AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE CONCEPT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE GURDWĀRĀ IN THE UK

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ABSTRACT

Although Sikh *gurdwārās* have existed in the UK for the past one hundred years, there have been few studies focused on them by western academics. Gurharpal Singh and Darshan Singh Tatla state in their work, "Remarkably, the role of *gurdwārās* in community development has received little academic attention" (Singh and Tatla 2006: p. 5). This dissertation examines the ever-changing social, political, and religious role of the *gurdwārās* in the UK in the serving of the community in reflection of the traditional authority on *gurdwārās*, with particular focus on six *gurdwārās;* three in Bradford and three in Southall.

Gurdwārās in the UK provide a religious, social and political role for the community. However, this does not mean that the social, political, and religious role of *gurdwārās* has remained static over the years. *Gurdwārās* in the UK have developed and changed to meet the needs of the Sikh community and the wider society. This raises the following questions that form the focus of this study: What are the Sikh *Gurūs* teachings on the role and function of *gurdwārās*? What is the historical context of *gurdwārās* in the UK? How has the management system of *gurdwārās* in the UK adapted to the changing demographics of the Sikh community? What religious, social, political activities and services do *gurdwārās* perform? How does the management system along with the religious, gender, and age composition of the management committee affect the success or failure of *gurdwārās* doing the job that the Sikh *Gurūs* had envisaged? In addressing this, I draw upon scriptural texts, religious histories, and a detailed ethnographic study of six *gurdwārās,* three from Bradford and three from Southall. For the research I examined documentary material, conducted participant observation, and carried out face-to-face and telephone interviews with *gurdwārā* management staff and members of the Sikh community over a twelve month period (2007-2008).

I argue that although no absolute conclusions can be made, there is a general trend that the age, gender and religious representation in *gurdwārā* management committees do influence how far the *gurdwārās* go in providing religious, social and political activities and therefore there is some effect upon their roles in the Sikh community. My findings indicate that *gurdwārās* in the UK are providing an important role in the Sikh society, which has a wider impact on society as a whole; nonetheless there is the opportunity and also the need for *gurdwārās* in the UK to push forward their roles further in making them more relevant to the lives of its community members.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Introduction

Over the last hundred years, *gurdwārās* in the UK have provided comfort and peace to settlers from the Indian subcontinent. However, this does not mean that the social, political, and religious role of *gurdwārās* has remained static over the years. *Gurdwārās* in the UK have developed and changed to meet the needs of the Sikh community and the wider society.

This study discusses the ever-changing social, political, and religious role of *gurdwārās* in the UK in the serving of the community. To do this, the traditional authority of *gurdwārās* from a scriptural and historical perspective has been analysed and the historical background of UK *gurdwārās* in general has been researched. Further to this, an ethnographic study of six *gurdwārās* has been included. The ethnographic study raises the important and relevant question of how the roles and functions of the six *gurdwārās* have changed and adapted over time, how well the *gurdwārās* follow the teachings and example of the Ten *Gurūs* period, and what reasons there could be for how well the *gurdwārās* serve a religious, social and political role.

1.1.1 Relevance of the Study

The few academic studies that exist on *gurdwārās* in the UK discuss *gurdwārās* in relation to Sikhs establishing themselves in Britain or issues surrounding caste and racism[1]. Some of this

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[1] (i) Kalsi, S (1992), *The Evolution of a Sikh Community in Britain: Religious and Social Change among the Sikhs of Leeds and Bradford',* is a dissertation based on the notion of caste and caste based *Gurdwārās* in Yorkshire between 1980 and 1984. (ii) Grosvenor, I (1999), *'Faith in the city': religion, racism, and education in 1960s Britain* (p. 291-293)*,* analyses how ethnic minorities in Birmingham policy of assimilation in the 1960s. The study includes a brief discussion of *Guru Nānak Gurdwārā Smethwick* providing classes for Panjabi, English, music and history for children because the community was dissatisfied with the State education. (iii) Singh, G and Tatlā, D.S. (2006), *Sikhs in Britain: The Making of a Community* (Chapter 4), analyses the establishment of the Sikh community and discusses the first UK Gurdwārā and small number of *Gurdwārās* in relation to them being involved in political fights and the revenue they generate. (iv) Naylor, S. and Ryan, J.R.

existing literature on UK *gurdwārās* is discussed in further detail in the Literature Survey. The present study adds to the existing academic literature on UK *gurdwārās,* and aims to provide a detailed discussion on whether *gurdwārās* in the UK have been a success or failure in doing the job that the Sikh *Gurūs* had envisaged and how the different composition of *gurdwārā* management committees may influence this.

1.1.2 Literature Survey

Some of the available literature and studies on *gurdwārās* in the UK will be discussed in terms of their contribution. I will discuss the literature in order of oldest to newest.

Sewa Singh Kalsi (1992) in his study *The Evolution of a Sikh Community in Britain: Religious and Social Change among the Sikhs of Leeds and Bradford* looked at *gurdwārās* in Leeds and the neighbouring city of Bradford. The study focused on the significance of caste amongst the Sikh community. It showed the existence of caste and its continuity outside of India whilst linking into understanding the emergence of social institutions of Sikh immigrants in Britain. The research was conducted between 1980 and 1984. However, as Kalsi was a member of the community that he was studying since 1965, he had prior knowledge of the subject. In 1966, Kalsi was elected the deputy general secretary of the Leeds *gurdwārā*. Therefore, being an insider Kalsi had the advantage of having easy access to the community he was studying and having familiarity with the inner dynamics of the *gurdwārā* institution.

Kalsi's study examined the historical development of the Sikh tradition in *gurdwārās* in Leeds. He gathered his data through participant observation in *gurdwārās*, informal interviews of members of the Sikh community, and examining documentary materials. A lot

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(2008), *Mosques, Temples and Gurdwaras: New Sites of Religion in Twentieth-Century Britain* (published in *Geographies of British Modernity: Space and Society in the Twentieth Century*), discusses the spatial evolution of Sikh, Hindu and Muslim places of worship and their religious architecture.

of his research focused on the *Rāmgarhīā* Sikhs and the development of the *Rāmgarhīā* identity. He also looked at the *Ravidās* Sikhs and the historical development of their caste-based institutions. This research contributed to the knowledge of how *gurdwārās* in Leeds were established.

Kalsi contributed to the academic research on the UK Sikh community. However, the research is now out-dated. In twenty years the UK Sikh communities have evolved and the issues relating to the early Sikh migrants from East Africa and India are no longer relevant. Also, attitudes towards caste and social groups within the Sikh community have considerably changed with the second generation, which is evident through the rise and acceptance of intercaste marriages[2]. A criticism of Kalsi's study is that it does not focus on the role of the *gurdwārā* in serving the community's needs socially and politically and the functional dimension of the *gurdwārā*, which this study attempts to achieve.

Jagjit Singh Dosanjh (2002) traced the development of *gurdwārās* in Nottingham in his study titled *The Development of Gurdwārās (Sikh Temples) in Nottingham* that was commissioned by the Millennium Commission. The study is a survey of the development of nine *gurdwārās* in Nottingham from a historical perspective. The methodology he uses is participant observation and face-to-face interviews that were recorded. He interviewed executive members of the managing committees or office bearers of the *gurdwārās*, as well as children alongside their parents. In addition to this he used newspaper cuttings, posters and leaflets printed by various groups at the time of *gurdwārā* elections as part of his research data (Dosanjh 2002: p. 4). He doesn't indicate any use of questionnaires or quantitative data.

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[2] This viewpoint was shared by the majority of old and young participants that were interviewed in the study.

Dosanjh's study illustrates the early establishment of the Sikh migrant community in Nottingham. In the early 1950s there was no *gurdwārā* in the city and no communal worship. The Sikhs practised their religious rituals in their homes and instead of using *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib* they used a '*gutkā*' (a small prayer book) for services because community members found it difficult to house *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib* and maintain the appropriate rules and sanctity required. For special occasions halls were hired in order to celebrate functions. Dosanjh describes that when Sikh wives began to join their husbands in this country the pressure for *gurdwārās* became strong and finally a *gurdwārā* was set up.

Dosanjh's research was not confined to studying the arrival of the Sikh community and establishment of the first Sikh *gurdwārā*. He also provides a descriptive survey of the various *gurdwārās* that were established in Nottingham over time. He writes that the main reason for the proliferation of *gurdwārās* is that "Sikhs are not a homogeneous group and this phenomenon is a reflection of the caste structure of the Sikhs" (Dosanjh 2002: p. 3). Similar to Kalsi's study, Dosanjh explores the relationship between caste and the establishment of *gurdwārās*. He also lists the main services provided by the *gurdwārā*, for example Panjābī classes for children, *kīrtan* (singing of sacred hymns) and trips for the elderly. However, he doesn't provide details of the activities and services offered and the *gurdwārā's* perspective in establishing and running such services.

The last chapter of Dosanjh's study, titled *The Future of gurdwārās,* presented very interesting quotes from members of the Sikh community from the various *gurdwārās* in Nottingham. Dosanjh quotes eleven individuals, which included community leaders and *gurdwārā* devotees about their views on the future of *gurdwārās*. The people interviewed mostly present pessimistic viewpoints. The common denominator in all the interviews was

concern about the lack of youth being involved and the lack of attempts to attract the younger generation to the *gurdwārā* and the Sikh faith (Ibid: p. 55-61).

Whilst Dosanjh's study focused on the city of Nottingham, this thesis will mainly cover two cities, Bradford and Southall, and also include discussion of other *gurdwārās* in the UK in examining the background of how *gurdwārās* in the UK were established. Unlike the Nottingham study, the present study traces the development of the *gurdwārā* institution since the beginning of the Sikh faith, providing a general history of *gurdwārās* in the UK and also including an ethnographic study of *gurdwārās* in Bradford and Southall.

The most up to date study of *gurdwārās* in Britain is *Sikhs in Britain: The Making of a Community* by Gurharpal Singh and Darshan Singh Tatla (2006). Their study of the Sikhs in Britain has greatly contributed to the field of *gurdwārā* studies. It maps the community's origins and development from a sociological and political perspective. The study in particular focuses on multiculturalism and the issues affecting Sikhs in Britain since the Second World War.

Chapter four (Singh and Tatla 2006: p. 69 – 93) of their study focuses on *gurdwārās* and the building of the community. The chapter extensively reviews the process of how the Sikh community established itself by analysing the history of *gurdwārās* being established in Britain. Singh and Tatla's research demonstrates the religious and social diversity of *gurdwārās* with regards to community leadership and representing groups and sub-communities. The research provides a detailed picture of the management of *gurdwārās* in Britain. They analysed *gurdwārā* incomes, management structures, infighting and legal disputes surrounding *gurdwārās*, attempts to locally and nationally co-ordinate *gurdwārās,*

and finally contemporary challenges facing *gurdwārās* internally and externally in the post 9/11 and 7/7 world.

The chapter doesn't discuss the methodology they utilised for the research. However, from the data presented and notes provided (Ibid: p. 229-234) it is apparent that the research was conducted through interviews and telephone conversations with members of the Sikh community, but also documentary material. The documentary material sources include British and Panjābī media, charity commission website, brochures and leaflets, information on *gurdwārā* notice boards, and other secondary sources.

Sikhs in Britain (2006) covers the political history of *Shepherd's Bush Gurdwārā, Srī Gurū Singh Sabhā Southall, Gurū Nānak Gurdwārā Smethwick*, and the main *gurdwārās* in Leicester and Coventry. Other than *Srī Gurū Singh Sabhā Southall*, the other five *gurdwārās* discussed in this dissertation have not been covered by Singh and Tatla. This study looks at the history, development, and role of *gurdwārās* from the perspective of religious histories, whereas Singh and Tatla's work examines *gurdwārās* from a sociological perspective and considers secular histories. Furthermore, this study examines how the different demographics of the management committees of *gurdwārās* influence how well the *gurdwārās* do in fulfilling services to the community in light of the Sikh *Gurūs* teachings. Nevertheless, Singh and Tatla's work will be beneficial to the present study for the wider knowledge of *gurdwārās* and their development that can be used when discussing the six chosen *gurdwārās* from Southall and Bradford. The detailed ethnographic research of this study has not been covered by any other academics therefore making the study unique.

1.1.3 Study Sample

According to *'Religions in the UK: a Multi-faith Directory, 2001'*, edited by Paul Weller (2003), there are two hundred and forty *gurdwārās* in the UK (Singh and Tatla 2006: p. 76).[3] Table 1 shows the distribution of the one hundred and eighty *gurdwārās* in England and Wales in 1997 by region (Ibid):

Table 1: Distribution of *gurdwārās* in Britain
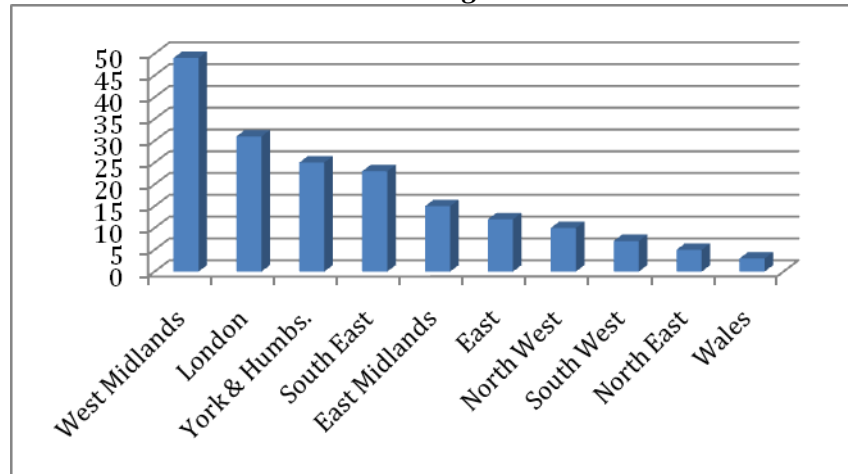
Due to the large number of *gurdwārās* in the UK and limited time for research, the study was restricted to primarily focusing on six *gurdwārās* from Bradford and Southall. Three *gurdwārās* were chosen from each city that represents the first *gurdwārā* established in the city, a caste-orientated *gurdwārā* and a saint-orientated *gurdwārā*. Bradford and Southall were chosen for this study because they represent two large Sikh communities that are over two hundred miles apart with two unique histories of settlement, establishment and development. Sikhs were the first South Asian community to settle in both of these cities in the late 1950s. Southall is well known as being associated to the Sikh community and has the largest *gurdwārā* outside of India. Bradford is not known for large-scale *gurdwārās*, but due to its well-established successful Sikh community. The success of both communities is

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[3] In 2006, two hundred *gurdwārās* across the UK were registered on the *British Organisation of Sikh Students (B.O.S.S.)* website.

reflected by the fact that Bradford and Southall are unique in being the first areas to have a member of the Sikh community elected as a Member of Parliament[4].

Although the *gurdwārās* in both cities developed in different contexts, comparing both cities' *gurdwārās* provides a unique insight into how the *gurdwārās* were established, developed into becoming multi-role and function institutions that serve the community's needs, and the religious, social and political issues that surround them.

1.2 Methodological Approaches

The data for this study was collected during 2007 and 2008. The methodology employed falls into three categories: (i) participant observation, (ii) structured interviews, and (iii) examination of documentary material. Structured interviews were the main mode of research without which the real essence and meaning of the institution from the individual's perspective would not have been possible to ascertain.

1.2.1 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research methods allow the researcher to convert the experiences of individuals and the important variables into numerical data, which can be tabulated into graphs, charts and statistics. Examples of this are questionnaires, postal surveys and generating statistics. The advantages of using a quantitative approach to research is that it produces statistical data, which can be used to correlate statistics against variable factors and show trends and patterns in behaviour and responses. In this research, quantitative data will be used for presenting statistics such as populations, number of *gurdwārās* in an area etc.

