

**GENERATIONAL CONFLICT IN THE TRANSMISSION OF SIKH IDENTITY:
A CRITICAL STUDY OF SELECT PUNJABI DIASPORIC WRITING IN BRITAIN**

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Dedication

I dedicate my humble labour to the two great pedagogues in whose edifying company, I spent most of my life. My father late Prof. Gurdial Singh Aarif was versed in nearly 7 languages, had authored several books and was on the National Panel of Translators for the Government of India and my father-in-law late Padamshree Dr. Attar Singh ji was an internationally renowned intellectual in Punjabi and English languages, well-known for his notable contribution to the field of academics. I continue to be deeply inspired by both....

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ABSTRACT

The course of every religion and the evolution of religious identity among its adherents are shaped by historical influences through intercultural exposure and exchanges, especially in the diasporic context. This research is an exploration of the progression of Sikhism, one of the youngest religions of the world, right from its creation in the multicultural scenario of the 15th century Indian subcontinent to the position at which it finds itself among the Sikh Diaspora of Britain in the 21st century and its transmission to the successive generations of Sikhs born there and educated in the Eurocentric framework.

British Sikh diaspora was singled out owing to the long cultural interjacency between the Sikhs and the British, which extends as far beyond as the second quarter of the nineteenth century. From the Anglo-Sikh wars to fighting for England in maximum numbers during the two World Wars, the Sikhs have had a long-drawn historical engagement with the British, which must have contributed tremendously to mutual understanding and resultant formation of notions about each other's identities as well as stereotypes, in the respective collective-minds of both the races.

Religion suggests a path to remain connected with our origins which becomes more significant, when one encounters other cultural and religious influences, and faces other challenges as a consequence of migration. The impact of such intercultural happenstances since the colonial times, on the development of Sikh religion and the Sikh religious identity among the diaspora, and the role that it plays in the negotiation of identities by the younger generations of Sikhs in the present day Britain is delved into in the light of literary texts in the form of memoirs and fictional writing by British Sikh diaspora. Writings by second-generation writers such as Satnam Sanghera and Jasvinder Sanghera have been included along with those by first-generation migrant writers like Kailash Puri and Harjit Atwal for the sake of comparison in terms of their self-representation, religious perception and the relative significance attached to various concerns pertaining to Sikh migrants. The texts are critiqued in view of the concepts of identity formation by various theorists, which are applied to the progression of Sikh identity.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Faith is something inherent in human beings. Since ancient times practices and customs (*sanskara*) have been the modes of giving a concrete shape to people's faiths and these are manifested through their enculturation. They adopt these while living out their roles in different societies. Since these are an integral part of a specific culture, these are handed down from generation to generation and hold a significant place in the dynamics of social life. Their importance in religious life is even more, as it is through these that an individual's life is moulded in a particular direction and his consciousness is fashioned. The Western equivalents such as 'practices, rites or customs' and the like have more external connotations, whereas the eastern notion of '*sanskara*', has a more intrinsic feel to it and it is this that religion helps us imbibe as a path of life.

1.1 Inherent Contradiction of Religious Manifestation

The most intriguing paradox of the religious vision lies on the one hand in its indescribable interiority and on the other in the inescapable necessity to externalize and reveal itself through tangible forms emerging in time and space. The vision in its purity of experience and realization tends towards transcendence of the known forms but in the act of becoming manifest through scriptures, and other acts and deeds of faith, it assumes specific characteristics situating it in temporal localization. In this paradox lies the root of the dialectic of vision and historicity, the universal and the particular, the eternal and the topical, the sacred and the secular. The compulsion of studying the evolution of the vision of religion in history is inbuilt in any human undertaking to give meaning to the human quest for the ultimate and the abiding, what we call the power beyond birth and death. The historical factors, therefore, manage to impinge upon any exercise in interpreting the actuality of God and the endeavour of the human soul to relate itself to His will.

The possibility of religious vision and its various social manifestations interacting with and being shaped by the historical factors, cannot be overstated. It can also be emphasized that since the boundless can be comprehended only in the immediate and the temporal, we can contemplate it in its evolution in the historical context, apart

from the abstract and the absolute one. According to the claims of diverse religious texts, religion concerns the promotion among humankind of the right beliefs about God, the right attitude towards God and the right conduct before the face of God. In other words, religion basically has to do with human responses to the assumed Creator. Religion thus, over the ages and various historical periods, has had varied subtexts holding equal validity such as reverence, worship, ethics, divine revelation, fear, hope, gnosis and even quixotism.

1.2. Inscrutable Religious Orientations: a brief Overview

Right from the origin, religion and its related practices have been an unfathomable part of humans' social life. The relationship of humans, religion and society is so deep that these are inseparably intertwined with each other. Ever since humans were born, they have been making efforts to unravel this mystery called life. The attempts to understand the kinesis and motive forces of human life, connect it with the concerns of religion which are at core, human concerns. Also, human beings are dependent on fellow beings for the fulfilment of their social and biological requirements, which gives rise to the establishment of social organizations. These are in turn susceptible to a constant process of change, in accordance with the dynamic human needs. Human beings have been relentlessly engaged in cognizing the various aspects of life through different disciplines such as sociology, psychology, history, political science, anthropology and economics. Religious studies too reveal the interrelationships, between the evolution of the culture of a society and the role played by religion in it. Social scientists are of the opinion that religion evolves in sync with the development of the society and thus, an understanding of its religions, becomes essential to a complete understanding of any culture.

Various religious scholars have looked at religion from diverse perspectives. Friedrich Max Müller, the German Orientalist, in his *Origin and Growth of Religion* documents his studies of various religions with elucidations based on the religious traditions of India. For instance, he quotes the French philosopher Auguste Comte, who was the founder of positivist philosophy, gave the secular notion of the 'religion of humanity' and propounded the doctrine of tripartite understanding of society in terms of the three stages namely the theological, the metaphysical and the scientific which positively advocated strict adherence to the testimony of observation and experience.

Gurmeet Singh Sidhu, in his 2014 Punjabi book, *Dharam: Adhunik ate Uttaradhunik Sidhant (Religion: Modern and Postmodern Theories)*, enumerates the theories about religion propounded by different religious theorists. He mentions David Emile Durkheim, the well-known French sociologist who writes in his book *The Elementary Forms of the Religious life* (1912) that collective consciousness is the highest manifestation of the psychic life, since it is a collection of all consciousnesses. Being outside and above all individual and local contingencies, it sees things in their permanent and essential aspects. It is a concentration of all psychic life. Due to their religiousness, humans are different from other creatures and religion cannot exist in a vacuum. It suggests a mode of living which has to be practically manifested in a society. Undoubtedly, religion and society go hand-in-hand, interact with and influence each other. In most of the religions of the world, faith, holy texts, rituals, codes of conduct and religious organizations have been considered the structural bases. Almost all religions consolidate themselves around some or all of these. Religious custodians exercise the authority vested in them to lay down the dictates to be adhered to, by the members of a particular group.

Sidhu also cites Bronislaw Malinowski, a Polish anthropologist and ethnographer who studied the practical facets of religion and religious practices with reference to the Australian aboriginals in Trobriand islands and wrote about them in detail, in his 1922 book *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (77). With a timeless approach towards religion and culture, he carried out in-depth field research work and gathered first-hand information, as to how religion fulfils human needs. He drew the inference that culture is born out of the biological and social needs of human beings. He attributes it to the fact that humans incessantly strive for their security, food and survival and religion originates from these pursuits. He connects religion to experiential knowledge and considers it an emotional, psychological and instinctive necessity generated by awe. Whereas for Durkheim religion is merely a worldly organization, for Malinowski it is a spiritual and other-worldly concept, instead.

The origin of religion thus, cannot be given a particular time, as since their creation humans have been concerned with interrogations relating to their existence and environment. Answers to many such issues have been found through gnosis and insights provided by religion. By being born in a particular religion, men are pre-ordained to inherit a specific moral code, to be brought up according to a fixed value

framework. Operating at a dual level, man is compelled socially by his circumstances and psychologically by his fears and aspirations, to adopt a certain perception of the world that helps him in comprehending and defining not only his environs, but gradually developing a cognition of himself and his distinct identity in terms of other religions. History gives us ample evidence of this cognizance, bringing about cross-cultural clashes and inter-religious encounters leading to mutual impact and consequent change. Any faith relies for its endurance and dissemination on its strength, originality and the sustainable capacity to answer questions pertaining to the spiritual quest of its followers. For this they have to ceaselessly find ways to reinvent their religion, in order to harmoniously co-exist with the practitioners of other faiths and develop its inherent fortes, in the case of any multiethnic threats to its essential tenets and its continuity.

1.3. Outline of Research

The focus of this research is the inception and evolution of the youngest religion of the world named Sikhism, its internal impetuses, external influences and challenges, and especially the juncture at which it finds itself positioned among its adherents who have spread to the farthest corners of the world. In the chapter “Birth of Sikhism” in the *History of the Sikhs: Volume I*, Khushwant Singh writes:

Every new religious movement is born out of and shaped by existing faiths, and like offspring bears likeness to them. Sikhism was born out of a wedlock between Hinduism and Islam after they had known each other for a period of nearly nine hundred years. But once it had taken birth, it began to develop a personality of its own and in due course grew into a faith which had some semblance to Hinduism, some to Islam and yet had features which bore no resemblance to either. (16)

Two religious systems viz. Hinduism and Islam predominated the state of Punjab in the early 15th century, when Guru Nanak (1469-1539), the founder guru of the Sikh tradition initiated Sikhism. A notion common to many scholars and historians of medieval Indian culture is that Sikhism is nothing but a syncretic amalgamation between Hinduism and Islam. Harcharan Singh Sothi in his book *The Sikh Psyche* quotes many such intellectuals. Beginning with Jawaharlal Nehru’s *Discovery of India*, wherein he terms Guru Nanak as a “reformer who deliberately preached a

synthesis between the religious faiths of the Hindus and the Muslims” and even included *Kabirpanthis* in the same tradition, as *Kabirbani* has also been included in the *Adi Granth*. Similarly, in his book *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, Tara Chand in an oversimplified way states it to be Guru Nanak’s mission to unify the Hindu and the Mussalman. Estlin Carpenter seems to follow the same line of thinking, when in *Theism in Medieval India* he writes that in his religion Nanak attempted to weave Hindu and Muslim elements to create a religion that encompassed both. He formed a Church Nation from this religion, he states. Likewise, Arnold Joseph Toyenbee, John Clarke Archer, Fredric Pincott and some Sikh scholars such as Sher Singh and Surinder Singh Kohli also subscribed to comparable views. But it is certainly erroneous to study Sikhism only as a reconciliation between the two dominant religious traditions of that time. This approach would amount to taking the entire phenomenon at a very superficial level and overlooking its integral and essential aspects. All was not well between Hinduism and Islam and the preceding period was marked with discernable discord. As Khushwant Singh expresses it in his chapter “Religious and Political Climate in Fifteenth Century Punjab” in Vol.1:

Political turmoil affected the religious practices of the masses. For the Muslim, the most meritorious act became the conversion or destruction of infidels. For the rest, he simply had to be circumcised, refrain from eating flesh forbidden by the Koran, and fast during the month of Ramadan, to pass off for a good Mussalman. Hindus reverted to the worship of idols, to washing away their sins in holy rivers, to the wearing of caste marks and sacred threads, as well as to fads like vegetarianism and cooking food in precisely demarcated squares. The caste system came back into its own. (27)

Islam had degenerated into a corrupt system controlled by the bribe-taking Qazis and Brahmans, the custodians of Hinduism, were trapped in the mesh of meaningless ritualistic practices and caste-distinctions. Sikh *Gurbani* describes them thus, “*Kaadi koor bol mal khai, brahman naave jiyān ghāi*”, The Qazi tells lies and eats filth and the Brahman cheats others and then takes cleansing baths (my trans.; *SGGS Ang* 662). There were problems galore and a solution had to be sought. The answer lay in changing the trajectory. Sobti quotes Indubhushan Banerjee, who in his epic work *The Evolution of Khalsa, Vol. 1*(1979) refers to Guru Nanak not as a reformer, but as a

revolutionary whose mission was to upset the valued institutions of the society into which he was born and with the goal to set up an independent path by himself, he worked towards cutting himself free from the old anchorages (Qtd. in Sobti: 19). But Banerjee too, missed the entire point as he failed to notice the fundamental change that was brought about at the psychic level by the process.

Sikhism was founded by Guru Nanak, whom Shiv Kumar Gupta, the Editor of the Khalsa Tercentenary Commemorative Volume titled *Creation of Khalsa: Fulfilment of Guru Nanak's Mission* (1999), in his introduction to the book compares to his contemporary Martin Luther (1483-1546), who also challenged the medieval institutions and Papal authority of his time and was instrumental in bringing about the 'Reformation' in the Church and emergence of 'Protestantism'. Guru Nanak launched a protest against the decadent Brahmanical practices and was vehemently critical of the unethical, yet established Muslim system prevalent in then Punjab and history records that he was a fervid crusader for their purgation. But viewed at a profounder level, the protest appears to be the outcome of his transcendental encounter with 'truth', that inherently transformed the psyche of this founder and leading light of Sikhism. Khushwant Singh has elaborated thus on that incident in his *History of the Sikhs Volume I*. He quotes that the *janamsakhi* describes Nanak's first mystic experience as one in which he was able to commune with God, who gave him a cup of *amrit* (nectar) to drink and yoked him to a responsibility. God is believed to have told Guru Nanak that he had been given the possibility to magnify His name through him. He will become the medium to save the people through his guidance. He is directed by God to go into the world and teach mankind the power of prayer and advise them not be sullied by the ways of the world. Guru Nanak's reply to the Almighty, which is known to the Sikhs as the *Japji*, comprises the quintessence of the Sikh ethos:

Nanak's voice rose in praise of his Maker:

There is one God. He is the supreme truth.

He, the Creator, is without fear and without hate.

He, the Omnipresent, pervades the universe.

He is not born, nor does He die to be born again.

By His grace shalt thou worship Him.

Before time itself, there was truth.

When time began to run its course, He was the truth.

Even now, He is the truth

And evermore shall truth prevail. (*Japji* qtd. in Khushwant Singh: 30)

The conversation between Guru Nanak and the Enigmatic Voice continued. It said to Nanak that whoever he would bless, will in turn be blessed by God and whoever he would treat kindly, will receive His kindness. He was the Supreme Creator, the Great God and he appointed Nanak, the Guru, God's Supreme Guru. He had been absent for three days and nights, and it was presumed he had drowned. He appeared the next day and spoke. "There is neither a Hindu nor a Muslim." "There is no Hindu, there is no Mussalman," (30) he would declare, every time he talked.

Hari Ram Gupta comments on how Sikhism was welcomed by the Hindus and Muslims alike:

People were tired of meaningless ritualism and forcible extortion of money from simple, illiterate people under garb of sacred scriptures. Consequently, they welcomed Nanak's plain formula of *Nam Simran* or constant repetition of God's name, to get deliverance from the ills of this life and salvation hereafter. (97)

More than purging Hinduism and Islam of their respective ills, he wanted the Sikhs to be elevated to a superior level of religious understanding than that which segregates communities of people into Hindu, Muslim, Christian and the like. Those scholars who hailed Nanak as someone who only eclectically merged the two prevalent religious traditions, disregarded the essence of his teachings. In that respect he has much in common with the pluralist theologians of today, who seek to find an essential current of spirituality that runs through all traditions and is the monopoly of none.

Despite the constant threats of being considered and homogenized as a new reformed sect of Hinduism, Sikhism succeeded in establishing its own distinct identity. The main reason behind this is that Guru Nanak founded his unique principles on a sound spiritual basis and created a novel Sikh culture with its own moral code. The thrust of this culture was on truth, purity and altruism. The higher truth emphasized by him was

that the Ultimate goal of all religious paths is complete unto itself and it is en-route the journey that the psychic transformation of an individual takes place. Guru Nanak exhorted, in a genuinely secular manner, the Mussalman to be a true Muslim who cherishes complete faith in Allah. He addresses the Muslim thus:

Hoi Muslim dina muhane, Maran jivan ka bharam chukave

Rabb ki rajae mane, sir upar karta mane, Apa gavave,

to Nanak sarab jian mein rehmat hoi, Tan Musalman kahave.

Becoming a true Muslim, a disciple of the faith of Mohhammad, let him put aside the delusion of death and life. As he submits to God's Will and surrenders to the Creator, he is rid of ego and conceit. And when O Nanak he is merciful to all beings, only then shall he be called a Muslim. (my trans.; *SGGS Ang 141*)

and the Hindu is reminded by him of the original definition of a Brahman when he says, "*So Brahmana jo brahma vichare, Aap tare sagle kul tare* Only he is an actual Brahmin, who has realized the Brahma and he not only transcends the ocean of existence himself, but also guides others. (my trans.; *SGGS Ang 662*). Even the *Vedas* and teachings from other religions are extolled in *Guru Granth Sahib* in lines such as "*Bedh Kateb kaho mat jhuthhe, jhutha jo na vichare*, Do not say that the Vedas, The Bible and the Koran are false, those who do not contemplate them are false" (my trans.; *SGGS Ang 1350*).

Sobti also mentions Max Arthur Macauliffe, a senior Sikh-British administrator, translator and historian of early Sikhism who in the Preface to his book *The Sikh Religion* (1909), declaratively counters the opinion of those scholars who categorize Sikhism as a derivative religion, with these words:

Now, there is here presented a religion totally unaffected by Semitic or Christian influence. Based on the concept of the unity of God it rejected Hindu formularies and adopted an independent ethical system, rituals and standards which were totally opposed to the theological beliefs of Guru Nanak's age and country. As we shall see hereafter, it would be difficult to point to a religion of greater originality or to a more comprehensive ethical system. (22)

Although, Macauliffe's assertion is also not completely devoid of a hidden motive. He was serving the interest of the British masters who not only wanted to create a gulf between the Hindus and the Sikhs, but were also interested in winning over the Sikhs.

Guru Nanak's purpose was a decidedly higher one. He introduced a vision of collective humanity to a nation riven by discord—a vision that surpassed all boundaries of caste and faith, nation and ethnicity. He inspired men to remember their fundamental unity. He used the labels 'Hindu' and 'Musalman' to generally refer to Jains, Buddhists, Jews, Christians and all others. He was urging men of all beliefs and fraternities to look past contrived divides and disparities, to see humanity's inherent unity. Sikhism was conceived with the objective of pointing folks away from their accepted conditions to a new perspective, rather than overruling or revamping any prevailing religious identity or tradition – towards a human community characterized by a true spirit of camaraderie and fairness, as well as a profound ethical and spiritual commitment manifested in compassion for one's fellow denizens.

With a strictly monotheistic doctrine, Nanak taught the oneness of God and referred to the eternal, infinite and omnipresent Supreme Being as *Ek* (One) who responds to the true devotion of His humblest followers. He is both *Nirguna* and *Sarguna*, that is He is with attributes as well as without attributes. Yet He remains formless, is never incarnated and cannot be contained in any image, thus denouncing any kind of idol worship. The central value in Guru Nanak's teachings was the affirmation of the Primal reality, the eventual basis of all human existence. Temporality is an essential feature of this existence, and enlightenment according to the Sikh principles comes through the realization that the path to transcendence lies in complete faith in His *hukam* or Will, intense love of God and absolute self-surrender. Guru Nanak prescribed no austerities or penances. He in fact, rejected all outward forms of piety and added that pilgrimages, fasts and ascetic practices were of no avail.

It was compassion for the people that impelled Guru Nanak, to undertake travels called Udaasis, so as to salvage them from their state of ignorance, which according to him, was not any intellectual failing, but a spiritual sightlessness. To give a concrete shape to his message of universal brotherhood, he advocated religious associations and temples devoid of priest-craft and termed those *sangat*, a gathering of equals from all castes and creeds. Such congregations helped in inculcating a feeling of fraternity

among people from diverse religious and economic backgrounds. He also popularized and encouraged the reading of the *Bani pothi* which contained secular hymns composed by Guru Nanak himself and other saints like Farid and Kabir, irrespective of their religious denominations. They were infused with the timeless spirit of philanthropy for the spiritually ailing humanity.

1.4. Sikhism: Crafting its Path in History

Sikhism evolved with the passage of time into a distinct and extensive religion and the historic moments, that accentuated the lives of Guru Nanak's nine successors, contributed immensely in setting the course of its development and shaping a peculiar psyche of its followers. The resolve of Guru Nanak was never the creation of a new religion but to reveal a new path, to stir up and purge the Hindu religion to bring about a qualitative change in the moral and philosophical consciousness of its practitioners, who formed a major chunk of his own followers. With the intention that the mission undertaken by him should sustain after his submersion into nature, he passed on his *jot* to Lehna, one of his disciples, who through his impressive demeanour and incessant devotion had proved himself worthy of the honour.

