1965) to Northern Ireland in 1997. These two processes of overcoming Catholic-Protestant divides and finding other 'demons' are not entirely unrelated (*Fortnight*, May 1998). It is still the Orange and Green emblems that predominate in the Christian and white image of Ireland, pertaining to both Northern Ireland and the Republic.

It is such tensions, contradictions, and yet alliances, which have led to the development of the contemporary artistic project. These dynamics are explored through an exploration of three countries spanning three inter-linked generations: the Irish in India in the 1920s; Irish and South Asian migrants in London in the 1960s; and the Indian diasporic population in Ireland in the 1990s. Only a brief contextual basis for the work is provided here as the project is still in the pipeline. The drama has been hampered by the leviathan pace of fund-raising, particularly in the comparatively monoracial contexts of Northern Ireland where the regional Arts Council has problems distinguishing whether a project such as this constitutes a minority or majority interest, the former requiring a multiculturalist gaze (underpinned by less resources), the latter aligned to the assumptions and expectations of its majority white audiences. This brings us full circle to the opening of this article: faced with the institutionalised concretions of bureaucracy, other more dynamic expressions of cultural and political alliances become stunted, until, as is the nature of most discursive formations throughout time, strategies of tokenism, accommodation or appropriation are deployed. However, rather than just striking a death knell to the politics of the project, this can also be the key to its widespread transmission, and thus play a part in the continual production of arenas of politicised and critical aesthetics.

The space of the diasporic subject is first and foremost a provisional one, out of which more concrete expressions emerge. This can form the basis for a transnational politics in which 'dramas', both in the sense of artistic productions and visceral excesses that lend creative musculature to socio-political presence, do not just *reflect*, but *refract*, key issues of concern. The dramas cited here are intertextual and represent a metadiscourse of fantasy and imaginings on the social phenomena of diaspora. The artistic alliances have arisen out of personal,

political and creative positionings, not essences based on *a priori* perceptions of gender, religion, race/ethnicity or region/nation. This, however, has not been the only narrative, for there have been others propelled by considerations about entertainment and aesthetics. It is the latter ingredients that can, if successful, make such expressions compelling and memorable – moments of excess that inspire, rather than the ‘lemon-squeezing’ analysis which, for some of the above account, I might too be held guilty of. Without making grand claims to effect change, artistic expressions such as these can at best make us perceive subjectivity and collectivity in a different light or allow for a politics of (re)imagination. But significantly they can be about injecting polycultural entertainment with a more radical orientation; and these are just a few possibilities of the ongoing and mammoth task to transform hegemonies and their underlying logics in the West.

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Notes

1. I take the term, ‘lemon-squeezer’, from Mary Douglas’s (1967) use of it to critique the rigid parameters of structuralism, although I do not intend to take this any further to make a comparable argument.
2. Notable exceptions include essays on *qawwali* and *bhangra* in Oliver (1990), which began to be written about with the explosion of the Asian club scene in the mid-1980s. More recently, the focus has widened, a prominent example being Sharma, Hutnyk and Sharma’s (1996) volume on the politics of Asian dance music.
3. West is used as a historical, not a geographical, construct in the chapter, that is, I follow Stuart Hall’s argument on the West as a concept that (i) characterises societies into different categories; (ii) describes a set of images; (iii) provides a model of comparison; and (iv) functions as an ideology (Hall 1992: 277). These questions also informed a panel that I organised, Black and Write, including Koushik Banerjee, Ravinder Gill, Joyoti Grech and Amitava Srivastava, for a workshop called Sub-Continental Britain: Diasporic Culture and Politics at Goldsmiths College in 1999 along with John Hutnyk, Sanjay Sharma and Virinder Kalra.
4. See also Banerjee (1999).
5. Here I do not focus on dance companies, the most successful being Shobana Jeyasingh’s Dance Company. Nor do I look at radio, which was also a prominent medium for the dissemination of new writing.
6. Thanks to Jatinder Verma and Iqbal Hussain for these comments.

7. Even though I am aware of the different histories of race and ethnicity, they have also become interchangeable terms. In this article I prefer to prioritise race for its politicised role in anti-racist work for which ethnicity appears to have become a liberal alibi.

8. These are just a few of the artistic works that I have been involved with since 1993 pertinent to the main argument. Other productions include *Draupadi's Robes*, *Pregnant Pauses*, and a collective script, *Futures*, alongside numerous youth and community-orientated projects.

9. The title, *Bullets through the Golden Stream*, was intended to conjure up images of violence and peace, death and rejuvenation, gloom and hope. More explicitly, it is a reference to the Golden Temple complex, the grounds of which were occupied by Sikh militants, which consequently led to the raid by army personnel on June 5th 1984.

10. The exact number of deaths is subject to vacillation, and has not been properly verified. This is compounded by the fact that international human rights organisations have been restricted by the Indian government from carrying out a proper assessment of the conditions.

11. Even though the shrine is particularly associated with the development of Sikhism, Hindus also venerate the place due to intermarriage and similarities of religion and culture. One of the main principles of the four-doored shrine is that the *gurdwara* is open to all religions from all corners of the world.

12. It is notable that due to the vagaries of political opportunism, the Hindu chauvinist party, the Bharatiya Janata Party, began to show support for the regionalist branches of the Akali Dal as a means of opposition to the then Congress party in power. However, this does not mitigate the proposition that Sikhs, particularly turbaned males, should be seen as potential threats by turning to militancy and thus viewed under the suspicious lens of terrorism.

13. The 1994 tour was aided by voluntary help, funds from the Punjab Research Group, and an award by the Watermans Arts Centre Asian Drama Competition. On the basis of the success of the 1994 tour, more funds were made available from the Arts Council of England (Black Arts Subsidy), London Arts Board, London Borough Grants Unit, Foundation for Sports and the Arts, and InPace (Institute of Punjabi Arts and Culture) for the 1997 tour.

14. The play was also a response to the state of theatrical affairs at the time, where most of the British Asian plays being produced were of a very limited political scope. Many of them concentrated on mystical themes, inter-generational misunderstandings, or arranged marriage. Thankfully, this limited purview is not the case now.

15. The drama was produced in English for the benefit of a mainstream audience and to fulfil our quota towards funding bodies. However, there were two performances predominantly in Punjabi as part of the 1997 tour.

16. Utah is part of the area ceded by Mexico to the USA in 1848 and developed by the Mormons, a settler Christian community.

17. The term, Chicano, extends to people from Mexico, sometimes including Central American countries. When combined with Latino, the appellation extends further south to include the people of Latin America. Chicano constituted a move away from terms such as Hispanics, Pocho (half-breeds), and Spanish/Mexican American as hyphenated identities. It was a radical term used to affirm modes of self-representation from the 1960s. However, as Rosa Linda Fregosa and Angie Chabram argue, Chicano can become problematic if it is just seen as 'a static, fixed, and one-dimensional formulation' (1990: 205).
18. See Prashad (2000b) for a critique of the 'model minority' conception of South Asians in the US, which he argues, is inherently racist.

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Rural Roots of the Sikh Diaspora

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Despite considerable expertise and some detailed studies, charting a satisfactory history of Sikh emigration remains a hazardous undertaking, even more so for the early period beginning in the 1860s. Among the many puzzles involved in this process, this paper addresses just one; the predominance of rural *Jat* Sikhs. From the colonial period down to the present era, Punjabi emigration has been overwhelmingly drawn from this section of the community. This article attempts to shed light on this phenomenon by examining the colonial impact on the Punjab countryside. In particular it draws attention to the links between rural army recruitment and overseas migration.

At the end of the twentieth century, out of a total Sikh population of 16 million, one million Sikhs lived abroad. The overwhelming proportion of this overseas population had migrated in the post-colonial era, but the tradition of overseas migration had been historically rooted in the colonial era, starting with the exile of Sikh dissidents such as Bhai Maharaj Singh to the Far East followed by a more illustrious son of Punjab, Prince Duleep Singh to Britain in 1854. Larger scale Sikh migration began in the 1860s, but its history still remains chiefly unexplored. Fragmentary accounts are in existence for the Far East, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, and Australia, while for Malaya, Sandhu's¹ work stands above all as a fine specimen, although it is not exclusively on Sikhs; for New Zealand, McLeod² has combined, as an ideal for such studies, a judicious search of official records with oral interviews. For Western countries, the United States is well covered by La Brack³ while Canadian Sikhs yet need a comprehensive study despite laudable work by Johnston⁴ and others. Similarly British Sikhs are yet to find a proper study, and the post 1980s period, settlement of Sikh political refugees in such countries as Holland and Germany awaits its scholar. Finally, Sikh settlement in East Africa is also a neglected subject despite some recent research.

The first wave of migration which saw around five thousand Sikhs leave Punjab from the region's annexation by the British in 1849 to the turn of the twentieth century has been even less explored. This period is nonetheless historically significant, as it was during this half century that the prevailing pattern was established of rural Sikh *Jats* dominating the migration process. Historians still know little about the motives for this migration, the information channels available to migrants about overseas countries, the agencies, which took them abroad, or the reasons for the selection of destinations. From the 1890s, when numbers increased substantially, official data does, however, become more substantial.

Among the many unanswered questions concerning Sikh migration from the colonial Punjab, this article addresses just one, why have rural Jat Sikhs dominated this process? This pattern contrasts with that of other Indian communities, for example the Gujaratis, where migrants have tended to be drawn from urban trading castes. Whenever we think of early Punjabi emigrants, however, we are usually talking about peasants - mainly Jats, joined by a small number of *Ramgarhias* and *Chamars* - hailing from a cluster of villages in the Central Punjab. Perhaps as much as 95 per cent of overseas Sikhs are of rural origin. Even acknowledging that Sikh society remains predominantly rural in character, the under-representation of urban population in the migration process is remarkable. Comparative migration studies point to the importance of education and wealth in encouraging mobility; the urban Sikh and for that matter Hindu populations of the Punjab should on this account have been more heavily involved in migration. While the concentration of Sikh migration from a small rural tract in the Punjab's central districts may be understood as resulting from chain migration once this process was underway, this does not help us to explain its initiating impulses.

The geographical as well as social concentration of migration is quite remarkable. Although information on early emigrants' origins is difficult to obtain, it can be conjectured that around 80 per cent of migrants were drawn from villages in the *Malwa* and *Majha* regions, with the remainder drawn from the *Doaba*. Within these regions, it is further possible, indeed desirable to specify a cluster of migrant, sending villages, as preliminary analysis suggests that particular pockets of the central districts of Punjab emerged as main centres of emigration to the Far East and then to North America. One way to understand these clusters would be to examine the cultural norms of their populations and see whether these especially predisposed the inhabitants to the unsettling process of overseas migration. Such a study is yet to appear. This article on the other hand focuses on another possible explanation in terms of the way in which the colonial administration may have encouraged the peasantry's crucial links abroad.

The Origins of Rural Emigration

The establishment of British rule in 1849 saw the spread of western education and improvements in the transportation infrastructure which enabled both ideas and goods to travel more widely in the Punjab than ever before. The world of the self-sufficient 'village republic' if it had ever existed was ended. The Punjab became increasingly linked into a new world economy as a producer of wheat, rice and cotton. These commercial crops could be grown on a vast scale following the massive irrigation development of the closing decades of the nineteenth century.⁵ At the same time as the Punjab became India's granary, it emerged as its sword-arm, following the decision of the British Indian Army to draw its main recruits from the so-called 'martial races' of the region. These two developments in combination led many Punjabis to venture out, first within the province from the central districts to the newly irrigated former wastelands of

the Western areas, and then abroad. Both these factors need further elaboration as they effectively changed the rural peasantry's social outlook by vastly increasing their fortunes and options.

Canal Colonies

The advent of the 'Canal Irrigation Project' to 'bars' - the wasteland areas of the Punjab - led to rapid migration from the central to the western districts. Under the 'Canal Colonies' scheme, surplus river water was channelled into newly built canals in the sparsely populated lands in the western Punjab.⁶ The British view of Sikh Jats as able and 'sturdy cultivators' led them to encourage this community's migration through the reservation of land in the canal colonies either as peasant proprietors or under the schemes for retired soldiers. This enabled thousands of Sikh Punjabi peasants to cultivate the larger irrigated lands of Canal Colonies, resulting in migration from Amritsar, Jullundur, Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur and Ludhiana to the Canal Colony districts of Lahore, Lyallpur, Multan, Montgomery, Jhang and Shahpur. Thus in the Chenab Colony in the Lyallpur district, migrant peasants rose in number by 1901 to 221,445 and to 280,232 in 1911. They cultivated the carefully laid out parcels of land known as squares. Previously the population had been most concentrated along river stretches and in the sub-montane districts of high rainfall. New cities such as Lyallpur and Montgomery were established in the canal colony areas. Lyallpur's population increased from a mere 60,306 in 1891 to 2,157,000 some sixty years later. Large scale migration took place from the crowded eastern Punjab districts to new and more fertile agricultural land between the Jhelum and the Sutlej. In terms of the shift of population across various districts of the Punjab, the Canal Colonies introduced profound demographic changes.

The increased productivity of Canal Colony farms created a surplus of agricultural produce, thereby raising many farmers' incomes. This wealth opened up the possibility that overseas migration could be afforded. The colonial Punjab's agricultural prosperity was not, however, confined just to the Canal Colonies: produce prices and land values rose throughout the province. By the turn of the century, some peasant families felt able to send one of their men abroad as they could pay for the fare to the far East and then onwards to the Pacific States. The fare of Rs 200 from Calcutta to Hong Kong and then to Vancouver represented the price of two acres of land by the turn of the century. The responsiveness of Punjabi villagers to opportunities in far lying countries, 'Tel a' (Australia), 'Mirkin' (America) and later 'Vilayat' (Britain) was facilitated by the rural Punjab economy's integration into the international economy.

Newly mobile peasants had also to undergo changes in their social outlook, though it is difficult to speculate on such a subject as peasants' social psychology. Certainly the material conditions of the 'middle' peasantry had become favourable for wider migration. It might also be speculated that internal migration processes whether from central to West Punjab, or from villages to newly emerging urban centres created an expansive attitude in which overseas

migration could be contemplated.