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[4] Piārā Singh Khābrā was first elected as a MP (Labour) for Southall in 1992; Marsha Singh was first elected as a MP (Labour) for Bradford West in 1997.

1.2.2 Qualitative Research

The research on *gurdwārās* is mainly based on qualitative research methods. Qualitative research focuses on analytical data and detailed descriptions. For example, detailed descriptions from events that have taken place, situations, individuals, and interactions through structured interviews, participant observation examining excerpts or entire passages from texts, documents, records and case studies (Patton 1980: p. 22). This data would be based on empirical evidence obtained through interacting with the subject, in this instance through structured interviews held with *gurdwārā* leaders, management committee members, volunteers, and visitors.

Participant Observation

Participant observation involves the researcher participating in a social group being studied to observe and experience their world as a participant while still observing the group for future analysis of their behaviour from the researcher's point of view. Being a participant observer in collecting research, I had the advantage of being a baptised Sikh and having easy access to the *gurdwārā* management committees and *gurdwārā* communities without being distinguished as an "outsider" in comparison to a non-baptised Sikh or non-Sikh. I was able to interact and hold informal discussions with community members in order to build a clearer and broader understanding on the topic.

Research Interviews

Having Panjābī and English language skills helped overcome possible communication barriers in this study. Through interviewing subjects I was able to gain details for further contacts through the subject's established social and religious network. This is known as a "snow-ball effect" in research, which saved time and effort in the research.

It is crucial for interviews and participant observation to master the language of the community being studied. Communication within the Sikh community takes place in the Panjābī language, and the main documents including literature produced by *gurdwārās* are also in Panjābī, written in the Gurmukhī script. I was able to fluently read and write the Gurmukhī script and therefore there were no problems in studying the Sikh sacred texts or other documentary material. Knowing the language is vital in being able to understand the subtleties of meaning that may be of considerable importance in relation to one's conclusions. Written consent to take part in the study was obtained from the *gurdwārās* that were studied and every attempt has been made to hide the identities of the people interviewed at the *gurdwārās*.

1.2.3 Difficulties and Limitations

Researcher Bias

> "People who are insiders to a setting being studied often have a view of the setting and any findings about it quite different from that of the outside researchers who are conducting the study" (Bartunek and Louis 1996: p. 267)

The "insider" researcher has, as a member of the 'in-group', the advantage of having easy access to its past and present histories. Being able to speak and understand the language of the people being studied gives the advantage of being able to access information more quickly and effectively. Moreover, since the insider shares the social world of the research participants there is less likelihood of the researcher experiencing any "culture shock or disorientation" (Hockey 1993: 119). The expectation is that the context will be understood and appreciated in a way not open to an outsider researcher. The insider has the potential of having insights and sensitivity to things both said and unsaid and to the culture operating at the time of the research.

This issue of objectivity is a challenging one for researchers. One's experiences and the meanings one attributes to them are shaped by one's background, the environment in which one lives, the cultures in which one functions, and the people with whom one interacts. Therefore, however much one seeks to claim to be unbiased and objective, preconceptions and stereotypical responses will come into play. I would argue that it is impossible to seek total objectivity but that the researcher must nonetheless strive to attain it.

Andrea Fontana and James H. Frey (1994) on the other hand appear to hold to the research culture, which reveres objectivity and holds that

> "…establishing close rapport may create problems for the research as the researcher may lose his or her distance and objectivity, over-identify with the individual or group under study, and 'forgo the academic role." (Fontana and Frey 1994: p. 361)

In contrast Robert R. Sherman and Rodman B. Webb (1988) claim that if one is to pursue qualitative research successfully one needs to appreciate the experiences of the researched "as nearly as possible as its participants live it" (Sherman and Webb 1988: p. 7).

Being born into a Sikh family as well as being a practising Sikh who dedicates free time as a voluntary Sikh preacher, I was well acquainted with most of the *gurdwārās* that I researched and can claim to know the dynamics of the *gurdwārā* which would take time for an outsider. I had the advantage of having easy access to *gurdwārā* staff and community members and was able to participate within the community being studied. L. Richardson (1990: 24) comments:

> "Participation in a culture includes participation in the narratives of that culture, a general understanding of the stock of meanings and their relationships to each other."

This being the case I was able to short-cut much of the mutual familiarisation phase necessary to seek out common ground, and establish a research relationship (Miller and Glassner 1997: p. 101). I knew people from some of the *gurdwārās* that I researched, and the staff and congregation members from the *gurdwārās* that I was less familiar were welcoming and very respectful towards me because of my involvement in the Sikh community and I dress in traditional Sikh attire, which made a big difference in how people perceived me and warmed

to me, perhaps because they felt they could trust me or my attire portrayed a position of respect in the community?

Collating Data and Cooperation

Collecting information from members of the Sikh community, in particular from *gurdwārā* management staff, was difficult because of a lack of commitment and reliability by some community members. However, to overcome this, *gurdwārā* members were chased up and when necessary, further information was obtained through telephone conversations.

1.2.4 Structure of Thesis

Chapter 2 explores the traditional authority of *gurdwārās* using scriptural sources and religious histories. The chapter not only provides the historical context of *gurdwārās,* but is also used for evaluating the success and failures of the present day *gurdwārās* in the UK in the later chapters.

Chapter 3 analyses the historical context of *gurdwārās* in the UK. The chapter looks at the management system of *gurdwārās* in the UK and discusses issues that have arisen in *gurdwārās* in the UK in relation to the Sikh tradition, which is detailed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 4 disseminates the findings of my ethnographic study of the six *gurdwārās*. The first section looks at Bradford and the second section looks at Southall. Each *gurdwārā* is analysed in regards to its history, the management committee composition, and the religious, social and political activities that the *gurdwārā* provides. At the end of each section there is a summary that draws together any trends, patterns or peculiarities between the three local *gurdwārās.*

Chapter 5 examines the overall findings of the study and aims to provide a conclusion for the dissertation. The conclusion links Chapters 2, 3 and 4 in analysing whether the *gurdwārās* in the UK are successful or not in relation to the Sikh *Gurūs* teachings and looks at the reasons for this.

CHAPTER 2:

DEFINING THE GURDWĀRĀ USING SCRIPTURAL SOURCES

AND RELIGIOUS HISTORIES

This chapter looks at the teachings of the Sikh *Gurūs* and how the *gurdwārā* institution was shaped by the ten *Gurūs* (1469-1708 CE). The chapter analyses the development of the *gurdwārā* from a scriptural and historical perspective, using Sikh scriptural sources and historical references. This analysis provides the basis for the six *gurdwārās* to be evaluated against in Chapter 3.

2.1 Etymological Perspective of the Gurdwārā

According to Bhāī Kāhn Singh of Nābhā (Singh 1981: p. 416), '*gurdwārā*' derives from two words - *gurū* and *dwārā/ duārā.* The word *'gurdwārā'* means i) 'through the Gurū'; ii) noun. 'the Gurū's house'; and iii) 'the Sikhs' religious centre.' The third meaning is elaborated upon. *'Gurdwārā'* means that place built for the propagation of *dharma* and where *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib* (the Sikh Sacred Scripture) resides. He states that from first *Gurū* to the fifth *Gurū*, the Sikh religious temple or centre was called '*dharamsālā*' and later the sixth Gurū renamed it as *'gurdwārā'.*

'Dharmsāla' has been mentioned many times in *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib*. For example, Gurū Arjan Dev says:

mai badhī sach dharamsāl hai. *gursikhā lahdā bhāl kai.* *pair dhovā pakhā fèrdā* *tis niv niv lagā pāė jīo. ||10||*	"I have established the *Dharamsāl*, the Temple of Truth. I sought out the *Gurū's* Sikhs, and brought them into it. I wash their feet, and wave the fan over them. Bowing low, I fall at their feet. ||10||" (SGGS Sirī Rāg: 73)

Bhāī Gurdās (1551 – 1636), a Sikh writer who scribed the first *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib* known as the *Ādi Granth* under the patronage and supervision of the fifth *Gurū*, Gurū Arjan Dev, was

committed to the propagation of the message of the Sikh *Gurūs* and the Sikh faith. He composed poetry that is valued for its style and exposition of the teaching of the Sikh *Gurūs*. His poetry, now available in two volumes, *Vārān Bhāī Gurdās* and *Braj Kabitt Savaīyye*, forms part of accepted Sikh canon and is sung along with *gurbānī* (the utterances of the *Gurūs*) in *gurdwārās*[5]. While *gurdwārā* is used by Bhāī Gurdās, he like the first five *Gurūs* has referred to the *gurdwārā* as a *dharamsāl*. For example in the following verse he describes the *Dharamsāl* as a physical place where *Gurū*-orientated people gather and sing praises of God:

sādhsangat kar dharamsāl *sikh sėvā lāė.* *bhāė bhagat bhai sėvdė* *gurpurab karāė.* *shabad surat liv kīrtan* *sach mėl malāė.*	"Telling him about the distinction of the holy congregation and the *dharamsāl*, the abode of *dharma*, he is put into the service (of the mankind). Serving through loving devotion, the servants of the Lord celebrate the anniversaries of the *Gurū*. Attuning the consciousness with the *Shabad* (Word), through the singing of the sacred hymns, one meets the Truth." (Bhāī Gurdās: Vār 9, Paurī 17)

2.1.1 Sikh Primary Sources

The primary religious and historical source of the Sikhs is *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib*. 'Gurdwārā' has been mentioned in *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib* twelve times in sacred hymns of the first *Gurū*, the third *Gurū*, and the fifth *Gurū*. Gurū Nānak says:

bhā'ndā hachhā soė jo tis *bhāvsī. bhā'ndā at malīn dhotā* *hachhā na hoisī. gurū duārai* *ho-ė sojhī pāisī. et duārai* *dhoė hachhā hoisī...*	"That vessel alone is pure, which is pleasing to Him. The filthiest vessel does not become pure, simply by being washed. Through the *Gurdwārā*, the *Gurū's* Gate, one obtains understanding. By being washed through this Gate, it becomes pure…" (SGGS Sūhī: 730)

This particular verse could be interpreted in a number of ways and whichever way it is interpreted the meaning of the passage would change. The above translation is from the American-Sikh translator, Sant Singh Khālsā, whose translation of *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib*

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[5] Translations of Bhāī Gurdās' work have been made by Jodh Singh (1998), Professor of Sikhism at Punjābī University (Patiālā, India), and Dr. Gobind Singh Mansukhānī (1988), whose incomplete translation was incorporated by Jodh Singh. While Jodh Singh's translation is literal; for the purpose of this study it provides an accurate reading that helps understand the eminence of the *gurdwārā* institution during the period of the fifth and sixth *Gurū*.

uses contemporary language and has been adopted by the Sikh governing body in India (S.G.P.C.) for translations. Dr. Khālsā reads "*gurū duārai*" to mean '*Gurdwārā, the Gate of the Gurū*'. Professor Sāhib Singh (1964) translates the text to mean "the *Gurū's* Door". On the other hand, Manmohan Singh (1993), whose translation along with the original *Gurmukhī* script was published by the Sikh governing body (S.G.P.C.) in Amritsar in 1962, provides an alternative reading. Manmohan Singh reads "*gurū duārai*" as "through the *Gurū*", whereas Dr. Khālsā translates "*duārai*" to mean 'Gate', Manmohan Singh translated it to mean "through". I would choose the translation of Dr. Khālsā that 'through the *Gurdwārā* one obtains understanding' because his translation is the most recent translation to be officially recognised and approved by the main Sikh governing body.

In the following verse, Bhāī Gurdās stresses the importance of attending a *gurdwārā*:

gurmukh pair sukārathė
gurmukh mārag
chāl chalundė |
gurūduārė jān chal
sādh sangat
chal jāė behandė |
dhāvan parupkār no
gursikhā'n no khoj lehandė |

"Blessed are the feet of the Sikhs who walk in *Gurū's* way; who go to the *Gurdwārā* and sit there in the holy congregation *(sādh sangat)*; who search out the *Gurū's* Sikhs and hasten to do them favours to benefit others."
(Bhāī Gurdās Vār 6: Paurī 13)

By saying "blessed are those feet" of the people who visit a *gurdwārā,* Bhāī Gurdās highlights the high importance of Sikhs that come to a *gurdwārā* to do *sevā* (selfless service) of the community and humanity. The passage shows the three roles that are assigned to a *gurdwārā*: (i) a place for religious education, (ii) a meeting place for fellow Sikhs to support one another; and (iii) a place to do selfless services for the benefit of the community.

2.2 Historical Perspective of the Gurdwārā

From 1469 to 1708, the *gurdwārā* institution grew larger and more sophisticated in its multi-functional roles. This section looks at the contributions and teachings of the ten *Gurūs* in forming and consolidating the *gurdwārā* institution.

2.2.1 Sikh Gurūs (1469 – 1708 CE)

Gurū Nānak spent the last 18 years of his life as a householder at Kartārpur, a town founded and constructed by him in earlier years. Here, Bhāī Gurdās describes the *Gurū* setting up a *dharamsāl* that became a place for putting into practice the *Gurū's* teachings of an ideal society. Dr. Sangat Singh describes the *dharamsāl* that Gurū Nānak constructed as being "the nerve centre of Sikhism in action" (Singh 2005: p. 20).

Gurū Nānak based the Sikh faith on three core principles that became the pillars of the *gurdwārā* institution. The three principles are (i) *nām japnā* (remembering God)*,* (ii) *kirt karnī* (earning a righteous and honest livelihood)*,* and (iii) *vand ke chhaknā* (sharing with others) (Bhalla 2004: p. 6)*.* During the period of the second *Gurū*, Gurū Angad Dev, the *gurdwārā* became a central place for these principles to be taught and put into practice. People would pray, receive guidance on living an ethical way of life, and get the opportunity to take part in communal service. The principle of *vand ke chhaknā* was crystallised with the institution of the Gurū's community kitchen, known as *Gurū-Kā-Langar* (Sidhū 1996: p. 5). Sikhs would donate one tenth of their earnings in the form of money or crops and share food with the rest of the wider society.

One of the main ways that *nām japnā* (the remembrance of God) is expressed in the Sikh faith is through '*kīrtan*', the singing of God's praises[6]. Gurū Nānak made *kīrtan* one of the key activities for the *gurdwārā* institute. Music is a mode of worship that is used throughout the world. In the Sikh faith, each of the *Gurūs* performed worship through music and taught that performing *kīrtan* is the highest form of worship (SGGS Marū: 1075). To the present day, *kīrtan* is an integral part of the religious role that *gurdwārās* play in providing a place for communal worship. *Kīrtan darbārs* (*kīrtan* events) are held at times of celebration and

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[6] *Kīrtan* in Sanskrit literally means "to repeat". It is call-and-response chanting performed in India's religious traditions, usually accompanied by the playing of musical instruments.

remembrance in *gurdwārās* throughout the world, which usually last for a few hours and themed *shabads* are sung throughout.

The *Gurū-Kā-Langar* plays an integral role in the religious and social role of any *gurdwārā*. The religious role lies in the spiritual message of how collectively eating food on the same level amongst people considered socially high and low or from different backgrounds helps to remove one's ego which is a spiritual hindrance in finding God. On a social level, I suggest that eating food on a common level regardless of gender, colour, religion or ethnic distinctions is a unique and powerful way of promoting equality, respect and tolerance for fellow humanity. During the time of the early Sikh *Gurūs* caste, social, religious, and gender divisions were rife in Indian society. It seems that in order to engage with all communities and the different aspects of each community (i.e. women, children, young, old, rich, or poor) the *Gurūs* introduced a simple but effective way of bringing equality and promoting peaceful co-existence. The third *Gurū*, Gurū Amar Dās, built upon these social reforms to build a society based on love, respect, and equality.