Guru Angad Dev (1504-1552), as Lehna came to be known to the Sikhs, continued preaching the model of religion of Guru Nanak, furthering it through certain measures that led to the religion emerging as an institution. The most effective and influential step was to give shape to the Gurmukhi script, which became an exclusive and specialized mode of expression of the Sikhs. In Gurbani, *Gurmukh* is a person who adheres to the Guru's *hukam* as opposed to *manmukh* who follows his own will. The Sikhs felt a reverence for the language, as it contained their *Guru's word*. The Hindus used Devnagari and the Muslims wrote in the Persian script. Through Gurmukhi, the Sikhs came to have their exclusive alphabet which demarcated their distinction from the Hindus and the Muslims. In the words of Gokul Chand Narang:

The very name of the script reminded those who employed it of their duty towards their Guru and constantly kept alive in their mind the consciousness that they were something distinct from the common mass of Hinduism, that they were regenerated, liberated and saved. (qtd. in Har Jagmandar Singh: 64)

Another step which had far-reaching effects was Guru Angad Dev's special impetus to the idea originally conceived by Guru Nanak, of a community kitchen called *langar* where food was served at all hours, to all who came to congregate. People from all castes, genders or social statuses were made to sit in a row on the same floor and served the same food. This tremendously benefitted them spiritually, as according to the Sikh ethics, ego or consciousness of one's social standing acts as a barrier in one's religiosity and this kind of common participation helped one in overcoming it. *Langar*, which was introduced as a unique feature of Sikhism, has continued ceaselessly ever since and is a singular provision at every *gurdwara*.

A systematized organization of the followers into a community came with the third guru, Guru Amar Das (1479-1574) who divided his area of influence into 22 *manjis* under the control of *masands* and worked towards ridding the Sikh religious ceremonies pertaining to births and deaths, of the Brahminical influence. Hymns by the Gurus began to be recited in place of Sanskrit shlokas. The third guru's disparaging the *Sati pratha* and encouraging widow remarriage distanced the Sikhs further from the Hindu *Brahmans*.

The Sikhs were increasing in number and moving steadily on the road to forming their distinctive identity. Guru Ram Das (1534-1581), the next successor of the divine *jot*, built the town of Ramdas Pura around a natural pond that was believed to be a preferred sanctorum of the first Guru. This town later came to be known as Amritsar (pool of nectar) and owing to the belief about its purity and curative powers of the water, the pond soon transformed into a holy *sarovar* and the place became a kind of Mecca (to quote Gokul Chand Narang's words) for the Sikhs. To strengthen the economic base, he even invited traders to settle down there and sent Bhai Gur Das, the first Sikh preacher, to spread Guru Nanak's religious teachings outside Punjab. The fourth guru can thus be accredited with expansion of the economic and political dimensions of the Sikhs.

The spiritual powers were then conferred on the fifth guru, Guru Arjan Dev (1581-1606) on whose shoulders rested the responsibility of crystalizing the Sikh tradition and that had far-reaching repercussions. He got the *Harimandar Sahib* erected on a foundation-stone significantly laid by a Muslim saint of Lahore, named Mian Mir, specifically symbolizing the secular tenor of Sikhism. The pivotal structure of the

temple was purposely constructed with doors opening in four directions, indicative of the fact that those were open to people belonging to any of the then prevalent four castes. A line from *Gurbani* expresses it well, “*Chahu varna ko de updesh, Nanak us pandit ko sada aadesh*”, Nanak says that that *pandit* is going to be respected, who indiscriminately imparts his teachings to all the four *varnas* (my trans.; *Ang* 274), thus boldly challenging the established caste hierarchies.

Funds for the accomplishment of the task were raised through the introduction of a system of *dasvandh*, a system which is honoured till date by the devout Sikhs. According to this obligatory system, every Sikh had to deposit through the *Masands*, one-tenth of their annual income with the Guru every year on the Baisakhi Day. *Harimandar Sahib* thus, became a symbolic seat of authority of the swiftly expanding religion:

At a certain stage of its expansion, a religion needs a central seat, from where inspiration and guidance should flow to its followers. The place acquires supreme sanctity and the messages emanating from there carry a special authority. It is useful for preventing disunity among the devotees. . . . The emotions of the Sikhs world over are attached to it. Enemies have demolished and occupied it several times. But the Sikhs have freed and rebuilt it every time; and every time it has come up with a new glory. They have always regarded it as a rare privilege to make sacrifices for its sake. (Jagmander Singh 65-66)

Next landmark attainment by the Guru in His fifth embodiment was the compilation of the *Adi Granth*. Bhai Gur Das was the first cousin of the mother of Guru Arjan Dev and acting as his amanuensis, wrote out the *Adi Granth*, taking dictation from him. It comprised the hymns of the first five Sikh gurus and some saints of the Bhakti movement such as Baba Shaikh Farid, Sant Kabir, Sant Nam Dev, Bhai Dhanna and Rama Nand and eleven other bards and *Bhattas*. Having an exclusive and yet markedly inclusive collection of the teachings of one's own Gurus provided unprecedented consolidation to Sikh religion. Just as Hindus have the *Vedas* and the *Shastras*, Muslims have the Koran, Christians have their Holy Bible, the *Adi Granth* became the Sikh scripture, the uniqueness of which lies in the fact that it was compiled by the Guru himself unlike the scriptures of the other religions that were

brought forth after the passing away of the utterers of those words. Having been supervised by the Gurus themselves and been put under an interlocking system between its various shlokas and the pagination system, there was no scope for any interpolation within the *Granth* and it has been bequeathed to the succeeding generations in its pristine form.

Hari Ram Gupta, a famous historian compares the *Adi Granth* to the water of river Ganges that washes the dirt of and cools everyone who takes a dip in it. Similarly, the holy scripture is equally accessible to anyone who approaches it with reverence and devotion:

The *Adi Granth* embraces territorially the whole of India and people of all castes and creeds. The Gurus themselves and Farid, a Muslim saint, belonged to Punjab, Surdas to Haryana, Kabir, Rama Nand and Ravidas to U.P., Jaidev to Bengal, Namdev and Trilochan to Maharashtra, Sain to Madhya Pradesh, Dhanna to Rajasthan and Sadhna to Sind. As regards religion, Farid, Kabir and Mardana were Muslims, of the Hindu castes, Surdas, Jaidev and Rama Nand were Brahmins, the Gurus were Kashatriyas, Trilochan was a Vaish, Namdev, Ravidas, Sadhna and Sain were Shudras and Dhanna was a Jat. (143)

The holy scripture of the Sikhs is thus, an eclectic collection panning the teachings comprising the essence of all religions and is an epitome of broad-minded acceptance and universal brotherhood, transcending the barriers of caste, creed, region or language.

1.5. Strengthening of the Political and Economic Aspects

The spiritual and moral edicts of Sikhism had been concretized in the shape of the *Granth Sahib* but the practical and temporal dimension yet needed to be strengthened. With the setting up of Amritsar, not only as a powerful seat of control but also as a centre for flourishing trade, the Sikh protectorate began to gain prominence, which soon became unbearable for the Muslim rulers of the time. Guru Arjan Dev had earned many enemies due to his swift ascendancy and the credit of making the first supreme sacrifice at the altar of religion, goes to him. Mian Mir, the empathetic Muslim saint had offered to negotiate on his behalf with his tormentors but he had

declined the offer pointing out that the future path of Sikh religion was an arduous one and his sacrificial act will embolden its followers never to compromise with tyranny or to be dissuaded from the righteous path.

The martyrdom of the fifth Guru at the hands of the Muslims ignited the passions of his Sikh followers who had learnt the bitter lesson that spiritual interiority of religion had to be balanced with intrepid exteriority in the face of oppression. After first sacrificing his father, the Guru's eleven years old son Hargobind, who was to become the sixth Guru (1595-1644) transformed the face and essential character of Sikhism for all times to come. Responding to the need of the hour, he took to arms in a regular way and encouraged the Sikhs to keep a sword and a horse. He himself initiated the concept of wearing two swords of *miri* (temporal power) and *piri* (spiritual power) according to the Sikh *weltanचाung*, which is a balanced amalgamation of both. He raised the *Akal Takht* in the vicinity of the *Harimandar Sahib* as a symbol of temporal sovereignty. He sat as a saint within the precincts of the gurudwara, guiding the followers on the path of virtue and spirituality, and at the *Akal Takht* assumed the role of a king administering justice to his people. The intolerant Muslim rulers imprisoned him for seven years, but on his release he continued on the rebellious path of fortifying the Sikh spirit with renewed vigour.

The hostility with the Muslim rulers continued in the tenure of the next two Sikh gurus, Guru Har Rai (1630-61), the seventh and Guru Hari Kishen (1656-64), the eighth guru. Aurangzeb, who had then ascended to the throne, was more fanatical than his predecessors and persecuted the Hindus in large numbers, as conversion to Islam was a great virtue to his mind. He too, being weary of the growing Sikh strength, wanted to interfere in and manipulate their political affairs. He invited Guru Hari Kishen to Delhi to settle the matter of claim to the *gurgaddi* (successor to Guruship) between him and his elder brother Ram Rai. The eighth Guru however, passed away due to small-pox but indicated before his death that the next Guru was to be found at Baba Bakala, a place near Amritsar. Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-75) was located there and he became the rightful ninth Guru of the Sikhs.

Aurangzeb, desirous of an unchallenged totalitarian regime, fervently took to eliminating the Brahmins, as in the absence of the priestly class, Hinduism, he hoped, would wither away. Brahmins were coerced into conversions or put into prisons. The

helpless victims sought the support of the ninth Sikh Guru, who suggested that for the just cause of protesting against an impingement on the right to a religion of one's choice, a great sacrifice would be in order, to rouse the spirit of the tormented people and to teach them not to fear and surrender to the tyrannical oppressor. Going by the spirit of secularism infused in him by his own religious predecessors, which taught him compassion even for those who adhered to a different model of religion, he decided to espouse their cause and fight against the injustice being done to them. Aurangzeb failed in his attempts to convert the Guru to Islam and exasperatedly beheaded him on November 11, 1675 at the Chandni Chowk, Delhi. His death underpinned the notion of martyrdom for the sake of faith, which has been highly glorified in Sikhism. Foreseeing his elimination, Guru Tegh Bahadur had already passed on the *Gurgaddi* to Gobind Rai, his nine years old son, later known as Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708), the tenth Guru of the Sikhs.

With Guru Gobind Singh came the culmination and eventual realization of a religious goal envisioned by the founder of the religion, Guru Nanak. In the words of Guru Nanak, who said:

Jo tau prem khelen ka chau, sir dhar tali gali mori aau

True love for God is unattainable without self-sacrifice

(my trans.; *Ang* 1412)

It is these very words that were brought to life by the tenth incarnation of Nanak during the momentous occasion of the creation of *Khalsa*, a moment which shall be indelibly marked in the history of Sikhism as an event of irreversible psychic transformation of the Sikhs. The point to be clearly noted here is that the emphasis is on self-sacrifice and spiritual advancement, along with a fortification of the physical strength.

Guru Gobind Singh was a living example of a saint-soldier, envisaged by the founder of Sikh religion. He set sovereignty as a goal for himself and his religion. He believed that he was destined to spearhead the mission of spreading a true religion and creating an indomitable race of people who lived fearlessly in the face of tyranny. Till the time was ripe for taking up cudgels with the Mughal forces, he deliberated upon the teachings of Sikhism propagated by his predecessors and imbibed those well to

formulate his religious philosophy. So, the birth of *Khalsa* was not an overnight or sudden development necessitated by certain circumstances but was rather a carefully considered and planned step of religious evolution, well thought out by the responsible leader of the community. As Khushwant Singh remarks in *History of the Sikhs Vol.1*, on the thinking behind the creation of the *Khalsa* by Guru Gobind Singh, in the chapter “From the Pacifist Sikh to the Militant Khalsa”:

As he grew into manhood, he was able to disentangle one strand which ran through the confusion of ideas: that although love and forgiveness are stronger than hate or revenge, once a person was convinced that the adversary meant to destroy him, it was his duty to resist the enemy with all the means at his disposal, for then it was a battle of the survival, not only of life but of ideals. It became the *dharama yudh* (the battle for the sake of righteousness). (74-75)

Here, there is a need to point out that the word *Khalsa*, is different from the word *Khalis* and it should not be taken to mean that Guru Gobind Singh created pure Sikhs. *Khalsa* means sovereign and liberated, not only in spirit but even from vices. Based on the Sikh ideals, he painted for the followers a picture of an exemplary Sikh who would be valiant, virtuous and a master of oneself. He revolutionized Sikhism by creating an exclusive form for its followers, by prescribing the essential 5 Ks (*Kara, Kes, Kangah, Kirpan and Kachha*) to be adopted after the Baptismal ceremony (*Amrit chakana*). But maintaining only the external form, without the inner attributes was an improper interpretation of the real *Khalsa*, which unfortunately came to be adopted earlier by several Sikhs and even Hindus, to be enrolled into Ranjit Singh’s *Khalsa* Army and later after Punjab’s annexation, at the behest of the colonisers who desired clear distinctions between different religions and their practices. Such developments however, led to a mitigation of the virtuous and spiritual aspects of the Sikh identity as it had been originally conceived.

1.6 Concretization of a Discrete Identity

Sikhs as a religious community had thus, come to assume a distinct physical identity with a specified philosophy behind their religion, by the time their close interaction with the British rulers of the country started. **Chapter 2** deals with the initial travails involved in the founding and formulating of the Sikh religion. The Sikhs and the

British came face-to-face during Ranjit Singh's tenure as he successfully challenged the annexation of Punjab till his death, then during the Anglo-Sikh wars that happened after his demise and later, post the annexation during the two World wars, when the Sikhs valiantly supported the British in facing their encounters, as part of their army. It is this participation that gave the Sikhs an opportunity to travel to different parts of the world, thus sowing the seeds of the Sikh diaspora, which was to burgeon into an oak later. This research focuses on the Sikh identity as it is positioned today among those Sikhs, who left the shores of their natal country to venture into the unchartered foreign territories, with a hope to secure a better future for themselves and their progeny. The processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization involved in this migration and their consequent impact on the religious identity of the migrants are going to be analytically explored.

The cultural interjacency between the Sikhs and the British extends as far beyond as the second quarter of the nineteenth century, since Punjab was one of the last areas of the Indian subcontinent to fall under British control, after having offered strong resistance. Right from the Anglo-Sikh wars to fighting for England in maximum numbers during the two World Wars, the plucky race of the Sikhs has had a long-drawn historical engagement with the British, which must have contributed tremendously to the mutual construction of stereotypes and resultant formation of each other's identities in the respective collective-minds of both the races.

1.7 Impact of the Migratory Experience on Religious Identity

As far as migration is concerned, there has been a Sikh presence in the UK for almost two centuries now, with its beginning in 1849 after the fall of the Sikh empire and the lifetime exile of the last Sikh emperor, Maharaja Daleep Singh to British County. Since then, there have been consistent waves of Sikh migrants to Britain, especially following the Second World War when massive manual labour was required by England for post-war reconstruction. Several other phases are noticeable following the Punjab terrorism crisis and 1984 riots, which acted as push factors in propelling migration from the Punjab. With each wave came diverse cultural influences which, given the colonial past, make a fertile ground for bicultural exploration. The Sikhs are such a presence to reckon with in today's England, that the various Governments have been reframing laws and policies, sometimes after strong protests, in the direction of antiracist procedures and constructive forms of acknowledgement and accommodation. It is just one aspect of the ethnic resurgence that most of the Western democracies are facing and attempting to handle.

Throughout their history, Sikhs have lived alongside other religious traditions and blended with other cultures both at home and in the adopted lands, expressly after migration, resulting in varying effects. Mark Juergensmeyer (1988), the Religious Studies scholar, visualized that the Sikhs can adopt three kinds of attitudes when thrust among those of other religious persuasions (6). It can be either a protective attitude which is even historically justified, as Sikhs as a people have warded off several threats to their culture and overcome the danger of being assimilated away into a dominant tradition by a process of cultural osmosis. Secondly, they can assume an open attitude that entails a willingness to coexist, to learn from other traditions and even to admit elements from those into their own, but this openness can easily degenerate into a religious syncretism and has to be tread with caution. The third attitude that they can adopt may be expansionist in nature but Sikhs have generally not been known to proselytize. At the same time, there is no denying the fact, that interest in Sikhism has been on the increase especially among the Westerners who have been attracted to its essence and converted to Sikhism in large numbers. Indubitably, the ideas of Guru Nanak and other members of the *Sant* tradition represented in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, are universally appealing and Sikhism has the potential to be a world religion someday. The question that needs to be addressed is how it is viewed and represented by Sikhs themselves; as something that can expand easily across cultural boundaries or as something less culturally adaptable, especially in distant and alien environs.

In the diasporic scenarios, identity crisis is an expected and accepted phenomenon. The crisis is an open clash in terms of binary opposition, for the first generation migrants. Living on the margins of the European society, they are bound securely in a signifying context, a culture or tradition that they are firmly rooted in and take as a pre-given. The problem gets complicated when the so-called essence of this identity has to be transmitted to the successive generations, for whom the context is no longer a single point of origin but is instead a hazy system of signs that has to be articulated and comprehended through new cultural codes. Identity then, is no longer transparent and unproblematic. It can no longer be viewed as an already accomplished fact and rather needs to be looked at as a 'production' which is always in process, a view that problematizes the authoritative and authentic notion of cultural identity initially held. The first generation of migrants, clinging to the vestiges of their interpretation of the

faith, fight tooth and nail to prevent the ideational migration of their successive generations to the notions of their homeland, sometimes with disastrous consequences.

1.8 Some Theories of Identity Formation and Negotiation

Various postcolonial and other theorists have formulated diverse theories about the formation of stereotypes and the negotiation of identities in multicultural spaces. According to Stuart Hall, the “two different ways of thinking about cultural identity are to see it either in terms of one shared culture, a sort of collective true self, hiding inside the other artificially imposed selves” or something that is determined by the sempiternal “play of history, culture and power” (“Cultural identity” 223). Identity here is not a sense of security that places ourselves in eternity, but the name given to the multiple “ways we are positioned by and we position ourselves in the narratives of history” (“Cultural identity” 225). Ziauddin Sardar, another cultural critic, shares this notion with the psychologist and philosopher Ashish Nandy, that identity is not a single, static entity, but a collection of interconnected and ever-changing elements. In his famous book *Balti Britain*, he explores “what it means to be simultaneously British and Asians in contemporary Britain” (139). He says that “the Asians have neglected to learn how they have been shaped by a long history of mutual entanglement and belonging” (107). These theories have been elaborately discussed in **Chapter 3** and it is in the light of such notions of identity, that this project envisions to view the Sikh religious identity, the stage at which it finds itself positioned after nearly two centuries of cultural intercourse with the British and the subsequent cross-cultural impact.

The study has also taken into critical consideration the notion of cultural hybridity, liminality and sly civility given by Bhabha and the ideas of the sea, double consciousness and conviviality promulgated by Paul Gilroy. An attempt has been made to find mutual relevance and congruence between these and certain concepts introduced much earlier in the Sikh *Gurbani* and contained in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. The ideas have been found to be basically acquiescent, if not exactly similar and the research proposes that an understanding of these basic Sikh notions will facilitate the negotiation of identities by the Sikh youth, who are finding themselves at crossroads, fragmented by the cultural and religious dilemmas posed by the multicultural

scenario. The literary texts and the work done by the theorists are going to be my primary material to work with and a few pertinent documentaries have also been considered. An Online Survey based on Snowball method of sampling has also been conducted for the Sikh respondents who are either migrants or born in Britain, to get more authenticated information. Information from the recent BSRs (British Sikh Reports) has been used to provide real contextual background.

1.9 Account of the Work Already Done

Copious volumes have been written on the more than five centuries long history of the Sikh religion and the Sikh community including the phenomenal *A History of the Sikhs* in two volumes by Khushwant Singh, which has been a preeminent, accurate and exhaustive work on the Sikhs. The first volume covers the social, religious and political background which paved the way for the creation of the Sikh faith in the fifteenth century and the second volume deals with the issues germane to the Sikh struggle for survival as a distinct community, the reign of Ranjit Singh that consolidated its strength, their clashes with the English, subsequent fall of the Sikh kingdom, Punjab's annexation to Britain's Indian empire and eventually the division of Punjab, the traumatic uprooting of Punjabis from Pakistan and their ultimate resettlement in independent India. *History of the Sikhs and Their Religion* edited by Kirpal Singh and Kharak Singh covers the initial period when Sikhism was finding its roots and its basic tenets were being formulated by the various Sikh Gurus. Charles Gough and Arthur D. Innes have demarcated, in minute detail, the rise of Sikhs as a martial *qaum* along with their numerous conflicts and conquests in their book *The Sikhs and The Sikh Wars*. The varied images of the Sikhs that were formed in the Western consciousness as a result of these encounters, have been collected very well by Darshan Singh in his book *Western Image of the Sikh Religion*. Ethne K. Marengo traces the economic and technological development of the Sikhs under the British regime, in his book *The Transformation of the Sikh Society*. Major A. E. Barstow has written a sort of Handbook for the Indian Army in the form of his book *The Sikhs: An Ethnology* which is a systematic study of the rise of the Sikh power and highlights the role of the Sikhs in the British and the Indian army after the mutiny. The evolution of the Sikh community and the development of its revolutionary psyche have been exhaustively brought forth by W.H. McLeod, an established Western authority on Sikh History, in his book *Sikhs and Sikhism*. His observations, along with those of

Harjot Oberoi, put forth in his controversial book *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, have been critically examined in subsequent chapters.