Army Connections: Military-Jat Sikh-Overseas Nexus

While agrarian changes encouraged internal migration and produced an environment which motivated some sections of the Punjabi peasantry to seek foreign fortunes, it was the Government of India's policy to recruit Punjab's 'sturdy Sikh peasantry' into the army, which eventually played a major part in encouraging overseas migration.

A vast literature, which need not be repeated here, has emerged surrounding the British identification of certain Punjabi communities in the post-1857 decades as 'martial races'.⁷ What is noteworthy is the consequent 'Punjabisation' of the British India Army following the monopolisation of recruitment by the 'martial races.' Rural Jat Sikhs took their place among these, along with Muslim *Rajputs* from the Salt Range and Hindu *Dogras* from what is contemporary Himachel Pradesh. From 1858 to the First World War, the share of Sikhs in the Indian Army increased sharply. They were drawn overwhelmingly from the rural Sikh Jat community. Urban *Khairis* and *Aroras* were conspicuously absent. Sikh regiments were deployed in many British colonies and protectorates from the Far East to Africa. Sikh soldiers also fought in the European theatres during the two world wars.

Retired Sikh soldiers benefited from plots of land in the Canal Colonies. Some, however, extended their sojourn overseas where they were in particular demand as reliable employees in police and other security services and as railway employees. The Government of India itself recruited Sikhs for security duties in the Far East. When this policy was dropped, a tradition of Sikh employment in these professions had been established and was continued by private agencies. In both instances, the military connection was crucial for obtaining overseas employment.

British officials with Punjab connections acted in some instances as overseas recruitment contractors for rural Sikhs. Thus, when a British officer, C.V. Creagh, Deputy Superintendent of Police, was transferred from Sind to Hong Kong in 1865-6, he recommended his trusty Sikh police men from Punjab for the Colony's new police. This resulted in 100 Sikh migrants going to Hong Kong in June 1867 - perhaps the first of Sikh emigrants abroad. Officials were so impressed that they recommended further recruitment.⁸ By 1939, Hong Kong's police force was comprised of 774 Indians, almost all Sikhs, and 272 Europeans and 1140 Chinese. It was only in 1952 that the Hong Kong police force was indigenised. Many of its former Sikh employees migrated to the United Kingdom.

Similarly, emigration to Malaysia was facilitated by army connections. Over 170 Sikhs and a few Pathans were recruited by Captain Speedy in 1873 to combat Chinese insurgency among Perak's tin mines. These Sikh recruits were subsequently drafted into other government services and formed the nucleus of state security forces, following the Malaya States' passage into British control. As the security forces expanded, the government started recruiting directly from

the Punjab. When news of opportunities in Malaya spread, many independent Sikh migrants arrived and obtained employment in Perak's mines. However, the Malay States Guides and the Straits Settlements (Penang, Malacca and Singapore) Sikh Contingent, two of the principal government bodies employing Sikhs, were disbanded in 1911 and 1926 respectively. Malaya's Sikh population - mainly drawn from rural peasantry, was estimated at 8,295 in 1921. It increased to 15,145 in 1931 and remained at that figure until independence in 1965. The occupational structure reflected the peasant background of the majority of the migrants, with Sikhs working as policemen, watchmen, dairy farmers and bullock cart drivers until the end of the Second World War.

Sikh servicemen at the expiration of their contracts in Malaysia possessed two options, either to return to Punjab, or to seek further fortunes in the neighbouring countries. The most resourceful could sail towards America - a dream every emigrant Sikh had nurtured. Many Sikhs drifted to neighbouring Thailand or Sumatra, while more ambitious individuals set out for Australia and New Zealand. The former destination had attracted some Sikhs in the 1890s from Hong Kong and the Malayan States who had completed ten-year contracts with police and security services. Similarly a few retired policemen from Hong Kong entered New Zealand. After landing in New Zealand, some left for Fiji lured perhaps by stories of sugar-cane fortunes. Sikh policemen were also recruited for Fiji from Shanghai and Hong Kong under contract. Some probably stayed after their contract expired.

The army connection also partly facilitated rural Sikhs' entry to East Africa. After assuming the Imperial British East African Company's responsibilities in 1895, the British Government decided to establish the East African Rifles with headquarters in Mombasa. At the outset, it comprised 300 Sikh soldiers, 300 Swahilis and 100 Sudanese. During the following years the East Africa Rifles participated in campaigns against Arab rebels and other insurgents. Sikh troops were also employed to quell the mutiny by Sudanese troops in October 1897. However, the contingent was not replaced at the expiration of its contract in 1900. In 1898, the Uganda Rifles and the East Africa Rifles were merged into the newly founded King's African Rifles for regular service in Nyasaland and Somaliland as well as Uganda and the East Africa Protectorate.

Similarly, the beginning of Sikh migration to North America is also attributed to army connections. It is generally said that after parading in London for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887, a Sikh regiment went to British Columbia before returning home.⁹ In the following years, some of these former servicemen returned as emigrants to the Pacific Coast ports of San Francisco and Victoria. These emigrants were joined by Sikhs from the Far East who after serving their terms in police or army also sailed towards America. Sir Harry Johnson, who had met some of these Sikhs observed:

...reserve soldiers of the Indian army who have served with the Malay police or the Hong Kong police.. in the spirit of adventure drifted across to the Philippines Islands and engaged themselves in the services of Americans.. From there they found their way to

Hawaii and then to the States, and some of them stayed in California and others came on.¹⁰

In this way, between 1904-8, over five thousand Sikhs had settled in British Columbia. A fair proportion of these were ex-army men.

Policy Changes

By the close of the nineteenth century, the Government of India's attitude to Sikh emigration had begun to change. It not only ceased to actively recruit Sikhs for overseas service itself, but began to frown upon recruitment by other means as well and virtually prohibited fresh emigration altogether.

A number of factors lay behind this change of heart. First, there were fears of a Sikh 'brain drain' or perhaps it should be 'brawn drain' as other colonies and protectorates outbid its demands for servicemen's pay. Second, although very remote, was the possibility that Sikhs might through overseas military enlistment one day be drawn into conflict with their British Indian Army counterparts. Thirdly, some Sikh emigrants appeared to be a constant source of administrative trouble and political embarrassment to their home governments. Sikhs entering or trying to enter 'white' countries such as South Africa, Canada, the United States and Australia, made many complaints about their 'discrimination' policies. These countries did not want 'coloured' migrants. But Sikh migrants, especially ex-servicemen thought they should be on par with citizens of the United Kingdom.¹¹ These developments created serious problems for the Government of India. Finally, at the turn of the century, Sikh migrants in Canada, America and the Far East were becoming involved in revolutionary activities, with schemes to send arms and money to India.

Thus, government-sponsored emigration was ended. But, by this time, sufficient Sikh peasants had gone abroad to have a wider impact on the Punjab. Soldiers who saw distant lands preferred to settle away from the sedentary rural life. Since army service was usually short-term, on retirement many of them sought their fortunes abroad. Army recruitment became a liberating outlet for young men tied to the traditional occupation of farming. By enlisting in the army, they could venture to see the outside world either as part of regimental service or through emigrating on retirement.

Indentured Labour

Punjab Sikhs also migrated overseas in the closing decades of the nineteenth century as indentured labourers. The Caribbean and South and East Africa were the main destinations for Indian indentured labourers. In the former region, they worked on European-owned plantations as a 'free' but cheap labour force following the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1807. In Africa, they were employed in infrastructural developments, especially railway construction. By the 1880s, when the shipping agencies came to Punjab for recruitment under the indentured labourer scheme, over two million Indians had already been

spread across both self-governing dominions and colonies - as a truly imperial phenomena.¹² The East India Company had introduced a system of indenture in the 1830s.¹³ Although shipping agents were issued new legal requirements, the indentured system fell far short of its ideals and became a 'new system of slavery'.¹⁴

Only a few Punjabis were enlisted by colonial agents from the 1860s onwards. Their earliest destination was Fiji. Its indentured labourers had at first been drawn from south India, but by the 1880s, over two-thirds of Fiji's new recruits were enlisted from North Western Provinces, and a few came from the Punjab. However, Punjab's entry into the indentured system in the 1870s was a 'disappointment'. Sir Everard Thurn, Fiji's governor, observed that the Punjabis' previous occupation as 'soldiers or something of that sort' made them unused to field labour.¹⁵ Those Punjabis recruited by an agent in 1914 complained bitterly of their broken dreams in Fiji, where Indian labour had come mainly from the hinterlands of Baroda. These Punjabis sent a petition complaining:

We, the Punjabis, now residing in Fiji islands left our country on the inducement and representation of Wali Mohamed and Atta Mohamed; castes Syed, residents of Kamana, Tahsil Nawanshahar, District Jullundur, Punjab. They have been sending our people during the last five years and on each steamer 45 or 46 men are being emigrated while they take 35 Rupees as their commission for each individual and 5 Rupees from the Shipping Company.¹⁶

A similar situation existed in the Caribbean. The first few hundred Punjabi emigrants were found 'unsuitable' by the planters in the West Indies who protested against these unusual Indians who

....are very objectionable as field labour. Many absconded to the Spanish Main, refused to work in the fields, and nearly all have been unruly and troublesome.¹⁷

The African protectorates attracted both indentured and free labour drawn chiefly from rural Punjab. Indentured labourers were recruited mainly for the Ugandan Railways project in the 1890s. The railway line was constructed by migrant labour from Punjab, a majority of them Muslims with the remainder being Sikhs and Hindus. The Sikhs were mostly artisans of the Ramgarhia class. As the railway line progressed, imported labour rose sharply, from 3,948 in 1896 to 6,086 in 1897, and another 13,000 men arrived in 1898.¹⁸ A scheme of plots of lands for Indians employed on the railways was devised as an inducement for permanent settlement, but this was not carried out. Nevertheless, many labourers stayed on. Uganda's Indian community rapidly expanded, and from 1903 it started competing with the Arabs and Swahilis as traders.

In Kenya, over three thousand Sikhs were employed in the railways and security services during 1895-1901.¹⁹ After the railway line was completed,

many Sikhs returned to Punjab. By the 1911 census, just 324 Sikhs remained among 2216 Indian migrants. Their strength increased slowly to 1,619 out of the 45,633 Indians who were enumerated in 1921. A second phase between 1920 and 1929 saw many skilled workers, mainly Ramgarhias, migrate to Kenya. By 1948, the Sikh population of Kenya was 10,663, and by the time Kenya gained freedom in 1960, it had increased to 21,169. This population was mostly concentrated in Nairobi and the coastal province, Mombasa. Its occupational structure was highly skewed towards skilled jobs: carpenters, fitters, turners, builders, electricians, along with clerks, teachers, contractors and shopkeepers. After independence, under pressure from Black African nationalists, many Sikhs emigrated to the United Kingdom and other countries.²⁰

Areas of Origin

The geographical concentration of the Sikhs' colonial emigration process has already been alluded to. We have noted that it was clusters of villages in the three geographical regions of the Malwa, Doaba and Majha which were the main sending areas of overseas migrants. Malwa is a vast tract east of the River Sutlej, but for our purposes, this means effectively south western Malwa comprising Ludhiana, Ferozepore and Bathinda districts only. Doaba lies between the Sutlej and Beas rivers, comprising the districts of Kapurthala, Jullundur and Hoshiarpur. Majha is a tract of plain between the Beas and Ravi rivers, covering the districts of Lahore and Amritsar. Within these three regions, there emerged a nucleus of villages which sent a majority of the Sikh migrants abroad. In the Doaba, these tracts can further be identified as comprising the *tahsil* (revenue sub-division) of Garhshankar in Hoshiarpur district, and the *tahsils* of Nawanshahar and Phillaur in Jullundur district.²¹ In the Malwa, Moga *tahsil* of Ferozepore along with Jagraon of Ludhiana district emerged as the nucleus of Sikh emigration. In the Majha, a narrow tract of villages lying between Tarn Taran *tahsil* of Amritsar and Lahore provided many emigrants. Within these *tahsils*, the number of migrants varied even between neighbouring villages. In the three *tahsils* of Eastern Doaba, large villages such as Bundala, Rurki, Raipur, Karnana, Jandiala, Mothada Khurd, sent a high proportion of their residents abroad. In the Malwa region, villages such as Dhudike and surrounding villages in Moga *tahsil*, provided many emigrants, while Binjal and villages around Jagraon also sent comparatively more Sikh emigrants abroad. These patterns are further complicated by changes over time. A discernible shift is noticeable in the period between the 1880s and the 1940s. In the 1880s, it was predominantly Malwa and Majha Sikhs who migrated, while later in the 1910s, Doaba comes into the picture with many peasants from the three *tahsils* heading for the Pacific States of North America. Then there is the odd case of a nucleus of villages around Gujranwala from which Aroras, a class of petty traders among Sikhs, migrated to Thailand in the early decades of the 20th century, with villages like Philloke having sent scores of them.²²

Thus within the overall picture of predominant rural Sikh emigration from central Punjab during the colonial rule, there are a great many puzzles. A

preliminary list of such areas of emigration which emerged in particular periods of colonial emigration is indicated below.

Table One: Characteristics of Sikh Emigration: Areas and Classes , 1860s-1940s

<u>Period</u>	<u>Destinations</u>	<u>Region</u>	<u>Tahsil belt</u>	<u>Social Class</u>
1860s	Far East	Malwa/Majha	Moga-Amritsar	Jats
1880s	East Africa	Majha/Doaba	Patti-Nakodar	Jats/Ramgharias
1890s	Far East	Malwa/Doaba	Jagraon-Phillaur	Jats
1900s	N. America	Doaba/Majha	Jalandhar-Lahore	Jats
1920s -1940s	Britain	Doaba	N/shahar- Garhshankar	Jats/Bhatras

Can we identify some common threads to explain this pattern? A colonial officer with much expertise on rural Punjab, Malcolm Darling, attributed the Jat Sikhs' recruitment from the central districts as resulting from the fragmentation of land-holdings which had weakened their family support structures.²³ For some of these regions, the lower level of ground water had also made Persian Well irrigation investment rather prohibitive. Both these factors, Malcolm noted, contributed to the shrinkage of peasants' incomes, some of whom considered migrating abroad. Kessinger, in his study of a Doaba village, further underlined economic motives behind Vilayatpur peasants' emigration. Their desire for the 'acquisition of wealth' to purchase land and build *pucca* brick houses was pushing some of them abroad. However, a monocausal economic explanation for migration raises many problems. It was not poor peasants who migrated, but those who possessed substantial land and came from larger families. While pressure of population in the bigger villages of Majha, Malwa may have exerted an impact, army recruitment was more significant in creating an environment for overseas emigration.