In response to the increased number of congregations and followers, Gurū Amar Dās set up the *Manjī* system for organising and managing the Sikh community and its spiritual and social development. The geographical area under the *Gurū's* influence was divided into twenty-two dioceses that were known as '*Manjīs*', one in each of the twenty-two provinces of the Mughal Empire. There were fifty-two '*Pīrhīs*' that were smaller centres under the *Manjīs*. The *Manjīs* covered the area from Kābul in Afghanistan to Bengāl, the East coast of India, and therefore helped in the spread of *gurdwārās* across the Indian subcontinent. The person appointed to manage the '*Manjī'* was called '*Manjīdār'* or '*Sangatīā'* and had the responsibility of initiating new followers into the faith. According to Ranjodh Singh (1990), Gurū Amar Dās sent out 146 of his selected disciples as preachers as "apostles of love and service" to different

places, who most likely used existing *gurdwārās* or helped to established new *gurdwārās* in other areas. Of these skilled people, 94 were men and 52 were women. Ranjodh Singh describes these individuals selected by the *Gurū* as being the "apostles of love and service" to different places who became "messengers of love" (Singh 1990: p. 15). This message was and still is very relevant in bridging the gap between communities in a diverse society with different beliefs, cultures and backgrounds.

By the time Gurū Amar Dās had completed his *Gurūship* and passed away, key institutions and functions of *kīrtan*, *sangat, langar,* and *pangat* had been firmly rooted in the *gurdwārā.* The Sikh rites of passages for birth, marriage and death were distinguished from the other faiths and given a unique form by Gurū Amar Dās. Furthermore, he improved the quality of food served in the community kitchen. The new *langar* (food) included a choice of lentils and other dishes like rice, curd and pudding. This could be a reflection of the Sikh community's growing affluence and prosperity, and a sign of followers taking a more active part in the voluntary services of the *Gurdwārā*. However, it could also be an indication of how the *Gurūs* were ensuring that the food available was nutritious and wholesome in a step to rid poverty and enhance the health and diet of the community.

The institution of *Pangat* (sitting down in rows and participating in the communal meal) was made a fundamental requirement of attending the *Gurdwārā*. The *Gurū* had instructed his followers and guests that anyone who wished to have an audience with him must first have something to eat or drink in the *Gurū-Kā-Langar*. There is evidence that Akbar, the Emperor of India, and an upper caste king of Harīpur participated in the *Gurū-Kā-Langar* and sat with the rest of the congregation before seeing the *Gurū* (Singh 2005: p. 26). Akbar was impressed by the egalitarian message of the *gurdwārā* and paid his respects to the *Gurū* (Singh 1990: p. 15). It can be suggested that the *Gurūs* acted as social workers in society in attempt to bring

social reforms and changes in society's attitudes towards social inequality and discrimination. The institution of *Pangaṯ* provided an opportunity for society to have a 'melting pot' where all distinctions of differences could be shed and a common humanity could be felt and shared. Another suggestion could be that the institution of *Pangaṯ* was a rebellion against the Islamic rulers and Hindu hierarchy that promoted and survived on the social division system of society in order to show how powerful the Sikh community were.

Before Gurū Amar Dās passed away, he instructed the succeeding *Gurū*, Gurū Rām Dās, to build a city and excavate a pool at the site now known as Amritsar (Pool of Immortality). The construction of the pool and city needed a lot of financial resources and increased participation of the followers in *kār sevā* (voluntary labour) (Singh 2005: p. 29). As a consequence of the construction projects, Gurū Rām Dās introduced the *'Masand'* system. The word *Masand* derives from the Persian *Masnad-i-Ali*, which means 'His Excellency, for provincial Governors'.

The *Masands* were deputies or agents of the *Gurū* and up until the *Khālsā* period were authorised to preach and collect tithes from the Sikhs living in a specific area or city on the festival-day of *Vaisākhī* (Dhillon 1999: p. 293). It could be suggested that the *Masands* were like modern day fundraisers within *gurdwārā* communities with larger geographic areas to cover but their role also extended as being an intermediary between the *Gurū* and the communities that lived far and wide. The overwhelming response to community projects led to a rise in the status of the congregation, especially that of women, who contributed to a large measure to the voluntary labour force (Singh 2005: p. 29). Using the funds collected from the followers and the voluntary labour force, Gurū Rām Dās' son, Gurū Arjan Dev, later constructed the *gurdwārā* known as the *'Srī Harmandir Sāhib'* (popularly known as the *Golden Temple*) in the middle of a pool, founded various cities, and excavated many pools

(*sarovars*) in the Amritsar area (Sidhū 1996: p. 19). One of the cities founded by the *Gurū* was *Tarn Tāran*. This city had the largest *sarovar* made and stories emerged that it was a centre for curing and caring for leprosy patients (Singh 2005: p. 32). Over history and event today all major *gurdwārās* in India*,* in particular historical *gurdwārās,* have *sarovars* built within their complex for pilgrims to bathe in.

The Sikh *Gurū*s aimed to rid society of divisions, discrimination, and notions of certain people being born inferior or superior. The Hindu caste system, the mistreatment of non-Muslims by the Muslim rulers of the time, and gender discrimination throughout society, led the *Gurū*s to form two institutions in the aim of uniting humanity. One was *pangat*, where visitors sit in rows and eat *langar*, and the other was the *sarovar.* In the *sarovar*, all would bathe to remove dualities in the mind, in the same spirit of eating in the *pangat*. On a more practical level, the *sarovars* provided the poor with fresh supplies of water and opportunity to bathe and keep clean as during the times of the *Gurū*s water supplies were scarce and the rich controlled water wells in accordance to ancient Hindu laws (Caponera 1992: p. 19-20). Therefore, the *Gurū*s made water wells *(boalīs)* and *sarovars* for the common people that was open to all, which was a revolutionary idea considering that during the times water sources were labelled as 'Hindu water' or 'Muslim water' and that the upper stream river water would be reserved for higher castes only and the lower stream river water would be for the lower castes (known as 'untouchables') (Mendelsohn and Vicziany 1998: p. 41).

By the time of the sixth *Gurū*, Gurū Hargobind, the *gurdwārā* developed into a school for students, a place for religious instruction for the spiritual seeker, a care centre for the ill and diseased, free-kitchen for the hungry, preserver of women's honour and human rights, and a place for shelter for travellers (Singh 1981: p. 416). There could be a number of reasons why the *gurdwārā* took on so many social and political roles. One reason could be that the *Gurū*s

were producing a self-contained and managed community and therefore it was ideal to have a wide range of social and political services and activities under the umbrella of the *gurdwārā* institution. The other reason could be that the society at the time lacked these particular services and there was little or no hope for the poor and downtrodden of society to access support from the state or hierarchy, as a response to this the *Gurūs* showed support for the more vulnerable of society by including a wide range of social and political roles and services in the *gurdwārā* institution.

On 15th June 1606, shortly after the martyrdom of his father, Gurū Hargobind completed the construction of the *Akāl Takht* (Sohan Kavī 1970: p. 150). The *Akāl Takht,* literally meaning 'the Throne of the Almighty', was the court of Gurū Hargobind where he discussed and deliberated on social and political issues. It became known as the highest seat of temporal authority in the Sikh community. Gurū Hargobind would watch wrestling matches, military feats, and sword fighting outside the *Akāl Takht*. As a consequence, the *gurdwārā* institution became a place that promoted sports tournaments and various martial arts displays.

The architecture, location, and construction of the *Akāl Takht* by Gurū Hargobind provided a new socio-political dimension to the *gurdwārā*. The *Gurū* erected two *Nishān Sāhibs* (flags) outside the *Akāl Takht,* whereas only one *Nishān Sāhib* was erected at *Srī Harmandir Sāhib.* The two flags outside the *Akāl Takht* symbolised the twin-concept of *mīrī-pīrī* (religious and political authority) (Sohan Kavī 1970: p. 150-51). Gurū Hargobind combined together the religion and social-politics, thus significantly developing the holistic role of the *gurdwārā* institution to be more than a spiritual centre. The *gurdwārā* became relevant to social, political and religious issues and governed all aspects of life. The succeeding *Gurūs*, in particular the tenth *Gurū*, Gurū Gobind Singh, built upon the concept of *mīrī-pīrī* introduced by Gurū Hargobind.

Gurū Gobind Singh consolidated the Sikh faith through the creation of the *Khālsā*. On *Vaisākhī* 1699, the *Gurū* baptised five Sikhs (known as the *Panj Piāre*) through the *Amrit* ceremony and then himself took initiation from the five Sikhs. This was a pivotal event in Sikh history for the Sikhs but also for the *gurdwārā* institution. The management and control of the *gurdwārās* passed on to the *Khālsā* and the Sikh *sangat*, which operated through the agency of the *Panj Piāre* (Singh 2004: p. 2). The present-day daily prayer (*ardās*) of the Sikhs asks God to bless the *Khālsā* with the gift of freely visiting and managing all *gurdwārās* without restrictions (SRM: p. 10). Furthermore, during the *gurūship* of Gurū Gobind Singh, the *Masand system* was abolished due to the *Masands* becoming corrupt and resulted in the *Masands* being killed by the Sikhs for their greed fuelled murder of Bābā Rām Rāi, the elder son of the seventh *Gurū* (Kaushish 2005: p. 102-104).

Before passing away, Gurū Gobind Singh declared that from then on all Sikhs were to accept and obey *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib* as the eternal *Gurū* and spiritual authority in which the divine light and spirit of the ten *Gurūs* is enshrined. The *Khālsā* was declared the physical representation of the *Gurū* (Ibid: p. 220-221). From then on the Sikh community and its *Gurdwārā* were led by the wisdom of *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib* and the representation of the *Khālsā* through the five Sikhs.

2.3 Conclusion

The objective of this chapter has been to explore the *gurdwārā* from a religious perspective through examining religious text and religious histories in order to give a picture of the job of *gurdwārās* that the Sikh *Gurūs* had envisaged in order to give some indication of how well *gurdwārās* in the UK are performing in comparison.

The findings indicate that the *gurdwārā* institution has a religious, social and political role, which developed and became more sophisticated over the period of two hundred years or so. One of the religious roles of the *gurdwārā* is to provide spiritual and religious understanding to the community through activities such as recital of the sacred scriptures, *kīrtan,* and *kathā*, which the Sikh faith believes brings the individual nearer to God and develops qualities such as "peace, spiritual poise, and tranquillity" within the mind[7]. The *gurdwārā* is also an important place for the Sikh ideals of meditating on God's Name, sharing with others, and being taught the values of living honestly through activities such as *nām simran* (meditation), *kīrtan, sangat, langar*, *pangat,* and *sevā.* The main underlying concept of all the *gurdwārā* activities is *sevā* (selfless service), which is believed to rid one from his or her ego, help others, and achieve a sense of common humanity[8].

It can be argued from the analysis that the Sikh *Gurūs* acknowledged the various social and political problems of the time and responded to them through incorporating further institutions, activities, and roles underlined with ideology and practicality into the *gurdwārā*. Religion and spirituality was made accessible to all, irrespective of caste, gender or age, at a time when women were not allowed to pray, untouchables were not allowed into temples and people of different faiths were divided amongst one another. The structure of the Golden Temple having four entrance doors symbolises the equality of all and how the *gurdwārā* welcomes society's diversity. By providing *Langar*, the *Gurdwārā* helped to alleviate poverty and moreover the *pangat* (eating together on the same level) helped society to overcome boundaries of faith, gender, and wealth in promoting an egalitarian society that recognises the oneness of humanity.

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[7] (SGGS Bilāval: 816).
[8] (Bhāī Gurdās: Vār 3, Paurī 8)

It is a common belief that religion and politics do not mix. However, in accordance with Sikh tradition, religion *(mīrī)* and politics *(pīrī)* go hand in hand. There is no definite definition of politics. However, in general it can be argued that politics means the governance of all aspects of life; this includes religion, family, and work etc. It can be argued that the Sikh *Gurūs* were political and Gurū Hargobind made the *gurdwārā* institution political through the construction of the *Akāl Takht* in Amritsar. From this it can be argued that the *gurdwārā* was developed to having a religio-political role in order to become relevant to the lives of the people; this was on multiple levels as the focus was either spiritual, social, welfare, or political. This was highlighted through examples given in this Chapter. The lack of provisions and services provided by the State for the poor and vulnerable in society as a consequence of inequality and discrimination were challenged by the Sikh *Gurūs* on a grass roots level through setting up preaching centres *(Mānjīs)* in far and wide places, the establishment of *sarovars* (bathing pools) and *boalīs* (water wells) for the poor, schools for the illiterate communities, treatment centres for the sick, and rest-houses for the needy.

The findings also indicate that the management of the *gurdwārās* developed over two hundred years. Responsibilities within the *gurdwārā* institution were delegated to the community of followers, which included women. Women were in the forefront of organizing and managing the *langar* during Gurū Angad Dev's period and during the period of the succeeding *Gurūs* the community managed construction and voluntary projects *(kār sevā)*. At some point during the fourth *Gurū's* period, *Masands* were appointed for organising and managing *gurdwārā* communities. However, for various reasons that include an abuse of authority and wealth, the *Masands system* was abolished and instead the tenth Gurū introduced a fairer and more representative management of *gurdwārās*. Following the events of 1699 Gurū Gobind Singh introduced the *Panj Piāre* system whereby five baptised Sikhs were democratically selected

to manage the *gurdwārā* and the community through the wisdom and guidelines of *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib* (the Sikh Sacred Scripture).

The information in this chapter gives an insight to the traditional authority of *gurdwārā* based in religious text and histories that will provide the grounds and data for evaluating the success or failure of *gurdwārās* in the UK in Chapter 3 and 4.

CHAPTER 3:

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF GURDWĀRĀS IN THE UK

This chapter traces the history of how *gurdwārās* were established in the UK and then explore issues of management and the functioning of *gurdwārās* that arose in the UK as a consequence of changing demographic, religious and political trends within the Sikh community. This chapter provides a historical background and context for *gurdwārās* in the UK that helps to understand the ethnographic study presented in the next chapter.

3.1 First Gurdwārā in the UK

The famous Sikh saint, Bābā Tejā Singh, came to England in August 1906 for higher studies. He studied at *University College London (UCL)*, and then *Cambridge University* from 1906-1908. Later, more Sikhs attended and they started holding regular Sikh *sangats* on Sundays. To organise them formally, *'Khālsā Jathā, British Isles, London'* was founded in 1908 to promote the religious and social activities amongst the Sikhs that had settled or were studying in the UK. A provisional committee of seven members, all of whom were students, were selected and Bābā Tejā Singh was the first President.

In 1911, when the Mahārājā of Patiālā, Mahārājā Bhupinder Singh, visited London, he was approached by the *Khālsā Jathā* members to set up a *gurdwārā* in London to cater for the Sikh community. The *Mahārājā* gave a generous donation that helped to establish the first *gurdwārā* in the UK at 79 Sinclair Road, London. Sikh Students and businessmen living as far away as Scotland would travel to visit the *gurdwārā* on special festivals and Sikh religious holidays.

As the Sikh community increased with rapid migration, regular religious events started to take place. In 1953 weekly religious services started to take place and in 1954 a full-time *Granthī*

(Scriptural reader) was employed to lead religious services at the *gurdwārā*. In 1969 the community found a new site which is where the current *'Shepherd's Bush Gurdwārā'* on Queensdale Road, London is located.

3.2 Management of the Gurdwārās in the West

Although most of the early Sikh migrants cut their *kes* (hair) and discarded their turbans in order to gain employment and avoid racial discrimination, their commitment to preserving their cultural and religious roots remained strong, either due to a fear of assimilation or in the pursuit of preserving their identity, which they had already been compromised in regards to the physical appearance. This is evident from the early Sikh migrants' dedication in establishing *gurdwārās* despite facing financial and social hardships. Considering that there were few *Amritdhārī* Sikhs or *Kesdhārī* Sikhs (Sikhs with unshorn hair), the *Monā* Sikhs (those with trimmed/shaven hair) were responsible for the establishment, organisation, and management of the early *gurdwārās* in the UK.