Moving to Diaspora Studies, *The Sikh Diaspora* by Darshan Singh Tatla, a reputed scholar in this field is an impressive, probing and original examination of the Sikh communities of Britain. Eleanor Nessbit is Professor Emeritus for Religious Studies at the University of Warwick, UK and has extensive research in the area of Religious Socialization of Sikh and 'Mixed Faith' Youth in Britain, to her credit. She is also the co-author of Kailash Puri's autobiography. Pashaura Singh and N. Gerald Barrier are well-recognized voices in the field of Sikh Identity among diaspora and their two anthologies *Sikh Identity: Continuity and Change* and *The Transmission of Sikh Heritage in the Diaspora* also give a good overview of the various questions being raised pertaining to the Sikh identity. In his later book *Sikhism in Global Context*, Pashaura Singh looks at the future of Sikhism as a World Religion.

All this is an account of the wide-ranging work done in the field of Religious Studies and History of Sikhism. This research has attempted to weave these threads into the fabric of formation and evolution of the Sikh identity, connect it with the colonial past and chart its path up to its present position among the diaspora. Within the whole gamut of Cultural Studies and Diaspora Studies in the context of contemporary literature, Sikhs as a *qaum* and Sikhism as a religious faith have not been delved into, especially among the acknowledged diasporic writers.

The canonical works voicing the migratory and multicultural experience of the diaspora by the likes of V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, M.G.Vassanji and the more popular mainstream writers such as Amitav Ghosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai etc. have focused majorly and generally on the Indian encounters abroad. The UK based writers Monica Ali and Zadie Smith who made it to the Granta List, also delineate the Asian experience with focus on the Muslims. Chitra Banerjee Divakurni's works are principally located in India and the United States and concentrate on the involvements of the South-Asian immigrants. Conversely, the Punjabi and particularly the Sikh diaspora writing has yet been a comparably unexplored territory especially among the English academia and its relevance to our own region cannot be undermined. As T.S. Eliot says, the main current does not necessarily flow through the most distinguished reputations. It

becomes imperative then to go to the lesser heard voices, which is the essence of Cultural Studies. Those expressing in their native tongues (Punjabi, for instance) might be stronger cases in point here. Some of these writings have been examined here, from the viewpoint of representation of Sikhs and Sikhism. Since the perspective of the research has not been purely literary, but rather historical, sociological and cultural as well, the conclusions drawn therefrom help us recognise the realities of multiculturalism and the study falls well within the purview of an interdisciplinary research with significant bearing on the fields of Cultural Studies and Diaspora Studies.

1.10 Primary Texts Selected for Analysis

The texts selected for analysis cover the time from 2006 to the present and have been included on the basis of their representation of the Sikh community in Britain and the comportment of its members of the first and second generation in the particular context of their faith and its transmission. Most of the texts are by second generation Sikh writers such as Satnam Sanghera and Jasvinder Sanghera. Three of these are memoirs which display very well, the authors' interaction with religion as transmitted to them and their consequent cognition of it. Some texts by the first generation Sikh migrant writers like Kailash Puri and Harjit Atwal have also been included, one of which is an autobiography, for the sake of comparison with the younger writers in terms of their religious perception and the relative significance attached to various concerns pertaining to the Sikh migrants.

The project has charted the course of the formation of Sikh identity from a historical perspective, right from the time of its initial struggles against challenges and encounters with other cultures and religious traditions, to its present position and transmission among the diaspora in Britain, in close focus. Beginning with the early experiences that brought the Sikhs and the British together in various happenstances such as the Anglo-Sikh wars and the other battles of annexation of various territories by the British during the colonial period to the Sikhs' participation in the World Wars, the factors that determined the formation of the Sikh identity in their own consciousness and in the eyes of the British have been elaborately probed. Then, the period following the Second World War, that witnessed large-scale migration of the Sikhs to England and also the transition of a self-respecting *qaum* into an impecunious manual-labour tribe struggling for survival, along with its impact on

their religious identity, has been studied. How living in the midst of an alien culture, did the Sikhs withstand that onslaught? Did they remain steadfast on their religious principles or adapted themselves and renegotiated their identity in terms of the new environment? As Diana Eck (1988), a scholar of Religious Studies at Harvard University enunciates about a multi-religious society, that on the one side the wide emergence of secularism makes people drift away from any kind of religious identity, while on the other side the wide prevalence of fundamentalism, communalism and group chauvinism moves others towards an extreme identification with their own religious tradition. To quote her words, “What does it mean to be a Christian today, in a Britain where a Muslim call to prayer is heard in Regent’s Park, where a Hindu temple attracts thousands of worshippers in a somewhat sleepy London suburb, where there is a Sikh Gurudwara round the corner? How is the tradition of the Sikh Gurus passed to the next generation in Southall?” (80). The research has looked into the diasporic writings for the approaches and perspectives adopted by the first and second generation Sikhs to come to terms with such a multi-ethnic society in the present day Britain and the interlacing presence of their faith and colonial past, therein. In **Chapter 4** the selected texts, mainly written by first-generation Sikh writers from Britain and chosen on the basis of their delineation of Sikh characters are probed. Those deal with the issues of acculturation, monetary survival, the distancing with the succeeding generations, disquiet of roots and the processes of identity formation in the diasporic context, with religion forming the backdrop. In **Chapter 5** the research has closely focused on the new generation Sikhs, who have multicultural and transnational lifestyles and has reconnoitered the strategies adopted by them for cultural adaptation to and integration with the host societies, in the context of their religious identities under the shadow of tradition. The exploration and investigation has been done with the aim of ascertaining how the Sikh identity is handed down to the youth, who are born, grow up and reside primarily in Britain, under different cultural and linguistic conditions and how they interpret, articulate and negotiate their religious identities, traditions and authorities through practices and narratives on individual as well as collective levels.

The literary works of first-generation writers have been compared with the writings of more recent second-generation writers who are all based in Britain and have been expressing the diasporic experience and sentiments in both English and Punjabi. Their works have been critically examined in view of the notions of identity, formed on the

basis of a critique of cultural theories of Stuart Hall, Alberto Mellucci, Ziauddin Sardar, Paul Gilroy, Homi K. Bhabha, Ashis Nandy, Peter Van der Veer, Avtar Brah and the like, who have extensively traversed the complex character of identity. It has evidently come to be understood not only as temporally and spatially mutable, but as inherently plural and contradictory, which differs from the conventional concept of identity as a stable feeling of selfhood, rooted inside and well-shielded from external contingencies. Members of racial minorities have been observed to be in a state of confusion regarding who they really are and where they belong. They then, begin to interrogate their 'patchwork identity', to use Thomas Meyer's expression in *Identity Mania* (2001).

In the concluding **Chapter 6** the study keenly attempts to locate the position at which the development of religious identity of the Sikh migrants, especially the second and third generations, finds itself contemporarily poised. The orientation of the developmental process has been viewed against the actuality of the larger framework of how multiculturalism is imagined, a notion similar to what Will Kymlicka defines in his report titled *Multiculturalism: Success, Failure and Future* (2012). Compiled under an initiative of the Migration Policy Institute, Europe, the report describes it "as a feel-good celebration of ethno-cultural diversity, encouraging citizens to acknowledge and embrace the panoply of customs, traditions, music and cuisine that exist in a multiethnic society" (4). The texts studied as part of this research are mainly written by Sikh/Punjabi diaspora writers of the second generation of migrants and help us obtain their perspective on Sikh identity. Three texts by the first-generation migrant writers are included for the sake of comparative analysis. Not much critical work had been done on such under-celebrated and lesser known pieces of literary writing and that made this exploration and enquiry expectedly more fruitful and promising.

CHAPTER 2

CHARDI KALA- THE RISE OF THE SIKH QAUM

The Introduction brought out the implication of religion in the life of an individual and traced the path of evolution of the Sikh religion, from its origin by its founder Guru Nanak in the mid-fifteenth century to its actualization by the tenth Guru towards the end of the seventeenth in the form of *Khalsa*. This chapter maps out the course followed by the young religion, as it began to find its bearings in the midst of other established religious traditions, threats from other foreign agencies and various influences of these on it. This journey has been termed as a transformation of the Sikh religion by writers such as Gokul Chand Narang who wrote a book with the same title, Grewal (1994), Khushwant Singh (1999). It is termed as a transition from a *panth* to a *qaum*. Georgio Shani in his article titled “From *panth* to *qaum*: the construction of a Sikh ‘national’ identity in colonial India”, elaborates that whereas a *panth* stands more for a path of spiritual quest, a *qaum* is a term with Arabic roots and refers to a more evolved community in socio-political dimensions and an enhanced consciousness of identity. He attributes the incorporation of the term into the Punjabi discourse to the influence of the Islamic Mughal rulers. “The development of a *qaumic* dimension to the Sikh faith”, says Shani, “can be seen as the outcome of a historical process with its origins in the colonial encounter” (20). It is significant from the point of view of this research, as the form in which the British first encountered the Sikhs and the Sikh tradition on their native land, and they interacted with each other, resulted in mutual image-formation, which had a lasting impact on their respective psychology and consequent interrelations.

2.1 Initiation of the Khalsa

From the tolerant and compassionate teachings of its revered founder Guru Nanak Dev to the righteous and revolutionary form and ethos engendered in it, from the sixth guru onwards up to the tenth and the last living guru, Gobind Singh, Sikhism had been transformed from an initial *Nirmal Panth* to *Khalsa Panth*, without essentially undergoing any change. For both, through the other eight Gurus, the ‘*nam*’ and the grasp of the eternal truth- ‘*sach* and *tat gyan*’ contained in that remained the panacea for all ills and the way to attain communion with God, which was the ultimate goal of life. The mode of worship was not altered in any way, as the religious commandments

laid down in the *Adi Granth* continued to be sacrosanct and inviolable. The decree that there will not be any more incarnate guru in Sikhism, was firmly laid down for the successive followers. It was the dire need of the testing times under the Mughal rule that spirits of the Sikhs were refueled and fortified to overcome the oppressive opposition. Khushwant Singh registers this change in the basic Sikh sentiment in these words:

The only change Gobind brought in religion was to expose the other side of the medal. Whereas Nanak had propagated goodness, Gobind Singh condemned evil. One preached the love of one's neighbor, the other the punishment of transgressors. Nanak's God loved His Saints; Gobind's God destroyed His enemies. (*Vol.1* 85)

This was not a purely religious transformation, but the whole cultural tenor of the Sikhs was changed. From a tolerant and conciliatory sect, they were turned into a combative community of brave activists, in keeping with the requirements of the times. Khushwant Singh quotes Sikh Chronicles of the times stating that twenty thousand baptisms had taken place at Anandpur Sahib itself and were followed by mass baptisms throughout Northern India. As a result, Guru Gobind Singh trained the sparrow to fight the hawk and one man to fight a legion.

2.2. Sant-Sipahi Banda Sigh Bahadur

The first Sikh product of this hawkish and revolutionary attitude infused into the Sikh psyche in the form of Khalsa, was the saint-soldier Banda Bahadur, fashioned in accordance with the newly laid down principles. Originally born as Lachman Das (Gokul Chand Narang writes Lachman Dev, 1977, 97) at Rajauri in 1670, he was a Rajput from the valiant Dogra tribe known for its hunting prowess. Having had a change of heart after one such hunting expedition, Lachman Das became an abstemious renouncer of the world and began to follow the path of knowledge, purity and mysticism. Guru Gobind Singh met him at Nanded in 1708 and found him to be made of just the stuff needed to competently lead the Sikh *qaum* into its befitting glorious future and ably avenge the wrongs inflicted upon it by the Mughal detractors. Madho Das, as he had later started calling himself, was overawed by the Guru's religious zeal and pleasant demeanour, and unflinchingly submitted himself to His shelter and supervision. Guru shared with him a bond, close enough to elaborately

apprise him of the prevailing challenges and means to surmount those, entrusting to him the colossal responsibility of taking the torch of Sikh ideals forward. In the words of Gokul Chand Narang:

He bestowed on him one sword and five arrows from his quiver and asked him to abide by the following five principles:

1. Do not indulge in adultery and lead a life of purity and celibacy
2. Always contemplate on, speak and follow the path of truth
3. Consider yourself a *Khalsa* caretaker, and make all decisions in accordance with the *Khalsa's* diktat.
4. Never think of instituting a separate independent sect
5. Never let triumphs and power make you arrogant

Banda accepted the arrows and the sword with utmost reverence and took a vow to wholeheartedly follow the guidelines of the guru". (my trans.; 97)

It is due to this absolute submission to the Guru's will and exemplary self-discipline, that Guru Gobind Singh called him Banda (from *bandish* who knows self-restraint) or the bonded devotee and it is owing to his exceptional martial skills that the epithet of Bahadur was added to his name. To a large extent Banda Bahadur became an epitome of the ideal saint-soldier identity and consciousness that the tenth guru wanted to cultivate among the Sikhs. Under his blustery leadership, the Sikhs won many victories and redeemed the lost prestige and power. The circle of his followers went on widening, so much so that "Encouraged by the response, Banda issued a proclamation offering protection to anyone 'threatened by thieves, dacoits or highway robbers, troubled by Mohammedan bigots, or in any way subjected to injustice or ill-treatment'" (Khushwant Singh *Vol.1* 99). This disapproval of any kind of injustice and alacrity to protect the victims became an indelible part of the Sikh psyche and its vestiges can be found till date in the most modern Sikh thought and ethos. Those proclamations and the peasant revolts led by him, won Banda the admiration of Sikhs and Hindus alike, who started looking up to him as a saviour but it also earned him the wrath of the Mughal rulers under Emperor Bahadur Shah. The dauntless leader was hunted, captured, mercilessly tortured and eventually executed for the wave of violence that he had unleashed against the Mughal tyrants. His execution also brought about large scale persecution of the Sikhs and the disintegration of the Sikh collective,

temporarily. The Mughal authorities took this as an opportunity to restore their lost strength but their efforts were mitigated due to powerful attacks by Nadir Shah in 1738 and series of invasions steered by Ahmad Shah Abdali till 1753, which turned out to be the final nails in the coffin of the Mughal rule in Punjab. Military exploits of this proportion strengthened the notion of *qaum* among the Sikhs.

2.3. Deposing the Mughals

A Westerner's perspective on the political and military developments of this period is found in W.H. Mcleod's "Cohesive Ideals and Institutions in the Sikh Panth". He writes that after Banda's execution in 1716, the Mughal authorities spent more than a decade attempting to bring the increasingly tumultuous *Jat* Sikhs under control. The Sikhs reacted by forming several tiny and extremely mobile bands known as *Jathas*, each led by a *Jathedar*. Attempts to form a lasting union of the *jathas* were largely unsuccessful until the middle of the century, when the weakening Mughal administration relinquished its grip over them. A stronger unity within the community eventually emerged, when it had to face a stronger adversary in the form of Ahmad Shah Abdali, from Afghanistan. Abdali's invasions were launched first in 1747 and then in 1769, and he had succeeded in defeating both the Mughals and the Marathas. But Sikhs, with their restored unity posed a tough challenge to him, a sturdy force that he could not quell. Confrontation with Abdali thus, brought about an initial self-awareness of the *qaumic* dimension among the Sikhs and established their cohesive opposition to the Muslims.

The Sikhs had been infused with such exemplary valiant spirit by their Guru that even their adversaries could not help expressing their admiration for the character and skills of these warriors. Qazi Nur Muhammad was the official historian of Abdali who maintained the records of his military operations and conquests. He praises the Sikhs in his *Jang Nama*, statement no. 50, which consists of 55 comments in Persian called '*Bian*' - each dealing with a different event, personality, racial collectivity, battle tactics adopted by the Sikhs or general Sikh behaviour. Even their opponents praised the Sikhs for their opposition to Ahmed Shah Abdali. Despite his animosity for the Sikhs and concern for his fellow Muslims, Nur Muhammad could not stop himself from praising their great conduct, battlefield experience, liberality, intrepidity, agility and majestic physical robustness. This was most likely done to convince the men of

the invading army that Sikhs were strong enough to withstand their assault, since they were exceptional in moral conduct and no one could match them.

2.4. Generous Accounts of Sikhs' Uprightness and Bravery

Retd. Justice Mewa Singh writes in his book *Religion and History of the Sikhs 1469-2010*, in a similar vein that the Sikhs were completely dedicated to their cause as well as to its justice. They had no dread of death and they had no desire for material goods. They followed the Sikh code of conduct to a tee and were punctual in their religious obligations of virtues and form (*Bana and Bani*). As a result, they were unconcerned with the difficulties of life. Mewa Singh quotes a British writer George Thomas, who was witness to the life style of the Sikh warriors during their period of struggle and has given an account of it in his book *Military Memoirs* (1803):

Accustomed from their (Sikhs') infancy to a life of hardships and difficulty, the Sikhs despise the comforts of a tent; ... Considering this mode of life and the extraordinary rapidity of their movements, it cannot be a matter of wonder if they perform marches which to those who are only accustomed to European warfare must appear almost incredible. (71)

Such enduring exposure to the tyrannies of the Mughal rulers and success in unitedly warding off the threats of Afghan onslaughts, revealed to the Sikhs their inherently indomitable character and essentially independent temperament. Close military encounters with both the foreign races also brought about enhanced martial capability, fortitude during adversity and immeasurable resilience among the Sikhs, which trained them well to deal with foreign invasions of various kinds be it physical, territorial, or even psychological. If the compassionate teachings of Guru Nanak, enshrined in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, had made them treat all religious traditions with the same deference and guided them to rise above any kind of caste distinctions, the edicts of the tenth Guru had geared them to never tolerate any kind of injustice and always redress a wrong through violent means only if peaceful measures had failed. Guru Gobind Singh was not taking the religious tradition in a different direction, but was rather applying the timeless words of the first Guru practically to the situation of that time.

Surprisingly, the notions of revolution and supreme-sacrifice for the sake of one's faith were given by the founder himself. Guru Nanak Dev said:

Jo tau prem khelan ka chau, Sir dhar tali, gali mori aao

It marag paer dharije, Sir deeje, kaan na kije.

If you yearn to sport the love of the divine, you can gain entrance to the arena of love with your head placed on your palm. And once you have set out on this path of love, never turn back but laydown your head with least concern for anything else. (my trans.; *Adi Granth* 1412)

Guru Gobind Singh founded the *Khalsa* based on these very notions and exhorted the Sikh followers to tread that path with strict adherence to the virtues of purity, uprightness, self-discipline and zero-tolerance for injustice. It was the same *Khalsa* spirit that lived on in the *Panth* after the incarnate gurus had left behind their light in the form of the *Shabad* (Word) Guru; the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Mewa Singh expresses the philosophy of the tenth Guru. He [Guru Gobind Singh] decreed that the Sikhs recognise the *Guru Granth Sahib* as the permanent eternal Guru, the spirit and embodiment of the ten Sikh Gurus, and that the Sikhs should receive guidance from the Divine Hymns contained therein, from then onwards. The *Khalsa Panth* was to be the Sikh Commonwealth since these poems were the Word of God, containing the Truth, consummation and heavenly knowledge, as well as the ‘Name of God’—the signal generator of mankind. Sikh *qaum* was elevated to a lofty pedestal through such developments as having their own sacred text brought the religion at par with the other established religions.

2.5. Western Historians on Sikhism

Since the main objective of this chapter is the study of the processes of formation of mutual impressions between the Sikhs and the British colonizers, the accounts of history and historiography by both the indigenous historians as well as the Western, especially the English scholars of the period when the two cultures interacted closely, assume tremendous significance. It is on the basis of a comparison of these respective versions that an understanding of the reciprocal image created in the eyes of each, of the other, can be reasonably formed and the rationale behind the founding of certain notions can be ascertained. It can also lead to an analysis of the motives of the settlers behind projecting and encouraging the development of a particular aspect of the Sikh identity which suited their own interests.

J.S. Grewal, the eminent Sikh historian, in his article “The Emergence of Sikh Studies” included in his book *Contesting Interpretations of the Sikh Tradition* brings forth how the European writers were not much interested in Sikh history before the middle of the 18th century. He cites two reasons for that, which are the advent of East India Company as a formidable political power in India and the increasing importance being attached to historical writings in Europe. Dr. J.C. Dua in his article “The British Understanding of the Sikh Struggle for Power During the 18th Century” included in the Journal *The Punjab Past and Present*, quotes late Prof. B.R. Grover, former Chairman, Indian Council of Historical Research. Prof. Grover had carried out painstaking research and unearthed important documents written in Persian, to compare and verify the facts related to the evolution of the Sikh *qaum* as stated in the British writings, which had held supremacy for a very long span. On the basis of his study, he divides the English writers into three broad categories: a) the earliest ones who wrote during the 18th century such as Major James Browne and George Foster b) the ones who wrote during Ranjit Singh’s tenure such as John Malcolm and Henry T. Prinsep and c) the later ones who wrote after Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s death and the eventual annexation of Punjab such as W.L. McGregor, Joseph Davey Cunningham and Lepel Henry Griffin.