The costs of emigration were out of the reach of the poorer peasants who some writers have seen as being driven to departure by land fragmentation. Rather than to escape poverty, emigration was embarked upon to earn money to buy more land, or to redeem an already mortgaged family land. In the pre-World War II period, a Sikh migrant needed about Rs60 in cash to travel to the Far East or East Africa - the approximate travel expenses between the Punjab and these areas. In many cases, they went aided by a sympathetic relative or friend who had lent money or sent the necessary fare for the passage. The decision to migrate was always a collective one for the family: an important argument was to raise the family status through emigration. In such cases, McLeod reported that many Sikhs had emigrated to New Zealand to restore family 'status' as

suggested by their interviews:

...land, housing, and marriage were three familial concerns which prompted emigration. Within this, the sustaining or the redeeming of *izzat* might also be seen as a primary impulse.²⁴

Still there is no definite answer as to how individuals calculated risks vis-à-vis the gains projected, or how the family was involved in this decision-making process or indeed the role of such a factor as Sikh notion of *izzat* (family honour) often alluded to in the literature but hardly ever elaborated. Moreover, what was the state of information available to intending migrants to overseas countries? Obviously these questions and the emergence of clusters of emigration villages in particular regions of central Punjab requires a more detailed analysis.

Towards A 'Culture of Migration'

The clusters of sending villages may be partly explained by the development within them of a 'culture of migration.' This may have been originally rooted in family experiences of migration from the central Punjab to the Canal Colonies, creating attitudes which were then transferred to overseas migration. This culture was also reinforced by army recruitment. It stemmed in part from retired servicemen's narration to the young of their adventures, while their brick built houses lent authority to tales of overseas riches. Gradually, the migration experience of the Punjab peasants found cultural expressions through popular songs and folklore.²⁵ Not all praised this experience, as seen in the laments of Punjabi women for absent husbands serving in the Indian Army:

*The wedded and newly wedded brides gather around
Curse the English Lord, who has taken their men to wars abroad
O Sahib, if brides wait for too long, you will lose the war.*

At Punjabi fairs held regularly throughout the year, folk singers gently mocked many emigrants' dreams:

*For twelve years you roamed abroad
for what fortune?
How much did you bring in return?
For all those lost years abroad?*²⁶

Other popular songs, however, celebrated the wealth from abroad and *pardesi* (overseas) life found much appreciation. Thus, as the colonial era ended, a 'culture of migration' appeared in certain regions of the Punjab. Several factors reinforced it at the end of empire. The British departure from India in August 1947 saw the partition of Punjab. This tragedy led not only to a vast process of internal migration, but the uprooting also encouraged emigration to overseas countries. The old connections abroad were eagerly exploited by many unsettled peasants. The post-war demand for labour in the UK and the liberalisation of immigration policies in the United States and Canada encouraged migration on a

larger scale than ever before. This built, however, on the pioneering efforts of the colonial era, as old Sikh migrants sponsored their relatives. A process of chain migration built up which saw the Sikh population of Canada climb to 195,000 by the time of the 1991 census.²⁷ The existence of overseas connections became a much sought-after family status symbol.

Conclusion

Sikh emigration abroad was facilitated by specific policies of the colonial state. Some of these policies, first directly through army recruitment and secondly by government assisted agencies, almost ensured that individuals who ventured abroad were of a peasant background, though there was no bar on urban migration. As a result, a 'culture of migration' emerged in a nucleus of central Punjabi villages, which partly explains the preponderance of migrants drawn from them. However, much research remains to be done to establish the cultural roots of individuals' motives in undertaking overseas journeys. We also require to know more about the interaction of local economic conditions and colonial agrarian and army recruitment policies in encouraging such heavy emigration from certain tracts of the Doaba, Majha and Malwa.

Notes

1. K.S. Sandhu, *Indians in Malaya: Some Aspects of Their Immigration and Settlement 1769-1957* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).
2. W.H. McLeod, *Punjabis in New Zealand* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak University Press, 1986).
3. Bruce La Brack, *The Sikhs of Northern California 1904-1986* (New York: AMS Press, 1988).
4. H. Johnston, 'The Development of Punjabi Community in Vancouver since 1961' *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, XX, 2 (1988), 1-19. See also N. Buchignani et al, *Continuous Journey: A Social History of South Asians in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985).
5. Imran Ali, *Punjab Under Imperialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).
6. *Ibid.*
7. See for example, G. MacMunn, *The Martial Races of India* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston & Co. 1933); D. Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army 1860-1940* (London: Macmillan, 1994); S. Vohra, 'The Punjabis in the British Army: Some Aspects of Loyalty' *Journal of the United Services Institute of India* 116, 486 (1986), 336-43.
8. Government of Hong Kong, *Blue Books* (Various years); see also K.N. Vaid, *The Overseas Indian Community in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, 1972). In 1871, 182 Sikhs and 126 Muslims from the Punjab worked in the Colony's police force.
9. D.S. Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora. The Search for Statehood* (London: UCL Press 1999), 51.

10. Johnson's account of Sikh emigration is contained in *Report of the Committee on Emigration from India*, 1910, Comm. 5193, Minutes of Evidence.
11. Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora*, 87.
12. For details of Indian indentured labourers in overseas territories, see R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas. An Introduction* (London: UCL Press, 1997), 59-60.
13. After the Law Commission report presented by Macaulay, reforms were enacted in 1837 which included: strict enforcing of passage regulations; a written contract; 5 years service renewable for a further 5 year term; the return of the emigrant to the port of his departure and the women's quota at 25 per cent. The indentured system was abandoned in 1920.
14. Hugh Tinker used this phrase in his influential 1974 study, quoting Lord John Russell. H. Tinker, *A New System of slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920* (London: Oxford University Press).
15. Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora*, 47.
16. The letter was sent to the Deputy Commissioner of the Jullundur district from which the 46 Punjabi emigrants had come. *Ibid.*
17. *Annual Report for Trinidad 1902-3* cited in Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*, 58.
18. M.F. Hill, *Permanent Way: The Story of the Kenya and Uganda Railway* (Nairobi: East African Literatures Bureau, 1949), 189, 240.
19. See J.S. Mangat, *A History of the Asians in East Africa 1886 to 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
20. Kenya's Asian population declined from 176,000 in 1962 to 78,600 in 1979.
21. Districts have been renamed and reorganised in the Punjab State since independence. Nawanshahr and Moga are both districts. Phagwara is part of Kapurthala district. The boundaries of Tarn Taran and Patti tahsils are substantially different from the colonial era.
22. I owe this information to Dr. P.S. Kapur.
23. Malcolm Darling (1880-1969) was a middle-ranking British officer who travelled widely across the countryside on horseback to find out more about the Punjab peasantry.; His classic works include: *The Punjab Peasantry in Prosperity and Debt* (first published 1925) (New Delhi: Manohar, 1977); *Rusticus Loquitor or the Old Light on the New in a Punjab Village* (London: Oxford University Press, 1930).
24. McLeod, *Punjabis in New Zealand*, 23.
25. See Nahar Singh, *Malve de look geet* (Patiala: Punjabi University Press, 1989) 4 vols.
26. Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora*, 45.
27. *Ibid.*, 57.

Parliamentary Debate: Punjabi Community

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Debate

Mr. John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington): Two years ago, I introduced an Adjournment debate on the Irish community in Britain, partly because of my Irish background and partly because of the large number of my constituents who were of Irish origin. Surprisingly, that was the first debate on that subject in Parliament. The second largest ethnic minority in my constituency are members of the Asian community who derive their origin from the Punjab. This is the first time that a British Parliament has specifically addressed the Punjabi community in Britain. Not only do I represent a constituency with more than 15,000 community members whose origins lie in the Punjab, but I am the founding chair of the all-party group on the Punjabi community. Some of its members may want to make brief contributions to the debate.

Language can be important, especially when dealing with Britain's colonial past, so let me first clarify an issue of pronunciation. Many of my Punjabi friends and colleagues advise me that the terms 'Punjab' and 'Punjabi' are colonial mispronunciations of the more exact pronunciations 'Panjab' and 'Panjabi'. To remedy that historical error apart from trying to learn Punjabi at a local school - I shall pronounce Punjab as 'Panjab'.

The Punjab means the land of the five rivers. It has a history that flows from the ancient civilisation of the Indus valley in approximately 2000 BC, through a series of empires and Mogul dynasties, to the founding of Sikhism in the 15th century. It is important to note that Sikhism is neither sectarian nor communal. Although it gave the Punjab a unique culture, its gift was secular tolerance in government and public life. The Punjab came under British rule in the 19th century and, on independence in 1947, the region was split between India and Pakistan, leaving a much smaller state of Punjab.

The relationship between Britain and the people of the Punjab in the colonial era formed the basis on which Punjabis migrated to this country in the latter half of the last century. The pattern of migration followed the pattern of settlement by my Irish community. In my area of west London, the first Punjabis often came to Britain to work in hard, low-paid jobs that found it hard to attract labour. They sometimes found work in medicine, where there were shortages of trained and skilled

professionals. Before long, families were sent for and the process of permanent settlement was under way. Punjabi migration came not only from the Punjab, but from the Punjabi diaspora, which extended across the British empire, especially East Africa.

After nearly 50 years, we can celebrate a thriving Punjabi community in Britain. The industrious and talented first generation is giving way to a self-confident and increasingly successful second and third generation. It is time to take stock of how the community is faring within our society and what issues the Government should be addressing in relation to it. But it has been difficult to find precise information on the Punjabi community in Britain. As with the Irish, there has been no specific question within the British census to identify Punjabi speakers or Sikhs. The Government, in particular the Minister, should be congratulated on producing the breakthrough that allows the Irish and Gaelic languages, and Sikhism as a religion, to be included in the 2001 census. However, regret has been expressed that the progressive approach has not been applied to Punjabi speakers in the form of a question on the Punjabi language. I urge reconsideration of this issue even at this late stage. The fact that members of the Punjabi-speaking community will not be counted in an identifiable form in the next census increases their fear that they do not count in the eyes of policy makers. That issue should be addressed.

It was estimated from the figures in the 1991 census that the British population included 840,000 people from India, of whom it was suggested 51 per cent were Sikh, and 477,000 people from Pakistan, of whom 48,000 had Punjabi as their main language. In fact, Punjabi is the most common language among British Asians and has become the second language in Britain used by an estimated 1.3 million people - including me, in a very stilted form at this stage. That is reflected in the fact that the number of entrants for GSCE and A-level examinations in Punjabi outstrips those for all other Asian languages. If central and local government bodies are to plan the provision and development of policies and services in an effective and culturally sensitive way, information is required on this substantial section of our community, and that information can come only from the census.

Based on what we already know about the Punjabi community in Britain, we are able to celebrate an incredibly successful community. Without wishing to fall into using stereotypes of Punjabis, I believe that there are numerous examples where the dedication, talent and industriousness of members of the Punjabi community have put them at the forefront of life in the public, private and community sectors. In virtually every walk of life, members of the Punjabi community are prominent. In celebrating this success, we must also address the outstanding concerns of the Punjabi community and create an agenda of policy proposals to tackle them.

First, we need to look at the way in which we fail in many instances to support family life in the Punjabi community. In the eyes of many in that community, the visa system is still discriminatory; too often, families are split at key moments of

celebration-births and weddings - and at times of sadness - sickness and funerals. Too many hon. Members have experienced the problems and the vagaries of the visa system. I applaud the Government for restoring the appeal mechanism; however, there are many miles to go to improve that system.

Many people feel that the proposal to introduce bonds is a retrograde step. First, they feel that it is discriminatory because it applies only to the Indian sub-continent. Secondly, there are concerns that it discriminates on grounds of wealth because the bond is set so high that people from low-income families will not be able to pay it. In our view, many organisations would want to fund the bond - for example, Gurdwaras in their charitable role.

Mr. Marsha Singh (Bradford West): Does my hon. Friend accept in part that the demand for the bond system originated in those ethnic minority communities who saw a guarantee system as an effective way of gaining the admittance of a relative who had previously been refused entry?

Mr. McDonnell : I agree. The demand for the bond system arose largely from the Asian community itself; therefore it is important that we ensure that this reform is carried out correctly and that, when we introduce the bond system, it is done in such a way that it does not discriminate and is of practical assistance. It must not be a fob to avoid reform of the system overall and eradication of what is often seen as racism.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Does my hon. Friend also accept that many in constituencies such as mine and his are very poor and that the bond system will discriminate against the poorest and prevent them having family reunions because they will be unable to put up the appropriate bond or find anyone to do so?

Mr. McDonnell : That is why many have expressed concern. It has been proposed that the bond be on a sliding scale, related to the wealth of the individual or family, and that organisations such as Gurdwaras should be allowed to support individual families on a charitable basis. In addition, there are many concerns about the process of applying for a visa within the Punjab, especially about the long journeys that must be undertaken to Delhi and elsewhere. For that reason, we welcome the Government's initiative in establishing a temporary consulate in Chandigarh, which will be a breakthrough for the Punjabi community here and in India.

Ms Jenny Jones (Wolverhampton, South-West): I am pleased that my hon. Friend has raised this issue. A couple of weeks ago, I visited India as part of a delegation. Some of the delegation had business in Delhi and undertook the 16-hour train journey from the Punjab. My hon. Friend may be aware that the extra travelling time for those of my constituents who have to travel from the west of Punjab is an obstacle for those who may wish to apply quickly for a visa - for instance, to attend a relative's funeral.