3.2.1 Gurdwārā Committees

Most *gurdwārā* management committees in the UK are either elected or appointed by the formally enrolled members of local *sangats.* In theory, the committees are elected or appointed annually or bi-annually by the *sangat* according to the procedures outlined in the constitution of the particular *gurdwārā*, free from outside interference. Most *gurdwārā* management committees are elected bi-annually by the approved membership.

3.2.1.1 Issues arising from Committee elections

As a result of having an elective system, different internal groups and parties form which compete with one another in the elections. Many young interviewees said that they were upset at how opposing parties within the *gurdwārā* easily turn to violence and intimidation that has

led to the police entering the *gurdwārā* with their shoes on to stop violent clashes between the community leaders. There seems to be an irony that a place for prayer, reflection and worship can become the centre for court battles, mass brawls and divisions. Some interviewees said that they believed if *gurdwārās* were managed in accordance to Sikh tradition and the authority of *Panj Piāre* (five baptised Sikhs selected by the *sangat* for their piety) then there would be fewer problems and less friction.

3.2.1.2 The Parchī system for Committee selection

A small number of *gurdwārās* use the traditional Sikh method of selecting a management committee called the *'Parchī system'*. *'Parchī'* literally means 'slip of paper'. The *'Parchī system'* requires the names of nominated candidates to be written down on a *'parchī'* (slip) and put in a box which is placed in front of *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib;* then either an elderly person, respected member of the community, a person perceived to be neutral, but more often a child, is invited to draw slips corresponding to the number of candidates eligible for the management committee. This system has been adopted by the *Srī Gurū Singh Sabhā Gurdwārā* in Slough.

3.2.2 Rise in *Keshdhārīs* managing gurdwārās

During the 1970s, the number of *Kesdhārī* Sikhs increased, which led to *Kesdhārī* Sikhs wanting to gain control of the *gurdwārās* from the *Monās* who had originally established the *gurdwārās*. The original constitutions did not make any distinction between an *Amritdhārī* Sikh, *Kesdhārī* Sikh, and a *Monā*, and all were allowed membership and positions within the committees and trustees.

The June 1984 attack on the Golden Temple led to a resurgence of Sikh identity and many Sikhs in the UK who had previously cut their hair, smoked and drank alcohol became

baptised Sikhs (Singh and Tatla 2006: p. 6). As a consequence, areas which had a large increase of *Amritdhārī* Sikhs, such as Southall and Birmingham, amended their constitutions so that it became mandatory that all members should maintain complete unshorn hair; this in theory would result in members being more religious-orientated than before. However, most of these *gurdwārās* allow *Monā* Sikhs membership of *gurdwārā* electorates through which they are allowed the right to vote for *Amritdhārī* and *Kesdhārī* candidates (Ibid: p. 82-84).

3.2.3 *Sant* managed gurdwārās

In recent years the number of *gurdwārās* managed and under the patronage of *sants* (holy men) in the UK has increased. Currently the main *sant* controlled *gurdwārās* that have opened branches across the UK are *Nānaksar, Gurū Nānak Nishkām Sewak Jathā,* and *Amrit Parchār Dharmik Diwān.* The *sant* controlled *gurdwārās* are managed by appointed trusted followers of the *sants* who are in effect the heads of these *gurdwārās*. Theoretically, the advantage of *sant* orientated *gurdwārās* is that there are no elections and one person holds supreme authority overlooking the management and as a consequence there is less likelihood of violence, warring factions, and issues like mismanagement compared to *gurdwārās* with elected committees.

3.2.3.1 Issues facing some Sant managed gurdwārās in the UK

Despite the theoretical advantages of *sant* orientated *gurdwārās,* two out of the three main *sant* organisations in the UK have come under the scrutiny of the media in recent years. Currently High Wycombe's only *gurdwārā, Gurdwārā Amrit Parchār Dhārmik Diwān* (whose other branch in Bradford is part of the ethnographic study) is at the centre of a legal dispute. On 19th September 2008, *Bucks Free Press* reported that the police had to intervene in the *gurdwārā* after a row erupted over two of the trustees (brothers) refusing to accept the authority of the newly appointed patron saint that is based in India.

Nānaksar Gurdwārā Gursikh Temple in Coventry, which is part of the *Nānaksar* saint led group, became involved in controversy in 2003. *The Asian Pacific Post* (8th May 2003) and *The Sikh Times* (16th March 2003) reported wide spread accusations from members of the local community against the saint who controlled the *gurdwārā*, which included mis-use of *gurdwārā* funds*, drinking alcohol inside the *gurdwārā,* engaging in sexual relationships outside of marriage, and promoting free sex amongst his close followers. Therefore, if we use the Sikh *Gurū's* teachings as well as the number of violent incidents as barometers of success it would be wrong to assume that *gurdwārā* institutions controlled by one authoritative-figure are more successful than *gurdwārās* managed by a committee selected or elected by the *sangat*.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter has set the scene for presenting the ethnographic study of six *gurdwārās* in the UK. The historical context of *gurdwārā* in the UK has been examined with particular focus on the development of the management structure in *gurdwārās*. The first *gurdwārā* in the UK was established by students and remained a student-based institution until the arrival of businessmen in the 1940s. Later with a large wave of migration from the Indian subcontinent the *gurdwārā* became a community-based institution, which included women and children.

From the analysis it could be argued that although the *gurdwārā* management system in the UK is predominantly based on elected committees, the traditional management system of *gurdwārās* (as examined in Chapter 2) is based on the concept of the *Panj Piāre* (five baptised Sikhs) representing the community and managing the *gurdwārās.* The traditional system of management does not require elections, but rather works on selection either through the *sangat* selecting the five most suitable candidates, the elders of a community choosing the

five members, or more popularly through the *parchī* system which ensures everyone has a fair chance in becoming selected. The advantage of the traditional selection system of management is that there is less likelihood of friction, violence and in-fighting as there is no involvement of warring *gurdwārā* parties. On the other hand, the modern election system has the advantages of electing a democratically chosen committee that in theory should give all parties and individuals a fair chance in contesting. But it is evident that the election system leads to in-fighting and sometimes does turn to violence which then affects how young people and the wider Sikh community perceive the *gurdwārā* and those that run it.

It can be argued from looking at the findings that an effective management system is more likely to produce an effective management committee which then helps to make a more sufficient working *gurdwārā* that fulfils its potential in serving the community and being relevant in the lives of its community members. This raises questions of how the composition of *gurdwārā* management committees may influence the religious, social and political activities and roles of a *gurdwārā*. This will be examined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4:

GURDWĀRĀ STUDY

The purpose of this chapter is to disseminate the findings of my ethnographic study of six *gurdwārās,* three from Bradford and three from Southall. The findings from the *gurdwārās* will be analysed and evaluated against the teachings and principles that Sikh *Gurūs* incorporated into the *gurdwārā* institution as discussed in chapter 2. This chapter examines the history, management committee composition, and the religious and socio-political activities of each *gurdwārā* studied. I first look at Bradford, then Southall, in order of the oldest *gurdwārā* to the newest. Conclusions are drawn using the teachings of the Sikh *Gurūs* at the end of the chapter, which leads to general conclusion for the dissertation in Chapter 5.

4.1 Gurdwārās in Bradford, Yorkshire

At present there are six *gurdwārās* in Bradford. I focused on three of the six *gurdwārās.* I will first provide a brief background of the Sikh community in the city of Bradford and the history of the development of *gurdwārās* in the area, followed by a comparison of the different functions and services the different *gurdwārās* provide for the community.

4.1.1 The Bradford Sikh Community

According to the 1977 electoral register of the city of Bradford, there were 5,000 Sikhs living in Bradford (Singh 2000: p. 19). The 2001 National Census showed that 4,748 people identified their religion as Sikh in Bradford. Although some of these sources are fairly detailed and reliable for general use, all available estimates must be treated with caution. In 1996 there was an estimated 6,400 Sikhs living in the city of Bradford (Singh 2000: p. 18), however many Sikhs living in Bradford make the unofficial estimate of the Sikh population being around 8,000.

4.1.2 Gurū Gobind Singh Gurdwārā

4.1.2.1 History
Prior to 1964, there was no *gurdwārā* in Bradford. The nearest *gurdwārā* was in Leeds. In September 1963, the Sikh community bought an old carpet warehouse at 16-20 Garnett Street, for which they received a grant from the council for the renovation of the derelict building. The *Gurdwārā* was officially inaugurated on 29th March 1964.

A committee under the name of *'United Sikh Association, Bradford'* managed the *Garnett Street Gurdwārā*, which implemented a constitution for the *gurdwārā* on 6th September 1964. Weekly *divāns* (services) were conducted by volunteers at the property, however large religious celebrations were held in hired public halls in order to cater for the large gatherings. The congregation was predominantly men because at this stage wives had not accompanied their husbands because migration was intended to be temporary only for work purposes.

In an interview with an elder member of the Sikh community in Bradford, he explained that,

> "The Sikh community were all one at first but later divided into different *gurdwārās* due to mix feelings about acquiring a larger *gurdwārā.*"

Due to the lack of space and a growing congregation, it was decided on 9th May 1965 to build a larger *Gurdwārā*. Using the donations from the community, a plot of land was bought on Malvern Street, which was only a hundred yards away from the Garnett Street property. During this period a church hall on Wakefield Road went on sale. The building was suitable for the size of the congregation and also was cheaper than building a new *gurdwārā*. The opinion of whether to build a new *gurdwārā* on the purchased plot or buy a building that needed no major construction work divided the community for five years.

On 21st February 1970, the *United Sikh Association* agreed to continue managing the *Garnett Street Gurdwārā* and that the community members in favour of building a brand new

Gurdwārā and those who wished to buy the church hall should form separate committees and go ahead with their individual plans. Eventually the local council purchased the Garnett Street property for demolition and the accounts of the *United Sikh Association* were frozen. The Wakefield Road *Gurdwārā* was named *Gurū Nānak Gurdwārā*, and the newly built *gurdwārā* on Malvern Street was named *Gurū Gobind Singh Gurdwārā,* replacing the original *gurdwārā.*

On 31st May 1970, MP Edward Lyon laid the foundation stone for *Gurū Gobind Singh Gurdwārā*, which was later inaugurated on 12th March 1972. In 1975, with a growing community and the number of people using cars increasing, the *gurdwārā* purchased a small building and plot of land for car parking that were adjoining. Ten years later a new hall and some additional rooms were added to the *gurdwārā*, for which the local council provided a grant for the extension work. Later, in 1999 extensive rebuilding took place when a second *divān* hall was built along with a larger *langar* hall. To celebrate the tri-centenary celebrations of the *Khālsā* in 1999, with the permission of the Council, Malvern Street was renamed *'Gobind Marg'* and a monument was built next to the *gurdwārā*. *Gurū Gobind Singh gurdwārā* is currently the most attended *gurdwārā* in Bradford.

4.1.2.2 Committee Composition

The elected *gurdwārā* management committee consists of twenty-seven members, which includes four women. Women represent twenty-five percent of the committee, which puts this *gurdwārā* in the lead for female representation in *gurdwārā* management committees. The religious make-up of the committee is that there are seven *Amritdhārīs* (baptised Sikhs) and out of the twenty non- *Amritdhārīs* members seven are *Monās* (individuals whose hair has been cut). The age ratio of the committee is between twenty to sixty-five years old, which includes four second-generation Sikhs who are born in the UK.

4.1.2.3 Religious Activities

The *gurdwārā* is open daily, with religious services in the early morning and evening time. The religious services include recital of prayers, *kīrtan* and *kathā* (oral discourse of Sikh history and religious texts). In addition to the standard religious services, families and individuals hold religious programmes throughout the week.

Every Wednesday the *gurdwārā* holds education classes for the youth. A *'Sikhism for children'* class is held for forty-five minutes, starting at 6pm. The class is open for children aged five and above, teaching the basic beliefs of Sikhism, the teachings of the *Gurūs* and provides opportunities to learn *shabads* (hymns from *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib*). After this class, a *'G.C.S.E. and A.S. Level in Sikhism'* class is held for forty-five minutes. The class is open to all ages, teaching about the Sikh faith and prepares students who are taking G.C.S.E and A.S Level examinations. There is strong emphasis given in the local community for children to learn their mother tongue so that they can understand and become closer to their faith and culture. Every Sunday morning, Panjābī classes are held for children with levels ranging from basic to G.C.S.E level. For adults there is weekly class on Thursdays, teaching the recitation of *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib* and Sikh music.

4.1.2.4 Social and Political Activities

Gurū Gobind Singh Gurdwārā offers a wide range of social activities, aimed at the youth, women, and elders of the community. For women there are weekly women's computer classes, which encourage women who have no prior knowledge of computing to learn how to write letters, surf the Internet, and use e-mail. In addition to this twice a week there is a women's fitness class held at the *gurdwārā*. The classes are led by a bilingual tutor who helps to raise issues of healthy eating and the importance of healthy lifestyles for individuals and their families.

Besides providing classes for Sikhism and Panjābī, which helps students with preparing for their school examinations in these subjects, the *gurdwārā* also provides study support for children every Sunday morning. The study support workshops provide help and guidance for children up to G.C.S.E. level with their homework and other schoolwork. Furthermore there is a library that caters for the whole congregation through providing books on Sikhism in both English and Panjābī.

Gurū Gobind Singh Gurdwārā is the only *gurdwārā* in Bradford that has day surgeries that are held in conjunction with local agencies and the local authority. The day surgeries are not frequent; nonetheless the community appreciates the visits from the health authorities, the police, social services and other groups sharing information and dealing with issues which otherwise would not get highlighted as many first generation Sikhs struggle to speak English or are reluctant to ask for help from the police or other services.

Like most main *gurdwārās* in areas with a large Sikh population, the *gurdwārā* has a matrimonial service. The service is provided every Wednesday evening and Sunday morning, which is a confidential service set up to support families to find a suitable partner for their son or daughter. One *gurdwārā* staff member commented,

> "Whilst we value and respect our traditional ways of finding marital matches, we appreciate the difficulties experienced by families in finding matches and so provide this convenient service."

4.1.3 Amrit Parchār Dhārmik Diwān Gurdwārā

4.1.3.1 History

This *gurdwārā* is unique among the *gurdwārās* in Bradford. The *Amrit Parchār Dhārmik Diwān* is an organisation of *Amritdhārī* Sikhs that was founded by a small number of

followers of a devout Sikh saint called Bābā Giān Singh "*Johalān wāle*" from the village Johal, in the Panjāb. One *gurdwārā* staff member commented that,

> "With the growth of the Sikh community there became a growing need to educate, promote, and share awareness of the basic tenets of the Sikh faith and religious code of conduct. The early migrant workers tended to discard their outer Sikh identity and indulged in drinking alcohol, eating meat, and had little understanding of the faith."

In response to community's need for renewed faith, Giānī Kulvinder Singh (the former *Granthī* of *Gurū Gobind Singh Gurdwārā*) invited the Sikh saint Bābā Giān Singh to visit the UK in July 1980. The saint held the first ever initiation ceremony (*Amrit Sanchār*) in Bradford, in which three hundred people received initiation. The saint instructed a strict orthodox code of conduct for *gurdwārā* etiquette and management, which was not looked favourably upon by the members of *Gurū Gobind Singh Gurdwārā,* which consisted mainly of non-*Amritdhārī* Sikhs with a large number of whom cut their hair and drank alcohol. As a consequence of this, the saint-led group along with two hundred of the newly baptised Sikhs began to hold religious services in each other's houses.

In 1981 the group entered into negotiations with the council to purchase a former Zion Chapel building, which was being used as an Italian club. The fact that the building was not being maintained well and was in need of repair worked in the favour of the Sikh community. On 24th October 1982 it was officially opened as a *gurdwārā*. The organisation also has very close links with its other branches in Oldbury (West Midlands) and High Wycombe.