The historians of the first lot had been obviously directed by the East India Company to concentrate on the political situation in Punjab at that time, as it had been disconcerted with the fast emerging strength of the Sikhs and their widening political influence. Browne was appointed as Agent and Envoy of the Governor General in the court of the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam and he used the appointment as an opportunity to first familiarize himself and then the Company, with the polity, practices and character of the members of the swiftly rising Sikh *qaum*. Forster too, was a Civil Servant of the East India Company and was among the first British travelers to have travelled all over India and maintained historical records. Both these historians focused more on the political developments of the time. They both refer to the remarkable leadership of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, the head of the Ahluwalia *misl*, under whose command the Sikhs had initially declared their sovereignty and even minted coins in his name. The word ‘*misl*’ is a word of Persian origin meaning equal and its literal meaning is a file. *Misldar* used to be the leader of the territory. The word is however, missing from the accounts of Persian, Marathi and English sources

of history in the 18th century and according to Prof. Grover, was introduced in the records only 19th century onwards. The recognition and respect, which are due to a *misl* and its leader, were not accorded to the Sikh leaders of the various *misl*s for two reasons, namely the lack of discipline among them due to mutual animosity and their resultant failure to establish a strong and singular authority. The Persian sources have addressed the leaders as *Sardaran-i-Sikhan* and the Sikh confederacies as *Jamat-i-Sardaran*. The significant point to note however is that up to the time of Guru Gobind Singh, the thrust was purely on religion and its survival in the face of oppression, whereas later, it shifted more to political and territorial expansion under the religious banner. Although, both Browne and Forster have emphasized the religious tenor of sacrificial instinct among the Sikhs in their struggle against the Mughals and the Afghans, their politico-military activities have been shockingly described as depredations and highway robbery. The Sikhs have been fallaciously projected here as trouble-makers and plunderers by the lens of the British historians and the fact was hugely instrumental in the image-formation of the Sikhs in the eyes of the East India Company in particular and the British in general, as these were the first impressions of the Sikhs outlined for them. For the Sikhs nevertheless, the *Misl*s were their rudimentary training grounds in leadership, a significant stage in the evolution of the *qaum*.

The second set of British historians which included the likes of Malcolm and Prinsep, was the contemporary of Ranjit Singh and was witness to the unprecedented rise to supremacy of any Sikh leader up to that point in history. The British naturally felt interested in carefully studying this phenomenal development. John Malcolm wrote in his book *Sketch of the Sikhs* (London, 1812) that “every information regarding the Sikhs is of importance” (Dua 20). While highlighting Ranjit Singh’s extraordinary ascendance, the book also shed light on the political motives and designs of the English, which revealed their nature to him and the Sikhs. The colonizers were at that time apprehending a combined attack by the French and the Afghan forces under Napoleon Bonaparte and Zaman Shah on India and did not desire to have any internal trouble. They did not interfere with Ranjit Singh’s affairs in *Cis-Sutlej* states and were, in an amicable way, able to convince him not to align with Jaswant Rao Holkar, the leader of the Maratha army. But the turn of events in France that is Napoleon’s enmeshment in the Peninsular war and the development of agreeable relations between the English and Mahmud the II, quickly revealed the opportunist and go-

getting side of the visitors. The other English historian of this period, Henry T. Prinsep wrote his book in 1834, with a long title *The Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab and Political Life of Maharaja Ranjit Singh with an Account of the Religion, Laws and Customs of the Sikhs*. He mentions that Ranjit Singh had not only captured Attock, Kashmir, Dera Ghazi Khan, Dera Ismail Khan, Bakhar, Leh, Mankera and above all Peshawar but was very shrewdly strengthening his political influence in Afghanistan through its fugitive ruler Shah Shuja. He also states, how Ranjit Singh had begun to be viewed as a major impediment in the way of the realization of the ambition of the already Russia-phobic English, as the differences between Russia and Britain were escalating at that time and Russian influence in Persia and Central Asia had increased. The negativity in the image of the Sikhs delineated by such historians, is clearly discernable from the epithets used by them to refer to their activities. For instance, the smaller groups of Sikhs who indulged in defensive counter-action against the Mughal and Afghan oppression were called *Dharwis* in Punjabi and Prinsep terms them as ‘highwaymen’. Similarly, when several *misls* jointly fought and protected certain territories, they collected a tribute amount called *rakhi* which Prinsep explains as ‘Black mail’ and addresses these collective forces as ‘*Dal of the Khalsa ji*’, thus maligning the religious impression as well.

By the time the third category of western historians comprising writers such as McGregor, Griffin and Cunningham started writing, the British had already begun analyzing the Indian context in terms of the diversity of religious beliefs and the disreputable policy of ‘Divide and Rule’ had begun to take shape in the minds of the English administrators, according to Dua. Safeguarding their own political and commercial interests was foremost on their minds. Politically they were keen on securing an alignment with Central and West Asia and commercially, they wanted to realise their prized aspirations, for the opening of the profitable Indus navigation of Turkestan and Khorasan and bringing it into their jurisdiction. Although, McGregor was officially Ranjit Singh’s medical surgeon, he derived diplomatic advantage out of his stay at the court and played a significant role in averting the annexation of Sind by the powerful leader. He conveyed valuable information about the Sikh struggle during the eighteenth century and based on that background, offered worthwhile suggestions to the East India Company for framing their policies towards Punjab and Afghanistan. While describing the period of struggle McGregor specially emphasized the strong cohesiveness between the Sikhs from different areas. For instance, he specifically

mentions the *zamindars* from Majha area who extended full support to Sikh soldiers of various *misls* “when being pursued by the Mussalmans” (Dua 23) and to the Sikh *Sardars* at the time of any emergency.

Lepel Henry Griffin’s *The Punjab Chiefs* published in 1865 was a kind of defence of the policies of the British against the malicious criticism being faced by them. The words of the critics, as quoted by Griffin in the Preface to one of his books, bring forth that it is impossible to justify the methods used by the conquerors. Each new province added to British India, represented new crimes, and it had in fact been only won through fraudulent means. The criticism, thus accrued, speaks volumes on the first-hand experience gathered by the natives through numerous encounters with the British aggressors and their image formed in the minds of the hosts who happened to be at the receiving end. But since Griffin’s chief motive was to validate the policies of the British towards Punjab and the Sikhs, he wrote, “despite the preference of the people for the rule of their hereditary chiefs, they accepted British rule with most unfringed satisfaction” (Dua 19). In order to justify the annexation of Punjab and the daring changes being introduced in the agrarian set up there, he dubbed the revenue system of Maharaja Ranjit Singh as “an organized system of pillage” (Dua 24).

Joseph Davey Cunningham, who was a Captain in the British Indian Army and had the opportunity to observe the Sikhs very closely, owing to his posting in Punjab for eight years from 1838 to 1846, wrote his famous *History of the Sikhs* in 1849. The subtitle of the book states ‘*From the Origin of the Nation to the Battles of the Sutlej*’ which indicates that he witnessed the evolution of the Sikh *qaum* during one of its most crucial periods, the period of its genesis as a nation with the expansion of its territory. What makes Cunningham stand out among the other British historians is that though his allegiance was with the British and he was a dedicated servant of the command, he shows a comparatively better and more balanced understanding of the Sikhs and, their religious and military practices. His focus was decidedly the commercial interest of the East India Company but he is certainly eloquent in his praise of the dauntless Sikh warriors. He displays a remarkable grasp of the Sikh religion right from the time of its initiation by Guru Nanak and significant cognizance of the essential role it played in the military practices of the Sikhs. While referring to the *misl* period, a period of uncertainty when the Sikhs were divided into small warring groups under their respective leaders for want of a stronger leadership,

Cunningham writes appreciating their religiousity and uprightness, despite their rivalries:

God was their helper and only judge, community of faith or object was their moving principle, and warlike array, the devotion to steel of Gobind, was their material instrument. Year by year the ' Sarbat Khalsa ', or whole Sikh people, met once at least at Amritsar . . . the performance of religious duties, and the awe inspired by so holy a place, might cause selfishness to yield to a regard for the general welfare, and the assembly of chiefs was termed a ' *Gurumatta* ', to denote that, in conformity with Gobind's injunction, they sought wisdom and unanimity of counsel from their teacher and the book of his word. The leaders who thus piously met, owned no subjection to one another, and they were imperfectly obeyed by the majority of their followers; (96)

2.6. Shaping of the Sikh Sovereign State

The uncertainty looming over the Sikh sovereignty due to the warring *misls* was eventually dispelled by the arrival on the horizon of a commanding trailblazer. Ranjit Singh Sukerchakia, born on 13th November, 1780, was the exemplary Sikh leader who chiseled the Sikh Empire out of the conspiratorially belligerent *misls*, around the closing decades of the eighteenth century. After his father's death in 1792, he inherited a huge district and with his boundless ambition, at the age of twelve, took the reins of the fissured territory in his young hands and self-assuredly steered it towards greater and greater heights. He was a virtual personification of the Sikh power and intrepid robustness, though on the yardstick of the *miri-piri* system of life recommended for a *Khalsa*, he still fell short on the spiritual account. Nevertheless, it was his ceaseless devotion to the cause of Sikhism and specifically the strengthening and expansion of the Sikh empire, which he wholeheartedly engaged himself in, that wins him a glorious mention in the annals of the history of the Sikh *qaum*.

Punjab was in a state of political decadence and general chaos, before Ranjit Singh came to the forefront of the Sukerchakia *Misl*. Khushwant Singh compares the Punjab of that time to a jigsaw puzzle of fourteen pieces comprising the twelve *misls*, the district of Kasur under the charge of a Pathan family and in the south-east, the District of Hansi, where an English wanderer George Thomas had settled and taken control over it. It was admirably the sheer grit and strategic shrewdness of Ranjit Singh that

made him an exceptional ruler who could valiantly resist and protect his kingdom from a five-edged sword consisting of his five foes: the Afghans, the Gurkhas, the Rajputs, the Marathas and the British. Khushwant Singh notes with tremendous admiration, the superior ability of Ranjit Singh at skillfully handling aggressive opposition at multiple fronts.

Shah Zaman (Abdali's grandson) set out to subjugate India and made it as far as Hassan Abdal, before being forced to return to Afghanistan to put down an insurrection led by his brother Mahmud. Two years later, he was victorious in his objective, and he and Hassan Abdal seized Rohtas from the Sukerchakias. As a result, Ranjit Singh was the first Sikh monarch to fall victim to him. Zaman had to return home yet again, this time to avert a western incursion of his own country. The restoration of Rohtas was not difficult for Ranjit Singh. Zaman and his Afghan hordes, on the other hand, had not yet evacuated the Punjab. Sansar Chand of Kangra was one of the princes on whom Zaman counted for help. Sansar Chand had conquered lands adjoining to his holdings from Sikh leaders and learned that their divisiveness made them extremely vulnerable.

The Punjab was also a target for three other powers. First, the Gurkhas, formerly only known as a combative tribe, had become a strong force in the Eastern Himalayas under Amar Singh Thapa's leadership. They had commenced advancing in the western direction, along the mountain ranges, till they arrived at Sansar Chand's, Kangra area. The Gurkhas and Rajputs had to choose between battling each other or banding together to conquer Punjab and divide the riches. Because of the *misl*s' dire situation, the latter option appeared to be more advantageous.

Secondly, the Marathas had rebounded from their setback in the battlefield of Panipat in 1761. They had re-entered southern Punjab after capturing Agra and reducing the Mughal ruler in Delhi to servitude. Their men had received European training and were more regimented than the Sikhs. As illustrated by Khushwant Singh, they had French Generals in charge of their exploits in the north, including De Boigne, Perron, and Bourquin.

Thirdly the English, who were less visible than the Marathas, but were arguably more dangerous. Ostensibly, their main interest in the region was to defend the Nawab Wazir of Oudh, whose lands stretched all the way to the Ganges. Nonetheless, the

acquisition of India as a whole had piqued the interest of most Englishmen in the country, and they rarely passed up a chance to broaden their borders. They had informants in all major cities of India, Persia and Afghanistan, and were well-informed about what was going on. The English, more than anyone else, saw that Zaman's incursions posed a threat to their Indian domains, and correctly predicted that the warriors who could be trusted to put up a powerful challenge to the Afghans, would be the Sikhs, instead of the Marathas, Rajputs, or Gurkhas. They also recognised that the youthful Sukerchakia ruler Ranjit Singh was the only one, who could marshal the Sikh armies and unite the Punjab.

2.7. *Raj Karega Khalsa: Ascendancy of Ranjit Singh*

Ranjit Singh was an exceptionally powerful ruler and his rise to supremacy has fascinated historians, scholars of Sikh studies, and students of Military Science and war-tactics alike. The tenure of his rule has been under special attention of all of these. Even the Western scholars, especially the British historians were keenly interested in studying his phenomenal growth and his strategic relations with the British colonizers, which had rendered the annexation of the state impossible for them, during his life. Several books have been written by both the indigenous and the Western historians, revealing diverse, sometimes contradictory facts about the establishment and administration of his empire. For the sake of this research however, the focus would be limited to the interaction between the British rulers and Ranjit Singh and the manner in which they dealt with each other. It is significant because it was with Ranjit Singh that they first came across a truly magnificent Sikh ruler who almost matched them and on some occasions outsmarted them with his intelligence, fierce military skills, religious faith and magnanimity.

Jassa Singh Aluwalia, the prominent leader of the Ahluwalia *misl*, one of the twelve existing in the early eighteenth century Punjab, had done excellent groundwork in uniting the Sikh community and had led several offensives against the Mughals, Durranis, the Jats, the Rohillas, the Marathas and even the Awadh Nawabs. He too emerged as a highly admired leader in the capacity of the *Sardar* of the *Dal Khalsa* and the English historians have also written approvingly of him. But it was in Ranjit Singh, that the full splendour of the embodiment of the characteristic Sikh might and acumen was discovered by the British invaders. Using his sheer grit, sharp military

tactics and even friendly alliances such as marrying the daughters of the Chiefs of various confederacies, he earned the reputation of being a tough negotiator. Not only the Sikhs, but even the Hindus reveled in the glory of this rising son of the soil and treated him with equal reverence. They looked up to him as their saviour and emancipator. His imminent upsurge earned him the support of most of the Sikh Confederacies especially the *Ghanayas* and the *Nankayas*, the daughters of the Chiefs of which, he got married to. His mother-in-law Sardarni Sada Kaur, the hitherto Chief of the *Ghanaya* Confederacy was an outstanding warrior and discerning strategist herself and she became a kind of indispensable guide for him in his later ventures. All the other Confederacies were incorporated without much trouble, in the united Sikh state created by him due to his excellent and mature handling of the situation. He used his power and kindness in tandem for the expansion of his territories. If he used armed force to conquer the land, he won over their hearts with liberal *Jagirs* including movable and immovable properties. Continuing his successful streak, he occupied Lahore, the erstwhile Mughal capital and hoisted the Khalsa flag there on July 7, 1799. It was indeed a realization of the dream envisioned and yearned for by the Sikhs since the time of Guru Gobind Singh to have their own undivided empire, governed by a Sikh ruler. The ceremonial Coronation for Ranjit Singh's ascension as Maharaja of Punjab took place amicably on April 12, 1801 with the presence of prominent Sikh leaders. Ranjit Singh asserted at the occasion that he was merely one of the Sikhs and that they should not address him as Maharaja, but instead as Singh Sahib, because he was only the Head of the Sikh state. The steps undertaken by him however, contributed tremendously in creating a distinct Sikh identity and establishing a sovereign Sikh state:

He named the government as 'Sarkar-e-Khalsa Jio' (Sikh Government)—the court of Maharaja of Punjab to be named as 'Darbar Khalsa Jio'. The seal of the government also had no reference to him; it being of the 'Sarkar-e- Khalsa Jio'. The official currency was in the name of Guru Nanak as 'Nanak Shahi coin'. The Sikhs felt honoured and felt contented with these far-reaching decisions for the recognition of Sikhs and of the Sikh state. Ranjit Singh in his daily routine followed the Sikh religious practices. (Mewa Singh, 318)

The attention of the East India Company was first drawn towards Ranjit Singh around 1808, when the rulers of some small Sikh states, apprehending attacks on their

territories, had foolishly sought help from the British against the blitzkrieg unleashed by him. Much to his perturbation, Raja Bhag Singh of Jind, Lal Singh of Kaithal, Diwan Chain Singh of Patiala and Sayed Ghulam Hussain of Karnal had directed a delegation to the British rulers in Delhi, that met the British resident and shared their anxiety, while seeking security against him. With his sagacity he deliberated deep over the matter and patiently invited the three Sikh rulers of those states and convinced them not to forge any agreement with the British. Meanwhile, the British government was going through a phase of apprehension on account of the French Emperor Napoleon who, it was rumoured, was about to launch an attack on India via Afghanistan. With that consideration, Sir Charles Metcalfe, who also later held the position of acting Governor General of India, was then deputed to hold consultations with Maharaja Ranjit Singh whom the British could not afford to immediately offend. Metcalfe was received with complete honour and shown great hospitality. In keeping with Ranjit Singh's tradition, lavish gifts were given to the visiting officer and after long drawn discussions, the proposal of an agreement was prepared which was to be ratified by the Governor General. In the whole episode, Ranjit Singh presented himself as a confident and perceptive negotiator despite being illiterate, much to the chagrin of the British government, that wanted to extract maximum advantage out of the deal. Also displaying farsightedness and a deeper understanding of the intentions of the British rulers and their current precarious situation, he used the opportunity to further strengthen his empire by crossing the river Sutlej and bringing more territories under his control. Thus, before signing the Treaty of Amritsar with the British in 1809, Ranjit Singh had already extended the Sikh empire to all the five Doabs of the Punjab, giving ample evidence of his superb leadership qualities. In the words of J.S. Grewal (1997):

By the Treaty of Amritsar, the British recognized Ranjit Singh as the sole sovereign ruler of the Punjab and left him free to round off his conquests in the former Mughal province of Lahore, to oust the Afghans from Multan and Kashmir and finally to turn the tables on the successors of Ahmed Shah Abdali in the former Mughal province of Kabul. In the first article of the treaty between the British and the 'Raja of Lahore' it was stipulated that "the British Government will have no concern with the territories and subjects of the Raja to the Northward of the river Sutlej". (101)

Ranjit Singh's rule in Punjab had been preceded by the excessively harsh and dogmatic regime of the Mughal rulers who were conspicuous for their avarice, desolations and forced conversions. The spirit of tolerance and temperance, in keeping with the Sikh edicts, exhibited by him was a very welcome change for the people of Punjab. The Muslim conquerors were driven by their misplaced interpretation of *Jehad* which they understood to be the waging of a religious war against the nonbelievers whom they called the infidels. They did not hesitate in using force to convert the non-Muslims to their own religion and rather believed that to be a great service to its cause and expansion. Clearly, the intention was to exterminate any kind of pluralism, be it religious, political or social. They even imposed a special tax *Jaziya* on the people outside their religion and firmly believed such imposition to be in accordance with the principles of *Shariat* (Islamic canonical law based on the teachings of the Koran). In complete contrast, Ranjit Singh did not even declare Sikhism to be the official religion of the State. There were no attempts at proselytizing or converting anyone forcibly. Inclusiveness of his Sikh polity was amply evident in the independence enjoyed by people of all religious affiliations during his reign. Though *qaum* has various dimensions to it and is not defined solely through statehood, the attainment and sustenance of the same during the brief golden period of *Khalsa Raj* brought political recognition and did go a long way in consolidating the notion in the Sikh psyche.

The Britons, who were perpetually looking to expand their territorial and economic conquests, were keenly desirous of understanding this enigmatic phenomenon called Ranjit Singh and through him the Sikh community. Their consciousness of the tremendous diversity and co-existence of religious faiths in the country was also growing. The East India Company collected a substantial range of information from its agents, travelers and appointed historians on Sikhism. This was to be taken into account in developing further policies for dealing with the Punjab state and its ruler. In the context of religion, Major James Browne who has been mentioned earlier, used a Persian text written by Budh Singh Arora of Lahore and concluded that Guru Nanak's religion appeared "to bear that kind of relation to the Hindoo religion, which the Protestant does to the Romish" (Ballantyne 40). He perceived Sikhism as a rectification of the Hindu tradition of that time, which was blighted by polytheism, caste discrimination and idol worship. To the British perception, these were the main

impediments in the way of the advancement of the Hindu faith and had led to its stagnation. Charles Wilkins published his sketch of Sikhism in 1788 and specifically pointed out the reformatory tone in Nanak's vision of a monotheistic religion believing in an omnipresent and omnipotent God according to which "there will be a day of retribution, when virtue will be rewarded and vice punished" (Ballantyne 40). The element of Sikhism, which was most admired by these Westerners, was its revolutionary spirit. Tony Ballantyne gives the following explanation for this peculiar perception of Sikhism by these western historians:

What is striking about these earliest British accounts is the deployment of Protestant terminology and explicitly European points of reference to make sense of Sikhism. When Browne and Wilkins saw Sikhs in the late eighteenth century, they recognized elements of themselves. At a moment when Protestantism was becoming fundamental to both regional and national identities within the United Kingdom, these East India Company men were delighted to find that the spirit of Protestantism existed in India too. (40)

A similar but more sympathetic analysis, which even went to the extent of offending the British masters, was given by J.D. Cunningham, the well-known historian of Sikh history, who wrote very approvingly of Ranjit Singh, that he had displayed exceptional intelligence in keeping the trespassers at bay and striven towards "giving unity to diverse atoms and scattered elements; to mould the increasing Sikh nation into a well-ordered state or commonwealth" (120). He also exhibited a very rare understanding in a Western scholar, of seeing Guru Gobind Singh and Guru Nanak Dev together and in complete sync in the total schema of Sikhism when he said "Gobind had developed a sect into a people, and had given application and purpose to the general institutions of Nanak." (120)

Ranjit Singh was also admired for his warring skills and strategies. Though majority of his soldiers were Sikhs, he did not employ religion as a criterion, while selecting his military officials and generals. Muslims such as Aziz-ud-din, Imam-ud-din, Ilahi Baksh and Noordin along with Brahmins like Raja Sahib Dayal, Raja Ruliya Ram, Diwan Ayodhya Prasad and Kshatriyas like Diwan Mohkam Chand, Diwan Sawan Mal held significant positions in his army and unitedly fought under the Sikh banner. He had even secured the services of some European and American warriors to train

his native soldiers in European war techniques, with the purpose of preparing them to undauntedly face any foe. The centrality of the religious edicts is emphasized by the fact, that these Europeans were employed on the condition, that during their employment they will neither eat beef nor trim their beards. The Sikh army had thus, firmly established itself as the best military force in the country and had become an unbeatable perplexity for the English. Ranjit Singh's insatiable ambition and continuous aggrandizement had become unbearable for the English, who had begun nurturing in their hearts, the desire to annex the Punjab. The remarkable fact however, is that whether it was through intelligently and amicably signed treaties, or at other occasions asserting his well-trained and disciplined military power, Ranjit Singh did not allow the foreign invaders to attack the sovereignty of the Sikh state, that he had valiantly chiseled out of antagonistic fragments, during his lifetime. He died in 1839, very much a ruler of his land who did not acquiesce to the English supremacy. The impression that he left on the English psyche was that of dauntless leadership, secular governance, devout service and disciplined valiance, and these were etched as the trademark assets of the Sikhs.