Mr. McDonnell : My hon. Friend demonstrates the need for a more creative approach. We need to balance security and accurate decision making with the needs

of the local community - particularly of those who are ill able to afford or endure a long journey, and especially people such as those mentioned by my hon. Friend who are in a state of distress.

The other problem, which has been raised in my community and in Southall, is of visas for Gurdwara priests travelling from India. The Gurdwaras and temples have a limited number of priests. Many of them were trained in the United Kingdom, but priests sometimes travel from India. Unfortunately, restrictions are placed on the number of priests allowed to practise in our Gurdwaras, even for limited periods, and that is a problem. The number of priests in Gurdwaras in my constituency is disproportionately lower than the number of priests in Catholic churches.

Mr. Singh : Have ministers of religion in my hon. Friend's constituency been asked for work permits, as they are in my constituency, where it has caused tremendous problems?

Mr. McDonnell : That problem was drawn to our attention only the weekend before last. At least 15,000 practitioners attend the Ravi Guru Dass Gurdwara each week, but there are only two priests; yet our local Catholic church has five priests for a similar sized congregation. The demand for work visas needs to be reviewed.

Mr. Chris Pond (Gravesham): My hon. Friend is generous in allowing interventions from those hon. Members whose constituencies include a significant Punjabi community. My constituency has an additional problem; because the Gurdwara is used as the central focus for the community, the facilities are now inadequate. Would my hon. Friend take this opportunity to join me in congratulating my local Sikh community for the work that it has done to raise the money to build a new Gurdwara.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody) : Order. This is an Adjournment debate. Time is limited and interjections should be very brief.

Mr. McDonnell : You can see, Madam Deputy Speaker, how much interest the House has in this subject. We should congratulate the Sikh community on the role of the Gurdwaras, in respect of not only their religious practices but their social support of the community, which goes beyond religious practice. That social support was first recognised, dare I say it, by the Greater London council; the first grant to a Sikh Gurdwara in London was presented by the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) in his former capacity. Funding is needed for community organisations in the Punjabi community in recognition of the social and institutional role of the Gurdwaras.

I move on to the question of long-standing asylum claims. The Government are now wrestling with the problem, and I welcome their proposal to give greater resources to the immigration and nationality directorate of the Home Office to tackle those long-standing cases. However, many of those claims relate to the troubles in Punjab in the 1980s and early 1990s, and a large number of asylum seekers have

now settled here. They should be quickly informed that they will be allowed to stay because of their continued fear of repatriation. Their position should now be regularised.

We want many other matters of policy to be addressed by the Government. For example, for the first time, the British Government have provided financial support for the Guru Nanak college, a voluntary-aided Sikh school in my constituency. I congratulate the head teacher and my hon. Friend the Minister for School Standards on their work during the past two years to ensure that the college is properly funded; it is now flourishing. We will now receive demands for support from across the country, for example for language tuition in state schools, and for additional cultural and educational support through section 11 and other measures in those schools, to help with the growing community of first, second and third generation Punjabis. We are concerned that discrimination in employment continues.

Mr. Martin Salter (Reading, West): I thank my hon. Friend. Is he aware that a significant section of the Punjab falls within Pakistan? Has he, like other hon. Members, been lobbied on the decision of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to declassify Basmati rice, which significantly affects trade in that part of the Punjab and Pakistan?

Mr. McDonnell : The community has raised the issue of the need to maintain links between this country and the Punjab, and Britain's role in assisting the economic development of what members of the community consider their original homeland. Issues such as that mentioned by my hon. Friend undermine that relationship and much of the aid assistance that we provide. We need to come back to that in a later debate.

There is a requirement for closer ethnic monitoring in employment. The census will give us that information and all public bodies must use it to ensure that discrimination does not occur in employment matters. I welcome the appointment of Gurbux Singh as chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality. He is a talented and dedicated professional, as I know from my experience in local government. I encourage him, through the Minister, to undertake a CRE study of the Punjabi community in Britain, similar to the CRE study of the Irish community in Britain which revealed levels of discrimination and, more important, set out proposals for tackling that discrimination in, for example, employment.

On employment, it is important to mention the military, which is now denied to many Sikhs as a career because of the helmet issue. Sikhs have a proud military history, and throughout their employment by the British Army were allowed to wear the turban. That has now become an issue of conflict that has also been raised in regard to European regulations on safety helmets in construction.

Mr. Singh : Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating the Sikh community on the 300th anniversary of the Khalsa?

Mr. McDonnell : I will come to that. I shall not take any more interventions.

On health policy, the census should give us the information for targeted health campaigns. Several local authorities are undertaking campaigns on morbidity in the Asian community. The Government could give that more central funding and give it a fresh stimulus. The Punjabi community is demanding the elimination of the PHAB - physically handicapped and able bodies - test, which prevents many doctors who were trained on the Indian sub-continent from working in Britain.

On culture and sport, I indeed congratulate the massive success of the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the Khalsa in the Khalsa Panth last year. I congratulate all those who came together to celebrate Baisakhi last year, through music, modern dance and the traditional assemblies of different organisations in the Royal Albert hall. I also congratulate the Victoria and Albert museum and Susan Strong on their contribution through the wonderful exhibition that they organised, which was supported by translations from one of my constituents, Mr. Rayat.

The Government should look at how we fund Punjabi community culture in this country. I draw particular attention to the applications made by various radio station groups - Apna Sangeet Radio, Punjabi FM and Saffron FM-which we could support, not only to disseminate information through the Punjabi community but to support its culture.

The Punjabi community is still attacked by the scourge of racism. I welcome the Government's measure to tackle that and the Race Relations (Amendment) Bill, which recognises institutional racism. Anyone who heard PC Kash Singh this morning on the BBC knows how far we have to go. We must first support the Black Police Association. We also need to support organisations such as the Southall monitoring group. We need to make it clear that racial harassment and abuse, attacks on neighbours and school bullying will not be accepted in the society that we want to create.

That brings me on to the issue of human rights in the Punjab itself. The all-party group has received evidence of the extent of the abuses in the 1980s and 1990s and about those who disappeared, the torturing that took place and the attacks on innocent Punjabis by police and other agents.

Madam Deputy Speaker : Order. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but I am sure that he is aware that this is a timed debate and that those in the Chamber will want to hear the Minister's reply.

Mr. McDonnell : I shall conclude my remarks in 30 seconds. The Government now have a role to liaise with the Indian Government to ensure, for example, the admittance of the UN human rights rapporteur to the Punjab to exert pressure, so that compensation and assistance are given to those families who have suffered. We have a vibrant and resourceful Punjabi community in this country of which we are proud. The Government supports it and, for that reason, I welcome the opportunity to introduce the debate this morning.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Mike O'Brien) : I, too, welcome the debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. McDonnell) on securing it and on being elected as founding chairman of the all-party Punjabi group. I note his use of the word 'Panjabi' and I shall certainly ensure that it is used in documents. I congratulate the Punjabi community, in particular the Sikh community from the Punjab, on the 300th anniversary of the Khalsa. I have attended several celebrations of the anniversary, including some in my constituency. They were important to the whole community and were enjoyed not only by the Sikh community, but by many others who attended them.

There are many Punjabis in Britain, some of whom are Hindus, some of whom are Muslim, although the majority are from the Sikh community. Each community makes an enormous contribution to our country. As a Minister, may I, on behalf of the Government, publicly thank the Punjabi community for their contribution to Britain. We are a multicultural society and we are stronger because of that. Our culture is more diverse and more enjoyable. Our trade links are more varied; our ability to take a wider cultural perspective is enhanced greatly by our economic and social potential, which comes from the Punjabi community. That is why cultural diversity is not just about having the right moral perspective on issues relating to multiculturalism; it is also good business for Britain. It is about getting right the sort of society that we can become.

Last year, I spoke at the Sikh Forum dinner, at which many business people were widely represented. They energise our business, reinforce our economy and create jobs for our people. One only has to look at last year's publication by *Eastern Eye* of 'Britain Richest 200 Asians'. It makes impressive reading and it is heartening to see so many young people and so many women on that list of successful people. It includes manufacturers, importers, exporters, retailers, wholesalers, industrialists, financiers, media moguls and leaders in the pharmaceutical industry and in information technology. People from the Punjabi community make an enormous contribution to our universities. Also on the list of 200 richest Asians is my noble friend Lord Paul, who came originally from the Punjab.

We have to address many problems in a multicultural society. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington said, when considering the issues that present themselves to Britain as a multicultural society, it is right to highlight the success of communities such as the Punjabi community and its people, who are examples to everyone of how our nation's diversity is prospering and flourishing as we enter the millennium. Too often, ethnic minorities are portrayed as victims of discrimination and poverty. It is important that we deal with their concerns. The Asian culture is not a culture of victims; it is go-getting, vibrant and dynamic, and contributes a staggering £5 billion a year to the British economy. Many of our Asians claim their heritage from the Punjab. Some are from families that came here

via East Africa in the 1970s, although most of them were born here but still cherish their Punjabi heritage. Long may they do so.

Many people work in factories and businesses set up by Punjabis in places such as Leicester and Coventry. Punjabis have helped to create jobs in my and other areas, and have often done so where there had been few jobs previously. They have created prosperity out of unemployment, and we thank them for that.

I should like to respond to the call for consulate facilities in the Punjab made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington. The Government are aware of suggestions that there should be more visa offices in the sub-continent to facilitate easier and faster processing of visas. The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz), recently visited the sub-continent, and has commissioned feasibility studies to establish how best we can extend services there. Studies are being carried out in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, and we shall consider opening offices in Chandigarh, Ahmedabad, Sylhet and Lahore. We are reviewing information already received from those posts, and my hon. Friend suggested that he wanted to consider the reports in due course. I hope that we shall have some news about how we intend to proceed during the year.

We think that appeals should be reinstated, so I welcome the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington about them. There has been some confusion about bonds, so I shall clarify the subject. Bonds were introduced at the request of many people from the Asian community. People have come to my surgeries to ask whether they can put a sum down as a bond because a visa has been refused. The bonds will be raised only when the entry clearance officer is otherwise 'minded to refuse' a visa. Families will not be denied the possibility of being reunited, as my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) suggested. More families will be reunited than were before. Bonds will be used only when people are not given visas. Some people have deliberately given a lot of information that makes clarification of that issue necessary.

Fiona Mactaggart (Slough): I am glad that the Minister has clarified the issue, as there is confusion in the community about it. Does the scheme apply only to South Asia?

Mr. O'Brien : The aim is to pilot the scheme for one year. The Asian community has requested that we pilot it in south Asia. That is why we have considered and are still considering how best we can do so in the light of the community's recent comments. We wanted to help, and some people have misinterpreted what we presented and sought to portray it as something other than it was.

Ministers of religion are needed and we want to ensure that all members of the Punjabi community can practise their religion. The concession about ministers of religion has been abused, so we must ensure that it is properly applied. Perhaps proper training of priests in the United Kingdom might be a solution. After all,

Sikhism is now a British religion, as many people born in Britain are Sikhs. We must ensure that British Sikhs can practise their religion as they choose. The Home Office gives ethnic minority grants, so perhaps we can help. I should have liked to discuss some of the wide-ranging changes that we want to make to the national curriculum, and radio licences.....

Madam Deputy Speaker : Order. Time is up.

Book Reviews

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Darshan Singh Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora: The Search for Statehood* (London: UCL Press, 1999), xiv + 327 pp. \$22 (pb). ISBN: 1-85728 301-5. \$40 (hb). ISBN 1-85728-300-7.

Diaspora studies are well on their way to becoming a scholarly cottage industry. Tatla's volume stems from his Ph.D. thesis at the University of Warwick. It is a notable contribution to a growing list of scholarly publications on overseas Sikhs that includes N. Gerald Barrier, Verne A. Dusenbery, Pashaura Singh, Shinder Thandi, Narindar Singh, and Arthur Helweg. Moreover, it is part of a series edited by Robin Cohen which already has published two general books as well as specific cases studies on Italians, Greek and Japanese.

Earlier, Tatla co-authored an annotated bibliography on *Sikhs in North America* and also co-authored an annotated bibliography on *Sikhs in Britain*, and a book on Sikhs in North America. In *The Sikh Diaspora* his extensive, well-organised bibliography is buttressed by extensive personal interviews in Britain and North America; the areas which provide the focus for this volume. Table 2.1 provides a world-wide perspective as it lists estimates for countries throughout the world for Sikhs in both the colonial as well as the contemporary period (pp. 42-43). Specifically, the author is interested in the relationship between migrant Sikhs, Punjab and India.

What constitutes a diaspora involves a spectrum of definitions and interpretations. For this review, it is sufficient to state that overseas Sikhs do not meet the strictest criteria involving 'forced separation,' according to Tatla. But, he points out, Sikhs do meet other criteria of dispersion including 'reluctant hosts, contest over homeland and maintenance of an active relationship with their mother country' and thus qualify for inclusion. Moreover, the author emphasizes that developments stemming from the 'destruction of the Akal Takhat' resulted in 'hundreds' fleeing abroad (pp. 3-4).

Important distinctions are made between the stages of ethnic identity in political terms. Thus, Tatla categorizes Sikhs as 'evolving' from an ethnic community under British colonial rule into a 'nationality' in independent India (p. 30). Operation Blue Star in June 1984, according to the author, had a 'traumatic effect' as it radically changed the relationship of Sikhs to the Indian polity. Military action by the Indian army in the Golden Temple resulted in a wholesale Sikh reaction and the diaspora's support for a Sikh homeland. Sikh support for an independent country, Tatla estimates, now is held by a 'distinct minority of Sikhs' (p.211). Nonetheless, he concludes that support for the Khalistan movement by Sikhs abroad will fluctuate according to two factors.