4.1.3.2 Committee composition

The selected *gurdwārā* management committee consists of five members, which are all men. In accordance to the strict orthodox views of late saint, the *gurdwārā* follows the tradition of the *Panj Piāre* (five baptised Sikhs) representing and managing the *gurdwārā*. The five members are not elected, but selected by the patron saint (who is based in India) whenever he decides to do so on merit of the individual's character and their piety. The age range of the

committee is that they are over fifty years. All the members are first generation Sikhs born in India.

4.1.3.3 Religious Activities

The *gurdwārā* is uniquely founded on the basis of preserving a puritanical interpretation and practice of the Sikh faith under the guidance of the patron saint. All the religious services and duties in the *gurdwārā* are exclusively carried out by the *Amritdhārī* (baptised) Sikhs. The code of conduct and guidelines for performing religious duties is stricter than the other *gurdwārās,* namely that all men should be wearing traditional dress and their beard kept untied, and that both men and women should cover their mouth when reading from *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib,* cooking *langar*, and serving *langar.* The volunteers observe a general dress code of wearing white turbans for men and white *chunnīs* (head scarf) for women.

The religious activities performed are weekly *Akhand Pāths* and Sunday morning services that include *kīrtan.* Uniquely this *gurdwārā* promotes *kīrtan* performed in the traditional manner with classic musical instruments contemporary with the *Gurūs.*

Having spoken to youngsters from the different *gurdwārās* in Bradford, it seemed that the majority of the youth and the elders of the other *gurdwārās* perceive the *Amrit Parchār Dhārmik Diwān Gurdwārā* as being too strict in its rules and regulations and therefore they preferred to attend the other local *gurdwārās.* Ironically the day I visited the *gurdwārā* youngsters were performing *kīrtan*. I had an opportunity to speak to some of the youngsters that performed *kīrtan*. Two of them were active in organising religious services and seeking to include the youth.

4.1.3.4 Social and Political Activities

The two youths who were performing *kīrtan*, when I visited the *gurdwārā*, shared with me that the *gurdwārā* had recently installed a computer room for the congregation, particularly adults, to learn computer skills. The *gurdwārā* also has traditional *kīrtan* classes and Panjābī classes aimed at attracting the youth. The classes are opened to all and it was mentioned that non-Sikhs also attend the Sikh music classes, one that included a local Muslim boy. It was a pleasant surprise to know of a Muslim teenager attending the *gurdwārā* for music classes considering that some of the Sikhs that were interviewed perceived that there is growing tension between the young Sikhs and Muslims in Bradford.

4.1.4 Rāmgarhīā Sikh Temple

4.1.4.1 History
During the mid 1970s onwards, there was a large influx of Sikhs from East Africa in the UK. The majority of the African Sikhs were from the *Tarkhān* (carpenters) caste group that identify themselves under the name of *Rāmgarhīā*. Although historically *Rāmgarhīā* was the name of one of the eleven Sikh federations (*misls*) of the eighteenth century, it has become synonymous with the *Tarkhān* caste group because the majority of the Sikhs within the historic *Rāmgarhīā misl* were *Tarkhāns.*

In September 1975, the *Rāmgarhīā* community set up a small group for members of its community in Bradford and Halifax under the banner of *'Rāmgarhīā Board'*. Membership of the Board increased over time; however its membership was restricted only to "*Rāmgarhīā* Sikhs" despite the Sikh faith's strong emphasis on rejection of caste and ancestry. This Board was affiliated to the larger national *Rāmgarhīā Board,* which acted as an umbrella body for *Rāmgarhīā* community groups across the UK.

During the 1979 annual election for the management committee at *Gurū Nānak Gurdwārā* on Wakefield Road, the *Rāmgarhīā* group lost the election. The election was contested for the first time in the history of Bradford's *gurdwārās.* This created a caste-based split that created ill feeling between the *Rāmgarhīā* Sikhs, particularly those from East Africa, and the *Jatt* Sikhs from India. As a consequence of this the *Rāmgarhīā* group began to hold their weekly *divāns* in a hired church hall, later buying Victoria Hall on Bolton Road in 1980. The building was rundown and after being repaired by the community members it was opened as a *gurdwārā* on 18th April 1981. The *Rāmgarhīā Board* was eventually dissolved and an elected committee took over the management of the *Gurdwārā. Rāmgarhīā Gurdwārā* later brought a community centre hall on Cliffe Road, a few hundred yards away from the *gurdwārā.*

4.1.4.2 Committee Composition

The elected *gurdwārā* management committee consists of fourteen members, which includes no female representation. The religious make-up of the committee is that there are seven *Amritdhārīs* (baptised Sikhs) and the other seven members are *Kesdhārī* (maintain unshorn hair) in accordance to the Constitution. The age range of the committee is from forty-five to seventy-five years old. All the members are first generation Sikhs, ten of which migrated from India and four from East Africa. In accordance to the constitution of the *gurdwārā,* membership is restricted to members of the *Rāmgarhīā* community.

4.1.4.3 Religious Activities

The *Rāmgarhīā Gurdwārā* attendance is significantly less than the other *gurdwārās* and a result of this the religious services are only held on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings. The services include recital of prayers, *kīrtan* and *kathā.* Sometimes religious services take place over weekends if someone from the community has booked a programme. One member of the *gurdwārā* staff member commented that

"We [*Rāmgarhīā Gurdwārā*] do not have enough *sangat* to hold *divāns* [(religious services)] on a daily basis. We used to celebrate important religious holidays on whichever date it fell however the amount of *sangat* has fell because people have decided to go to the bigger *gurdwārās* as Bradford has six *gurdwārās.*"

The committee members shared that they have attempted to start *kīrtan* classes for children, however they have stopped because there are not enough children for classes. This is not to say that children are not interested in *kīrtan* but rather that there already established successful *kīrtan* and Sikhism classes being run at the nearby *gurdwārās,* namely *Srī Gurū Singh Sabhā Gurdwārā* and *Gurū Gobind Singh Gurdwārā.*

4.1.4.4 Social and Political Activities

The *gurdwārā* has limited social activities for the youth. The only permanent activity available for the youth is weekly children's Panjābī class at the *gurdwārā*, which is attended by thirty children. Speaking to the local *Granthī* and some elders, they said that they wish youth to take an active part but no one is coming forward, and since the establishment of the *gurdwārā* no initiatives had ever been taken to put this into practice. Women are given opportunity to get involved and participate in religious services every Saturday afternoon, in which they lead the *kīrtan* and recital of prayers. Furthermore there is a weekly fitness class for women held at the *gurdwārā.*

The *gurdwārā* community centre hall is situated on Cliffe Road, a few hundred yards away from the *gurdwārā* itself. The community centre hall is hired out by playgroups occasionally, but is booked "every week" for wedding functions and parties. One *gurdwārā* staff commented that,

"The hall is hired out for parties. There is a need in our community for venues to hold parties and functions, especially wedding functions. The hall is booked every week because the hiring cost is very cheap in comparison to other venues."

When questioned about the hall being used for functions that include meat and alcohol, which

is forbidden in the Sikh faith, I was told that no one has objected in the community to the hall or raised any religious concerns. The person said that

> "People are going to hire a hall out for wedding functions. We are just providing that service and making it easy for people."

It is understandable that the *gurdwārā* management is providing for this service, when they have family members, fellow community members, or perhaps including themselves, who need a venue for catering for parties. Indian weddings can be very costly, especially for the bride's family, and therefore the community hall benefits families from financial burden and pressures. The other side of the debate is that these halls should not exist and that if the *gurdwārā* owns a community hall it should be used for functions and activities that are in line with Sikh teachings, and therefore not allow functions that include meat and alcohol. From the perspective of the *gurdwārā* management committee they believe the majority of its community members do and will have parties that include meat and alcohol and therefore to totally ignore this fact would be doing a social disservice to the community. It is apparent there is room for debate on culture vs. religion, social needs vs. religious principles with this type of issue.

4.1.5 Summary

This section has examined three out of the six *gurdwārās* in Bradford. The three chosen *gurdwārās* represent the main *gurdwārā* in the community, a caste-based *gurdwārā,* and a saint-based *gurdwārā*. The examination of the religious, social, and political activities of each *gurdwārā* demonstrates that each *gurdwārā* plays a multi-role in the community, nonetheless the degree of diversity and relevance of the services offered vary amongst the three *gurdwārās.*

The history of the Bradford *gurdwārās* has shown that the initial *gurdwārā* was built in response to the need for a place of collective worship for the migrant male workers from India

that had come to work in Bradford. Later with the arrival of families and an increase in the Sikh population there was a need to acquire a larger *gurdwārā*. The other two *gurdwārās* that were researched in this study emerged for different reasons. The saint-based *gurdwārā* emerged in response to the community drifting away from the traditional Sikh way of life, whilst the caste-based *gurdwārā* studied emerged in response to a power struggle between groups. It is clear that the main underlying principles for setting up each *gurdwārā* are different. This raises the question of how this may affect each *gurdwārā's* performs in relation to fulfilling the teachings and example set by the Sikh *Gurūs,* which will be examined later in the conclusion of Chapter 4.

The religious activities of *Rāmgarhīā Gurdwārā* are restricted to two days, whilst the other *gurdwārās* studied provide religious activities and services on a daily basis. The reasons for this are that *Rāmgarhīā Gurdwārā* has a small congregation and also perhaps in response to the lack of religious activities taking place, the congregation has decreased in further by members attending other nearby *gurdwārās* instead. This poses a problem for the *Rāmgarhīā Gurdwārā* as potentially the congregation could dwindle even further which could have the consequence of religious services only being held once a week on Sundays, and worse still the *gurdwārā* may face the fate of many churches that have witnessed a fall in attendance. In not being able to sustain the congregation, the *gurdwārā's* attempts to provide a weekly *kīrtan* class for children has not been successful as most of the children from the *Rāmgarhīā* community attend classes of other *gurdwārās.* On the other hand the *gurdwārā* has become relevant to the health and well-being of the local women who have a weekly fitness class. Furthermore, the *gurdwārā* has made itself relevant to financial and social burdens faced by many Indian parents in getting their children married by providing a marriage party hall, thus saving families considerable amounts of money.

Being the main *gurdwārā* in Bradford, *Gurū Gobind Singh Gurdwārā,* offers the largest number of classes and services to the community. The findings have shown that the *gurdwārā's* services aim to cater for a wide-range group and engage with women and the elderly from the community. Classes such as homework and school support, in addition to Sikhism, Panjābī, music lessons that shows the *gurdwārā* has become not only relevant to the religious life of children but also their school and work life. Similarly, the *gurdwārā* has become relevant to the health and well-being of its community members through providing bi-lingual health and fitness classes. In addition to this the *gurdwārā* has become relevant to the political and social life of its members through providing a space for elders to socialise, day-surgeries covering police, legal, and welfare benefit matters, and also being the voice of the community in representing the community's interests.

Although the *Amrit Parchār Dhārmik Diwān Gurdwārā* provides less variety in its services, it could be argued that its close-proximity to the main *gurdwārā,* affects the need for the *gurdwārā* to set up duplicate services. On the one hand, the *gurdwārā* does provide unique religious services in comparison to the other *gurdwārās* insofar as it emphasises strict religious observance and guidelines in its religious services, duties and activities. It could be argued that the *gurdwārā* lays stronger emphasis on religion and spirituality and therefore is more relevant to the religious life of the community rather than the social. But having said that the *gurdwārā* has become socially relevant to the lives of not only Sikhs but also non-Sikhs through providing computer classes, and classical music classes.

4.2 Gurdwārās in Southall, West London

This study examines three out of the nine *gurdwārās* in Southall. This section provides a brief background of the Sikh community in the Southall area and the history of the development of

gurdwārās in the area, followed by a comparison of the different functions and services the different *gurdwārās* provide for the community.

4.2.1 The Southall Sikh Community

According to the 2001 National Census, there are over 104,250 Sikhs in London, a third of the Sikh population of Britain. Furthermore, the 2001 Census showed that the Sikh community are especially concentrated in West London boroughs, making up almost 10 percent of the populations of Ealing and Hounslow.

4.2.2 Srī Gurū Singh Sabhā Gurdwārā

4.2.2.1 History
The early Sikh migrants in Southall attended *Shepherd's Bush Gurdwārā* in Central London, and later they began to hire a local community hall on Greenford Avenue and also Dara Bingo Hall on Beaconsfield Road for weekly *Divāns*, which became a temporary *gurdwārā* for the community. Then in 1961, the Sikh community purchased a house on Beaconsfield Road that became the first *gurdwārā* in Southall under the name of *'Singh Sabhā Southall'*.

The emigration of Malaysian and Singaporean Sikhs led to the formation of a rival group, called *'Srī Gurū Nānak Singh Sabhā.'* This group began to hire a community hall on The Green in Southall. It is said that both groups had minor differences that can be found anywhere where Sikhs live together and end up making different political-religious organisations. In 1964 the group purchased the community hall but then faced financial difficulties that led to the merger of both groups in the same year. The new group that emerged out of the previous two groups became known as *'Srī Gurū Singh Sabhā Southall'*. The Beaconsfield Road property remained owned by the *gurdwārā* but The Green became the headquarters of the *Srī Gurū Singh Sabhā*. In 1965 Mahārājā Yādvinder Singh, the *Mahārājā* of Patiālā, visited the *gurdwārā* at the Green and spoke to the congregation during a *divān* and

said, "Let the *gurdwārā's Nishān Sāhib* (flag) be visible from London's Heathrow Airport" (Singh and Tatla 2006: p. 73).

Due to the increasing size of the Sikh community, a dairy on Havelock Road was purchased in 1966 and transformed into a *gurdwārā*. The *gurdwārā* opened in January 1967, coinciding with the birthday celebrations of Gurū Gobind Singh. Later in 1984, the *gurdwārā* purchased a site at Park Avenue, next to Southall railway station, where in 1997 a temporary *gurdwārā* was constructed whilst the Havelock Road *gurdwārā* was demolished and rebuilt.

The building project for the new *gurdwārā* was estimated as costing £17 million. On 30th March 2003, the new Havelock Road *gurdwārā* was opened. Approximately 40,000 Sikhs attended the opening ceremony, including the Prince of Wales along with other dignitaries. Although the Park Avenue *gurdwārā* was intended to be a temporary building, the popularity of the location, especially for parking and convenience for the elderly and disabled, led the site to remain as permanent second *gurdwārā* under the one management committee of *Srī Gurū Singh Sabhā Southall*.

With the aim of building a Sikh primary school, the *gurdwārā* purchased an old college building on Tentelow Lane in Southall in December 2004 for £2.8 million. The school is currently being constructed and is under the ownership and management of the *gurdwārā*.

4.2.2.2 Committee Composition

During the period of research the *gurdwārā* management committee that had been in power for fourteen years changed in an unexpected election result. The previous elected *gurdwārā* management committee (the *Baaz* party) consisted of twenty-one members, which included one *Amritdhārī* woman who later on in the year resigned from her position for an unknown

reason. The religious make-up of the committee was that there were three *Amritdhārīs* (baptised Sikhs). According to the constitution all the members must be *Kesdhārī* (maintain unshorn hair) and therefore there were no *Monā* (cut-haired) Sikhs in the old or new committee. The age ratio of the committee was forty-five years old plus, which included one second generation Sikh.

The current elected committee (the *Sher* party) consists of 21 members, which includes one *Amritdhārī* woman. The religious-make up of the committee is that in total there are sixteen *Amritdhārī* Sikhs, which means that the *Amritdhārī* Sikhs have the majority. The age range of the committee is between twenty and over fifty years old. The majority of the members are over forty-five years old; however there are three UK born Sikhs, aged between twenty to thirty-five years old. One of these young members is the *gurdwārā* librarian, and another is 'youth activities co-ordinator'. It is apparent from the committee composition of the old and new committees that the new committee is more representative of the *Amritdhārī* Sikhs and the younger generation.