Cunningham pens admiringly about the impact of his death:

... he gave the potent English no cause for interference. He found the military array of his country a mass of horsemen, brave indeed, but ignorant of war as an art, and he left it mustering fifty thousand disciplined soldiers, fifty thousand well-armed yeomanry and militia, and more than three hundred pieces of canon for the field. His rule was founded on the feelings of the people, but it involved the joint action of the necessary principles of the military order and territorial extension; and when a limit had been set to Sikh dominion, and his own commanding genius was no more, the vital spirit of his race began to consume itself in domestic contentions. (200)

2.8. End of the Sikh Sovereignty

From the point of view of this research however, the significant consideration is that Ranjit Singh was instrumental in giving the Sikhs their own sovereign nation-state and infusing among the Sikhs the ascendant *Chardi Kala* spirit of *Khalsa* that Guru Gobind Singh had envisaged and initiated. They had been converted from a *panth* (which literally means a path) into a *qaum* that stands for the people of a nation. As mentioned in the beginning, Georgio Shani describes *panth* to refer to "the devotees

of a specific spiritual leader” and *qaum* to connote a “community in a socio-political sense” (20). The soldiers of the Sikh army had been forged in fire and turned into fierce iron-men referred to as *Singhs*. But with Ranjit Singh’s demise, these well-trained and disciplined fighters were left rudderless. The royalty of the state was mired in endless conspiracies about the successor to the throne. In Khushwant Singh’s words, Ranjit Singh had sheltered Punjab like a huge banyan tree but he had protected it to such an extent that under the shade of that tree, only weeds had grown, indicating that there was no one of that eminent a stature, who could direct the fortunes of the kingdom, that was swiftly turning into an anarchy. The soldiers of the erstwhile well-organized army, had been reduced to plunderers as their salaries were no longer being paid. The seven sons that Ranjit Singh had left behind had “fratricidal rather than fraternal” (Khushwant Singh *Vol. II* 5) feelings for each other. It led to a quick succession of accidents, suspicious plots and murders leaving Maharani Jindan and the minor Maharaja Dalip Singh, at the helm of affairs.

2.9. The Anglo-Sikh Wars

This implosion within the Sikh kingdom was the opportunity that the British had been long looking for, as they had covetously desired the annexation of the Punjab. But the Sikh spirit was not so easy to quell. The Khalsa army was at that time opposed to both the *Darbar* and the British but was nevertheless ready to fight tooth and nail for their sovereignty. The British, on the other hand, were prepared to use any tactics including deceit such as in going back on the treaties signed earlier, or pitching one king against the other, or even bribing the rival generals with promises of being made Chiefs of the annexed territories or going to the extent of being party to the plots hatched by various heirs to the throne against each other. This inevitably resulted in the Anglo-Sikh wars, which were going to end in the eventual annexation of Punjab, but were extremely significant from the perspective of the image of the unflinching and resolute Sikh soldiers, that was created in the minds of their English rivals. Unfortunately, they were brave-hearts fighting under cowardly and avaricious leaders who sold their loyalty to the British for petty materialistic gains. Amarpal Singh refers to the cunning role played by these generals in the first Anglo-Sikh war fought in 1845-46:

Curiously, none of this ruling triumvirate of Lal Singh, Tej Singh and Gulab Singh happened to be Sikh or Punjabi for that matter, but they had risen to

high office through the even-handed policies of Ranjit Singh. Beyond loyalty to their now dead patron, they had little natural fidelity to the Sikh state itself. The intrigues and personal ambitions of these men and their relationship with the increasingly assertive Sikh army would form the backdrop to the first Anglo-Sikh War. (Amarpal Singh, 23)

Khushwant Singh describes the battle at Mudki on 18th December, 1845 as military action that “gave the British their first experience of the fighting qualities of the Punjabi soldier. British casualties were heavy” (*Vol. II* 47). Pandit Sunderlal chronicles in his book *British Rule in India*, the stunning defeat faced by the British soldiers in the battle of Mudki. “The English lost the most on any battlefield in India since the time they had come. Numerous senior British officers, together with Major Bradfoot, were killed in combat and a very significant number of the European regiments were killed. Hardinge completely lost his composure and arranged to withdraw that very night to Ferozpur” (240). A Westerner’s perspective of another battle is given by Lord Gough who described the battle at Sabraon on 10th February 1846 as the Waterloo of India and paid a rich tribute to the Punjabis, “Policy precluded me publicly recording my sentiments on the splendid gallantry of our fallen foe, or to record the acts of heroism displayed, not only individually but almost collectively, by the Sikh sardars and the army” (Qtd. in Khushwant Singh *Vol. II*: 52).

Despite the consummate demonstration of its zeal and valour in the various battles of the First Anglo-Sikh war, the Sikh army was let down, as the outcome was in the form of the First Treaty of Lahore which was executed in 1846. According to this Treaty, considerable portions of the territories under the Lahore Darbar, now governed by the minor Maharaja Daleep Singh, were declared annexed to the English dominion. A mere child was beguiled and deprived of the kingdom that had been so assiduously erected by his father. The traitors, who had assisted the British in this prized acquisition, were in turn richly rewarded. Raja Lal Singh was appointed the Administrator of the remaining territories and he became the *de facto* head of the state and the complete territory of Kashmir was transferred to Gulab Singh as per the Treaty. A subsequent Treaty of Bhaironwal dealt a more severe blow to the family of Royals as Rani Jindan was excluded from all power and was to live on a paltry annual pension of 15,000 pounds. Pandit Sunderlal quotes from Charles Viscount Hardinge’s biographical account of his father Sir Henry Hardinge that, “The Regency Council

was appointed during Dalip Singh's minority and consisted of eight sardars, including Tej Singh, and was to act under the British resident's supervision and control" (246).

Rani Jindan and the *Darbar* Chiefs, soon realized that they had committed a grievous mistake by resorting to the help of the Company, against the Khalsa army as the British had taken a heavy price for providing protection and the inner squabbles of the *Darbar* were revealed to them. The legacy of Ranjit Singh was such that the people of Punjab treated the Rani as their Queen mother, but her faith was totally betrayed by her perceived friends, the British. In the name of restoring order in the state, the invaders had shrewdly taken the complete authority in their hands and through their exploitative strategies had begun robbing the erstwhile resplendent Sikh empire of its wealth as well. *Jagirs* were abolished and the system of land revenue was radically modified to the umbrage of the landlords and the general resentment of the masses. That, along with some other provocations, paved the way for the Second Anglo-Sikh war.

With the expansionist policies of the British government firmly held in their minds and the Resident becoming a virtual all-in-all in his region, the British officers started openly provoking the Sikhs to rouse them and create an excuse for another war. Sir Fredrick Currie, who was appointed Resident at Lahore on March 6, 1848, was bent upon destroying both, the minor Maharaja Dalip Singh and the Sikh Raj. In the words of Pandit Sunderlal, the freedom fighter, he was giving effect to a policy that had been settled years earlier by the authorities in England. In his book *British Rule in India* which had been first published in 1929 but had been immediately banned by the British authorities, he quotes from the memoirs of General Briggs:

... it was decided that we should avail ourselves of all opportunities for adding to our territories and revenues at the expense of our allies and of stipendiary princes ... In this direction the Bombay Government set the example by annexing the inconsiderable principality of Colaba, under the pretext that an adopted heir had no right of succession. This led the way to the more important and more impolitic cases, under Lord Dalhousie, of Jhansi and Nagpore. Dalhousie only acted on the policy prescribed by the ministers of England. (250)

Currie replaced all the Indian officers in important positions with Englishmen in all the Departments leading to discontent among the people of Punjab. It was clearly stipulated in the Treaty of Bhaironwal that the Sikh kingdom would be restored to Daleep Singh, on his reaching majority but the people began to suspect that the Treaty would not be honoured. Several incidents are recorded in history such as the Multan rebellion under Moolraj, the unjustified arrest and deportation of Maharani Jindan, the unwarranted murder accusation against Sardar Chatar Singh Atariwala and the incitement of the Mussalman chiefs against the Sikhs by the British, which became the propelling factors towards the Second war between the Sikhs and the English forces which had in reality been thrust on the former by the latter, only to justify the annexation. The battles fought at Chillianwala and Gujrat were noteworthy in this war which are described thus:

At Chilianwala, the Sikhs though outnumbered by the force under Lord Gough, inflicted a crushing defeat on the latter. The losses on the English side were more than 23,000 killed and wounded, including 26 English officers killed and 66 wounded. In addition, several infantry regiments were crippled. It was the most complete victory, as it was the last, won by the Sikhs on Indian soil against the English. (Sunderlal, 260)

As mentioned earlier, the Sikhs were fighting plucky but leaderless battles, that made them vulnerable to the manipulative strategies of the British. They could not utilize their advantage and due to inexplicable differences among the commanders, were eventually forced to surrender. The Sikhs had countered the larger numbers, advanced weaponry and extensive training of the British soldiers with their sheer grit, diehard sanguinity and valiant spirit that had been infused into them, first by their revered Guru Gobind Singh and then by their cherished Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The significance of these tales of admirable gallantry, to this research, lies in the fact that this rare fighting spirit also had an element of religiosity behind it. With rousing words such as “*Sawa lakh se ek ladaun, tabih Gobind Singh nam Kahaun*”, a war-cry given by him in the phenomenal second war of Chamkaur Sahib in 1705, the tenth Guru had transformed the Sikh *qaum* into warriors for life, who could face any adversity with courage, the quality that was going to shape the course that Sikhism was to follow. The element of spiritual and virtuous purity, essential for a *Khalsa* however, tended to be neglected during the later course.

The sad end to the Second Anglo-Sikh war nevertheless, was another pitiable Treaty that was the evidence and outcome of the British fraudulence, since Henry Lawrence, though purportedly not in favour of the annexation, convinced the Council of Regency not to protest, as their *Jagirs* and honours would be protected. They, in turn, persuaded the 11 year old Maharaja to do the same. This resulted in a Proclamation by the Governor-General, placing the blame on the Sikhs “for unleashing the war and for violating their pledges, and praising the British, who had faithfully kept their word and all obligations imposed by treaties, upon them” (Gopal Singh 569). According to this Treaty, the sovereignty of the Punjab was forever surrendered to the British and an agreement was made over the confiscation of all the property of the Sikh Kingdom in lieu of war expenses and so-called debts. It was under this very Treaty that the Kohinoor had to be handed over to the Queen of England. Only a life-pension, of not more than Rs. Five lakhs per year and the retention of the title of the Maharaja, was allowed for Dalip Singh, provided he remained faithful and compliant to the British authorities and agreed to stay at a place chosen by them. Thus, on April 5, 1849 the Sikhs lost their sovereign nation-state never to be regained, like the Kohinoor.

2.10. Maharaja Daleep Singh: The First Sikh Diaspora

Maharaja Dalip Singh is a paramount figure, as he is an iconic Sikh diaspora and his exile to England in 1854 is believed to have marked the advent of the Sikh migration to the UK. He was a symbol of the memory of the Sikh sovereign kingdom. After the annexation of the Punjab by the British, he was immediately removed from there as they feared the influence he might exercise on the people. He was brought to the United Provinces of Fatehgarh and was placed under the tutelage of the Bengal Army’s Sir John Login, who motivated him to adopt Christianity. He was kept away from the religion to which he was born as it did not suit the British masters, who were happy to convert him and fulfil their missionary motive. He was taken to England shortly afterward as an English squire and landlord, to indefinitely dwell in Suffolk, near London in complete oblivion of his roots.

He became an immediate favourite with Queen Victoria who found him very handsome and speaking perfect English in a dignified manner. “He was beautifully dressed and covered with diamonds. The “koh-i-noor” belonged to, and was once worn by him” (Ballantyne 89). Dalip Singh was treacherously deprived of his

favourite diamond and ironically made to present it again to the Queen, who was significantly struck only by the brilliance of the diamonds worn by him. While he was at Fatehgarh, he had trained himself well in hunting and shooting, skills that connected him to his royal inheritance and raised his stature in the eyes of his fellow Victorian Englishmen. He bought a large estate at Elveden in 1863 and went on to develop it as one of the premier hunting sites in Britain. After setting a new record in shooting, he attained national popularity as a sportsman.

Dalip Singh's early years as a royal in India at the Lahore court and later during exile at Fatehgarh, where he was moulded in a Christian as well as an English atmosphere, made his acculturation at Suffolk easy for him. As Ballantyne analyses:

In many ways, his childhood at the Lahore court, where from a very early age he was schooled in falconry and the use of weapons, and his subsequent exile in Fatehgarh, where he kept elephants and hawks, prepared the maharaja well for an elite life in rural Britain where blood sports were a highly valued cultural tradition. (115)

His life had all the ingredients of a happy diaspora tale and yet it ended with his reembracing his religion, tragic and desperate attempts to return to his homeland and reassemble his Sikh brethren with the aim of regaining his lost kingdom. The shifting positions in his life become a complex case-study for the negotiation of identity among the diaspora. His position in the community memory remained prominent, as was evident from the rousing reception received by him from the Sikh soldiers in the British army during his visit to Calcutta. So much so that the British government, feeling threatened, did not allow him to reach the Punjab. At the same time, he was a contestable figure, among the Sikh reformers of that time, as some rejected him as a "beef-eating alien" (Ballantyne 98). Some looked upon him as a precocious and rebellious Sikh nationalist leader who had been exploited, ill-treated and exiled by the British masters. He also symbolized the essential pull of roots and religion that irrepressibly drew him towards his motherland and the lost nation-state. Above all, he is a classic example of the failure of a man astride two boats, a failure to reconcile his Sikh past with his Englishness.

2.11. Approaches to the Sikh Past

Singh and Tatla, in the introduction to their book *Sikhs in Britain: The Making of a Community*, which is a splendid study of the way the Sikh community has evolved since its first migrant stepped on to the English soil, emphasize that the contemporary location of Sikhs in the UK is inseparably entwined with the shared colonial past of the Britons and the Sikhs:

The making of a British Sikh community has its roots in the complex Anglo-Sikh relationship that evolved after the conquest of Punjab in the middle of the nineteenth century. During colonial rule in India, Sikhs became the ideal subaltern community, their loyalty rewarded by mass recruitment into the Indian Army and recognition as the ‘favoured sons of the Empire’. (3)

This, however is a continuing debate, with enough diverse views on both the sides, about the exact role played by colonization on the Sikh religious identity. The Sikh religious leaders claim that Sikhism simply developed along the path paved by Guru Gobind Singh, attained its manifestation and fulfilment during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and continued in the same vein post the annexation of Punjab. Whereas, there is an equally strong section of the Sikh historians who underscore the formative role played by the colonial masters in giving a particular direction to the Sikh religion and especially accentuating the martial aspects of the Sikh form for their own purpose. Tony Ballantyne identifies five approaches to these aspects of the Anglo-Sikh past: “the internalist, the Khalsacentric, the regional, the externalist and the diasporic” (4). The internalist scholars, according to him, foreground the inner development of the Sikh tradition, the supremacy of the religious text or the *Shabad Guru*, the collective configuration of the Sikh *panth* and the intrinsic political tussles rather than the outer regional, cultural or colonial agencies that moulded the community. He refers to Harjot Oberoi, who emphasises the *Tat Khalsa* tradition, a normative outline of the forms of devotion and the nature of the development of the *panth*:

Within the context of colonialism, history writing became a crucial tool for community leaders who crafted epic poems, polemic pamphlets, and commentaries on “scripture” in the hope that by clearly defining the

community's past they would be able to cement their own vision of the community's present and future. (5)

The opposite groups of the Singh Sabha reform movement that started in Amritsar in 1873 and in Lahore in 1879 also pondered over Sikh customs and practices to be followed. The Sanatan Singh Sabha group insisted on following observances in keeping with the ancient Hindu tradition such as the criticality of the *Varna* (caste) system and the division of life into *asramas* (stages). The *Tat Khalsa* group of the Singh Sabha, on the other hand, took out a pamphlet titled "Ham Hindu Nahin" in 1898 to clearly demarcate the shift from ancient Hinduism. They projected Hinduism as an all-consuming entity, capable of subsuming all upcoming and minor religious organisations under its fold. In their view, the complacent attitude of the Sikhs and the concerted efforts of the Hindu reformers had obscured the boundaries between the co-existent religions and only a complete adherence to the *Rahitnama* (Sikh Code of conduct), could save Sikhism from being absorbed.

In the early twentieth century, scholars such as Bhai Vir Singh and a little later, after partition Ganda Singh and Harbans Singh came forth with histories that were remedial in nature as they countered the popular beliefs about Sikhism prevalent outside the community. The aim was to correct the erroneous notions created by the European historians like Ernest Trumpp and W.H. McLeod who believed Nanak's teachings to be fundamentally syncretistic. Even Harjot Oberoi, who has been labelled as a member of the McLeodean school, in his *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* emphasizes the unstable epistemological basis of knowledge construction. Underlining the diversity and ingenuousness of historical narratives, with a specific thrust on the period between 1849 to 1920, he notes the creation of a new Sikh episteme during the colonial rule. The impetus for this change however, did not come directly from the British rule, according to Oberoi. He attributes it to the social, cultural and economic reconfigurations that colonialism entailed.

But Oberoi, along with W.H. McLeod and Rajiv A. Kapur, the author of *Sikh Separatism: The Politics of Faith*, and Pashaura Singh, Louis Fenech and Doris Jacobsh who have echoed similar observations about the Sikh past in their doctoral studies, have been vociferously countered and denigrated by the internalist scholars

such as Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon and the much read Sikh historian J.S. Grewal. According to the latter academics, the formerly mentioned Western and Westernised scholars, had fallaciously and unsympathetically applied their empirical methods of historical research and Enlightenment notions to matters of religious faith. They sturdily critique the position of McLeod and Oberoi on the particularity of the early Sikh identity and find serious flaws in their hypotheses:

McLeod and Oberoi refer to the Sikh sources ‘without studying’ their ‘evidence’ in detail. A careful study of the *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas and the compositions of the Gurus in the *Guru Granth Sahib* brings out the ‘Sikh self-image’ which has not been taken note of by any other scholar. Grewal emphasizes that the successor Gurus and the people closely associated with them ‘thought of the path of Guru Nanak as totally new’. (Banga 315)

So, in the context of the controversies regarding the Sikh religious identity between the Khalsacentric Sikh scholars and the Westernised McLeodean school, that identifies a highly organized pattern of practice followed by the Tat Khalsa faction, aimed at delineating a distinct Sikh identity, the former deny the prevalence of any such new external patterns and reiterate that it was instead, a continuation of the religious code very well presaged in the *Guru Granth Sahib* and the *Rahitnama*. Ballantyne attributes the emergence of Khalsacentrism to a “conservative section of a transnational Sikh elite ... who are anxious about the maintenance of tradition in a diasporic age” (13). The regional approaches focus more on studying Sikhism in the context of its regional influences such as the geography, institutions, cultural spirit, economic configurations and political alignments. Here again Ballantyne mentions J.S. Grewal for whom “history is a dynamic story of the shifting relationship between this (Sikh) community and its regional environment” (17).

