

BOSS & SHRG present

SIKHS IN THE UK: FACT FICTION AND FUTURE CONFERENCE

The British Organisation of Sikh Students (BOSS) and the Sikh Human Rights Group (SHRG) present a one day conference on issues affecting young Sikhs in the United Kingdom.

Wednesday 5th April 2006

10:30am – 5:30pm (Lunch and refreshments will be provided)
Sir Alexander Fleming Building (No. 5 on the Campus map)
Imperial College, London.
Nearest tube: South Kensington

Keynote speakers;

Paul Goggins MP - Home Office Minister responsible for Community Cohesion, Faith and Race Equality

Professor Gurharpal Singh - Department of Theology, Birmingham University

Professor Arvindpal Singh Mandair - Professor of Philosophy and Religion at Hofstra University, USA

Manjit Singh Gill QC - Barrister and leading Queens Counsel

Dr Jasdev Singh Rai - Director of the Sikh Human Rights Group

Key note speakers from BOSS.

The lectures will cover key topical issues including

Legal invisibility: Sikhs and the law,

Sikhs and employment,

Discrimination and security,

The Panth in a global world,

Facts, fiction and reality of the Sikh Community in the UK,

Challenges and Opportunities.

This conference will act as a focus for debate over the issues and concerns of young British Sikhs.

For more information Tel: 07971602159

For a information pack email: sikh_conference_2006@yahoo.co.uk

Whilst the conference is free please register as places are limited

BOSS
British Organisation
of Sikh Students
www.boss-uk.org

SHRG
www.shrg.net



2006

SIKHS IN THE UK: FACT FICTION AND FUTURE

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10:30am - 5:30pm
Sir Alexander Fleming Building
Imperial College, London

Sikhs in the UK: Fact Fiction and Future Conference Programme

10.30 am	Registration	
11.00 am	Welcome & Introduction	Jaswant Kaur
11.05 am	British Organisation of Sikh Students [BOSS]	Harjit Singh
	Sikh heritage in the UK	Jaspreet Singh
	President of Sikh Society UCL – Student Life	Dilpreet Kaur
11.35 am	The Panth in the Global World	Jasdev Singh Rai
12.15 pm	LUNCH	
1.15 pm	Kirtan	Harkirat Singh
1.30 pm	The Law and the Sikhs	Sukhvinder Kaur
1.45 pm	Sikhi and the Space of Critique	Prof Arvind Singh Mandair
2.45 pm	Sikhs in Britain: the challenges ahead	Prof Gurharpal Singh
3.15 pm	Minister Home Office: A Future for All	Paul Goggins
4.15 pm	Response to Minister	Satnam Singh
4.25 pm	Negotiating Barriers, Para 67	Manjit Singh QC
4.45 pm	Our Voice	BOSS speaker

Dr Jasdev Singh Rai
MBCChB , MA (Politics)
Director Sikh Human Rights Group

Jasdev Singh has been the director of the Sikh Human Rights Group since 1988 and has led the Group in several national and international conferences, campaigns, research work and media representation on issues of human and civil rights.



Dr Rai is also the General Secretary of the British Sikh Consultative Forum and an advisor on international issues to the Jathedar, Sri Akal Takht Sahib.

Recent Papers include:

- 'The monologue of liberalism and its imagination of sacred in minority cultures'
- 'The sacred within the new hegemony, where is the battle, where is the demon?'
- 'Contesting hegemony and marginalisation, reclaiming science in other praxis'
- 'Conflict as collaboration, Sikh insurgency in India and the passage to peace between India and Pakistan'.
- 'Globalisation and the Indian strength'
- 'Good Governance and Sikhi,'
- 'Resolving paradoxes: locating the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib'
- 'Political violence in the era of globalisation, an argument for pluralism'.

