

August 14, 2014

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

4th Dr. Jasbir Singh Saini Endowed Chair in Sikh and Punjabi Studies Conference
(May 8-9, 2015)

Theme of the Conference

Living and Making Sikhi in the Diaspora: The Millennial Generation Comes of Age

Description and Rationale

The Department of Religious Studies at the University of California Riverside and the Dr. Jasbir Singh Saini endowed Chair in Sikh and Punjabi Studies are pleased to announce the call for papers for UC Riverside's fourth international Sikh Studies conference on the theme of *Living and Making Sikhi in the Diaspora: The Millennial Generation Comes of Age*.

The term 'Millennials' (a.k.a. 'Generation Y') has been applied to the generation reaching young adulthood in the early 2000s. This is the generation that has grown up during the current era of 'globalization' characterized by increased global interconnections and consciousness thereof. Politically, their lives have been shadowed by a 'global war on terror'. Economically, they have experienced a global economic recession. Culturally, they came of age as 'digital natives' for whom the internet and other forms of information technology connect them to others near and far.

Among Sikhs in the diaspora, Millennials are frequently a generation or more removed from ancestral roots in Punjab. These are young Sikhs who have been born and raised in North America, the UK, Australia, and throughout Europe whose grandparents or parents emigrated between the 1950s and 1980s. Their worldviews and life experiences thus reflect the societies in which they have been born and raised, and their experience of Punjab is often limited or second hand. As a result, questions of distinguishing *Sikhi* (Sikh practices) from *Punjabiyyat* (Punjabi culture) and of representing *Sikhi* and Sikh interests to others in the multicultural and religiously pluralist cultures in which they live are often at the forefront of their concerns.

In line with the 'town and gown' theme and aspirations of previous Sikh Studies conferences at UC Riverside, this conference seeks to bring together Sikh Studies scholars and diaspora Sikh youth activists to explore the ways in which Millennial Sikhs of the diaspora are making and living *Sikhi* in various settings around the globe. We particularly seek papers and presentations bearing on (but not limited to): the lived experiences of Sikh Millennials and the localization of *Sikhi* in response to particular social settings in which young local-born Sikhs are coming of age; the global flow of discourses about *Sikhi* as diaspora Sikh youth share accounts and ideas about what it means to be a Sikh; the role of technology and social media in these global religious and cultural flows; local and global efforts and movements to teach young generations of diaspora-born Sikhs *Sikhi* ways of being and knowing; the role/s of religious performances and practices in the transference and re/interpretation of Sikh ways of being and knowing in new contexts and their interaction with cultural performances and practices; changing gender and sexuality practices and attitudes in diasporic settings; Sikh institution building and institutional reform efforts locally, regionally, globally; issues surrounding civic engagement and the legal rights of diaspora Sikhs; relations between Sikhs and non-Sikhs (and of Punjabi and non-Punjabi Sikhs) in different locales and sources of difference or division within Sikh communities and the responses of diaspora-born Sikhs to them.

Timelines / Participation

The conference will be mainly a two day event of panel discussions, and will be held on Friday and Saturday, **May 8-9, 2015**, at the newly-built Interdisciplinary Building (Symposium INTS 1113) of the Riverside Campus of the University of California. The abstracts of the papers are due by **December 15, 2014** and complete papers by **April 15, 2015**. Attendance at the seminar will be open to graduate students, faculty and the public.

Budget

The details of the budget will be worked out once we have a clear idea of who will be coming to participate in the conference. The Saini Chair of Sikh Studies in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of California, Riverside (UCR) will provide funding to cover local expenses, board and lodging, and travel funding to those participants whose proposals have been accepted but who do not have any institutional sponsorship.

Outcomes

There are two main outcomes of this project, one immediate and quantitative, and the other long term and qualitative.

The immediate outcome of this conference will be the publication of selected papers emerging from the conference on a coherent theme. The task of soliciting contributions from among the participants, and organizing and editing the volume will fall to the chair of the organizing

committee of this conference. It is anticipated that an academic publishing house will be receptive to publish such a volume.

In the long term, this conference will contribute to the on-going process of community building between individual scholars as well as across institutions. The conference provides an opportunity for scholars with otherwise disparate fields of inquiry in the area of Sikh Studies / South Asian Studies to enter into conversation with one another. This conference represents a first step in developing further collaborative projects among UCR and other universities around the world, particularly in the Punjab. At its most ambitious, this conference will raise further the profile of UCR, its faculty, and its students and lays the foundation for future scholarly collaborations among UCR and other institutions.

Organizers

Chair of the Organizing Committee:

Professor Pashaura Singh

E-mail: psingh@ucr.edu

Members:

Professor Verne A. Dusenbery

E-mail: vdusenbery@hamline.edu

Charles M. Townsend

E-mail: charles.townsend@email.ucr.edu

Event Coordinator:

Ryan A. Mariano

E-mail: ryan.mariano@ucr.edu