The approaches that are more significant, from the point of view of this research are the two mentioned at the end, which are the Externalist and the Diasporic approaches. The former assign a pivotal role to the colonial powers in directing Sikhism towards a particular direction. Ballantyne quotes Richard Fox’s *Lions of the Punjab* which argues:

Fox suggests that the British pursued a project of ‘domestication’ when they used military recruitment “to turn the Singhs into guardians of the Raj” while

using “Sikhism’s religious institutions to discipline them [Sikh soldiers] to obedience. Through the mechanism of the “martial races” policy, the British were thus instrumental in the constitution of a new “orthodoxy,” a religious identity that fulfilled the needs of the British, not the Punjabis themselves. (18)

Along similar lines, James R. Lewis gives a detailed discussion on the notion of “martial race” in his essay “Some Unexamined Assumptions in Western Studies” and labels it a habitual or taken-for-granted way of the Westerners, of talking about the Indians in general and more specifically in referring to the Sikhs. In support of his argument, he cites a sort of semi-scientific theory put forth by Sir George MacMunn, according to which multiple variables such as history of violent conflicts, being continuously exposed to different religions, early marriages and health problems caused by poor sanitation in a hot climate had led the race, that was once white and inhabiting cool highlands, into a dilapidated state. Lewis also alleges that the martial race theory “functioned as part of a racist ideology which served to help legitimate British rule in India” (292). The British conveniently used this theory to exclude the Sikhs from the domain of the so-called non-martial administrative and professional occupations that they claimed, were unsuited for the sparring tendencies of the Sikhs. He admits that the notion of martial races was not invented by the British administrators, but the generally accepted idea was exploited very shrewdly by them, to their own advantage. Vedika Kant too emphasises the same point in her 2014 book *India and the First World War: If I Die Here who will Remember Me*, “The British recruited largely according to the so-called ‘Martial Races Theory’, which had at its core the belief that some Indians were inherently more warlike, bringing together indigenous notions of caste and the ideas of Social Darwinism”. The ideological connotations acquired by the term were driven indirectly by the concerns and expectations of British interventionism. For the well-trained soldiers of the erstwhile Sikh army, that had been disbanded by the British, recruitment into the English army was a major attraction that came with the pre-condition of complete adherence to the *Khalsa* Sikh form. Many non-Sikh soldiers had also adopted the Sikh form for that purpose earlier, during Ranjit Singh’s time.

The last approach to the Sikh past that Ballantyne enlists, is the Diasporic approach that views the Sikhs as an originally transnational community, emphasizing how Sikhs have been an on-the-move race, since times immemorial. They traversed

extensively, initially within the region according to availability of water and then post-colonization, to areas outside the state, serving the police or the army under the British regime. He quotes Verne Dusenbury (2008), who in his article “A Sikh Diaspora?” marks the reconceptualization of the Sikh community under the rubric of diaspora, as a people uprooted from their natal land and integrated by a common ethos. Taking the example of Darshan Singh Tatla’s *The Sikh Diaspora: The Search for Statehood*, which he terms as the first ever extensive analysis of the Sikh experience as diaspora, Ballantyne traces the development of Sikh political institutions abroad and the spirited emergence of a specifically Punjabi print culture around the 1980s and 90s. He also highlights the impact of technological communication on the social patterns among the highly diverse global Sikh community. Brian Keith Axel’s *The Nation’s Tortured Body* is also referred to, in underscoring the point that the importance attached to a Sikh homeland is not something that the migrants brought along from Punjab, but rather a notion that evolved out of and was strengthened by the diasporic experience of dislocation. As argued by Axel and elucidated by Ballantyne, the wide dissemination of the images of the tortured bodies of the militants and of the violence unleashed on the Sikhs during the 1984 riots, on the internet, further crystallized the consciousness of the need for a Sikh homeland among the diaspora Sikhs. However, Tatla (1999), Shani (2008) and Axel (2001) concur that other concerns such as “access to education, the status of the Punjabi language, the maintenance of the five Ks, the “human rights” of Sikhs in the West and the centrality of marriage in cultural reproduction as well as the teachings of the Gurus” (Ballantyne, 22) took precedence over the commitment to Khalistan, for most diaspora Sikhs.

Under the same approach is discussed the idea of a Sikh diaspora being considered misrepresentative by Western thinkers on Sikhism, such as McLeod, Karen Leonard and Dusenbury, on the premise that the initial Punjabi settlers in various parts of the globe did not “necessarily define themselves in terms of their religious community” (23). That is precisely the pivotal issue in this research, that had they kept themselves genuinely entrenched in the ‘Word’ of the Guru and directed their lives according to the paradigms of Sikh religion, which being inherently inclusive were accessible to all, their acculturation into their adopted lands would have been tremendously smoothed.

2.12. The Sikhs and the Indian Mutiny of 1857

Some Sikh soldiers from the former Khalsa army who had been absorbed into the British Indian Army, were highly valued for their military capabilities. The *Delhi Gazette* published a report about the Sikh soldiers then, which suggested that they:

will be hated and feared, for their contempt for caste, their disdain of idolaters will always render them disliked by their Hindoo and Muslim comrades, whilst their superior courage and higher military virtues are sure to win for them the favour of their officers. (Qtd. in Ballantyne, 63)

Thus the colonial officials were persuaded that Punjabi, in particular the Sikh soldiers were endowed with military expertise, resolution and were highly reliable, but the authorities were not clear about their commitment, yet. The uprising that quaked the British regime on May 11, 1857, which has now come to be called the first war of liberation by some, tested these earlier assertions made about the Sikhs. The soldiers that the British had trained in the newly annexed province of Punjab, played a crucial role in the mollification of the rebels and displayed true loyalty to the duty assigned to them.

Aspersions have been cast, on the part played by the Sikh soldiers during the mutiny but Khushwant Singh enlists several factors that formed the context of their action. Sikhs, who could have used this opportunity to regain their lost sovereignty, were clueless without a leader. Maharaja Dalip Singh had already been exiled to England, had renounced Sikhism and was involved in converting himself into a Christian English gentleman. Punjab had become a relatively peaceful state post annexation as compared to the tumultuous period following Ranjit Singh's death. Sikh soldiers were encouraged to wear turbans and allowed to have unshorn hair as per their religious edicts. So, they did not share the objections of the Hindu and Muslim sepoys which had initially sparked off the mutiny. The Sikhs, who had been raised on the history of Mughal brutality against their Gurus and ancestors, were unable to conciliate to the declaration by Bahadur Shah, which the Muslim protestors endorsed. There was also ill-will against the easterner Hindustani sepoy, referred to as '*purabiah*' who sneered at the Sikhs as low-caste men. The British, by propagating a new version of the *Sau Sakhi* (hundreds of tales) presaging the joint Anglo-Sikh conquest of Delhi, were actually able to take advantage of the anti-Moghul feeling of the Sikhs.

The outcome of the mutiny however, was an increased mutual faith between the Sikhs and the British rulers, which was cemented by the heroic display of valour by the Sikh warriors in the joint combats undertaken by them. One such glaring example was the Battle at Saragarhi fort in 1897 which was fought between Afghan tribesmen and the Sikhs representing the British Indian Army. In a historic contest, 21 Sikh officers of 36 Sikh Regiment fought thousands of well-armed Afghans and bravely held the front till British reinforcements reached. All of them fought valiantly till their last breath. The British officers were impressed with this rare display of bravado and this resulted in the gradual ‘Punjabiasation’ of the British Indian army.

This reframing of the recruitment policy carried tremendous significance for the Sikh identity. A large number of Sikh agriculturalists had been absorbed into military service and provided a lucrative source of employment, which led to a marked improvement in their living standards. Ballantyne says that the “Sikh reformers identified military service as a domain that could produce, reproduce, and police their vision of a coherent Sikh identity” (65). Since it was mandatory for the Sikh soldiers to maintain the complete form of a *Khalsa*, many non-Sikhs also took the *pahul* (Sikh baptismal rite) and adopted the outer form hastily, to facilitate their entry into the service, as had been done during the Khalsa army days. To some extent, this also led to the dilution of the true Sikh virtues as genuine reverence towards Sikhism was lacking among them. At the same time, it was service in the army that became the foundation for taking the Sikh identity beyond India and giving it a global exposure. This became the seed ground of the Sikh diaspora.

2.13. *Nische kar apni jeet karo*; Sikh participation in the two World wars: the beginning of migration

Initially, despite having well-founded faith in the battle-hardened abilities of the Sikhs and their well-established allegiance, the British were hesitant in involving the Indian regiments of their army in the off-shore conflicts of World War I. Vedica Kant (2014) ascribes it to the British concern with upholding their ‘white-prestige’. Indians could not be employed during a battle with a white enemy as:

Having Indians kill white men in the battlefield could, after all, potentially upset the strict racial hierarchies and threaten the colonial machinery. Having had the experience of killing white men in the battlefield what would stop the

Indian soldiers from thinking that they could turn on their masters? Still, necessity triumphed over ideology.

The Indian soldiers, majorly Sikh, grabbed the opportunity of service in Europe as they would get to see 'vilayat'. Eventually, the first wave of large-scale mobility of the Sikhs across the borders of the British ruled India was brought about by the two World Wars, when the Sikh regiments of the British army were sent to represent the English forces, beginning in September 1914. The later second wave of Punjabi, predominantly Sikh, migrants comprised the labouring class who migrated after the World War II for the reconstruction work in the war-torn England. It is these numbers who became the building blocks of the Sikh diasporic community. As Ballantyne puts it:

In considering these historical layers that shaped the Punjabi migrant experience in connection with the experience of colonialism itself, I underscore the centrality of cross-cultural encounters in making Sikh mentalities and defining the boundaries of Sikh communities over the last two centuries. (Preface x)

Not so long ago in September 2010, a small gathering of Indians got together at a remote hillside in Sussex, in South East England to pay their respects to the Indian war heroes. The number of Indians who had volunteered to fight for the British Indian Army during the First World War was incredibly higher than all the Scots, Welsh and Irish soldiers combined. Up to one third of these soldiers were Sikhs, despite making up a small fraction of the Indian population. In December 2010, the BBC made a magnificent documentary titled "*Remembrance: The Sikh Story*" to commemorate the contribution made by the Sikh soldiers to the two World Wars under the British and their crucial role in saving Britain from the Nazi tyranny. It is acknowledged that they laid down their own lives for the sake of their colonial masters' freedom. They proved their mettle as diehard fighters who persevered till the end, with utmost loyalty and spirit. The impressions left by their performances on the field and their religious uprightness of character are so indelibly etched on the British collective psyche that even today, as brought out in the documentary, the British army shows a special keenness to recruit Sikh youngsters. The Sikhs had always chosen not to surrender to the oppressor's will, but rather stand up and challenge their persecution. In the

documentary, Gordon Corrigan, the Military Historian attributes the Sikhs' martial capabilities to a struggle for survival which had been continually threatened. They had lived lives that gave them the choice between face it or be effaced. According to him, after the Anglo-Sikh wars, the British had felt that it was better to have the Sikhs on their side than to fight against them. The historians Alex von Tunzelmann and Peter Bance also iterate that the British harnessed the Sikh army's power to strengthen their hold across India. By the early 20th century, the Sikh homeland was providing over half the troops of the British army. When the First World War began, the British found it a highly useful source of war conscripts. The only army that was almost as big as and as well-trained and disciplined as the British army, was the British Indian army, predominated by the Sikhs. The intrepid soldiers of the latter readily provided the numbers direly needed to fill the vacuum left by the huge casualties suffered by the former. For the Sikh collective consciousness, to die fighting on the field was an honour in itself. An addition of around one hundred thousand competent warriors, is a certain boost to any campaign. The incidents of Sikh soldiers marching the French streets and the local French citizens greeting them with flowers have also been cited. Jaimal Singh Johal recounts his grandfather's grueling experience in the harsh European weather inside the inhuman trenches, narrating how he had sacrificed his life at the young age of twenty-seven, while saving that of his English officer, Captain Anderson. King George, the Fifth had made a personal visit to the wounded Sikh soldiers suffusing a personal sense of duty in them. Corrigan reiterates that the Sikh soldiers arrived just at the right time and just in the right numbers to save England from an embarrassing retreat back to the Channel ports. The Sikhs were a significant part of the conflict that claimed over nine million lives and a memorial named the Chattri Memorial has been erected at the spot just outside Brighton, where their martyrs were buried during the First World War. The Sikhs were decidedly overrepresented in the award of gallantry medals which included several Victoria crosses. The young British natives and the British-born youth among the diaspora need to be well apprised of this tremendous contribution made by the Sikhs and other Indians, for the British in the past.

But the Sikh soldiers who had hoped that their loyalty would be rewarded with greater autonomy in their homeland, were harbouring a misconception. They received a rattling shock, when within months of the end of the war, the British reverted Punjab

to the Martial Law under a repressive regime which reached its nadir in 1919 when on the day of Baisakhi (the day of the birth of *Khalsa*) a peaceful protest against the British rule in Amritsar, the holiest city of the Sikhs, was responded to by military orders of Acting Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer to the troops of the British Indian Army to shoot indiscriminately at unarmed men, women and children. The incident known as the Jalianwala Bagh Massacre resulted in around four hundred deaths and left more than a thousand wounded. The Sikhs, who had unconditionally supported the British in a campaign that did not concern them at all, felt cheated and betrayed and there was a loss of faith on the intentions of the English government.

Before the Second World War, the Sikhs had already started migrating to Canada and the United States in search of employment opportunities. But by the first quarter of the twentieth century, Indian, along with Chinese and Japanese migrants, began to be resented in those countries because of competition with the Whites in securing jobs. The formation of the Ghadar Party in 1913 and the Komagata Maru incident in 1914 had already started souring the relationship between the Sikhs and the Whites, with the former beginning to perceive the latter as their avowed enemy. The hanging of the young Punjabi hero Bhagat Singh along with his friends Sukhdev and Rajguru in a perfidious manner on 23rd March, 1931 at the young age of 23, enraged the Sikhs further and infuriated their anti-British feeling to spur them to wholeheartedly join the freedom struggle.

It was in this strained scenario with the British government, that the troops of the British Indian Army, with a huge percentage of Sikh soldiers were asked to participate in the Second World War. Even Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of peace is believed to have encouraged the Indians to support England at the time of war as that would please the rulers and they may quit India earlier (Kant 2014). In the 1940s London was burning under bombing by the German forces and sent a plea for help and it was the Indian fighter pilots who came to their rescue. Mahinder Singh Pujji was among the first Sikh Fighter Pilots to sign up and had almost lost his life in the war. He survived a crash and became a popular figure as a turbaned officer. According to Gordon Corrigan defeating Italy and carrying out the Burma campaign would have been impossible without the help of the Indian army. Historian Peter Bance expresses clearly in the documentary '*Remembrance*' that after the war, a myth was created to

replace the earlier myth of Britain as the strong bedrock of the Empire. This myth credited Britain for the success in war but conveniently the contributions made by the armies of the Commonwealth were forgotten. So, the soldiers from other countries including the Sikhs find no mention in that narrative of British glory. Bhupinder Singh Holland, who has achieved the mammoth task of bringing on record the name of almost every Sikh soldier involved in the two World Wars in his two voluminous books, puts the number of Sikh martyrs at 83,005 and the wounded at 1,09,045. He says in the chapter “Two World Wars and the Sikhs”:

At a time when social scientists claim that in reality, the ethical society is located in the West, it is time that it pays attention to what the Sikhs have done for the construction of that part of the world. The Sikhs came forward and helped the Europeans at the time of the grave crisis of World War I and II and gave their lives in thousands and in return, all they are asking for is the free world to come forward and give due respect, that we deserve and to our symbols of faith. (19)

2.14. Push and Pull factors for Sikh migration

Given the invasions and disintegrations that they have witnessed, Sikhs have inherently and continually been an in-transit race. Beginning with the *Udaasis* by the founder of their religion, Sikhs have traversed extensively. A substantial number poured out beyond the national boundaries onto foreign shores, covering boundless distances in search of livelihood as soldiers, labour or traders. Migration has indeed been an almost inevitable phenomenon in the case of the Sikhs:

Sometimes migration has been an adventure, sometimes a necessity; always it has been the mark of an open community with few physical or spiritual barriers restraining a readiness to explore the modern world. Thus migration often has no end; instead it becomes a staging post for further movements and explorations. (Singh and Tatla 33)

The folklore of the culture too, bears testimony to the fact, with the most popular *Gidha boli* being “*Baari barsi khattan gaya si...*” (He had gone to earn for twelve years) (my trans.). Singh and Tatla concur that the tradition of migration is in the danger of turning into a culture, in the case of the Sikhs. Having begun in the

eighteenth century at the national level, it grew into major waves of migration by the twentieth, propelled by several factors. As a pattern, it continues to shape the Sikh culture and impact Sikh religion even today.

In the period before the Second World War, during the second and third decades of twentieth century, owing to the First World War exposure and a little earlier as well, Sikhs from various social strata had started migrating to various places across the globe. One initial example that Pooja Gupta cites in her chapter titled “History of Migration, Settlement and Demographic Profile”, included in the book *Punjabi Diaspora in Britain*, is that of an artisan Ram Singh whom Lockwood Kipling, the writer Rudyard Kipling’s father, took to England in 1891 to design a Banquet Hall for Queen Victoria. From the other side of the social rungs, the affluent Princes of the Raj had also started travelling to Britain as state after Indian state, were annexed to the Empire. Most early Punjabis went as sailors (lascars) employed by the East India Company or as nannies (ayahs) on the return of British officers from India. Earliest Sikh migrants in large numbers, generally went as self-employed peddlers, their occupation referred to as ‘door business’. On the basis of an analysis of the peddler licences issued for the period 1939-40, carried out by Mcfarland, and some recorded testimonies of the peddlers, Gupta establishes that thirty-five percent of these were Sikhs who peddled haberdashery. As far as their social status was concerned, these were demeaning occupations for the erstwhile self-respecting land owners and resilient soldiers. But given the situation at home, with the tough agrarian and land taxation policies of the British government leaving them no profits and no alternative careers available in the state, moving to greener pastures for economic advancement, appeared attractive to many.

The aftermath of the war brought in more chances for the migration of the Sikhs, as those who had already experienced life in a foreign country, invited and sponsored their kith and kin. The war-torn Britain appeared to be a gold-mine of employment opportunities as labour, for reconstruction. There was a dearth of unskilled labour in the industrialised Britain and the migrants sought work mostly in the textile industries and foundries. The 2016 documentary ‘*The Sikhs of Smethwick*’ by the BBC captures this time from the past of the Sikh migration and connects it to the present situation, bringing out the developments. Sikh men hailing from traditional, lower middle-class and mostly illiterate households were catapulted into a completely poles-apart,

industrialised and modernised world of England. They worked in inhuman conditions of the foundries, sometimes with threadbare gloves and footwear. An incident of two illiterate men who could not read the signs and slept inside the furnace to their deaths, with no one coming to their aid, speaks volumes on their plight. They had to face severe racial prejudice, with even movie theatres having exclusive shows for the Whites and other entertainment zones where non-whites were not allowed. Whites vociferously opposed immigration and the environment was physically and psychologically hostile. These enterprising and persevering men struggled to make a success of their migration stories, the overriding desire being that of earning money. As far as maintaining their religious symbols was concerned, these men had to forego keeping their hair, beard and turban as that would have meant no jobs for them in those racially tainted times.

2.14.1 Sikhs and the Partition of the Punjab

Back home in India, another wave of migration was building up as a result of the partition of the Punjab, the unfortunate corollary of the country's independence. The analysis of the phenomenon of the partition of India and the role played by the Sikhs in that can constitute an independent research in itself but suffice it to say that it entailed a double betrayal for the Sikhs. Despite earlier disillusionments with the British government, the Sikhs had hoped against hope that considering their recent significant contribution to the Second World War, the still-in-control foreign rulers would provide some safeguards or make some provisions for them in the partition framework. Yet again, their hopes were completely belied as they were left to helplessly fend for themselves in those turbulent times, revealing the 'use and throw' nature of the imperial regime. Georgio Shani, marks in his book *Sikh Nationalism and Identity in a Global Age*, this callous approach:

Partition, however was characterized by the very *absence* of direct state involvement. Indeed, it was the inability or unwillingness of the departing colonial authorities to maintain law and order which is often cited as a contributory factor for the escalation of violence. (89)

Even among their own countrymen, the Muslim League had bracketed the Sikhs with the Hindus and looked upon them as antagonists. The Indian National Congress too, had convinced the unsuspecting Sikh leadership into agreeing to the terms and conditions of partition, with the false promise of later dividing the provinces on the

basis of predominant population. Congress approved a resolution, requiring that Punjab be divided into Muslim and Non-Muslim regions, but the Sikhs' identity was submerged in the Hindu category, obscuring the lines between both. The guarantee given to the Sikhs by the Congress that they would have a homeland (Punjabi Suba) in independent India, never materialised. Shani attributes Congress's denial, to its desire to maintain the semblance of a secular government:

In order for Congress to preserve the veneer of secularism and, therefore to assuage the fears of Muslim subjects who could not- or might not want to- emigrate to Pakistan, as well as lay claim to being a genuinely 'modern' nation-state which could play a key-role in the emerging international society, it was imperative for the Nehruvian leadership to deny the Sikhs a 'homeland' once the Sikh community had regrouped in East Punjab. Partition, therefore, set the parameters over which the battle for the Punjabi *Suba*, and eventually Khalistan would be fought. (93-94)

So, in the grind of the bigger communities like the Muslims and the Hindus, the interests of the Sikhs, a minority, yet a resilient and ebullient community were easily forgotten and they felt cheated. Khushwant Singh expresses it well when he says that the "carving knife" for drawing the lines of partition "was firmly placed on the Sikhs' jugular vein" (*Vol.II* 251).

The disappointment and trauma of partition pushed the disheartened Sikhs, out of the communalism-ridden frontier zone that their erstwhile peaceful and prosperous state had turned into. Later, the further subdivision of the Punjab left in India, into Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and a much reduced Punjab was another test of faith, based on the speaking of Punjabi language, that the Sikhs lost. The effect of the partition on the religious psyche of those who had been victims of or had witnessed this communal brutality, according to Shani was in fact, strengthening. He quotes a victim as saying, "Partition made me feel stronger religiously. That was the only good thing to come out of that sorry event" (91).