'THE PANTH IN A GLOBAL WORLD' Dr Jasdev Singh Rai

Predictions of the new Global Empire based on universal norms based on western European concepts, the dawn of an aggressive Neo Con led American imperialism, the unremitting globalisation of cultures, capitalism and controls, liberal humanism, the inter-faith dialogue influenced by humanist Christianity, Al Qaeda's Salafi version of Islam and politics and Ala-Maududi's reunion of State and Religion, India's Nehruvian but conflict prone attempts to forge a 'nation' of Indians and a secular State, the new citizenship drive in UK and France's 18th century revolution for a mono-cultural egalitaire, the 1648 Westphalian order of territoriality and the destructive drive of development on our planet are just some of the forces that the Sikh Panth deals with daily without consciously acknowledging or addressing them strategically. The Panth means the path, it has come to mean the collective Sikh community and its conscience. Beyond the politics of identity how does the Panth retain the context of 'sachi taksal'.

Sukhvinder Kaur - The Law and the Sikhs

Abstract:

Sikh youth in UK – then and now

The early immigrant Sikhs that came to the UK assimilated to get jobs. The myth of returning to the homeland meant that these Sikhs did not want to let go of their culture, customs and religion. Having plenty of experience of being a minority in India and other places they soon realised that they were able and should assert their rights to enjoy the same or similar rights as others. They soon found that they were invisible in the eyes of the law even though they had the most distinct and visible appearance.

Despite all the barriers and in the face of discrimination they were instrumental in changing the law, getting exemptions in the law, and bringing together the community to stand united for their rights. Rights have improved and as a result of a ‘special relationship’ and unprecedented effort by the Sikhs then. Sikhs have enjoyed more rights than many other communities.. However, what of today’s Sikh youth? Discrimination is still prevalent, though perhaps not to the same extent and not as openly. Where are the Chahals and Sandhu’s of today? Do the Sikh youth of today have the impetus and desire for change and protection of their culture, customs and religion or does the need for conformity challenge this?

Dr Arvindpal Singh Mandair
Assistant Professor of Philosophy and
Religion; holder of the Sardarni Kuljit Kaur
Bindra Chair in Sikh Studies
Hofstra University, New York USA



Dr. Mandair holds doctoral degrees in chemistry and philosophy.

Before going to New York in September 2001 Dr Mandair taught at the School of Oriental and African Studies, the University of Warwick (U.K) and at Coventry University. In addition to Sikh and South Asian Studies his research interests include continental philosophy post-colonial theory and theory of religion.

His recent publications include a major new set of translations from Sikh Scripture entitled "Teachings of the Sikh Gurus" published by Routledge, 2005 (co-authored and co-translated with Christopher Shackle), two special issues of the journal "Social Identities" focusing on the philosophy of dialogue, and a special issue of the journal Theory, Culture and Society centered around the work of Jacques Derrida.

He is currently completing two monographs: "Religion and the Politics of Translation" and "Critical Terms For Sikh Religion and Theology". He is one of the founding editors of the new journal "Sikh Formations: Religion, Culture and Theory" published biannually by Routledge.

SIKHI AND THE SPACE OF CRITIQUE

"This talk will explore reasons for why Sikhs continue to deny themselves access to the space of public intellectual discourse or what is often called the space of critical thinking. Conceptual enunciations of Sikhism have generally been limited to a stereotypical and over-determined set of representations designed to conform to a demand for a kind of identity that effectively forecloses the heterological resources of Sikh thought. My argument is partly a plea for a younger generation of Sikhs to feel confident about using the Guru Granth Sahib as a conceptual basis for re-determining their relationship to the space of mainstream critical thinking (that continues to be dominated by Christian and Jewish concepts even in its secular versions). If taken to its limits, such a task must inevitably result in the transformation of the very sphere that they believe denies them access."

Prof Gurharpal Singh

B.Sc.Econ (Lond), M.A. (Warwick), PhD (Lond)
Nadir Dinshaw Professor of Inter-Religious Relations,
University of Birmingham



Recent Publications:

Guest Editor (with John Rex) of International Journal on Multicultural Societies
Vol. 5, No.1 (September 2003) : Multiculturalism and Political Integration in Modern Nation-States.
Ethnic Conflict in India: A Case-study of Punjab (Macmillan/St.Martin's Press).
Sikh Religion, Culture and Ethnicity (edited with Shackle and Mandir, Curzon).
'Rightsizing and Reshaping the State : India from partition to the Present', Brendan O'Leary et. al eds.,
Rightsizing the State (Oxford University Press).
Culture and Economy in the Indian Diaspora (edited with Bhikhu Parekh and Steve Vertovec, Routledge, 2002).
'South Asia'. Global Corruption Report (Transparency International, Berlin).