4.2.2.3 Religious Activities

The *gurdwārā* is open daily, with continuous religious programmes from 3am till 8pm. Other than *Soho Road Gurdwārā* in Birmingham, *Srī Gurū Singh Sabhā Southall* is the only *gurdwārā* in the UK that has continuous religious services from morning till night every day. The most obvious reason would be that it is the largest *gurdwārā* outside of India and is the most attended *gurdwārā* in London, the *gurdwārā* has the income and resources to provide *kīrtan, kathā* and recital of *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib* throughout the day, seven days a week. Every week different musicians *(rāgīs)* and preachers are given a week slot to serve the *sangat*, providing variety in religious services.

The other religious activities offered by the previous management were weekly a *kīrtan* class, daily *gurbānī santheā* (learning to correctly read the Sikh scriptures) for adults, and *kīrtan* performed by local ladies every day including during the main Sunday service. On the last Saturday of the month, youngsters were given the responsibility of organizing an evening *kīrtan* event at the Park Avenue *gurdwārā*, which aimed to encourage youngsters to get involved in performing *kīrtan*. Furthermore, there is a library with English and Pānjabī books on the Sikh faith, weekly Pānjabī classes for children, and an annual five-day summer camp that was held at the *gurdwārā's* Norwood Green site that is attended by more than three hundred youngsters. There was a *Sikh Missionary College* course set up to train individuals on the Sikh faith, the first in the country. However, I was told that the weekly classes were difficult to maintain because sufficient levels of attendance were not sustained.

Since the arrival of the new committee in October 2008, a more variety of religious activities have been made available for the community. Before all the classes took place at the Park Avenue site, but now the Havelock Road *Gurdwārā* is being further utilized for various projects and classes. The religious classes include, two weekly *gurbānī santheā* classes, one for the youth and the other for adults. There is also an additional weekly and monthly youth-arranged *kīrtan*. On important religious holidays the *gurdwārā* now arranges outside speakers to preach in English so that *gurdwārā* becomes relevant to the English-speaking youth. One elderly congregation member commented that,

> "The new committee has really focused on the youth and doing things which gets them involved. Where before you didn't find many youngsters at the *gurdwārā,* now you see many young boys and girls who have taken Amrit, learning how to read *pāth* (scriptures) and taking an active part in *sevā*. I am very happy."

4.2.2.4 Social and Political Activities

The *gurdwārā* offers a wide range of social services aimed at the youth, women, elders and also the wider community. Up to five hundred people from the wider community visit the

gurdwārā every week, which includes mainly school children but also inter-faith groups and tourists. This provides an opportunity for the *gurdwārā* to engage with the outside community and help to promote understanding of the Sikh people and faith and also in order to bring social harmony amongst the different groups in societies.

Like other main *gurdwārās* in the UK, the *gurdwārā* has a matrimonial service that is "very successful". The service is provided every Sunday at the *gurdwārā* library, which is very popular as a result of the decline of the more traditional ways of finding a marital partner. This is an example of how the *gurdwārā* has become relevant to the lives of young individuals in finding life partners, which includes people that are not necessary religious or attend the *gurdwārā* regularly. Therefore, it is a service aimed that serves the wider spectrum of the Sikh community.

The *gurdwārā* has become relevant to the lives of the community outside of the *gurdwārā* space through *gurdwārā* initiatives like the hospital visiting service, in which the *gurdwārā's Granthīs* visit Sikh patients in the nearby hospital. Furthermore, the *gurdwārā* has a Sikh St. John's Ambulance room where they train community members, young and old, in first aid. This is the first Sikh St. John's Ambulance room that has been set up by a *gurdwārā,* which includes non-Sikh members from the local community. One former *gurdwārā* committee member commented that,

> "The *gurdwārā*'s Sikh St. John's Ambulance group is the most active unit in the area. In the past three years it has won three to four top prizes in the whole London district for the work it does."

The *gurdwārā*'s *Khālsā Primary School*, which is planned to open next year, aims to provide a good schooling for the Sikh community and provide further opportunities for young Sikhs to remain engaged and involved in the Sikh faith as well acquire the skills and teachings to

become good citizens. Furthermore, there is an organised *gurdwārā* football team, which attracts many youngsters to get involved.

The *gurdwārā* has been relevant in local political and social struggles. A member of the previous committee commented in an interview that,

> "In the past thirty years, with the death of Blair Peach, as a result of the National Front marching through Southall, the police realised that the ethnic minority communities have a wider role to play, and since that time *Srī Gurū Singh Sabhā Gurdwārā* has been on the forefront in forging relationships with the police, the local council, and other faith bodies in terms of avoiding racial and religious disharmony, as well as addressing issues affecting all the communities."

Furthermore, in August 2005, the *gurdwārā* provided support and a political stage for protests led by 670 airport staff that worked at *Gate Gourmet* at Heathrow airport that had been sacked. The two hundred or more airport staff joined the protest at the *gurdwārā* included non-Sikhs. The *Guardian* (27th August 2005) reported that,

> "…Community support has been vital to the persistence of these women. The local *gurdwārā* (Sikh temple) has played a central role by making sure hot food and *masālā* tea are readily available."

The importance of this quote is that the author noted how the *gurdwārā* has played "a central role" in a crisis by providing a simple service of food and drink but also being a venue for supporters to congregate, indirectly highlighting Gurū Nānak's concept of *vand chhaknā* (sharing with others), one of the three pillars of the Sikh faith that was discussed earlier. In addition to this, the local MP, Mr. Virendra Sharma, has attended the *gurdwārā* frequently either to attend services that he has been invited to, or to share information with the community on issues affecting the Sikh community, like the Heathrow airport staff protest.

4.2.3 Rāmgarhīā Sabhā Southall

4.2.3.1 History
In 1959, a group of caste-based Sikhs from the *Rāmgarhīā* community formed a separate group under the name of *Rāmgarhīā Sabhā Southall* and decided to setup a caste-based

gurdwārā for its community in Southall. In 1969, the *Rāmgarhīā* community purchased a laundrette on Oswald Road and in 1970 and converted the laundrette into a suitable building for a *gurdwārā.*

Soon after the *gurdwārā* was opened, the *gurdwārā* community increased in significant size as a result of a large wave of migration from East Africa, predominantly from the *Rāmgarhīā* background. With influx of new community members, the *gurdwārā* management committee purchased several houses in order to extend the *gurdwārā* building and also provide accommodation to some of the desperate migrants that had newly arrived from East Africa. A house at the back of the *gurdwārā* was purchased and now used as the *gurdwārā* library.

In 1971, the *gurdwārā* purchased a building on 159 The Broadway, which was converted into *Rāmgarhīā Hall.* The building was refurbished and began to be actively used from 1974 onwards for sports activities, meetings and party functions. In 1974 the *Rāmgarhīā Sports Club (RSC)* was established when members of the *gurdwārā* with interests in sports and games agreed to offer their free time and experience to train and develop the younger members of the community in sports like hockey and karate. In the absence of adequate facilities, newer facilities to accommodate for the rising membership became a paramount objective. As a consequence various locations had to be found where indoor training and sports could be undertaken. Eventually the *Rāmgarhīā Sabhā Southall Gurdwārā's* management decided to purchase a site in Cranford for the Sports Club to use.

4.2.3.2 Committee Composition

The elected *gurdwārā* management committee consists of twenty-five members, which includes three women. The *gurdwārā* management staff interviewed refused to give the information about how many of its committee members are *Amritdhārī* (baptised) Sikhs. I

was told, "It [baptism] is a very personal thing. So I cannot ask the members nor tell you." I was surprised by the response considering all the other *gurdwārās* responded happily to the question. It raises questions of why a *gurdwārā* management staff would like to conceal how many of its members are baptised Sikhs. However, the interviewee was able to reveal that,

> "This year's committee doesn't have any *Mona* (cut-haired) Sikhs but there have been in previous committees."

The age range of the committee is from thirty to sixty-five years old, three of which are second-generation UK born Sikhs. In accordance to the constitution of the *gurdwārā,* membership is restricted to members of the *Rāmgarhīā* community.

4.2.3.3 Religious Activities

The *gurdwārā* opens daily with morning service starting at 5.30am and finishing at 11am. The morning service includes *kīrtan,* explanation of daily edict (*hukamnāmā*) taken from *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib*, and *simran* (meditation). The evening services are from 6pm till 8pm and include *kīrtan* and *kātha* (oral discourse on history and religious texts).

Although *Srī Gurū Singh Sabhā Gurdwārā Southall* is the largest *gurdwārā* in Southall, currently the *Rāmgarhīā Sabhā Southall* has the largest facility for educating the youth about religion and culture. The *Rāmgarhīā Sabhā Southall* runs a weekly Sunday school from 11am to 1pm, which teaches children Panjābī, the Sikh faith, and Sikh music. Three hundred students, aged five to eighteen, attend the school. One local volunteer commented that

> "Unfortunately, due to the fast and changing life we all lead, there is no time to teach children about their religion in a family setting, and sometimes institutions fail to deliver what is needed. Therefore, *Rāmgarhīā Sabhā Sunday School* was set up by a small group of teachers to provide education in the field of Panjābī and Sikhism."

The *gurdwārā* management committee supports the *Rāmgarhīā Sabhā Sunday School*, but there is a team of twenty volunteer staff that organises, administrates and operates the Sunday school. Some of the staff includes qualified teachers and many of the older students act as

assistant teachers for the younger students. The Sunday school plays an important religious role in the community as it promotes greater religious understanding amongst the Sikh youth and encourages children to learn more about their faith and *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib* through language, history and music.

4.2.3.4 Social and Political Activities

Rāmgarhīā Sabhā Southall Gurdwārā offers a wider range of social activities. The *gurdwārā* takes part in the annual *Mahārājāh Jassā Singh Sports Tournament* at Brunel University held every August, which is a family event that engages with the youth and the elders. In addition to this the *gurdwārā* has hosted an exhibition at the *Rāmgarhīā Hall,* in which a team of local volunteers engaged with other organisations and groups to take part in the project. In addition to this, the *gurdwārā* offers a matrimonial service for the *Rāmgarhīā* Sikhs. This is a prominent service that most *gurdwārās* are now providing in response to the changing trend of how young people are finding marriage partners within the community.

The *gurdwārā* also has a *Community Development* group, which is mostly managed by younger community members. The group runs a wide range of social activities such as an annual variety show, an annual dinner and dance, and exhibitions in order to engage and promote 'community development'. Having talked to members of the *Rāmgarhīā* community it became apparent that the *Rāmgarhīā* community had a more liberal or relaxed interpretation of observing traditional Sikh values and rules. For example, most other Sikhs would not expect a *gurdwārā* to be associated or involved in any form of dance. It could be argued that the *Rāmgarhīā* community has addressed the community's needs in non-traditional ways in order to reach to the younger generation. Another reason could be that the liberal interpretation of the faith is a consequence of living in British society and being influenced by the environment and values of this society.

The *gurdwārā* has been politically active since it was established. Many politicians have visited the *gurdwārā* over thirty years, including the Home Secretary and Employment Minister. One interviewee commented,

> "In the late 1970s the *gurdwārā* was involved with talks with the Police when the Southall Riots happened. Similarly, in the 1980s the *gurdwārā* took an active role to protest against the turban ban."

In more recent times the *gurdwārā* has been politically active in supporting protestors against Nuclear Weapons and helping the Heathrow airport staff during the August 2005 incident through providing *langar* to protestors. Further to this, the *gurdwārā* has written letters of support for these protests.

4.2.4 Gurdwārā Nānaksar Southall

4.2.4.1 History

Gurdwārā Nānaksar Southall was the second *gurdwārā* built in England that was affiliated to the *Nānaksar* sect. Later other *Nānaksar gurdwārās* were built in the UK. It is situated in a mainly residential area where a lot of the congregation live locally or a short drive away.

The land for the *Gurdwārā Nānaksar Southall* was purchased on the 25th June 1999 after followers of the sect obtained permission from their revered leader, Bābā Gurdev Singh who is based in India and Houston. The land itself was a derelict engineering factory that had been in decline for many years. The property was not on the market when some *Nānaksar* followers approached the owner. Eventually, the owner decided to sell the land so that the current *gurdwārā* could be built. The land is approximately one acre. Once plans had been finalized and passed by the local building planning authority, construction began and the foundation ceremony was performed in October 1999.

The *Nānaksar* order holds strong emphasis on performing and listening to *kīrtan*. The opening ceremony of the main hall was done on the 3rd February 2001. The *Nānaksar* head, Gurdev Singh, and dignitaries from other *Nānaksar gurdwārās* attended. *Rāgīs* (musicians) were sent from India from the *Nānaksar* centre in India so that the daily *kīrtan* could take place.

4.2.4.2 Committee Composition

I was told that the *gurdwārā* management committee has only a logistical role in ensuring the smooth running of the *gurdwārā,* and does not interfere or make-decisions on the religious set-up or code of conduct of the *gurdwārā.* The religious code of conduct and daily programme is in accordance to the instruction and guidance of late Bābā Nand Singh (Kalerān) and the current saint, Bābā Gurdev Singh. The management committee for *Gurdwārā Nānaksar Southall* consists of seven members, which are all men. The elders of the Gurdwārā community select local congregation members who are active in voluntary service at the *gurdwārā* to become committee members. All the committee are *Amritdhārī* Sikhs (baptised Sikhs) who have reverence for the *Nānaksar* saints. The age range of the committee is from thirty-five to sixty-five years old, which includes two second-generation UK born Sikhs. The majority of the committee members are Sikh migrants from East Africa.

4.2.4.3 Religious Activities

Since the opening of the *Gurdwārā Nānaksar Southall* there has been a daily religious programme in the morning and evening. The *gurdwārā* opens at 2.30am for morning prayers and *kīrtan.* The evening service, which starts at 4.30pm and finishes at 8pm, includes *kathā* (oral discourse on Sikh history and religious texts) and *kīrtan.* The *kīrtan* is performed using simple tunes that encourage the congregation to sing along and repeat lines from the sacred hymns. The unique style of *Nānaksar kīrtan* attracts a large gathering on days of religious

importance. Every month, on the Sunday following *pūranmāshī* (full moon day), an *Amrit Sanchār* (Sikh initiation ceremony) is arranged for anyone wishing to become baptised.

Gurdwārā Nānaksar Southall differs in some of the functions compared to the other *gurdwārās* studied. One congregation member stated that the tradition of *Gurū-Kā-Langar* being cooked at the *gurdwārā* is not practised. He said,

> "The food is not cooked at the *gurdwārā*. The *langar* is cooked in the homes of devotees who in turn bring food to share at the *gurdwārā*. The reason for this is for getting people to get involved in selfless devotion to God."

On the other hand, speaking to another community member I was told that the reason for not preparing *Langar* in the *gurdwārā* traces back to the history of the original *Nānaksar* saint, Bābā Nand Singh. In short, the saint was a celibate ascetic monk who would go to the jungles or woodland areas to meditate upon God. It is said that he used to ask for food from door-to-door, when one day a lady scorned the saint for asking for food when her family has to work hard to earn a living.

> "After this episode, *Bābā Jī* [Bābā Nand Singh] prayed to God that he would never ask for food and rely on God's Grace alone. Since then devotees, without being asked, would bring food for *Bābā Jī* [Bābā Nand Singh] and share it with the *sangat* [congregation] and this tradition has carried on into *Nānaksar gurdwārās*."

Another divergence from named practice was that there was no *Nishān Sāhib*[9] erected outside the *Gurdwārā*. One local volunteer commented that the *Nishān Sāhib* is not erected in any of the *Nānaksar gurdwārās*. He gave the following explanation:

> "The *Nishān Sāhib* is a political symbol and an army flag. At *Nānaksar*, politics is never mixed with religion. *Nānaksar* is the centre of pure devotion and prayer alone."