2.14.2 Operation Blue Star 1984

Holocausts, Genocide or slaughter on a mass scale have been an inseparable part of the narrative of the Sikh past. The ethnic term for those was '*Ghallūghārā*' or mass persecution which had originally happened at the hands of the Muslim rulers: The

Chhōtā Ghallūghārā in 1746 in which nearly 7000 Sikhs had been brutally murdered because they refused to convert to Islam and the *Vadda Ghallūghārā* of 1762 which was the mass-murder of 20-25000 Sikhs by the Afghan forces of the Durrani Empire. But the irrepressible Sikhs emerged stronger, after every such cataclysm. The harrowing partition and later in the June of 1984, the Armed forces of the Indian government attacked the most sacred shrine of Sikhism, the *Harminder Sahib* in Amritsar, evoking the same emotions in the Sikh consciousness as the *ghallūghārās*. As a result of that sacrilegious act, Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards, which led to the anti-Sikh riots that swept across India. The toll of these riots is believed to be around quarter of a million Sikhs. From the perspective of this research, it is important to note that this persecution of the Sikh community by their own countrymen brought forth three results. First, the Sikh psyche was permanently shaped along the conviction that the Sikhs as a minority could be readily exploited and their safety threatened by the governments, for political gains. Secondly, this further led to one of the biggest waves of migration since the partition, constituting Sikhs seeking political asylum in foreign countries. Singh and Tatla quote Charles Wardle's answer to a written question in the House of Commons stating that "from 1984 to 1992, 5900 Indian citizens, excluding dependents, applied for political asylum in Britain and most of these were Sikhs" (36). Thirdly and most importantly, as reiterated by Shani, the violence in the homeland generated an explicitly Sikh diaspora. "Sikhs became conscious of constituting a separate, culturally distinct community in the diaspora only *after the* events of 1984. A localized Punjabi identity therefore, gave way to a globalized Sikh identity in the diaspora" (95). Shani also elaborates how venerating the events, such as the recent holocausts is so important for the diaspora. The actual victims would like to forget the painful experience, what Jenny Edkins calls 'struggle over memory' in his book *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, "refusing to acknowledge that anything has changed, restoring the pretence" (2003, 16). The diaspora, on the other hand, memorialize it, as for them "remembering is constitutive of *community*, a way of asserting their own identity as Sikhs" (95).

2.14.3 Double migration of the Sikhs from Africa

Secondary migration also occurred with the Sikh migrants who had been forcibly taken to British colonies as cheap labour on sugar and rubber plantations, and mines,

after the abolition of slavery in 1833. As per a 2013 report compiled by the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, Italy on 'The Punjabi Diaspora in the UK', in 1878, Indians were employed in Guyana, Trinidad, Natal (South Africa), Suriname, Fiji, and East Africa, among other places. Employees from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh worked in other countries, whereas Punjabi and Gujarati workers majorly worked in East Africa. However, after Idi Amin forcibly overtook power through a military coup in 1972 and the Africanization policies of the government came into force, majority of the Indians including the Sikhs were rendered jobless and compelled to leave Africa. Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, and other countries in East Africa were undergoing a process of Africanization that resulted in many Asians losing their jobs or being evicted from their adopted homes. The double migrant Sikhs from Africa, who were mainly from the *Ramgharia* caste of Sikhs, however differed from the other Sikh migrants to UK in their vigorous attitude towards the Sikh form and maintenance of the outward symbols of Sikhism. They had lived as an emigrant community for almost seventy years and had learnt well to preserve their religious traditions. They also had an edge over the later direct migrants from India as far as employability skills and experience were concerned. Eleanor Nesbitt observes on the basis of her analysis that, "socioeconomic status of twice migrants is generally high in comparison with the direct migrants as their English is fluent, and many were professionals or had business experience from Africa giving them a head start in processes of resettlement in Britain" (qtd. in *Young Sikhs*: 22). The attraction of better wages, in comparison to the unskilled agriculturalists coming from India, pulled them towards the UK. With the arrival on the scene, of the Sikhs who took tremendous pride in their faith and its edicts, the overall religious identity and visible presence of the Sikhs in the UK were strengthened and it invigorated those, who had discontinued with the outer symbols of Sikhism due to racial discrimination, to adopt those again.

2.14.4 Secondary migration from Afghanistan

Later towards the last decade of the twentieth century, secondary migration of Sikhs also happened from Afghanistan, due to political disturbances in that country. In the period before independence, these Sikhs migrated to Afghanistan from India and were mainly merchants in that country. Today in Greater London, they are mostly to be found in Southall. Those Punjabis in Afghanistan, who have been compelled to migrate to the UK (and other countries) at different times due to political problems,

witnessed a considerable rise in the period following the Indian independence. They have been fleeing due to threats from the Mujahideen in the 1980s and the Taliban in the 1990s. Under the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, Balpreet Singh, of World Sikh Organization of Canada, carried out a study titled “Overview of the Current State of Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan” in 2016 which brings out the unlivable conditions being faced by the Sikhs in Afghanistan:

The Sikh and Hindu communities have lived in Afghanistan for centuries but now make up less than one percent of Afghanistan’s population of around 30 million. Prior to the collapse of the pro-Soviet regime in 1992, there were approximately 200,000 members of the two communities. The number is now estimated at approximately 395 families, as many Sikh and Hindu families sought refuge in other countries during the civil war due to restrictions on the practice of their faiths. (1)

These Sikhs had thus, faced religious persecution, economic crises, communal discrimination and even threats to their lives in their adopted land where their generations had lived for hundreds of years. They had been pressurised not to cremate their dead, a custom not followed in Islam and even incidents of cutting of their hair have been reported, to force them to adopt the religion of the land. The children who went to schools were physically as well as psychologically abused, making it impossible for them to continue their education. “According to Anarkali Honaryar, a Sikh lawmaker and activist, “there have been incidents where people threw stones at Sikh funeral processions and verbally attacked them” (qtd. in Balpreet: 2). Sikhs have been discriminated against, in giving employment, their businesses constrained, their land holdings forcibly acquired and undue taxes such as ‘*Jizya*’ (religious tax on non-Muslims) imposed on them. “The Los Angeles Times reports “Sikhs say, Afghan President Hamid Karzai’s weak and embattled government rarely counters prejudice by the majority population, which emboldens attackers. Hooligans rob, insult and spit at them on the street, they say, order them to remove their turbans and try to steal their land” (Balpreet 2). Living in such an acrid and hostile environment would obviously have been impossible, resulting in an exodus to comparatively tolerant and economically affluent countries like the UK, which also offered the haven of stronger moral and religious support, given the greater number of Sikhs there. But as reported in a January 10, 2019 story, with the heading “UK MPs meet UK Immigration

minister about plight of Afghan Sikhs and Hindus” in *The Times of India*, (accessed on 20.6.20) even their physical resettlement process in the UK had not been completed, with the specific asylum policies for their accommodation, yet being reformulated. The local Sikh organizations have been highlighting their plight and taking up the issue with the government. The healing of their earlier physical and emotional scars, and their social and psychological settlement in the UK, might still be a protracted progression.

Conclusion: Clearly then, the entwined pasts of the British and the Sikhs need to be seen in the light of the juxtapositions that emerge from the tales of colonial encounters, factors leading to migration and the cultural reconstitution with the schematizing forces at work, which ostensibly provided particular direction to the fashioning of Sikh religious identity. The form that Sikh religious identity developed, cannot be simplistically attributed to the influence of colonial strategies in shaping a culture, as illustrated by the externalist approach of Richard Fox. Nor can it be solely accounted for, in terms of the *Tat Khalsa* episteme as emphasized by Oberoi, a point that is also negated by Grewal who points out that majority of the Sikhs were ‘Singhs’ much before the commencement of the colonial rule and the *Singh Sabha* discourse. I would rather quote Taine here, who attaches tremendous significance to the “acquired momentum” along with “permanent impulse and the given surroundings” in shaping the course of the history of a race:

Look around you upon the regulating instincts and faculties implanted in a race—in short the mood of intelligence in which it thinks and acts at the present time: you will discover most often the work of some one of these prolonged situations, these surrounding circumstances, persistent and gigantic pressures, brought to bear upon an aggregate of men who, singly and together, from generation to generation, are continually moulded and modelled by their action. (Taine 12)

Having faced large-scale persecution at the hands of various invaders and oppressors, it was a natural need of the moment that the Sikh religion should fortify itself and forge a robust identity that could thwart any threats to its existence. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the transformation from Guru Nanak’s *Nirmal Panth* to Guru Gobind’s *Khalsa Panth* did not entail any essential change in the religious path. It was

a transition engendered by the acquired momentum, provided by the demands of the changing times, that continued well into the altered global scenario of migration as well. The British, just happened to utilize that momentum well and exploit it skillfully, to their advantage. The chapter thus, establishes the interrelatedness of the colonial past and the present of migration, between the Sikhs and the British and the mutual impression-formation resulting in the construction of stereotypes. The course of the development of the *qaumic* dimension of Sikhism and the resultant psychic transformation of the Sikhs has also been charted. The Sikhs had gained a consciousness of their distinct identity, that tended to be initially diluted with migration as other concerns of deterritorialization took predominance in the Sikhs' minds, but was later enhanced and crystallized among the diaspora owing to the various events that became push and pull factors, as mentioned in the chapter.

CHAPTER 3

***ATAMTAT BICHARI*—QUEST FOR A FUGACIOUS IDENTITY**

This chapter is a critical exploration of some of the notions of identity formation conceptualized by theorists from diverse backgrounds in different contexts and cultures. In the succeeding chapters, these notions will then be correlated to the evolution of Sikh religious identity among the diaspora, which is the specific focus of this research. Religious identity often plays a pivotal role in the cultural framework of the diaspora, as religion, given its inherent interiority and manifest exteriority, is one of the essences that can be easily taken along, while land definitely, and language and regional legacy to a large extent, have to be left behind by the diaspora, when they migrate. The first generation of migrants, clinging to the vestiges of their own traditionally held and fossilized interpretation of faith, fight tooth and nail to prevent the ideational migration of their successive generations to the concepts of ‘their homeland’, sometimes with disastrous consequences. Various postcolonial and other theorists have focused on the challenges experienced in staying connected to the origins amidst the alien environs and transmitting the cultural and religious inheritance to the descendants in the context of the migratory experience.

3.1 Stuart Hall’s Notion of Identity Reaffirmation through Self-representation

Stuart McPhail Hall, the Jamaican-born cultural theorist and sociologist had earned himself the title of “godfather of multiculturalism”. He has discussed cultural identity in detail and addressed the questions of identity development, cultural norms and artistic expression in the context of diaspora. Two points of view about cultural identity are outlined by Hall. The first defines it as one common heritage. He suggests that they have to ascertain, unearth, bring clarity and express this monolithic identity through media representation, in his essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" included in *Selected Writings on Race and Difference* (2021), which specifically refers to the Caribbean or Black diaspora. This perspective on identity played a decisive role in the Negritude movements aimed at creating and nurturing “Black consciousness” across Africa and its diaspora. In this case, identity was viewed as a sort of “collective true self hiding inside the other artificially imposed selves” (258). Hall brings up a related but different concept of cultural identity as a second point. This is an identity understood as unstable, metamorphic and even contradictory which indicates an

identity shaped by multiple points of similarities as well as differences, something that is determined by the sempiternal “play of history, culture and power” (258). Identity, here is not a sense of security that places ourselves in eternity but the name given to the diverse “ways we are positioned by and we position ourselves, in the narratives of the past” (260).

In the context of Africans, Hall focuses on the dual aspect of “what they are” and “what they have become” (260) after the intervention of history. He denies any unity or exactness in this second kind of identity, because in considering it, the breaks and the discontinuities have to be accommodated. This is an identity that takes the past into account and shapes the future. It is not a given, based on a fossilized past that rises above time, place, culture and history but is rather ceaselessly transformed by their interplay. It is this second kind of identity which is more pertinent to the colonial experience. The Westerners, according to him, had the power to make the colonised see and experience through themselves, as ‘the Other.’ He quotes how in Said’s ‘Orientalist’ sense, we were constructed as different, in the domain of Westernised knowledge. This was not only an outward imposition of those notions as a dominant discourse but the more serious and traumatic aspect was an inner expropriation of cultural identity that “cripples and deforms” (261). In his posthumously published memoir *Familiar Stranger: A Life Between Two Islands*, Hall exemplifies such social construction:

The process of social mapping included the stereotyping not just of blood, but also of cultural characteristics. In colonial discourse, non-white peoples were regularly categorized as congenitally lazy, unreliable, aggressive, over-emotional, over-sexed, irrational, not well-endowed intellectually and thus destined by nature to be forever low down on the scale of civilized societies. (104)

Citing Frantz Fanon’s insight into the colonising experience in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Hall states how this inner compulsion needs to be countered. “If its silences are not resisted, they produce, in Fanon’s vivid phrase, ‘individuals without an anchor, without horizon, colourless, stateless, rootless—a race of angels’” (260). Cultural identity in this sense, is not a fixed essence, an absolute conveyed to us factually to which we can return. It is rather comparable to the mother-child

relationship, as per Hall, which is always-already ‘after the break’. Cultural identities are the points of identification or the marks of sutures which help us connect with the past. The significance of history and its impact on cultural identity thus, cannot be overstated as the past continues to speak to us. It is always created through memory, fantasy, narrative, myth.

Such a conception of identity ranges between two simultaneously working trajectories of continuities and likenesses on the one side and gaps and disparities on the other. Uprooting due to migration brings about a discontinuity with the past but at the same time the shared and formative experience unites people from diverse “countries, communities, villages, languages and gods” (“Cultural Identity” 262). It is a profound experience “of ‘doubleness’ of similarity and difference” (262). He illustrates how the original African Gods who are identified in the spiritual manifestations around the social and the natural world, too have a hybridised existence in the form of “Haitian voodoo, pocomania, Native Pentecostalism, Black baptism, Rastafarianism and the black Saints Latin American Catholicism (practices characteristic of religious hybridity among Blacks) (261). To explain this play of difference within identity, Hall employs Derrida’s notion of ‘*différance*’ to suggest a lack of finality and a contiguous unsteadiness. Identity in this sense, moves out of fixed binaries of this or that and metamorphoses into “differential points along a sliding scale” (263). The similarity lies in the fact that vis-à-vis the developed West, all are underdeveloped and live on the periphery as the ‘other’ but the difference is seen in the way the various migrants with the same roots negotiate their “economic, political and cultural dependency differently” (263). The instability brought in by this situation adds to the complexity, which can no longer be understood in the terms of binaries.

To comprehend the constant positionings and repositionings of the cultural identities, which Hall terms strategic and arbitrary, the notion of ‘trace’ given by Derrida, is considered helpful. For instance, in the Caribbean identities, he illustrates as traces, three different kinds of presences namely the African, the American and the European presences among many others which shape its uniqueness. ‘*Presence Africaine*’ is an origin of the displaced Africans identities. The original Africa seems to have evaporated. Hall pleads for restoration of Africa with all its pristine values by all, especially by the Caribbeans but at the same time expresses doubt that they could return to an original fixed identity “unchanged by four hundred years of displacement,

dismemberment, transportation ... The original 'Africa' is no longer there. It too has been transformed. History is, in that sense, irreversible" (265).

Hall then talks of the second trace in the Caribbean identity, the *Présence Européenne* which is an excluding, imposing and sequestering presence. Yet it is not merely an external attendance that can be effortlessly outgrown, but is rather internalized and becomes a constitutive influence on the identity. Hall again quotes Fanon to emphasise the disintegrating impact of such a power on an individual's identity. "The movements, the attitudes, the glances of the other fixed me there, in the sense in which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye. I was indignant; I demanded an explanation. Nothing happened. I burst apart. Now the fragments have been put together again by another self" (qtd. in Hall: 344).

Hall finds a delicate difference between Africa and Europe. Where Africa was a case of the unspoken, Europe was a case of that which is endlessly speaking and there is a continuous interaction of power and resistance and denial and acceptance, creating what Bhabha has termed the "otherness of the self, inscribed in the perverse palimpsest of colonial identity" (Bhabha "Foreword" to Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks*). In terms of colonialism, underdevelopment, poverty and the racism of color the European presence is that, which has positioned the black subject within its dominant regimes of representations.

The third trace or presence in the Caribbean identity, noted by Hall, is that of the territory, the melting-pot or the 'juncture-point' as he calls it, where diverse people from every other part of the world met and interacted. It is the space where the "creolisations and assimilations and syncretisms were negotiated" (267), by the people who had faced multiple displacements of bonded slavery, colonisation and subjugation to the extent that they had become symbols of perpetual migration, moving endlessly between the centre and the periphery. This *Présence Americaine or Terra Incognita* becomes the seeding ground for diaspora and diversity. Hall specifies that he is not using the term diaspora, in relation to some consecrated homeland, to which all migrants must necessarily return, which he terms the hegemonising form of 'ethnicity' but rather defines their experience with the formation of an identity that is ceaselessly producing and reproducing itself. He describes this condition as a binate state where a sense of abundance and fulfilment coexists with a profound nostalgia for

the origins. This yearning to return to the beginning however, is according to him, like the ‘imaginary’ in Lacan, a return to which is not feasible and rather gives birth to the creative and the symbolic through memory, myth and discovery. For Hall then, identity is constituted constantly through representation as it is an enabling process of discovering new positions to speak from.

Pertaining to the concept of race, Kobena Mercer, the editor of *The Fateful Triangle*, a posthumously published compilation of Hall’s series of Du Bois lectures, quotes Hall as affirming that it has been rejected by science and is rather a social construct. He himself discredits race in favour of ethnicity, but that too is not a panacea, according to him. Community associations marked by shared past, language, practices and religion create imaginary groups out of the cultural backdrop and can lead to two kinds of digressive formations of ethnicity, closed and open:

Closed forms, in which a strong sense of belonging is grounded in a geographic sense of place that excludes what is foreign or alien, often entail potent invocations of “kith and kin” or “blood and soil,” which seek to fix the meaning of ethnos in essentialist or transcendentalist terms. ... (or the) open-ended forms that treat the boundaries of belonging as permeable, new ethnicities do not seek to eternalize identity in myths of purity and origin that rely on exclusionary closure against difference, but instead accept that all collective identifications are subject to fluctuating historical conditions. (qtd. in Mercer: 4,5)

However, in the essay “Ethnicity and Difference in Global Times”, in the same book, Hall enunciates that ethnicity too, is threatened by the “dislocating effects” of globalization, which “powerfully fractures the temporal and spatial coordination, of the systems of representation for cultural identity and imagined community, that are at stake in the concept of “ethnicity” (109). This certainly results in the identity becoming increasingly homeless and rootless.

3.2 Double Consciousness as an Aspect of Self by Gilroy

Paul Gilroy, the very incisive British scholar who has made landmark contribution to Cultural and Diasporic Studies, considered Stuart Hall his mentor. They had worked together at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University, UK in the 1980s and he later compiled a collection of essays in his honour titled

Without Guarantees. He established his reputation with his well-known book *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (1987) in which he demonstrates the prevalence of an ostensibly homogenous 'national culture' in Britain that takes pride in its Whiteness and Christianity and shapes the history of British racism. In his 1993 book *Small Acts: Thoughts on the Politics of Black Cultures*, Gilroy interacts with achievers sharing the African roots, such as novelist Toni Morrison, boxer Frank Bruno, author and critic Bell Hooks, American film director Spike Lee and analyses, the impact their accomplishments have had on the global African identity.

Gilroy is best known for his phenomenal 1993 classic, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* in which he critiques all kinds of absolutism as a basis to identity. He substantiates essentialist ideas about race, ethnicity and nationhood as scientifically disproven and historically questioned. As Sindre Bangstad, the Norwegian Editor of *Anthropology of Our Times: An Edited Anthology in Public Anthropology*, writes in his interpretation of *The Black Atlantic* that the book's publication concurred with a general atmosphere of optimism around the world regarding the possibilities of harmony transcending the historical boundaries of race, nation or class, with the Fall of the Berlin Wall happening in 1989 and the collapsing of the long established legal and political framework of Apartheid in South Africa around 1990. But Gilroy does not go overboard with his faith in hybridity and creolization as some critics believe. Rather he finds these terms inadequate to fully capture the processes of cultural mutation.

In the chapter "'Cheer The Weary Traveller": W.E.B. Du Bois, Germany, and the Politics of (Dis)placement", Gilroy quotes from Bois' writings and especially employs his *The Souls of the Black Folk* to explicate and elaborate on his theory of 'double consciousness' which is highly relevant in the context of diaspora. William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868-1963), who lingers extensively over Gilroy's work as a persistent marker and whom Bhabha refers to as a vernacular cosmopolitan, was the chief exponent in America to structure the African-American Civil Rights Movement that peaked in the 1960s. Gilroy uses Du Bois' thoughts on the relationship between modern Black political theory and European romantic nationalism, specifically in Germany to consider historically the movement of Blacks outside Africa. This entailed a detailed analysis of the forms of organization and cultural politics created by the diaspora, that consequentially emerged out of this

engagement. Three main purposes, according to Bois, underlined these processes. Foremost was the deliverance from slavery and its related oppression, demand for a respectable citizenship and the quest of a space that would be autonomous in respect of occidental modernity. The realistic shape assumed by this action ranged between it becoming a social movement directed towards a logical hunt for a quality life and an acceptance that such efforts were going to be perceived as anti-social in a society stratified by racial hierarchy. These counterforces of ethnic fulfilment and transfiguration form the two sides of Black cultural politics and, in Gilroy's view, are perfectly congruent with the theory of double consciousness promulgated by Du Bois.