Currently working on :

Globalisation and inter-religious relations, democratisation in South Asia, Sikhs in Britain, Leverhulme Trust funded research on Leicester: the making of a multicultural city. Recently appointed as a board member of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, UK.

SIKHS IN BRITAIN : THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

Despite the highly politicised nature of the Sikh community in Britain, there is very little serious understanding of its development since the Second World War and a real absence of a detailed evidence base among community activists and leaders about the social profile of British Sikhs. This presentation will draw on the author's forthcoming volume *Sikhs in Britain* to illustrate the Sikh contribution to the development of multiculturalism and the issues facing the community itself. In particular, by drawing on the data provide by 2001 census and recent surveys, it will highlight striking evidence of employment end educational under-achievement that is present among a large proportion of British Sikhs. The current picture that emerges is of a community in transition between Indian and British- born generations, between the young and the old, but it also a community where concerns with identity and discrimination have tended to overshadow other major areas of community development in contemporary Britain

Paul Goggins, MP

Under Secretary of State at the Home Office

Elected Labour MP for Wythenshawe and Sale East in May 1997.



Paul Goggins was a member of the House of Commons Social Security Select Committee until October 1998 when he was appointed Parliamentary Private Secretary (PPS) to John Denham, then the Minister of State at the Department of Social Security.

He moved with John to the Department of Health in January 1999. In December 2000 he was appointed PPS to David Blunkett, Secretary of State at the Department for Education and Employment and moved with David to the Home Office in June 2001.

In May 2003 he was appointed Minister for Prisons and Probation. After the May 2005 election, Paul was reappointed as a minister in the Home Office with responsibility for:

- Serious and organised crime
- Drugs
- Asset Recovery Agency
- Security Industry Authority
- Public order, sex offences, roads policing, animal extremism, internet crime, child pornography and football
- Voluntary and community sector, community cohesion, faith and race equality.

Paul Goggins is the co-founder of the All Party Parliamentary Friends of CAFOD group and is Secretary of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Poverty.

Manjit Singh Gill QC

Barrister, Silk 2000

Manjit Singh Gill has been very active in human and civil rights issues as a lawyer. In the 1980s he was prominent in the Society of Black Lawyers and involved in a number of initiatives to counter race discrimination in the legal profession.

Some years ago he was heavily involved in setting up the Discrimination Law Association. He is a member of the Bar Council's Immigration Practitioners Accreditation Board and was involved with the Bar Council's initiative on direct access to the Bar.

Manjit Singh Gill is also the chairperson of the Board of Sikh Human Rights Group and has represented the Group's work at international conferences including the World Conference Against Racism where para 67 was achieved.

In his professional life he is a member of, amongst others, the Administrative Law Bar Association, Discrimination Law Association, Bar European Group.

In 1992 he was appointed by the Attorney-General as Junior Counsel to the Crown in common law matters. In 1998 the Attorney-General appointed him as a Special Advocate authorised to represent the interests of appellants in National Security cases. All his leading human rights cases have been for victims of abuses. These include cases on the scope of the Crown's obligations to protect its citizens in trials and detention abroad, the extra-territorial reach of the Human Rights Act 1998, challenging the Government's indefinite detention of terrorists without trial, securing protection against having to participate in civil war on grounds of conscientious objection, developing the law on treatment of women subjected to rape as a weapon of war, the protection of the mentally disordered defendant in the criminal sentencing process, the human rights of professionals facing regulatory and disciplinary sanctions, challenging the discriminatory requirement on foreign nationals to seek the Home Secretary's permission before they marry in the UK, and various EC law cases.

He is editor of the Immigration and Nationality Law Reports. www.6kbw.co.uk