One factor revolves around future developments in India. Reinstitutionalization in Punjab of the political system, courts, bureaucracy and the press enabled normalcy to resume. Sikh politics returned with the Akali Dal not only reemerging, but winning almost landslide election victories in alliance

with the Hindu dominated Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP). It also is part of the BJP-led ruling National Democratic Alliance in New Delhi. Normalcy also includes ever-present factionalism within Sikh politics in Punjab. Following publication of this book, Sikh factionalism in 1999 and 2000 accelerated with several crises in the SGPC (Sikh temple management committee), the Akal Takhat (a major Sikh institution in the Golden Temple), and the Akali Dal. No one suggests that the unstable conditions of 1984 or the subsequent periods also involving high levels of political violence are once again imminent. Concern, however, is present.

A second factor is more directly related to Sikhs abroad. It revolves around the migrant Sikh's 'sense of security' in Britain and North America. Historically, the author examines parallels with the Gadr movement which he attributes to the 'exclusionary' policies of the Canadian and American governments. Incorporation and security in the new home vs. alienation provides a rough framework for evaluating this factor. Alienation toward the new home can increase the 'mobilization towards a secure and independent homeland' (p. 211).

Considering both these factors, Tatla in eight chapters and a brief conclusion systematically explores Sikh history in India, their receptivity and problems abroad, and their relationships or what he terms the 'dialectics of ethnic linkages.' This is a carefully researched and written book which succinctly covers a vast territory. It extends from the origin of Sikhism and its major historical periods in Punjab, to the diaspora and the connecting linkages.

Various Sikh social groups in Britain and North American ranging from Mazhabi to Jat Sikhs are identified with specific creative accomplishments. These include the popular arts, translations of the Adi Granth, a Sikh Foundation, establishment of chairs of Sikh studies and a number of conferences. Tatla handles the controversy over the Sikh chairs in a commendably objective manner. He notes the 'bitterness' and 'division' in the community, but also that the 'patronage of diaspora Sikhs has enabled Sikh studies to become part of Western scholarly debate and discourse' (p.83). Organization growth accompanies these concerns and accomplishments. Tables 4.1-4.4 provide analytical listings of organizations and their resources from 1908-1990.

Separate chapters focus on the 'demand for homeland' by Sikhs in North America and in Britain. They include short, objective descriptions of the major organizations and excerpts from publications and individuals which capture the flavor of the supporting and opposing participants. A chapter on 'Sikh diplomacy and interstate relations' completes the set of relationships with its focus on the governments of India, Britain, U.S., Canada and international organizations.

Darshan Singh Tatla's *The Sikh Diaspora* is required reading for diaspora and Sikh studies. In 211 pages plus appendices and bibliography he has clearly set forth the parameters and much of the content for exploring this overseas

community and its varied relationships. Separate volumes extending each of his chapters are warranted.

Paul Wallace

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Pashaura Singh and N Gerald Barrier (eds), *Sikh Identity*, (Delhi, Manohar 1999), 397pp, Rs 750 (hb), ISBN 81-7304-236-5.

It came as something of a relief to find myself and my late friend, scholar, and mentor, Piara Singh Sambhi, quoted by Eleanor Nesbitt, (p. 315), as having written that:

‘No two people are alike, so when you read about Sikhs in this book don’t think that any Sikh you meet will fit any picture which you form...If you meet him in Britain he will probably not wear the *kaccha* and he won’t be carrying a *kirpan*. He may even be clean-shaven and have his hair cut.’

During the twenty-five years that we worked and wrote together we frequently, even constantly, came between the hammer of those who wanted us to endorse the Khalsa Sikh image as the norm and the anvil represented by those who wanted a much broader picture of Sikh orthopraxy. Our experience has been shared by many other writers who have dared to comment on Sikh identity!

It is good to have Dr Eleanor Nesbitt’s contribution in the present volume. Readers outside the UK may not be aware of the fact that Religious Education is a compulsory aspect of the school curriculum and that Sikhism is one of the six religions which must be studied by all pupils. Religious identity is very much a daily issue in the classroom and pupils of any tradition often need help to withstand the pressures of the ultra-orthodox at one end of the spectrum and the example of the less-observant at the other, not to mention some teachers and students who think of religion as a superstition whose overdue demise is imminent. For the most part, however, the contributors to this collection of essays are concerned with Sikh identity at an academic but no less practical level, and certainly not at one which is less acrimonious.

The quality of papers is universally high and the subjects important for the growing number of serious academics who wish to understand and even unravel the subject of identity. An attempt has been made to structure the book but many of the contributions defy precise classification. This makes the lack of an index an important omission.

Part One is given to the conference agenda and a key note address by Dr Barrier. In Part Two attention focuses on particulars such as the turban (Professor McLeod), the first five Gurus as early markers of Sikh identity, (Dr Pashaura Singh), an examination of whether Sikhs are a nation or a world religion (Professor Dusenbury), the question of syncretism, (Professor Gurudharm Singh Khalsa), who is a little unfair to Noss who described Sikhism

as a recent and deliberate syncretism but revised his opinion in later editions of *Man's Religions*. Nevertheless the view persists and is sometimes given by Sikhs themselves at interfaith gatherings so it is salutary to find a section devoted to the subject, though all serious scholars need no reminder that Sikhism is a distinct revelation. There is also an important discussion of the place of Sahajdharis within the Panth, (Professor Bhai Harbans Lal). Each of these chapters takes the reader further and further away from simplistic notions and answers to the question 'Who is a Sikh?'

In Part three attention turns to recent Sikh history with essays on Sikhs and the state, (Professor Kerr), British rural perceptions of Sikhs from 1880 to 1930, (Brian P Caton), Professor Banerjee's view from eastern India, an East African perspective by Professor Sharma, and a typically thorough analytical study by Professor JS Grewal, this time on Bhai Kahan Singh's *Hum Hindu Nahin*.

The fourth and final section concentrates on contemporary matters. Dr Sewa Singh Kalsi is, as usual, unwilling hypocritically to deny the forceful existence of something of which we in the UK are particularly conscious, namely the place of caste in the Panth. He concentrates upon the Ramgarhia group to which he belongs. Second, and now third generation Sikhs often experience an identity crisis. This is what concerns Professor Karen Leonard in her paper. Professor Helweg discusses cultural transmission and regeneration, noting that cultures are alive and always changing, something which, of course, some members of most communities wish to deny. The perception which Sikhs have of themselves is appropriately dealt with in the succeeding chapter by Dr Nesbitt, while Dr Barrow looks at the authority and influence which a Punjabi *sant* with a strong following in Southall exercises. Shinder Thandi examines the aspirations and identity of some Sikh youths in Britain. Finally, Professor Barrier considers the case of the Fairfax gurdwara dispute, one of the more recent to come before the courts but not the only one and sadly, probably not the last. In such conflicts *zat*, family rivalries, power and greed can combine to hide the essential teachings of the Gurus and present the non-Sikh world with food to feed its scepticism. Professor Barrier expresses the hope 'that the message of the Gurus and the Granth, and perceptions about what it means to be a good Sikh will continue to play a major role in the rhetoric and everyday life of the community'. It is a felicitous note upon which to conclude a series of essays whose purpose some readers might be eager to misunderstand. I would prefer to see the conference as a sign of Sikhs coming of age in the west with eminent Sikh and non-Sikh scholars able to recognise openly and honestly that, in common with other religious movements, and nations, and our global society, diversity is to be regarded as an expression of integrity, and vitality, not weakness, and that, even more importantly, it is to be respected by those who hold different views.

Perhaps three areas lie outside the scope of this present volume. One is the effect which the current political situation in India is likely to have upon Sikh identity. JS Grewal's chapter on Kahan Singh Nabha's *Hum Hindu Nahin* goes

some way towards addressing this, though his approach is naturally historical. The second is the growing recognition that the term *amritdhari* or Khalsa Sikh does not bear a monochrome interpretation. Between the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sevak Jatha, especially strongly represented in the UK and the Gora Sikhs of the USA as well as other *sant* groups, of the kind described by Joy Barrow, for example, even the assertion that all subscribe in identical ways to the Rahit Maryada has to be questioned. Thirdly, it left this reader asking himself what place there really is for the *keshdhari* form of Sikh.

The editors are to be congratulated upon a publication whose importance will last well into this century - though how useful it will be to Her Majesty's Government in the UK in selecting someone, only one apparently, to represent the community in what used to be the House of Lords goodness only knows!

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Cynthia Keppley Mahmood. *Fighting for Faith and Nation: dialogues with Sikh militants* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1996), xi +314pp. £17.95 (pb), ISBN 08122 15923, £37.95 (hb), ISBN 08122 35611.

While western academics analysed George Orwell's 1984 as an imagined nightmare for the coming authoritarian rule, for Punjab specialists, the year provided a real tragedy; the Indian government ordered a brutal army attack on the Golden Temple in June 1984, murdering at least a thousand pilgrims in what the state authorities conveniently called the 'flushing out of extremists'. As a reaction to this sacrilege, several militant groups sprang up whose leaders spearheaded a violent campaign of revenge, and justified such actions to carve out an independent Sikhs state, Khalistan. This movement gathered much support from overseas Sikhs with finance and propaganda. Eventually, Sikh militancy was crushed by a combined force of army and police backed by unprecedented, almost draconian laws, which effectively sanctioned indiscriminate killing of militants without trial. The Sikh rebellion was over by 1994, though its embers are still smouldering among the Diaspora.

After almost two decades, with numerous publications, Punjab academics are still baffled by the event. The decade-long insurgency has left some very unsettling questions behind. Why did thousands of Sikh youth rise in rebellion? What was the view of the Sikh militants leading this insurrection and why did they split up into so many factions while sharing a supposedly common ideal? Why did the movement collapse in the early 1990s despite enjoying wide sympathy from ordinary Sikhs in its initial stage, say from 1984 to 1988?

Among numerous publications on the rise and demise of the Sikh rebellion, few deserve serious notice. Some couch the tragedy in sensational stories, others provide much of the state-sponsored misinformation, while a few personal memoirs and accounts by Sikh activists and security personnel seem

almost equally partisan. Mahmood's book offers a fresh commentary on this difficult subject. Consisting of perceptive analysis and acute observations, the book draws on interviews with a number of Sikh militants involved in the Khalistan movement, mainly those who fled to America as refugees and who had suffered torture and abuse while being witnesses to some of the crucial events in the Punjab.

The study was prompted in 1992 when the author had a chance meeting with Dr. Amarjit Singh and a few other Sikhs while she was attending the American Anthropological Congress in San Francisco. From this, a long odyssey began as she set off for further data by attending numerous gurdwaras and community conventions. To balance her account, she attended meetings of various factions including those of non-Khalistani and loyalist Sikhs. Interviews were recorded on tapes which were subsequently destroyed to protect identities. Eventually after four years of extensive exchange, and with several articles on the Punjab crisis, Mahmood had gained enough insight to stand as an expert witness for Sikh refugees' claims against the doubting authorities both in Canada and the United States.

The book provides a comprehensive account of the army assault on the Golden Temple, narrating events from 1981 onwards, mostly through eye-witnesses' accounts. As a social anthropologist, the author is exceptionally careful to keep militants' narrative under an objective lens.

In order to understand militants' violence, she suggests, a community's cultural past provides just one factor, the other being a state's abusive apparatus which humiliates individuals by depriving them of human dignity. In Sikhism, an attachment to martyrdom is considered to be a supreme virtue. Why has the Sikh tradition evolved in a particular way and how does it worship weapons? How did guerrilla leaders translate the community's traditions into reality? She infers from interviews that militants tried to justify their violent means for a higher cause; to die for a sovereign Sikh nation. For them, this aim provided some meaningful moments in the 'hellish conditions' around them. Some of Sikh activists' narratives make very uncomfortable reading. Through the interviews, she highlights a critical factor in militants' violent methods; their experience of abuse and the extent of the hurt through the methods adopted by the Indian State authorities. Typical among these was the humiliation of women, the indignity of anal and genital torture and the slurs on the Sikh faith represented by tearing off turbans and cutting hair.

In her endeavour to see why militant Sikhs were willing to die, Mahmood succeeds in capturing their particular narratives, which essentially portray a consistent struggle by the community towards statehood since the formation of the Khalsa in 1699. In this narrative, the post-1984 cry for Khalistan seems quite logical and almost inevitable. This is more or less what her interlocutors say and argue. However, this particular narrative, should be seen as one, an unpopular and minor one at that, among many competing interpretations of the community's history and legacy. Leading as it did to a violent and spontaneous

rebellion against the sacrilege committed by the Indian State, the 1984 tragedy was hardly a serious battle for statehood. That militants indulged in numerous murderous acts belied their sincerity and commitment to the 'higher' cause of statehood. Indeed, their indiscriminate methods, which included the killing of women, unarmed civilians, en-masse killing of Hindus, defied the Sikh tradition of warfare and martyrdom. Not surprisingly, militants lost the sympathy of the Sikh masses whose understanding of Sikh tradition and the ethics of 'shared humanity', of martyrdom based on moral rage, and of resort to physical violence only when 'all other means' had failed were demonstrably defied by militants. While individual dare-devil tactics might have pleased Sikh peasants' sense of levelling the brutal state apparatus, attacks on women, children and Hindus was too much for the Sikh masses to support.

With no serious Sikh élitist tradition of searching for statehood, and in the absence of a common cause, the militants' campaign for Khalistan degenerated into its inevitable morass of murders, intrigues and rivalry among militant leaders and their followers. Mahmood does not tax militants with more searching questions about their methods, in particular about Sikh ethics and tradition of martyrdom. Little space is given for militant Sikhs' thoughts on the formation of numerous groups, three parallel Panthic Committees and leaders' antipathy towards each other. More attention to such matters would have exposed militants' ideology and clarified the contradictions within the militants' imagined world and community's norms and expectations.

In any case, the militants' discourse for the creation of a Sikh state needs to be placed within an historical context. The demand for a Sikh state had no cogently argued history amongst its elite, except as an ambiguous reaction in the 1940s such as the demand for Independent Punjab when the Pakistan demand came on the horizon. Only in the twentieth century were a few serious voices raised, essentially as reactions to particular distressing situations in which the community leaders found themselves. The distant memories of the Khalsa raj of Ranjit Singh, though a shared sentiment, hardly provided an articulated solution to the Sikh dilemma in the new Indian state.