Another congregation member stated an alternative reason for why the *Gurdwārā* doesn't have a *Nishān Sāhib*:

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[9] According to the *Sikh Rehit Maryādā* (SRM: p. 15) "every *gurdwārā*" should install the *Nishān Sāhib* at a high-level in order to show that the building is a *gurdwārā*.

> "The *Nishān Sāhib* was a flag used in war and erected to show the opposition that this was Sikh territory… *Bābā Jī* [Bābā Nand Singh] said that the *gurdwārā* is open to all religions and not only a Sikh place of worship. In order to show that all religions and backgrounds are welcome and that this is not only a place of worship for the Sikhs, *Bābā Jī* [Bābā Nand Singh] instructed that there should be no *Nishān Sāhib.*"

To argue that the *Nishān Sāhib* is a political symbol seems to be inaccurate and false. According to *The Sikh Encyclopaedia* (2009) the tradition of the *Nishān Sāhib* dates back to the sixth *Gurū*, however some Sikhs trace back its origin to Gurū Nānak.[10] The *Nishān Sāhib* is the Sikh community's flag and mark of the Sikh nation. *Gurdwārās* across the world are easily identifiable through the tall flying *Nishān Sāhib* erected near on the *gurdwārā* building.

Members of the *Nānaksar* group justified the apparent violation of *gurdwārā* rules prescribed in the *Sikh Rehit Maryādā* (Sikh Code of Conduct) by saying that that their *gurdwārā* is a spiritual centre open to all religions, however its raises the question of aren't all *gurdwārās* open to all? The ten *Gurūs* and *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib* teaches that humanity is one and embraces people of all religious and ethnic backgrounds and therefore it seems strange to argue that a *Nishān Sāhib* should not be installed when the *Nishān Sāhib* was originally made and erected outside *gurdwārā* buildings by the Sikh *Gurūs* themselves (Singh 2009). *The Golden Temple* in Amritsar, which has four entrance doors that represents that all faiths, all denominations, and all nationalities are welcome to the 'House of God', has two *Nishān Sāhibs* erected on the top of the building. In addition to this all historic *gurdwārās* established by the Sikh *Gurūs* have two *Nishān Sāhibs*.

4.2.4.4 Social and Political Activities

When asked about the social and political activities of the *gurdwārā,* one person responded that,

> "In accordance to *Bābā Jī* [Bābā Nand Singh] politics should not be brought to the *Gurdwārā* otherwise the mind will struggle to concentrate on *pāth* (prayers) and

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[10] Oral communication by a Sikh preacher at *Leamington & Warwick Gurdwara Sahib*

> *kīrtan. Bābā Jī* [Bābā Nand Singh] has said that *Nānaksar* [*Gurdwārā*] is a place for *bhagtī* (spirituality) and worship and therefore political activities do not have a place."

It was made clear by the *gurdwārā* members that *Gurdwārā Nānaksar* is a spiritual centre and does not hold social or political activities as a priority. Although *Gurdwārā Nānaksar* doesn't have political activities, they do allow the local MP or local councillors to visit the *gurdwārā* and talk to the congregation. However the politicians or visiting speakers are not given any special treatment or allowed to speak during the prime time service. One respondent said,

> "Only once in memory has the local MP visited this *gurdwārā*. The local councillors have visited the *gurdwārā* but not very often. If they wish to speak to the *sangat* then they have to speak in the 7.30pm till 8pm slot which is allotted to outsider speakers or *rāgīs* [(musicians)]."

With regard to social activities, *Gurdwārā Nānaksar* holds an annual summer children's camp for two weeks. Approximately two hundred and fifty children attend the camp. In addition to this the *gurdwārā* holds a weekly Panjābī school attended by one hundred children and a weekly *kīrtan* class attended by ten people. Members of the *gurdwārā* are also involved in a hockey team, however this is not organised or managed by the *gurdwārā* itself. One local volunteer told me that he is planning to start a weekly Sikh class at the *gurdwārā* however the classes would focus on the spirituality aspect of Sikhism rather than the political or warrior aspect. The volunteer commented that,

> "…At the moment the youth are focusing too much on to the warrior aspect and basing their Sikh faith on political events like 1984. We should not forget 1984 as it is a landmark in our history, but the reality is that the majority of Sikhs are disregarding the saint side of the Sikh faith and therefore *[Gurdwārā] Nānaksar* just wishes to focus on the spiritual or saint aspect of the Sikh faith."

4.2.5 Summary

This section has examined three out of the nine *gurdwārās* in Southall. The three chosen *gurdwārās* represent the main *gurdwārā* in the community, a caste-based *gurdwārā,* and a saint-based *gurdwārā*. The examination of the religious, social, and political activities of each

gurdwārā shows that each *gurdwārā* plays an important part in the community in some way or another.

The history of the Southall *gurdwārās* follows the same pattern at the *gurdwārās* studied in Bradford. Whereas, the main *gurdwārā* was built out of necessity, the caste-based *gurdwārā* was built for political factors, and the saint-based *gurdwārā* was set up as a result of religious concerns. Therefore, it can be suggested that the main underlying principles for setting up each *gurdwārā* are different, which raises the question of how this may affect the job that the *gurdwārā* does in relation to the Sikh *Gurūs* teachings.

Religious activities take place at all three *gurdwārās* on daily basis. The religious activities include *kīrtan, kathā,* and *pāth* (scriptural reading). Although all three *gurdwārās* are open throughout the day for the public to pay their respects to *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib, Srī Gurū Singh Sabhā Gurdwārā* has a continuous religious service from the morning till evening which benefits local businessmen, school children, and the elderly, who may visit the *Gurdwārā* and take part in the religious service at different times in the day. Further to this, all three *gurdwārās* hold *kīrtan* and Panjābī classes for the youth. Moreover *Srī Gurū Singh Sabhā Gurdwārā* holds weekly and monthly programmes arranged by the youth and a weekly class of scriptural reading aimed at teenagers. However, *Rāmgarhīā Sabhā Southall Gurdwārā* is the only *gurdwārā* which has set up a structured and organised approached in educating the youth about Sikhism through its Sunday school with trained teachers going through a syllabus on Sikhism that covers the Sikh beliefs, history, and music.

The findings have shown that both *Srī Gurū Singh Sabhā Gurdwārā* and *Rāmgarhīā Sabhā Southall Gurdwārā* provide social services that aim to cater for a wide-range group. *Rāmgarhīā Sabhā Southall Gurdwārā* is particularly focused on the youth through its various

classes, and now it seems that *Srī Gurū Singh Sabhā Gurdwārā* is following its lead in providing more educational, social, and sports facilities for the youth which will be enhanced further with the completion of the *gurdwārā's* primary school. In the past *Srī Gurū Singh Sabhā Gurdwārā* has held surgeries and awareness days that covered health issues affecting the community like alcoholism and diabetes and providing social welfare advice to the elderly but for unknown reasons these services stopped. However, more recently, on 13th June 2009, the *gurdwārā* participated in 'Blood Donation Week' by holding a two-day blood donation drive. Whilst *Gurdwārā Nānaksar Southall* aims to solely provide religious activities and serve a spiritual purpose in the lives of its community members, it can be argued that the *gurdwārā* still serves a social role in arranging the annual two-week summer camp for children and weekly classes for the youth.

The study has found that although *Gurdwārā Nānaksar* does not believe politics and religion should mix, it allows the opportunity for politicians or community leaders to use the *gurdwārā* as a platform for liaising with the community, however the *gurdwārā* is strict in the time slot that gives outside speakers and the likelihood of speakers or politicians attending the *gurdwārā* is "very rare." On the other hand, the other two *gurdwārās* studied have shown to provide political activities through representing the Sikh community's needs and concerns with the Police and local authorities and engaging in initiatives and talks with other communities in order to maintain social cohesion and harmony in Southall's diverse community.

4.3 Conclusion

This intent of this chapter has been to present the findings from the ethnographic study of the chosen six *gurdwārās* from Bradford and Southall. The history of the establishment and development of each *gurdwārā* studied has been shown in detail. The chapter has explored

how the *gurdwārās* are managed and function, as well as the issues surrounding some of them.

It can be argued from the analysis that whilst the six chosen *gurdwārās* in the UK can further their religious, social and political activities so that they are more effective in being relevant to the lives of its community members, a lot of people are investing time, effort, and devotion in serving the community and their faith. It seems that although some *gurdwārās* are not doing enough to make their roles effective, they are walking along that path and making progress in serving the local community at least religiously. A great amount of optimism was shown in the communities studied that the UK *gurdwārās* will one day be able to reach out to the wider community and be a role model for promoting equality, peace, hope, and respect in a religiously plural and multicultural society. The next chapter will examine the research from the six *gurdwārās* studied in this chapter and UK *gurdwārās* in general in reflecting whether they do the job that the Sikh *Gurūs'* envisaged and how perhaps the management system or committees may influence this.

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter I will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the *gurdwārā* institution in the UK at the present and how they conform to the Sikh *Gurūs* teachings to see how the *gurdwārās* are serving the community religiously, socially, and politically, and this will give us some indication of how the *gurdwārā* institution will develop or change in the future.

5.1 Summary of Results

5.1.1 Religious role

Before considering the religious activities and role of the *gurdwārās* studied, I found a fundamental flaw in the religious message of two of the six *gurdwārās* studied that were caste-based *gurdwārās*. If we are examining *gurdwārās* on the religious role they play in terms of the Sikh *Gurūs's* teachings then these caste-based *gurdwārās* fail the test immediately because the purpose of Sikhism and *gurdwārās* is to unite people, not to divide. Gurū Amar Dās says:

jāt kā garab na kar mūrakh gavārā. *Es garab te chalhi bahut vikārā.* *rahāo.*	"Do not be proud of your social class and status, you ignorant fool! So much sin and corruption comes from this pride. (Pause and reflect)." (SGGS Bhairo: 1127)

The concept of caste or being born superior or inferior is an ancient Hindu belief that was fundamentally rejected by the founders of the Sikh faith who strongly proclaimed the equality and oneness of all humanity.

chāre pair dharam de *chār varan ek varan karāeiā.*	"[With Gurū Nānak's arrival] *dharma* was now established on its four feet and all the four castes (through fraternal feeling) were converted into one caste (of humanity)." (Bhāī Gurdās: Vār 1, Paurī 23)

Although many people left Hinduism to embrace the Sikh faith during the period of the ten *Gurūs*, the fact that there are some Sikhs, which includes baptised Sikhs, that believe and

practise the caste system shows the strong influence of ancient Hindu beliefs on the minds of those Sikhs or it could also be the effect of living in a Hindu dominated society in India that has influenced their attitudes.

Naming a *gurdwārā* on a caste and restricting membership to not allow people outside of the particular caste to join, seems to suggest that these Sikhs consider their caste status as possibly sacred or associated to 'purity' and in attempts to maintain this they created a caste-orientated *gurdwārā* institution. It could be argued that a group like the British National Party (BNP) that restricts its membership to only "indigenous British ethnic groups deriving from the class of 'Indigenous Caucasian"[11] has restricted its membership for similar reasons of considering its defined members as 'pure', see society as "us" and "them", and fearing the "other" will take over "their" country. Similarly, it could be argued that creating caste-based *gurdwārās* is a protective mechanism of a group that wishes to protect the group from being 'infiltrated' or sense that "outsiders" (i.e. other castes) may take over "their" *gurdwārās*. One interviewee commented that,

> "Casteism and caste based *gurdwārās* is a result of ignorance of the Sikh faith and total lack of understanding the fundamentals of the Sikh faith. Many of these caste-based *gurdwārās* were made because certain people fell out with others or couldn't get into one *gurdwārā's* committee so they formed another *gurdwārā,* and these *gurdwārās* were based on their caste-groups so that they could make themselves distinct and separate from the others."

The study found that one of the main religious purpose, role, and activity of the *gurdwārā* is to provide religious understanding for the community which is intended to be reflected upon and incorporated into the lives of individuals. Perhaps the emergence of caste-based *gurdwārās* shows that *gurdwārās* have failed in conveying the message of the Sikh *Gurū* within the community.

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[11] *Guardian* (Monday 8th June 2009)

All the management committees of the *gurdwārās* studied aimed to make the *gurdwārā* religiously relevant in the lives of the community members through providing daily religious services. During the period of the Sikh *Gurūs,* the *gurdwārā* was a religious centre based on collective worship and keeping the religious spirit alive through *nām japnā, kīrtan,* and *kathā.* Bhāī Nand Lāl Singh, the tenth *Gurū's* court poet, records the *Gurū's* instruction to Sikhs as:

sandhiā samai sunnai rehirās *kīrtan kathā sunnai har yās.*	"In the evening listen to the *Rehirās* (the evening prayer) and listen to *kīrtan* (singing) and *kathā* (oral discourse) of the Lord's praises."

From my observations and discussions with participants it seemed that *gurdwārā* managements lay heavy emphasis on performing *pāths* (scriptural readings) or *kīrtan*, however the majority of people interviewed claimed that there was language barrier in understanding the message being conveyed in sermons and religious services because often the language spoken by the preachers is not the language of the lay people and moreover some people, particularly, the second generation struggle to understand Panjābī. This raises the question of how effective and relevant the *kīrtan* and *kathā* in *gurdwārā* in the UK are in providing religious understanding to its community members so that they can benefit from the conveyed message.

Although reading and singing from the religious scriptures with faith and devotion is very important in Sikh faith, the Sikh *Gurus* also condemned the religious scholars of the time for merely reading religious texts without reflection, contemplation or attempting to understand:

parriā būjhai so parvān.	"One who reads and understands is acceptable." (SGGS Dhanāsrī: 662)

Those *gurdwārā* committees with youth or UK born committee members seemed to have realised that there is a language barrier, especially for the younger generation and have taken steps to rectify this problem by using a projector screen to show scriptural texts along with the English translation and Romanized version of the texts. This is one positive step that some *gurdwārās* have taken; many others are also still considering this, in overcoming such

challenges and others for *gurdwārās* in attempts to adapt to the changing needs and circumstances of the Sikh community living in the UK. Similarly, the *gurdwārā's* with youth or second generation Sikh representation in the committee have been shown to have taken further steps to adapt to the congregation's language needs by holding monthly English and bi-lingual lectures on Sikhism during the main religious services at the *Gurdwārā*. In addition to this, the same *gurdwārās* also provide classes in pronouncing and understanding *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib* which seems to be an investment in the future of UK *gurdwārās* as there will be more young people who will be able to relate, understand and convey the message of the Sikh faith to a wider audience. On the other hand, it was found that the *gurdwārās* with committees consisting of all first generation men over the age of 50 seemed to be showing little or no progress in attempting to convey the message delivered in the religious services in a way that is understandable and relevant to the community.

5.1.2 Social role

Sevā is one of the main pillars of the Sikh faith, which is incorporated in all aspects of Sikh life, including the *gurdwārā*. Bhāī Gurdās states that,

gur updes aves kar parupkār *achār lubhāeiā.*	"Inspired by the teachings of *Gurū* they [the Sikhs] always remain eager to undertake acts of public benefit." (Bhāī Gurdās Vār 11: Paurī 4)

The analysis in Chapter 2 suggested that the Sikh *Gurūs* acted in response to the social needs and concerns of the common people. Some of the examples that were examined were how the *langar* fed the poor; the *manjī* system was set up to reach out to the people that had limited access to attending the *gurdwārā* at Goindvāl and seeing the *Gurū;* the later sophistication in *langar* provided the poor with access to a health diet; the *sarovar* and *boalī* provided a water source for the low castes and poor; and the *gurdwārā* became a school for educating the illiterate. There are many examples of how the Sikh *Gurūs* made the *gurdwārā* socially relevant in the lives of the faith community and beyond.