Writing with candour but detached sympathy, Mahmood makes her stand clear - she is not a supporter of Khalistan, but argues that the Sikh community has some serious grievances with the state of India. While abhorring militants' violence, she defends her interlocutors as neither crazy nor evil. The best way to understand why militants 'love' violence is to know their viewpoint, talk with them about their methods, and seek a dialogue. Eventually this process can make them realise the cost of violence, both in terms of their own religious and cultural legacy and also in the more universal context of human rights. The Indian State, on the other hand, she argues persuasively, should acknowledge the internationally accepted principle of statehood for minorities, including the right to the principle of self-determination.

One specific reservation is that Mahmood treats Harjot Oberoi's work at some length and focuses on it as the natural target of militants' ire. My

interaction with Canadian Sikhs at that time showed that Oberoi's work had aroused little rancour among militant circles - though because of some very vocal articles in a popular Punjabi weekly from Vancouver, and later in the *World Sikh News*, Oberoi's work had become noticeable. Whatever the implications of Oberoi's work for Sikhism in general, or, as the author puts it, for militants, 'whose deepest religious sensibilities were at stake and whose political fates may hang on the question of identities and boundaries', American militant Sikhs never managed such articulated views at the time.

Nevertheless such an exposition is unique, and provides much insight into the Punjab in the 1990s. Besides recording militant Sikhs' unheard voices, her account is an important treatise on the methodology of social anthropology. Such a subject threatens traditionalists, used to the exotic subject matter of classical anthropology, since it raises fundamental ethical and methodological predicaments for its practitioners. But Mahdood is convinced that street gangs and guerrilla armies are also 'cultures' amenable to the same kind of ethnographical analysis that anthropologists have pursued in the jungles of Africa or New Guinea. Besides, such studies should contribute enormously to modern public discourse. Professionally oriented to stand in the middle as interpreters of other cultures anthropologists, she argues, are especially good at exploring the nature of the extra-ordinary cultures that emerge in conditions of conflict and political violence. In situations of violent conflict, academics' commitments are severely tested. Following Edward Said's indictment of intellectual duplicity, she asks social anthropologists to speak 'truth to power' as 'texts alone cannot depict human experiences of torture and abuse', she argues, nor it is possible to discuss a particular ethnic group's conceptual and ethical framework of 'sacrifice' and violence in rational terms. Such narratives throw up distressing questions for an anthropologist, such as the place of violence in human societies and the place of current methodology adopted by social scientists. Here, official versions of 'mindless violence' by 'terrorists' and the more usual theories of social scientists seem vacuous.

In sum, in letting militants speak throughout the book, the author has bared the human face of 'terrorists': their language and arguments are thus forced into the open for debate. Aware that such dialogue could be construed as a platform for Khalistan, she rather too often draws attention to her measures to maintain a distance from militants' voices. While recording first hand accounts of Sikh militants' views, she provides a methodological onslaught on political anthropology, where such a subject, if not actually frowned upon, is hardly welcome. Any serious student of Sikh society who needs to understand the community's recent tremulous past, especially the place of violence in Sikh community's ethical heritage, will find here a serious and intelligent analysis.

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Shinder Purewal, *Sikh Ethnonationalism and the Political Economy of Punjab*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press), ix+215pp, Rs 545 (hb). ISBN 019 565 180 4

As an aftermath of the Punjab problem reams of publications appeared, mainly endeavours at analysing the spectre of secession and violence which had stalked the region bringing global focus onto the state, almost four decades after the marvels of the Green Revolution sought attention. The psyche of a large number of ethnic scholars was shaken - be they indigenous or from the large diaspora - with each presenting his/her individual analysis and interpretation. While he teaches in Canada, Shinder Purewal belongs to the genre of diasporic scholars who are researching their ethnic region.

Why did one of the richest provinces in India, with a fairly progressive population, become a battleground for a very violent conflict? This study focuses on two basic questions: how did the Sikh ethnonationalist movement emerge and, subsequently, escalate to a problem of national dimensions in India? Why did it choose to pursue separatism on the basis of the right to self-determination? Purewal's thesis deviates from the view that it was a resurgence of ethnic identity; instead his focus is on 'the political economy of Punjab in its dialectical relationship with the larger Indian social reality', and he states that 'the essence of Sikh ethnonationalism can be understood only in the context of the struggle for primacy between agricultural and industrial capital' (p 166).

Central to Purewal's thesis is the contention that Sikh ethnicity had a politico-economic genesis in the hegemonic struggle between the Sikh capitalist farmers (Kulaks, as he refers to them) and the largely Hindu bourgeoisie in the commercial arena of the state. To regard this complex issue as merely a class problem, which assumed the garb of ethnonationalism, is far fetched. Undoubtedly, the Sikh farmers vented their political aspirations through the Akali Dal and the Hindu bourgeoisie vented theirs through the Bharatiya Janata party, but they had been political allies in the past as well. Of course politics does make strange bedfellows. In fact, in the conclusion, the author himself professes that their struggle is no longer as sharp as before, now that they are partners at the Centre.

In the second chapter, the author has traced 'Sikh identity in Historical Perspective'. For anyone conversant with Sikh history, there is nothing fresh. However, for those just starting to traverse the Punjab scenario, this would be helpful in understanding the problem in the relevant context. For Sikhs who cried themselves hoarse for Khalistan, and for any protagonists of secession, this should authenticate the stance of those who are opposed to it.

In fact, the issue of building walls around an exclusive Sikh identity in its relation to Hinduism did not arise. Sikhs continued to live in the fold of the larger Hindu society as one of its numerous segments. The difference between Sikhs and Hindus was non-existent to the extent that in their first census of the Punjab in 1855, the British excluded Sikhs and recorded only Hindus and

Muslims. Sikhs started receiving attention only after their role in crushing the 1857 rebellion against the British.

Certainly, it was the British who invoked Sikhs' jingoism as a separate ethnic group to suit their own political expediency. They wanted to boost their chauvinism and to infuse zeal in them to fight wars for their peripatetic army, and so they christened them a 'martial race', as they did with some of the other communities including the Rajputs, Gurkhas and Marathas, who had traditions of serving the army.

In the third chapter, the author is well ensconced in providing ideas for his thesis, the genesis of capitalism, which he feels was the seed of the Punjab problem. As he rightly contends, 'the political economy of the state has to a large extent been shaped by the capitalistic transformation in agriculture' (p52). All the assets of the Green Revolution and technology actually benefited only a chosen few - in his words:

This led to the concentration of land and other assets in the hands of a few. As a result of the buying and selling fuelled by the Green Revolution, land prices soared. The value of land in real terms, which had remained stagnant up to 1965-66, tripled in the next thirteen years. The wealth of rich farmers continued to increase, while tens of thousands of small and marginal peasants were stripped off their tiny plots (p 53).

By the early 1980s, more than 75 per cent of all agricultural wealth, including land and movable assets, was in the hands of only 10 per cent of the rural households, while the poorest 70 per cent of the households possessed less than 7 per cent of all assets. Agricultural surplus has, on the one hand, satisfied capitalist farmers' desire for consumer products and, on the other hand, it has led to the acquisition of land and machinery. What has been problematic is the transition of capital from agriculture to industry.

The pertinent issue relevant to the Punjab problem is the lop sided development of the economy, the lack of adequate industrial growth along with the growth of agriculture. Undoubtedly, the Green Revolution spurred agro based industry but 'the processing industries have not been able to absorb the population divested of land in the wake of the revolution.' Moreover, neither has Punjab been the beneficiary of major large-scale investments from the Government at the centre. This has exacerbated the frustration among landless farmers, as well as unemployed youth who were lured by easy money during the terrorist phase in the state. Taken as a whole, the book is a thought revoking analysis, though largely old wine in new bottles peppered by the author's usage of the term 'Kulaks' for the rich Sikh landowning capitalists. As the author rightly says, the 'Kulaks' conjured up the 'common enemy', and stirred up an anti-Hindu Sikh identity by circumventing the age old caste-class divisions to suit their own ends, so that power blocs could manipulate the masses as they desired.

The 'elite' in competition for economic and political power appear

extremely intelligent in the 'selection' and 'manipulation' of symbols from the past to construct identities and communal consciousness. They also comprise a major political elite, who use politics, to manoeuvre and manipulate, their own commercial agricultural gains, as they drug the masses with some idealist or religious schemes. But this is contrary to the author's conclusion:

While the industrial bourgeoisie has the capacity to mobilize other strata of the population, through assurances of expanded markets to the commercial bourgeoisie and land distribution to the peasantry, agricultural capital, by its very nature, is unable to build such broad-based cross-class alliances. It can make no promises to either the commercial bourgeoisie or the rural poor, as these would endanger its very existence. As a result, the nationalism or subnationalism championed by agricultural capital has very limited appeal (p 169).

This theory holds no weight as is evident from the agriculturally oriented populist policies of the present, Akali Government in the State. The book would be of interest to the Punjabphiles who are still challenged by the Punjab puzzle and attempt to demystify it.

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Surjit Singh Kalra, Navtej Kaur Purewal with Sue Tyson-Ward. *Panjabi: Teach Yourself* (London: Hodder Headline, 1999), 296pp. £14.99 [with two recorded cassettes £29.99]. ISBN 0 340 701 20.

Mangat Rai Bhardwaj. *Colloquial Panjabi: a complete language course* (London: Routledge, 1995), vii + 296pp. £17.99 (pb), ISBN 0415 101 913. [with two recorded cassettes, £34.02]. ISBN 0415 101 921.

Since Professor Shackle's *Panjabi* which appeared in the old *Teach Yourself Series* and went out of print several years ago, learners of Panjabi have had little printed material except their tutors' notes and exercises. Meanwhile the demand for Panjabi learning had expanded considerably not only in Britain but across the globe mainly due to new generation of Sikh Diaspora.

In Britain, Panjabi is the most common language spoken by South Asian migrants. Since the 1960s, Sikh and Muslim settlers have become the largest segment of South Asian population in the United Kingdom and as a result the market for Panjabi language has also expanded considerably. However, equating numbers with demand would be hazardous. Pakistani Panjabi speakers prefer Urdu as a medium of literacy for their children while Sikhs remain committed to Panjabi as their heritage and essential to religious identity. This apparent gulf between Panjabi Muslims and Panjabi Sikhs who share a common language and culture, owes much to Muslims' struggle for the creation of Pakistan - a new

Islamic state which has adopted Urdu as its official language. Indeed, in the post 1947 period, Panjabi has suffered loss of prestige and geography due to the language planning strategies of new states of India and Pakistan. India adopted as its official language, Hindi, which was barely a majority language except in the populous northern provinces. In Pakistan, Urdu was and continues to be spoken by a small minority, but it was considered to be more appropriate to the new 'Islamic' nation's search for cultural cohesion, just as India's Hindus sought cultural unity in Hindi. As both languages bear a close relationship with Panjabi, especially in spoken form, having a common vocabulary, their elevation to national status has resulted in a shrunken geographical spread of the Panjabi language as well as a loss of prestige and authenticity. Thus the many dialects of Panjabi spoken in the hilly areas of Himachal Pradesh and the Jammu region have gradually been siphoned off into Hindi. The new boundary of Punjab drawn in 1966 after Sikh leaders' persistent demand for a linguistic state was so cleverly drawn that several Panjabi-speaking areas now form part of neighbouring provinces and these are undergoing a rapid process of Sanskritisation.

Unexpectedly, the impact of language planning in the Indian subcontinent has been felt far away, especially in the West with the large migrant populations from India and Pakistan. Local education authorities have coped variously with the demand for instruction in the 'mother tongue' of migrants, confused by the discrepancy between 'national and official' and 'community languages'. Thus when the BBC launched its Asian Language Learning programme, it chose the two 'national' languages, Hindi-Urdu, for instruction, against the overwhelming evidence that the commonest spoken language of South Asian settlers was Panjabi. So much so that in its film coverage of people speaking in actual situations, a number of scenes portrayed Panjabi speakers trying their Hindi and Urdu under instruction, provoking some comic scenarios. More significantly, several English teachers were confused about the language of Asian pupils in their classes especially those of Pakistani origin. And such was the impact of BBC language course that Panjabi teaching classes suffered the loss of English learners in major cities of Britain.

Despite such adverse effects, for the Sikh community and its new generation pupils, Panjabi remains the language of home as well as a vital link with its religious and cultural heritage. Sikhs' collective commitment to Panjabi has seen that the majority of gurdwaras are providing instruction in Panjabi through weekend schools. By the 1990s, it was felt widely that community provision failed both in terms of the efficient administration of such schools and also in terms of the number of pupils gaining proficiency in the language. As second and third generation Sikh pupils enter such community run schools, their needs for better instruction are clearly felt and keenly debated within the community. In this debate, the lack of teaching materials is blamed for poor results.

Thus, there is a growing market for learning South Asian languages in Europe and North America. This demand comes not only from Sikh children, as some teachers wish to acquire familiarity with the language of their pupils in

primary and high schools. Similarly there is an increasing flow of tourists to India and Pakistan who need a short course in Panjabi although many now prefer to learn Hindi or Urdu, only to find the dominance of regional languages in many areas.

The books by Bhardwaj and Kalra *et. al.* are aimed at the same set of Panjabi learners - the beginners. Both are slanted towards those wishing to acquire elements of spoken dialogue. Their typical audiences are the tourists who wish to learn the language for travel. Bhardwaj specifically mentions its appeal to motivated adults. In both books, readers are guided through simple exercises in pronunciation, gradually proceeding to a fairly difficult set of lessons and exercises involving various situations such as ordering a drink, visiting a restaurant, shopping, and a taste of Punjab's cultural life, including music and marriage.

Dr. Bhardwaj feels confident enough to offer the reader a taste of Panjabi poetry at the conclusion of lessons. I am not sure that the book alone could elevate the reader to this stage without additional coaching. Kalra's approach is more gradual and somewhat more modest. His exercises cover similar situations, such as greetings, ordering a meal, introducing friends, travel dialogue and some guidance to Panjabi arts, including a popular dance, the bhangra.

Both books present some difficult choices regarding the pronunciation. Bhardwaj uses a modified version of the International Phonetic Alphabet as a guide to pronunciation. Although this has a phonetically consistent pattern, it is still based on a non-standard format. Kalra offers an intuitive sound system by a combination of consonants and vowels. Thus the *î* sound in Panjabi is to be pronounced as *ee* in English, while vowel *ā* sounds like *aa*, so Punjab is written as Panjaab. Unfamiliar sounds which have no equivalent in English are represented by combining two consonants or more, which at times seem quite taxing for the new learner. Thus *ghar* [house], *chiththee* [letter], where *gh* represents one special Panjabi consonant sound while *th* denotes another such sound. The reader needs to be quite careful as there are at least five additional sounds which are difficult for English native speakers. Here the cassettes come in handy, although there are not many exercises on special sounds. This intuitive method is helpful for a beginner intimidated by the phonetic symbols of a standard text, but the initial simplicity can and does lead to progressive confusion as the student masters the basics and comes across more complex sounds. In this respect, Shackle's *Panjabi* [out of print now] had a more consistent pattern and seems after all more attractive despite the initial difficulty faced by the learner in getting used to standard sound patterns.

Both the more recent books try to cover some aspects of Panjabi culture, thus *bhangra* finds space in both, while Bhardwaj provides lively anecdotes and even a taste of Panjabi jokes. Both books are accompanied by two cassettes, which reinforce pronunciation. From here, a serious learner should go to Shackle's *Introduction to Sacred Languages of the Sikhs* [SOAS, London, 1983] and try to see his competence looking through *A Guru Nanak Glossary*. [New Delhi: Heritage, 1983]. One could also try some exercises from Shackle's *Panjabi Reader*

drawn from London's Panjabi newspapers.

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Amrik Singh (ed.), *The Partition in Retrospect*, (New Delhi: Anamika Publishers & Distributors (P) Ltd. In association with National Institute of Panjab Studies, 2000), 432 pp (hb), No price mentioned. ISBN 81 – 86565 – 65 –5

Now, when more than half a century has elapsed since the Partition of India took place, it is time to attempt deeper and holistic analyses of those times. Professor Amrik Singh has edited a book which contains 24 articles authored mainly by historians, but also other writers and scholars - Indians, Pakistanis and international. The concentration understandably is on Punjab and Bengal, the two provinces that were actually partitioned on the basis of contiguous Muslim and non-Muslim majorities. It seems that the editor was interested in presenting a broad spectrum of interpretations, including contradictory ones, rather than advancing a particular thesis on Partition. In pursuing such an objective, he has succeeded very well. Some of the arguments and positions are familiar, but a number of articles throw new light on issues hitherto less researched and analysed. Here, only a few articles are chosen for comment.

Thus in the first section, K.L. Tuteja argues that Hindu consciousness had eclipsed the more secular character of the Indian National Congress in Punjab; consequently the Hindus leaders of the province did not try to reach a broader understanding with the Muslim majority of Punjab. When partition finally took place, the Congress leaders and cadres had become complete communalists. Bimal Prasad tries to dispel the widely held belief that Nehru and the Congress reneged upon an understanding reached with Muslim League leaders in the UP that after the 1937 elections joint Congress-Muslim League ministries will be established. He asserts that no such agreement existed and that the origins of such a story are to be found in the anti-Congress propaganda later launched by the Muslim League to counter the mass Muslim contact movement begun by Nehru in March 1937. Moreover, Jinnah had, by that time, made up his mind to direct his political skills at the creation of a separate Muslim state. A central feature of his strategy was to accentuate communal differences and tensions between Hindus and Muslims. Such a concerted campaign continued for the next ten years and many Muslims began to see themselves as a separate nation threatened by the Hindu community.

Prithipal Singh Kapur's thesis is that the Sikh leader Master Tara Singh played a leading role in opposing the idea of Pakistan, but when partition became inevitable he was the strongest force in demanding the partition of Punjab and Bengal. In those circumstances it was the best deal for the Sikhs and Hindus. Baren Ray examines how the Pathans and Baluchis fared in the

partition. Whereas the efforts of the Pathan nationalists to remain a part of the Indian union have received attention in scholarly research, the struggle of the Baluch leader, the Khan of Kalat, to remain independent rather than join Pakistan has received much less attention. Pakistan forcibly annexed Kalat State in 1948.

The Pakistani historian Iftikhar H. Malik tries to develop a sophisticated sociological framework deriving from current understandings of ethnicity and identity to analyse the emerging Punjabi-Muslim consciousness. His point is that too much concentration on Aligarh to grasp the politics of identity of Muslims is misplaced. Rather, research should be directed at the emergence of such an identity in the key Muslim-majority province of Punjab. Its role in the movement of Pakistan therefore needs to be probed more thoroughly.

The chapters on Bengal also provide interesting insights into the causes of the 'partitioning of hearts' as Mahatma Gandhi described the situation after the Great Calcutta Killings of August 1946. However, there were efforts of Bengali leaders, especially Sarat Chander Bose and Abul Hashim, to keep the province united but Congress and Muslim League High Commands ignored such possibilities.

In the section on perspectives on partition, V. N. Dutta takes issue with Ayesha Jalal's thesis that Jinnah did not really want partition, it was forced upon him by the Congress leaders. He asserts that Jinnah wanted nothing less than Pakistan, and used all means to achieve his end. In the final section, Mubarak Ali provides insight into how Islam in Pakistan has become a supra-ideology of all extremists. Amrik Singh winds up the book by arguing that the partition actually hurt the Muslims most because they were divided between two and later three countries.

The book focuses mainly on high politics; top actors and personalities receive most attention. Perhaps it is time to undertake investigations at another level - that of middle ranking British officials as well as local leaders and cadres of the main political parties. It is true that the top leaders were primarily responsible for dashing the chances of keeping India united - either by commission or omission - but the escalation of violence and brutality was the doing of middle and lower level actors. Some other issues that particularly need to be examined include the impact of the 1942 Quit India Movement on the balance of power in Punjab and Bengal; the role of religious slogans and religious figures in whipping up communal frenzy; a proper and systematic analysis of the reportings, articles and editorials of the various newspapers; and, the forgotten efforts of Peace Committees that were established at that time to fight the forces of reaction and inhumanity.

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Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 253pp, £17.50 (hb), ISBN 0-8166-3438-6. (pb) ISBN 0-8166-3439-4.

An inspiring as well as informative book is a rare commodity indeed. Vijay Prashad's *The Karma of Brown Folk*, which considers the history of South Asians in the US, attains this with consummate ease. With its arresting title and preface that concedes a debt to W. E. B. Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk*, Prashad deftly puts the argument across: if Du Bois starts off with the question addressed to African-Americans, 'how does it feel to be a problem?', then of US *desis*, he asks 'how does it feel to be a solution?'. This is particularly apposite to hegemonic assertions of their so-called 'model minority' status, even though this constituency may well know the crushing weight of the glass ceiling.

If I was to attempt to sum up this panoramic book, it begins with an account of US Orientalism which Prashad sees as a more fluid avatar of the European version (p12-13). He then considers the residue of such debates in Christian missionary and other vernacular arenas that revealed a schizoid repulsion-attraction to the 'ghastly beauty of India'. The next chapters focus on its contemporary legacy covering the popularity of consumer-age 'god men' such as Deepak Chopra in what Prashad dubs as 'New Age Orientalism' (p53). Its impact in state selection and legislation shaping the history of Asian migrants in the US is investigated, as is the creation of the 'model minority' as an institutionalised buffer against wider charges of racism. The latter is correlated with assumptions of Indians as essentially spiritual but driven to work hard. The packaging of Indian 'authentic' culture propelled by liberal multiculturalism lends itself to the retrogressive and conservative strands of what Prashad calls 'Yankee Hindutva'. It results in demarcating US *desis* from other diasporas, notably African-American. Prashad ends with an appeal to earlier histories of anti-racist and anti-imperial struggle - such as Gandhi, the Ghadar Party, and the Black Liberation movement - and compares this with the recent surge of Left movements with much emphasis given to the deleterious conditions of New York taxi workers, nearly fifty per cent of whom hail from the Panjab area.

There are memorable insights in this vast canvass. The take-up of techno-professional jobs by Indians from the 1950s' 'decade of indulgence' in an era where 'for white boys, the "nerd" was a figure of ridicule and the "rebel"...an icon of disenchanted youth' (p73) is refreshingly pert. How the differential articulations of race in the form of skin colour and *varna* in the subcontinent coalesce with European scientific racism is compelling (p97-98). And cross-connections between black and Indian campaigners against the 'fist of white supremacy' (p171) including Marcus Garvey's alliances with Indian rebels such as Haridas T. Mazumdar and Hucheswar Mugdal, gives a much-needed twist to an absolutist Afrocentrism. Earlier political movements in the US, particularly that of the Ghadar Party, provide a wealth of legacy for Prashad to draw upon.

This, along with the work conducted amongst Canadian Asians, were, some of the key catalysts for launching grassroots movement in the US, prominent amongst which is FOIL, Forum for Indian Leftists, set up in 1995.

I read the book in a chamber of echoes emanating from the Indian colonial context and other diasporic communities. Gender parallels with Prashad's argument of the domestic space as a repository of Indian culture, and the US exterior as the place of work (p104) resounded in the British colonial period in the subcontinent as outlined by Partha Chatterjee's *The Nation and its Fragments* (1994). In Chatterjee's account, the domestic was the space of Indian spirituality, embodied in the Indian woman and notions of Bharatmata; and the exterior that of the political economy, technology and science. But contrary to Prashad's argument, the private-public divide in this case was not a necessary prelude to domestic violence, rather it informed a struggle against colonialism.

Model minority syndromes have raised their despicably sanitised heads in post-1990s UK as well, albeit in a less institutionalised form. However despite the model being an aspirant for some status-conscious desis, it has itself become a pilloried notion not least by UK Asians: 'These Asian Rich Lists are a load of b***cks', as one colleague put it at a recent ICA conference on Asian Business and Creativity. In the end the specificities of the UK and US contexts outweigh any attempts at balancing acts. The history of US race relations, migration patterns and the 'guilt complex' of the 'sense of responsibility toward the people who live in those left-behind lands' (p120), namely India, remains peculiar to the US South Asian context.

Overall, there are a couple of shortcomings in the work. Prashad defends his stance to forward a parochial history (pix). But this guard does not save him from his apparently myopic generalisation of European Orientalism. There is no indication given of what he understands as European Orientalism other than that in this ideological branch, 'the twain (of East and West) would never meet' (p13). First of all, it might be emphasised that whilst the British Orientalists might have aspired to rule, German Orientalists continued to study and venerate the supposed ancient vestiges of India in a manner similar to the Thoreaus and Emersons located in the US. Secondly, there is a complex history of relations between Britain and the subcontinent. This might be simplified in terms of the Romanticist Orientalist view of India dominant before the 1830s, and its later subsumption into a more Utilitarian stance summed up in Thomas Macaulay's (in)famous Minute on Education on the need to produce 'a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, morals and intellect' which was legitimated by the more rigorous workings of scientific racism and the fruits of colonial profits. Ripples of discontent with this formulation were discernible at the turn of the twentieth century, where educationalist such as E.B. Havell extolled Indian traditions and religiosity - a current that contributed to the development in nationalist thought.

The second main contention is that Du Bois' pronouncement of the state of

Black people in the early twentieth century has shifted somewhat at the turn of the twenty-first. Perhaps we need to ask the question 'how does it feel to be a problem that is placated at least in the realms of popular culture?' Yes, abject poverty and discrimination persists with a vengeance amongst African-American communities, but the illusory workings of late capitalism have led to the creation of Black 'model' citizens in the form of Hollywood stars, television hosts and to a lesser extent, political figures. It has also entrenched the fetishisation of its alter image – the all-American, drive-by narratives of gangsta rap, unfettered sexuality, misogyny and gun-play, signalled in the avid consumption of rap by white suburban youth in the US. A more interesting question, which the book seems to overlook, is an exploration of what this Bhabhaesque desire/disdain complex might actually signify within the contemporary US polity. This is surely one of the psychological constructs underpinning the souls of Black folk defined by surfeit and excess, and the karma of Brown folk premised upon restraint and guilt. There are similar dynamics elsewhere, where Black underwrites contemporary popular culture albeit in the form of a domesticated fetish suitable for multinational corporate profits: the point being that moving away from history into the lineaments of contemporary popular culture, diasporic South Asian does not seem as prominent as Black. Instead Asian becomes a contested signifier rubbing shoulders with not just the residue of white supremacy, but also the valorised griots of popular culture – a situation which, momentarily at least, seems to turn the model minority thesis on its head.

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Hasan Manzar, *A Requiem for the Earth. Selected Stories*, (Pakistan Writers Series, series editor: Muhammad Umar Memon; Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998) xlviii and 183 pp. Rs/300. (pb). ISBN 0-19-577899-5.

Muhammad Umar Memon (ed. and tr.), *The Colour of Nothingness. Modern Urdu Short Stories*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998) xli and 230 pp. Rs/ 550. (hb). ISBN 0-19-577897-9.

Muzaffar Iqbal (ed.), *Colours of Loneliness. Short Stories from Urdu and the Regional Languages of Pakistan*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999), xvi and 405 pp. US \$ 17.00. (hb). ISBN 0-19-577850-2.

For a couple of years now, English translations from South Asian languages have been appearing on the market in growing numbers, partly translated by the authors themselves, partly by others. The three collections under review are among the latest publications in this line, devoted mostly to authors largely unknown outside South Asia. Hopefully, the publication of these stories by Oxford Pakistan will enable them to reach a wider circle of readers beyond the limits of the subcontinent and of the Indo-Pakistani diaspora in the West.

The first book, unlike the other two, is a selection of stories by a single writer, Hasan Manzar (born 1934). The stories were selected from three collections, published in 1981, 1982 and 1991; one story was published in *Aaj* in 1990. As the editor rightfully stresses in his detailed introduction, Manzar is one of the most versatile Urdu writers, not in terms of literary method, but with regard to the range of his themes, characters and the location of his stories. The background for this diversity of content is provided by the writer's eventful career which took him from India to Pakistan, England, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Africa and finally back to Pakistan where he now practises as a psychiatrist (cp. Introduction, pp. xxxi-xxxvi). It goes to the editor's credit that he was able to obtain detailed information on his life and writing from Manzar who otherwise shuns all publicity.