From my observations and discussions of the six *gurdwārās* studied, *Gurū Gobind Singh gurdwārā* provided the widest range of social services. I was surprised that this *gurdwārā* is a beacon for excellence in providing social activities and services compared to *Srī Gurū Singh Sabhā Southall Gurdwārā*, which is the largest *gurdwārā* outside of India. Comparing both *gurdwārās'* management committees it could be suggested that Bradford's *Gurū Gobind Singh Gurdwārā* management committee is more representative of the local community in a balanced mix of *Amritdhārī* Sikhs, non- *Amritdhārī* Sikhs that includes *Monā* (cut-haired) Sikhs, women, the second generation born in the UK, and the elderly, and therefore caters for a wider spectrum of social needs. On the other hand, *Rāmgarhīā Gurdwārā* in Bradford offered women's health classes when there is no female representation in the committee, and *Amrit Parchār Dharmik Diwān Gurdwārā* in Bradford provided music classes aimed at the youth when its committee has no representation from the second generation. Therefore, it can be suggested that no absolute conclusions can be drawn, however it could be argued that there is a general trend that a more representative *gurdwārā* committee provides a more representative range of social services.

5.1.3 Political role

The Sikh *Gurūs* write in their teachings that God is just and that he administers justice. Gurū Arjan Dev says that,

pūrā niāo kare kartār.	"The Creator administers true justice. He is
apune dās ko rākhanhār. (1)	the Saving Grace of His slaves. (Pause and
rahāo.	reflect.)" (SGGS Gaurī: 199)

The tenth *Gurū*, Gurū Gobind Singh, showed through the creation of the *Khālsā* that God delivers social justice through his devotees as the devotee acts as an instrument of God.

khālsā akāl purakh kī fauj.	"The Khālsā is the army of the Immortal
	Lord." (Sarbloh Granth)

Furthermore, *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib* provides society with a vision of an ideal society that gives the faith community a role model to aspire to,

begam purā sehar ko nāo.	"*Begumpurā*, 'the city without sorrow', is
dūkh a(n)dhohu nahee	the name of the town. There is no suffering
tihi t(h) āo.	or anxiety there. There are no troubles or
nā (n) tasvīs khirāj na māl.	taxes on commodities there. There is no
khouf na khatā na taras javāl.	fear, blemish or downfall there."
	(SGGS Gaurī: 345)

In accordance to the Sikh tradition, religion *(mīrī)* and politics *(pīrī)* go hand in hand. The study has shown that the sixth *Gurū* made the *gurdwārā* politically relevant to the lives of the Sikh community that had an impact on the wider society. During the period of the Sikh *Gurūs* the *gurdwārā* was in the forefront of bringing social change, defending human rights and representing the needs of the community.

The study of *gurdwārās* in the UK found that all *gurdwārās* provided religious activities and believed that the religious role was the most important role of the *gurdwārā,* and that the social role of the *gurdwārā* was secondary, however still significant. Although the *gurdwārās* observed and studied seem to have a political role, most *gurdwārā* management committees paid less attention to the political role of the *gurdwārā* in comparison to the religious and social. The lack of emphasis or value placed on the political role and activities of the *gurdwārā* seemed to be a general trend in the *gurdwārās* studied. Nonetheless, the role that the *gurdwārās* did play was important and is very relevant not only to the lives of the Sikh community but also to the wider community. All the *gurdwārās have* played an important part in local social cohesion with the non-Sikh communities. For example, they have obtained this through working closely and forging long-term relationships with public sector organisations (schools, police, and local government), inter faith groups and embracing other communities with open arms, which is expressed through the open-door policy of the *gurdwārās* to all people regardless of belief, race, gender or colour. Although *Gurdwārā Nānaksar Southall* did not consider itself as having a political role, it supported the idea that Sikhism has a political role and believed politics was important however it should not

interfere with the religious services and functioning of the *gurdwārā*. All *gurdwārās* had been visited by MPs, local councillors and police authorities which demonstrates how the outside community and political representatives of society consider the *gurdwārā* as playing a key role in liaising with the Sikh community. *Rāmgarhīā Sabhā Southall Gurdwārā* and *Srī Gurū Singh Sabhā Southall Gurdwārā* played active roles in Sikh political struggles such as the turban issue and fighting racism in the 1980s and more recently providing support and assistance to protestors seeking justice in different causes. Whilst the *gurdwārās* seemed to provide a supportive role in political activities, they didn't seem to be pro-active and on the forefront of political causes. Nonetheless, the *gurdwārās'* support and assistance in political activities is a significant contribution to the Sikh community in the UK.

One hundred years since the first *gurdwārā* was established in the UK, hundreds of *gurdwārās* have emerged throughout the country that have provided the focal point for the Sikh community in providing religious inspiration, support and guidance to the community in addition to a social support and political representation of the community. It can be argued that *gurdwārās* in the UK have worked to aspire to the Sikh *Gurūs* teachings, however some *gurdwārās* have been more successful than others in making the institution's role and activities religious, socially and politically relevant to the lives of its community members. One reason that could be argued for the success of these *gurdwārās* is that their management committees are representative of the local community and includes the second generation that have a different way of life, needs and world-view in comparison to the first generation. How successfully *gurdwārās* perform in being religiously, socially and politically to the lives of the Sikh community and beyond will be determined as much by the faith and conviction of those managing the *gurdwārās* as by how they include the second generation and women in positions of representation and management.

APPENDIX I

Letter sent to the Gurdwārās

<div align="center">

Manvir Singh
33 Waller Drive,
Banbury, Oxon. OX16 9NS

</div>

Wāhegurū Jī Kā Khālsā,
Wāhegurū Jī Kī Fateh.

<div align="center">

RE: Gurdwārā Study

</div>

My name is Manvir Singh and I am currently studying a MPhil in Sikh Studies at the University of Birmingham. My thesis is focused on the concept and development of *gurdwārās* in the UK. Being an active member of the Sikh community, I am heavily involved with voluntary work in *gurdwārās* across the UK; therefore I have keen interest in the subject area.

I want to find out how the present-day *gurdwārā* serves the community, in order to understand the role the *gurdwārā* plays within the UK Sikh and non-Sikh communities. This will highlight how the *gurdwārā* can effectively fulfil the needs and functions of a community and society. I wish to study three *gurdwārās* in Southall and three *gurdwārās* in Bradford. The areas chosen represent large established Sikh communities.

There are few academic studies on *gurdwārās* in the UK that focus on particular towns or cities and the history and settlement of the Sikh community. However, there are no detailed studies focused on the role, function and issues surrounding UK *gurdwārās*. The absence of such research by western academics was the catalyst for such a thesis, which will provide a detailed understanding of the ideology behind the concept of the *gurdwārā* and how UK *gurdwārās* can effectively fulfil the needs and functions of a community and society at large. To do this I will conduct field research on *gurdwārās* in the UK.

The following areas will be analysed:
- History of the establishment of the *gurdwārā*.
- Analysing the functions and general running of the *gurdwārā*.
- Interviewing *Gurdwārā* Management Committee members.
- Interviewing members of the local congregation about their perspective on the history, development, function and future of the *gurdwārā*.

I would be very grateful in your assistance and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours truly,

Manvir Singh
Mobile: 07877 575 101
Email: manvir.khalsa@gmail.com

APPENDIX II

Consent Form

Consent form to take part in this research project

I agree to take part in an interview as part of this research project. I understand that all the information given will be used for research purposes and that the name of the person providing the information will remain confidential.

Name: Phone No:

Best to contact:

Address:

Signed………………………   Date……………..

Researcher's Signature ………………….   Date……………..

Appendix III

Interview Questions

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Interview Questions

</div>

Concept and Importance of the Gurdwārā

1. a. How would you define a *Gurdwārā*?
   b. What is the role of the *Gurdwārā* within the Sikh community and wider society, with reference to:
   - I. The religious role
   - II. The social role
   - III. The political role

Local Gurdwārā History

2. When was this *Gurdwārā* founded?
3. What is the history behind the development of this *Gurdwārā*?
4. What obstacles or challenges did the *Gurdwārā* and the community face? (i.e. internally and from external groups)

Gurdwārā Management

5. How is the *Gurdwārā* managed?
   a) Are there **Elections** or **Selections**?
   b) What are the main management roles?
   c) How much influence does the *sangat* have on decisions made by the management committee?

6. a) What is the Constitution and rules/guidelines?
   b) What amendments (if any) have taken place in the Constitution of the *Gurdwārā* since its initial set up?
   c) What are the reasons for the change, if any?

7. Does the *Gurdwārā* have national and/or international association or affiliation with:
   a) *S.G.P.C.* and *Akāl Takht Sāhib,* Amritsar
   b) Other organizations or groups
   c) Individual personalities (e.g. Saints).

8. a) Which *maryādā* (code of conduct) does the *Gurdwārā* implement (e.g. *S.G.P.C.* etc)?
   b) Does the *Gurdwārā* have any rules or *maryādā* which are above and beyond standard practise in UK *gurdwārās*?

9. Is the *Gurdwārā* registered with the Charity Commission?
    I. If so, when?
    II. What are the benefits of being registered with the Charity Commission?
    III. What are the drawbacks of being registered with the Charity Commission?

10. Does the local council support the initiatives and services provided by the *Gurdwārā*?

Function, Services and Role in Wider Context

11. What functions and services does the *Gurdwārā* provide?

12. What involvement does the youth have in the *Gurdwārā*:
    a) Attendance and participation in *sangat* (congregation)
    b) Functioning of the *Gurdwārā* (i.e. *Sevā*, initiatives, projects, duties like *kīrtan*, reading *pāth*, teaching or *langar*)

13. What projects or initiatives are you currently working on/ planning that will benefit:
    a) The youth
    b) The wider-community (including non-Sikhs)

14. Have the needs of the sangat changed and how does the *Gurdwārā* cater for these?

15. How much of a role does the local *sangat* and external groups (i.e. community groups or local authorities) have in organising the running of activities and providing services in the *Gurdwārā*?

16. Does the *Gurdwārā* serve the non-Sikh local community?

17. What relationship does the *Gurdwārā* have with the following:
    b) The Police
    c) Local authorities (council)
    d) Educational establishments (schools and colleges)
    e) Other local non-Sikh places of worship?

18. Does the *Gurdwārā* participate in interfaith activities?
    a) How does the *Gurdwārā* promote the Sikh faith in the wider community?
    b) What are the benefits of participating in inter-faith initiatives?
    c) What are the drawbacks of participating in inter-faith initiatives?

Development and Change

19. Since the establishment of the *Gurdwārā*, what changes/developments have been made? Discuss with reference to:
    a) The building

b) Its role and function (i.e. Projects, initiatives, choice of services and functions the *Gurdwārā* provides).
c) The changing needs of the local community
d) Tackling social issues – e.g. alcoholism, crime, domestic violence, and community concerns.

The Future

20. What role and function do you envisage the *Gurdwārā* to play nationally in the future for:
   a) The UK Sikh community
   b) Local non-Sikhs

Any other comments.

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GLOSSARY

Akāl Takht	-	The principle seat of Sikh authority, located in Amritsar.
Akhand Pāth	-	Uninterrupted complete reading of *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib*.
Amrit Sanchār	-	Initiation ceremony
Amritdhārī	-	An initiated/baptised Sikh. A member of the *Khālsā* (Sikh brotherhood).
Amritsar	-	The famous Sikh holy city in northern Panjāb.
Ardās	-	Supplication, formal standing prayer
Bābā	-	'Father', a term of respect applied to a holy or wise man.
Baolī	**-**	Water well.
Bhāī	-	'Brother', title of respect given for piety or learning.
Bībī	-	'Sister', title of respect given to pious women.
Darbār / Darbār Sāhib	-	The Persian word for 'Royal Court'. It is used in reference to the court of *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib*, i.e. the room or hall where people can seek audience with the *Gurū*. '*Srī Darbār Sāhib* refers to the *Golden Temple* in Amritsar, India.
Dharamsāl	-	Sikh place of worship, later known as a *Gurdwārā*.
Divān	-	Religious service.
Divān Hall	-	It has the same meaning as *Darbār* (see above).
Granth	-	Sacred volume or scripture.
Granthī	-	Appointed custodian of *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib* who manages the religious services in the *Gurdwārā.* There is no priesthood recognised in the Sikh faith, thus the *Granthī* enjoys no special rights or status.
Gurdwārā	-	'The Door of the *Gurū*', a place where Sri *Gurū Granth Sahib* is present and serves as a religious centre for the Sikh community. The terms 'Sikh Temple' or 'Sikh place of worship' do not adequately describe the function of the *Gurdwārā.*
Gurū-Kā-Langar	-	*Gurū's* community kitchen.
Hukamnāmā	**-**	'Decree' or 'Edict' issued by *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib*, one of the ten Gurūs, or representative body of the Sikh faith (*Sarbat Khālsā*) to the Sikh congregation or community.
Jathā	-	Group
Jathedār	-	Leader, normally of a *jathā* (group)**.**
Jatt	-	An ethnic group native mainly to the Panjāb, who are perceived as the most dominant, prosperous, and powerful group of the Panjāb. The *Jatt* people have a cultural history that can be traced back to ancient times and have traditionally been an agricultural tribe. From a historic perspective the *Jatts* are not a caste because they were never included in the Hindū caste system. Although it is not a caste, there is continual debate on whether Sikhs should associate or label themselves with anything else other than being a Sikh, and therefore giving little value to belonging to a certain tribe, race or ethnic group.
Kathā	-	Religious discourse/exposition on the Sikh scriptures and religious history.
Keshdhārī	**-**	An individual who maintains unshorn hair.
Khālsā	-	Sikh sovereign nation formed by the Tenth *Gurū.*
Kirat Karnī	**-**	The Sikh principle of living and working honestly.
Kīrtan	**-**	Singing hymns from the Sikh scriptures with the aid of music.

Langar	-	Free communal food.
Manjī	-	Preaching office in the early *Gurū* period.
Masand	-	Administrative deputy acting for the *Gurū*. Inaugurated by the Fourth *Gurū,* they faithfully served for some time, but later became corrupt and were disestablished by the Tenth *Gurū*.
Mīrī-Pīrī	-	The Sikh doctrine of combining 'temporal and religious' elements of life.
Monā	-	Someone who shaves or cuts their hair.
Nām Japnā	-	Chanting and meditating upon the Name of God.
Pangat	-	Sitting in line, the custom whereby equality is maintained in the *Gurū's* community kitchen when food is served.
Parchī	-	Literally means 'slip of paper'.
Pāth	-	Recital of Sikh scriptures.
Patit	-	Apostate or fallen Sikh. A Sikh who had unshorn hair but then reverts to cutting or trimming their hair or a baptised Sikh who breaks his baptismal vows.
Rāmgarhīā	-	One of the eleven Sikh federations (*misl*) of the 18th century that defending the Sikh nation, now associated and synonymous for *Tarkhān*s.
Sangat	-	Company or fellowship. *Sangat* is an idea of community and spiritual support.
Sant	-	Saint or holy person.
Sarovar	-	Pool or lake of water. Most historical Sikh *gurdwārās* in India have *sarovars* within the *gurdwārā* complex.
Sehajdhāri	-	A Sikh who maintains unshorn hair, adheres to the Sikh principles and is progressing towards becoming a baptised Sikh.
Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib (SGGS)	-	The Sacred Scripture and final *Gurū* of the Sikhs. Sikhs revere it as the Living Guru, the Living Voice of eternal wisdom. It is considered the direct voice of the one Creator of universal life, expressed through earthly Gurmukhi language. Its entire text - spread over 1,450 pages, comprising 5,894 verses.
Tarkhān	-	A minority ethnic tribe of Panjāb who are a separate cultural and ethnic people that by historical tribal custom associate within their own *Tarkhān* community. *Tarkhāns* are a carpenter caste.
Vand Shaknā	-	The Sikh principle of sharing with others.