Manzar is a professedly realistic writer, in his own words striving 'for the simplest and most direct expression', avoiding 'romantic speech', considering 'show-offiness of any kind or the desire to impress the reader a taboo' (pp. xxxv-xxxvi). As the *raison d'être* of art his view is 'that it enables one to admit others into his or her experiences, his or her feeling' (p. xxxvi). True to this concept of writing, Manzar presents human beings in their manifold relations with each other and the world, but centred around the individual and his/her reactions. His subtle, finely chiselled stories rely as much on the unsaid as on what is said or done. They are entirely free from pathos and sentimentality, but full of human warmth and compassion. Apart from this central theme of human relations on the family and day-to-day level, one of Manzar's main concerns is the role of religion in people's life. In several stories, he presents the 'searing conflicts generated by regional and religious chauvinism in a highly exploitative society' (Memon, p. viii). Be it the claustrophobia of a Hindu girl in Pakistan ('Kanha Devi and Her Family'), the attempts of a Muslim family to convert a Hindu beggar ('The Beggar Boy'), or the bigotry of clerics in post-revolutionary Iran ('Night of Torment'), in every instance Manzar forces us to 'question and rethink the meaning of words which have been devalued by time, practice, and sheer exploitative usage' (Memon, p. xviii). Further themes featuring in the selected stories are the all-pervading corruption in Pakistan and the cynicism of its administrative class from the highest to the lowest ranks ('A Tough Journey'), the shallowness of a concept like nationalism for a poor man ('A Man's Country'), colonialism and racism ('White Man's World'), and the imminent danger of the extinction of the human race by man's irresponsible behaviour ('Requiem for the Earth'). Apart from the last story which includes a lengthy sermon about the destruction of the earth through smog, radiation, radioactive ash, experiments, hoarding and greed etc. (p. 180) voiced by one of the characters, the author avoids overt statements, though at some places in other stories, too, he seems to come through in his protagonist's words. There are, otherwise, no auctorial or narrator's comments, and for the most part it is left to the reader to draw conclusions. It may be advisable for readers of this collection to read the stories first and Part I of the introduction afterwards,

because this would allow them to arrive at their own understanding of the stories before getting influenced by the editor's interpretation. The extensive quotations included in the introduction might also reduce the spontaneous interest and suspense created by the stories.

While Manzar's stories are written in the realistic mode, using mimetic techniques, the anthology *The Colour of Nothingness* covers a variety of styles and narrative devices, from realism to surrealism and symbolism, as well as a number of stories which do not fall into any clear-cut category. Famous authors from Pakistan and India are presented along with others who are completely unknown outside Urdu circles. The thematic range is as wide as the stylistic – from love, sexuality and the relation of man and woman ('Sukhe Saawan' by Zamiruddin Ahmad; 'The Rose' by Abdullah Hussein; 'Deep as the Ocean' by Sharwan Kumar Verma) to overt critique of Imperialism's exploitation of the Third World ('The Bird' by Enver Sajjad), from the grim portrayal of social deprivation and its effects ('Artistic Finesse' by Anwer Khan; 'A Dream Story' by Mohsin Khan) to existential questions of man in his relation to faith and tradition ('The Parasite' by Iqbal Majeed), from the feeling of loss and nostalgia ('The Colour of Nothingness' by Naiyer Masud) to the aftermath of India's partition in 1947 ('The Thaw' by Muhammad Salim ur-Rahman) and Hindu-Muslim riots ('The Vultures of the Parsi Cemetery' by Ali Imam Naqvi), to name only some. All stories tackle their subjects in a novel, often unexpected way. Memon has succeeded in his aim to 'achieve a balance between the realist, traditional type of short story and its more daring counterpart' (p. xxxii) and to 'present the texture and flavour of the modern Urdu short story' (p. xxx).

The collection thus caters to different literary tastes and offers a good insight into the richness and diversity of contemporary Urdu writing. The editor's introduction provides short, but profound background information on the history of the Urdu short story and on the individual qualities of the selected writers. One may certainly disagree with some of his statements – is there any need to pronounce Surendar Parkash 'India's leading Urdu short story writer'? What I find disturbing, however, is the second aim Memon mentions in the introduction: 'to eschew all pronouncements about literature's alleged social relevance' (p. xxx). Why then mention it at all? It seems that this unnecessary statement is a product of Memon's strong anti-Progressivist bias, which is completely out of place in the present context.

The translations in both volumes are successful insofar as they offer smooth, enjoyable reading. The language never sounds awkward. Since many Urdu texts were not available to me, I was not able to compare the translations with the Urdu original to see how far they are faithful to it. However, sometimes I got the impression that the dialogues sounded too American. It is left to native speakers of English or American and Urdu to judge whether English or American colloquialisms (sometimes bordering on slang) are appropriate to convey what is expressed by the respective Urdu passage.

Biographical notes on the writers and translators conclude the volume. In

both books, Urdu and other Indic terms are explained in glossaries ordered story-wise. Alphabetical order at the end of the book would have made it easier for the reader to look up words. In Manzar's book, there is some incoherence as far as italics are concerned. Inconsistencies also occur in both glossaries in the transliteration of vowels. Apart from this minor flaw, the books are well-produced and free from printing errors.

Colours of Loneliness (one wonders whether the similarity of the two titles is coincidental!), the third collection under review, presents a more variegated picture as far as language is concerned. It includes wellknown senior writers as well as lesser known names. The editor consciously chose authors 'who not only belong to different geographical areas of Pakistan but also to distinct schools of fiction writing, from social realism to the metaphysical' (p. vii). In his words, the stories like a mirror reflect 'strains of contemporary urban life, rites of an ancient tribal culture, the ambitions of raw youth, the worries of an old mother, and a thousand and one miniatures which make up life in Pakistan' (pp. vii-viii). Some of the shorter texts on social questions, especially those set in the rural milieu, resemble outcries of protest against oppression and exploitation, often expressed in a direct manner. Examples for this mode are 'Shock' by Zaitun Bano (Pashto), 'Is This a Way to Live' by Niamatullah Gichki (Balochi), and 'The Mad Man' by Sher Muhammad Marri (Balochi). In contrast, stories like Khadija Mastoor's 'Embarrassment' (Urdu) present a highly differentiated image of social relations as experienced by the protagonist, without a clear indictment of any one side, forcing the reader to form his/her own opinion. A number of stories explore surrealist or symbolic modes of narration, others combine social realism with subtle introspection. Urdu stories outnumber those in other languages, but this only reflects the literary landscape of Pakistan. Balochi, Pashto, Punjabi and Sindhi are almost equally represented, and stories from all languages display a considerable thematic and stylistic range.

In his introduction, Muzaffar Iqbal provides very brief information on the background of Pakistani literature, pointing out the impact of 'the rich and enchanting world of Middle Eastern and South Asian folklore, legends, myths, and tales' (p. xv) on the regional literatures. He rightly stresses that much of this literature is still unknown to the outside world because it does not fit into the new 'North-South axis' of literary business (pp. xiii-xiv). While this state of affairs certainly is deplorable and every attempt to change it most welcome, some of the sweeping statements made in the introduction look grossly uninformed and seem to echo Edward Said in too uncritical a manner. Perhaps partisan interests here got the better of the editor, which somehow does not befit the fine pieces of creative writing he has assembled in the anthology.

The translations, partly done by the authors, with very few exceptions offer good reading and succeed in preserving the distinct flavour of the original stories. In 'Who was to Blame' by Mohammad Nawaz Tair, too many explanations on objects of Pathan life are provided in the text itself which could

very well have been included in the glossary, but then this may be due to the primary text and not to the translation.

The glossary shows some inconsistency as far as capitalisation and transliteration are concerned the two identical sounds in *mere* are written in two different ways *mairay*, p.388, ā is sometimes written 'a' as in *janab*, p.387, sometimes 'aa', as in *azaan*, p. 385; in *paan-wala*, p. 389, you find both versions in one word; later on we read still another version for the second part of the compound in *tonga-walla* p. 390; v is transliterated partly as 'v', like in *masnavi*, partly as 'w', as the above example illustrates. Some explanations are irritating, for instance 'maulana religious scholar' is followed by 'maulvi Muslim religious scholar', p. 388, which may lead uninformed readers to conclude that a maulana is a non-Muslim. Biographical notes for the writers and translators are given at the end of the book. Unfortunately, the information on lesser known authors is often scanty whereas it is here that it is needed most. As it is, the last portions of the book betray a lack of care. More care could also have been taken to avoid printing errors. Omissions of whole words occasionally blur the meaning of the respective sentences. One more deficiency of the collection is the lack of any information on the sources of the stories.

Taken together, the three books present a valuable addition to contemporary literature from South Asia in English translation available to a public outside academia. May they find the recognition they deserve - not as source texts about exotic lands, but as works of literature in their own right.

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Indeera Chand, *Climb Every Mountain - Radhika's Story* (HarperCollins Publishers, New Delhi, 1997), pp. xix+210. Rs 145. ISBN 81-7223-268-3.

Radhika Chand, youngest of the three daughters of Ramesh and Indeera Chand, and born in 1973 in Mumbai (Bombay), suffers from Down's Syndrome. The book under review is an account written by her mother and deals with the experiences the family has been faced with. The family's approach towards Radhika is quite open and based on deeper understanding of her illness. As the story goes in this moving biographical study, the Chands were delighted at the birth of their third daughter, whom they named Radhika. Indeera Chand was jubilant to have another girl though there were apprehensions and misgivings in her mind because of an early miscarriage. Due to this mishap, the family was deeply concerned about the health of the expected baby. At her birth, however, Radhika was a healthy and 'normal-looking' girl. Within a couple of days of delivery both the mother and child were discharged from the hospital and sent home. Indeera Chand enjoyed Radhika's childhood and took great pleasure in satisfying her needs. It was later at the age of three, while noticing a slight unusualness of her nose and eyes the parents took Radhika to the doctors.

According to the diagnosis and much to the shock of the family, the little Radhika suffered from Down's Syndrome, about which the contemporary medical and social knowledge in India was still scanty.

Ironically, Indeera started to feel guilty by blaming herself for having given birth to a 'monster'. The parents felt hesitation and fright in taking Radhika outside because of her abnormal looking face which might have invited crude remarks and sneers in the street. In South Asia, and other developing countries, people are not yet educated enough about such diseases. Even the educated and otherwise enlightened families like the Chands have a hard time accepting such disabilities. Such an attitude forces them to develop personal myths and superstitions rather than treating such patients normally and with a greater understanding. To them, sadly, a sufferer becomes a 'reject', and not a human. Due to scanty institutional support and an apathetic social attitude, it is the immediate family that comes to the rescue of such patients.

After much ado, Radhika and her parents went to visit their extended family who turned out to be quite supportive. However, in the process, Radhika missed her school whereas the elder sisters were both sent to a boarding school. But this also gave Indeera an opportunity to devote herself to Radhika. Later on, Radhika's father - an employee of a British bank - was posted to Hong Kong when she was eleven. Hong Kong being a totally new place for the family, Radhika, in particular, found it hard without her friends and missed her sisters immensely. With the co-operation from Radhika her mother was able to educate her on basic domestic chores. Radhika had to be taught basics such as crossing the road, boarding a train and other such day-to-day needs. In India Radhika used to attend a school for children with special needs but she was always confined to the same class. Obviously, Radhika was not a quick learner and the teachers had to work with her quite patiently. Whenever the family moved the parents made sure that she was sent to a helpful school. The family not only moved across India due to the father's job but also to Sri Lanka before moving on to Hong Kong. After a four-year sojourn in Hong Kong, the next destination was Australia, until they came back to New Delhi in 1990. The experiences in Australia in terms of schooling, special support mechanism and a greater information on the Down's syndrome proved immensely helpful.

From a young age Radhika had developed a special taste for art. She could convey her feelings through art. While staying in Australia she had designed certain paintings which her teacher found exceptionally good. She proved to be the most promising student in her class. Her dream was realized when her mother contacted an artist in India for exhibiting Radhika's works. The exhibition took place at the India International Centre, a prominent socio-cultural place near the famous Lodhi Gardens and attracted quite a few reviews besides several viewers. Radhika loved the attention and the thrill of seeing her work being acknowledged. Now in her late-20s, Radhika has developed her own unique style of art. She has sold a number of paintings, which has brought her money, fame and a greater self-recognition. Moreover, she has inspired many such other sufferers and their

families across India.

Radhika's Story is a great celebration of the life and creativity of a young woman who has made her mark despite all the odds. It is the story of a gifted person, who had been earlier 'disowned' or at least misunderstood by her society. She has fought against this prevalent ignorance and has set a pioneering trend for similar other countless individuals in that part of the world. This simple but impressive, diary-style book interspersed with episodic details, Radhika's own essay and records from teachers, deals with one of several neglected social issues in South Asia. Such material needs to be developed into films and documentaries in different languages for creating greater awareness. The book highlights the need for educating society on the life and aspirations of such individuals in a positive way. Realistically, Radhika is a heroine, the sub-continent's Helen Keller, and thus, a source of great encouragement to other people in her situation. Her mother has taught her daughter all that she knows; her dedication of time, resolve and attention should encourage others to contribute positively into similar situations. Most of all the societies and the governments must try to inculcate a greater sensitivity and a more supportive attitude, rather than being dismissive or disdainful of those people who, like Radhika, suffer from such enduring ailments.

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The Punjab has been one of the most important regions of the Indian subcontinent and has played a pivotal role in its political and economic development from ancient times. The International Journal of Punjab Studies provides interdisciplinary and comparative research on the historical pre-1947 Punjab, the Indian and Pakistani Punjab after 1947, and the Punjabi Diaspora. The Journal carries articles from an international list of contributors, with an interdisciplinary base that includes history, language and linguistics, literature, political science, economics, social anthropology, geography and theology.