Gilroy is, as is often said, interested in routes rather than roots. The Black Atlantic is marked as a space of modern political and cultural formation which is manifested in the "desire to transcend both the structures of the nation-state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity" (19). The duality at the core of this double-consciousness is the curious situation of the diaspora who suffer from the constant sense of being judged and look at their own selves through the eyes of the 'other'. They are forced to split their identities between being American/European and originally African at the same time. It entrenches the special difficulties arising out of Black internalization of an American identity as expressed by Du Bois, "One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (qtd. in Gilroy :126).

He also observes, how when Du Bois tried to bridge the gap between Western modernity and the rural Black folk who wanted to celebrate their "humdrum rhythm of life", their religious appetites offered resistance "fragmenting the fragile unity of preacher" (129). "It was in the religious practices that the buried social memory of that original terror had been preserved. It was frequently revisited by ritual means. ... Du Bois was forced to confront the way it's (Africa's) inhabitants had not been carried forward by the teleological momentum of historical development" (qtd. in Gilroy: 129). In the closing chapters of Du Bois' book, Gilroy notes a confirmation of the transmutation and fragmentation of the integral racial self that attempts to escape from "the closed codes of any constricting or absolutist understanding of ethnicity" (138).

The present day world is again witnessing a resurgence of various shades of the conventional ideas of ethnic or cultural purity, and a revival of its associated nationalism and racism. The focus of Gilroy's work has been his anti-essentialism, his advocacy of global cosmopolitanism that thrives on the conception of the world as a conglomerate or sea of plural cultures and his firm belief in "the flows, exchanges, and in-between elements that call the very desire to be centered into question" (190). However, the need for an anchor is felt by all of us in some way or the other, especially so in the tumultuous racism-ridden times which are resulting in dual, multiple or splintered identities.

In *Between Camps* (2000) he seems to have mellowed, as he poses the significant question whether a world devoid of race can even be imagined. He reiterates that even in the twenty-first century, ridden with ethnic politics, racial hierarchies and superfluous anti-racist laws, an equal society is still elusive. He elaborates how fascism is gripping Europe again and the hybridised popular culture which he had lauded in his earlier books has only resulted in a commodification of Blackness. The recent 'Black Lives Matter' movement in the US corroborates his assertion. People are entrapped in their own respective camps be it racial, national or cultural. He proposes that we must sally forth from all notions of racial purity and static national identity. This he suggests, may be achieved through countering and comprehending the gory histories of colonialism, slavery, repression and massacre on the one hand and by gearing up to stake a rightful claim to a common better future transcending the colour variance, espousing genuine planetary humanism, on the other.

Gilroy weighs the success of 'multiculturalism' in Britain and much like Will Kymlicka does for Canada, shields it against the indictment of miscarriage in his 2004 book *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* Looking intently into the context of the aftermath of the Empire, he points out how the atmosphere in Europe is that of a general melancholy, at having lost their supremacy over their colonies and the whole world. In Britain especially, having to tolerate the presence of immigrants who were once their subjects, is looked upon as an unpleasant compulsion leading to everyday complications. Welfare States have been relegated to the background and general public good seems to have been diminished in the light of commercialization and privatization of the public sphere. He mentions how the likes of Samuel Huntington, have been pronouncing the civilizations incompatible and constantly

clashing. Anyone who sees immigration as a benefit rather than a loss and optimistically expresses the possibility of a positive amalgamation of cultural diversity with a harmonious and peaceful civic order, becomes the butt of political jokes. It is considered politically right to proclaim the demise of multiculturalism, resist immigration and, raise xenophobic and nationalistic slogans. He iterates how multiculturalism had been declared unfeasible right from its initiation and it was struggling to survive among the anxiety ridden times of fundamentalism, terrorism and war-on-terror. But Gilroy offers a very unconventional justification of multiculturalism by advocating the logic that:

political conflicts which characterize multicultural societies can take on a very different aspect if they are understood to exist firmly in a context supplied by imperial and colonial history. Though that history remains marginal and largely unacknowledged, surfacing only in the service of nostalgia and melancholia, it represents a store of unlikely connections and complex interpretative resources. The imperial and colonial past continues to shape political life in the overdeveloped-but-no-longer imperial countries. (*After Empire 2*)

He admits that, that history exists in an ostracized and misunderstood form and is employed only to serve the nostalgic and melancholic purposes of the erstwhile ‘Raj’, but it contains a yet untapped wealth of improbable relations and multifarious interpretative possibilities. The colonial past is a continuous influence in shaping the political scenario, of the now much advanced and highly stressed-to-retain-control, colonising countries. Colonial history, states Gilroy, is being unraveled by some popular works written in the direction of assuaging the national conscience but such revisionist accounts only “endorse the novel forms of colonial rule currently being enforced by the economic and military means, at the disposal of a unipolar global order. These deluded patterns of historical reflection and self-understanding are not natural, automatic, or necessarily beneficial, to either rulers or ruled” (3). He suggests that in a transparent manner the gruesome minutiae of the colonial past, need to be exposed in complete detail and utilized to comprehend the current geopolitical rules in sync with the earlier imperial dominance, which have been sternly enforced after 9/11.

As an alternative to that pervading atmosphere of melancholia, Gilroy visualizes the possibility of a conviviality, arising out of a combative planetary humanism premised on the ubiquity of essential human susceptibility to suffer the injuries inflicted by one race upon another. The underlying principle or the ideal from which such geniality derives is the fact that humans are “ordinarily far more alike than they are unlike, that most of the time we can communicate with each other, and that the recognition of mutual worth, dignity, and essential similarity imposes restrictions on how we can behave, if we wish to act justly” (4). Revisiting the past horrors and reflecting over those might reveal some insights on how to efficaciously meet the challenges, posed by the contemporary global circumstance of living in close proximity to difference, in a harmonised and intrepid manner without any trace of hostility. The need is to consider “how a deliberate engagement with the twentieth century’s histories of suffering might furnish resources for the peaceful accommodation of otherness in relation to fundamental commonality” (3). He admits however, that the creation of such interconnections which could cross boundaries, reach over differences and deal with cultural and economic challenges, continues to remain unattainable. The factuality of the international diasporic scenario is that such cosmopolitan and trans-local alliances are viewed with suspicion, as the notion of culture entrenched in fixed ideas of identity and belonging, has led to the popularity of absolutist perception of national and ethnic difference.

3.3 Responsibility in Collective Identity by Melucci

Alberto Melucci, who was a Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Milan, studied the ways in which, individually and collectively, identity is built into complex planetary societies and examined the various modes of social and collective action. He emphasises that in the modern day information-controlled and technologically connected society, individuals and groups have the availability of far wider options and resources for an autonomous definition of themselves. But they are concomitantly, at the mercy of anonymous apparatuses that exercise systemic regulations through surreptitious coding of the information flow and pressurise them to adapt and alter their behavioural patterns, towards greater integration. These social systems are exceedingly differentiated and allocate liberal amounts of resources to individuals who ostensibly use those for autonomous action, completely oblivious to the fact that even their construction of meaning is being interfered with. The

contemporary conflicts, according to Melucci, do not fall into the traditional classification of conflicts such as industrial issues, ideological clashes or political tussles. At their core, they have the matter of creation and adoption of meaning, which significantly involves a redefinition of the individual and collective action.

In information societies, the formerly private dimensions such as the body, sexuality, emotional relations or the erstwhile subjective processes at the cognitive or motive level and even the biological developments like brain structure or genetic code, are all susceptible to manipulation. The real power in such societies, rests with those who have the capacity to inform. In such a situation, the consciousness of an individual turns more reflexive as the enhanced technological control, entails an exponential surge in symbolic or virtual possibilities. People inhabit a make-believe world of virtual reality where the distinction between the real and the virtual is constantly blurred. Information is being incessantly generated at an unbelievable pace and staying abreast with the changing world is a persistent struggle. He brings forth the plight of a present-day individual in these words:

Individuals find themselves enmeshed in multiple bonds of belonging created by the proliferation of social positions, associative networks and reference groups. We enter and leave this system much more often and much more rapidly than we used to in the past. We are migrant animals in the labyrinths of the world metropolises; in reality or in the imagination, we participate in an infinity of worlds. And each of these worlds has a culture, a language and a set of roles and rules that we must adapt to whenever we migrate from one to another. Thus we are subjected to mounting pressure to change, to transfer, to translate what we were just a moment ago into new codes and new forms of relation. (Melucci, "*Challenging*"158)

The space of our experience is inundated with the multiplicity of social memberships leading to a dilution of the traditional markers of identity such as family, race, class or religion. The oft-arising question about who one really is, cannot be answered with certitude. In the midst of these multitudinous and sporadic spheres of everyday experience, individuals begin to distrust the old tales of their lives in the quest for some 'firm foundation' or 'permanent anchors'. Since, the same pattern of action and

cognition, cannot be transferred from one sphere to another, uncertainty and ambivalence become staple components of life in such a society. There is a constant pressure to choose and face the consequences of that choice. Also, there is a persistent sense of loss and inadequacy, as what one chooses is only a fraction of what one leaves out, considering the enormous availability of possibilities. The arduous outcome is an individual's attempt to grab as many options as possible, bringing about a fragmentation of the self, whose efforts are fruitlessly squandered in a wild-goose chase.

Obviously, identity becomes problematic in such a schema as the multiple facets of the self, negate any fixed impression of individuality, which is rather seen through active processes of identification. Individuals, enact the roles of social actors which provide them a scope of greater independence, and identity in turn becomes more of a field for demonstrating responsibility. It is comprehended in terms of one's ability to deal with opportunities and limitations present in the existent arena of relations that establish one, at a particular moment. As Melucci construes, "Metamorphosis is the response to a world which compels us to multiply our faces, languages and relations" ("Identity" 65). And states elsewhere, in the same article "One frequent way out of the impasse is to dissolve the self and eliminate the social actor. Thus identity becomes merely a presentation of self, a game of masks, a play acted out on the public stage which disguises a void" ("Identity" 64).

The self may be salvaged, he suggests, by again fastening itself to a stable nub in a genuine effort to rebuild an essence, for instance by revitalizing the basic bonds of belonging. It is a resurgence of the primary identities, a necessity to moor oneself to something essential which possesses permanence to resist the dissolution of identity. These efforts at reattaching oneself to one's roots can take various forms of expression. In his 1996 book, *Challenging Codes*, he analyses collective action on this basis and considers altruistic action as one such form. The gratuitous nature of such voluntary work, which the individual chooses to do of his free will, is directed towards serving humanity in general, based on the objectives shared by all members of a like-minded solidarity. Melucci notes that in the contemporary complex societies the willingness to participate in such philanthropic activities has witnessed an upsurge. He attributes it to "lay or religious inspiration" and terms it to be an "act of grace" (168). Such attitudes could also be triggered as reactions to the inadequacy of

the modern welfare systems. “Action is intended to create opportunities for participation; it expresses membership in a civil community, and it makes tangible people's sense of belonging and their feeling that they are bound by duty to work towards common goals” (169). Such action provides an opportunity for expression, to the participants and leads to an almost Aristotelian cathartic sense of social gratification and moral upliftment, at closely experiencing others’ suffering. Altruistic action also becomes symbolic of the autonomy of the civil society, as it invests them with the power of decision making and democratically pressurising the political institutions. Melucci emphasises that:

altruistic action functions as a form of social control: it absorbs a certain amount of tension and potential unrest by occupying itself with the social outcasts that every society produces and which complex contemporary societies seem destined to generate in increasing numbers. Alongside their inability to dispose of the material rubbish of everyday life, complex societies appear unable to handle the social debris created by the processes of exclusion, discrimination, and pauperization that urban culture generates and reproduces. (170)

Selfless action thus, becomes the experimental field where cultural, organizational and interpersonal models, which are going to be later adopted by various institutions, can be tried and tested. The datum that there are persistent needs of the human consciousness which cannot be satisfied by information alone and that “communication and relationships with the other are more than mere exchange” (170), is confirmed by such philanthropic collective action.

Another form of collective action, enunciates Melucci, that is stimulated by the fragmentation of the self in the contemporary society, is the spiritual quest of which religious revivalism is an extreme example and has proliferated in recent times. He quotes Robbins to highlight that “the chief characteristics of religious revivals are their escapism, their tendency to spawn sects, to transform themselves into ‘churches’ or multinational corporations selling ‘holy commodities’ perfectly attuned to the market” (171). But at the same time, he looks beyond this reductionism and accepts the validity of the collective impulse that stokes up this kind of reinvigorated quest for religious realization. The present world is a religiously disenchanted world where

instrumental rationality, seems to have replaced God and brought about a closure of all chances of humanity to ever transcend reality. Society is reduced to a mechanical system of organisation, working according to its own apparatuses and xenophobic about any diversity or difference. The sacred then, reappears as a hope of what is desirable and achievable. “Divested of the ritual trappings of the churches, the sacred becomes a purely cultural form of resistance, which counters the presumptions of power by affirming the right to desire—to hope that the world is more than what actually is. This projective, transcendent force is the antagonistic nucleus of the contemporary spiritual quest. It is a fragile nucleus, under attack from all sides as it is purely cultural” (171). It can take a fundamentalist and totalizing regressive form which works towards the integration of the sect and this “mundanization”, in Melucci’s opinion, “threatens the sacred more than ever before” (171). The true sacred does not inspire one to bring about a change in the social structures, nor does it make one flee from social responsibility. It encourages a clarification of our minds and an improvement in our consciousness at a personal and individual level to bring about changes in one’s own life. It is in this reconciliation with the world, with a greater cognizance and not in escapism from mundane everyday routine, that an individual is reborn and re-formed. He rejects fundamentalism, which asserts the right of a particular religion to administrate the functioning of the social system and recommends those spiritual groups that comprehend the “complexity inherent in the relationship between religion and society and the autonomy of social and political processes” (173). Such a spiritual experience, based on essential values, may translate into group action in the direction of cultural transformation and may entail new forms of civil commitment.

3.4 Accepting Diverse Ways of Being Human by Ziauddin Sardar

Born in Dipalpur, Pakistan in 1951, Ziauddin Sardar moved to Hackney, East London in 1961 and by the age of eighteen, was already publishing *Zenith*, a monthly magazine by and for the Muslim youth, in Britain. Although, his chosen field of study was Physics and Information Science, his defined intellectual domain was modernization of traditional societies. He was well entrenched in Islam, took the sacred journey of Hajj at the age of 25, walking from Jeddah to Mecca along with a donkey and is earnestly concerned with the future of the Islamic civilization in the contemporary times. *The Guardian* says that “Ziauddin Sardar opens a door to places

many of us would not otherwise see” and *The Independent* calls him a scholar, writer, broadcaster, futurist, cultural critic, and a public intellectual addressing him as “Britain’s own Muslim polymath.” “We must search for the answers to the questions he asks if we are to challenge and change the status quo” says *Socialist Future*. The question that he has always asked is “How do you know?” which is also the title of his 2006 book. With his combined understanding of science and Islam, he has reiterated at several places, that there are more than one ways of knowing the world. The knowledge, that one forms or acquires about the world, is dependent on who one is, how one looks at the world, how the inquiry is shaped, the period and culture that contours one’s attitude and the values that compose how one thinks. For him, Islam is more than a religion, culture or civilization. It is a worldview, a *weltanschauung* with which to perceive the world, a way of knowing, being and doing; a way of being human.

The West, for Sardar is not so much a culture or a place, but a particular way of knowing in which rationalism is considered the only way to truth. The Western knowledge, based on this notion, has generated fields of study such as Natural Science, Humanities and Social Sciences where the focus is on asking questions and the West provides the prominent examining mode, according to Sardar. Islam or any other religion affords an alternative mode of inquiry and seeking knowledge, to the Western one and it is also likely to engender different answers to the questions about reasonableness, egalitarianism, answerability and restraint, based on the non-Western notions of being human. Since the motivation was the progression and expansion of the Western territories and the enhancement of their material affluence, the Western categories of knowledge were always Eurocentric and even in the present, in Sardar’s opinion, those disciplines are evolving in the same direction. It is just that during the colonial period, Eurocentrism was explicit and easily discernible whereas in its modern manifestation it seems to be working at a covert level. He terms the contemporary version as technological colonialism which involves only the transfer of “black box” technologies, that are thrust upon the users, with no attention to the contribution that people with any indigenous knowledge, might possibly make.

In *How Do You Know?* Sardar has written an article titled “Managing Diversity: Identity and Rights in Multicultural Europe” where he emphasises that diversity is not only an inevitable condition of the present-day world, but also one of its biggest challenges. Humans face and attempt to tackle diversity, at the level of communities,

different ways of being and doing, multifarious identities and even the extensive variety that nature offers. If the beings aspire to a harmonious existence, akin to the proverbial state of paradisiacal peace, they need to accept, appreciate and encourage diversity and make space to accommodate difference with all its dissimilar aspects. Talking of identity in the context of diversity, he quotes Amartya Sen to reject the two generally accepted presumptions about identity: that we all have a single, predominant identity and that one can discover one's identity. He accentuates that we all exist with multiple identities and employ a different identity in various contexts and despite the constrictions of community and tradition, we have the availability of choice to prioritize between simultaneous alternative identities. Consequently, identity has assumed a dangerous perception, leading to multiplicity too and becoming intensely confounding. Being a British citizen and counting himself as one of them, he expresses how the English identity can no longer be exclusive:

To accommodate diversity, we have to come to terms with multiple and changing identities. And the most fundamental change is this: all those other categories through which we in Europe defined and measured ourselves – the 'evil Orientals', the 'fanatic Muslims', the 'inferior races of the colonies', the immigrants, the refugees, the gypsies – are now an integral part of ourselves. It is not just that they are 'here', in Europe as an integral part of the Continent, but their ideas, concepts, lifestyles, food, clothes now play a central part in shaping 'us' and 'our society'. The distinction between 'us' and 'them' is evaporating; and we must adjust to this radical change. (*How do* 273)

But diversity, declares Sardar, is not a novel phenomenon, as even in history most societies have been multicultural. India for instance, has always been an assortment of different religions, cultures and ethnicities. Similarly, Britain with its Welsh, Irish and Scots was multicultural even before the invention of multiculturalism. It was assimilation, in the 1950s and 60s, which aimed at wiping away the cultural identity of the immigrant communities. It was followed in the 1970s and the 80s by the integration policies that believed in homogenization and transformation of the immigrants into indiscernible members of the dominant culture. Following the disappointment of this hegemonic effort, the concept of "celebrating difference"

appeared ambitiously. It was amply displayed in clothing, food and the way the members of these multi-ethnic communities furnished their homes, which exhibited deep repercussions of the cultures of immigrants. Such intermixing of cultures has brought forth the synthetic generation of hybridised identities, whose multiple voices constitute the racial mix of modern European society and are palpable in the contemporary art, literature, movies and music. Racial harmony though, laments Sardar, is conspicuously absent.

Multiculturalism that came to Europe from America, had become more of a fetish where the misplaced focus was on highlighting difference. Sardar cites the Bhikhu Parekh report 2000, titled *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*, that stressed the need to “treat people with due respect for difference” which led to the Governments erroneously insisting that difference should be exhibited and incessantly celebrated. The outcome was a commodification of difference, amply visible in the museums and art galleries, where it was “regularly constructed, fabricated and paraded, as a sign of enlightened plurality. The undue emphasis on difference and ethnicity, has not only turned multiculturalism into a commodity, it has made true multiculturalism impossible. This is not an accidental result; but a product of initial design” (277).

Echoing Hall, Sardar too, reiterates that fragmentation is the byproduct of overemphasizing ethnicity. Diversity becomes an unfathomable problem, if all ethnicities claim immutable rights to assertiveness and especially so for the various younger generations, who are not so well-versed with their respective ethnicities. They “manufacture new ethnicities to show their distinction. The insatiable desire for difference can never be satisfied: it can only lead to perpetual dissatisfaction, frustration, animosity and riots” (279). Multiculturalism, to become meaningful and efficacious in the UK, has to on the one hand, give equal access and opportunities for political representation, economic pursuits and education to the immigrant minorities and on the other, shift away from the irrational stance that the ethnic others have to transform and become more like the European society to a more humane acceptance that the latter can also be as fallible as all other human cultures. What is needed is not a sincerer obligation to liberal values based on individual freedom but rather an alteration of those values towards maximum inclusion.

He goes on to elaborate in the section titled “Diversity and Rights”, of the same article that a significant requirement of the present times is to realise that liberalism, along

with its definition, is not the monopoly of the Western tradition. Most of the cultural minorities in Europe have their own identifiable liberal traditions, which are worth appreciation and espousal. Hegemonic ideas, such as assertive liberal individualism at the cost of groups and communities, need to be eschewed. The notion of the individual being prioritized before the society, as a “self-contained, autonomous and sovereign being who is defined independently of society” (282) is exclusive to the Western culture. He cites the examples of various minority communities and cultures that are woven into the fabric of multicultural Europe, in which the individual defines himself in terms of his “relation to a holistic and integrated group: the family or clan, the community or culture, religion or worldview” (282). For the communities of Eastern origin, the society takes ontological precedence over the individual. Sardar points out that this kind of integration is seen among the Muslims, who have their Friday mosque collectivity at the local level and the *ummah* marking the whole community at the international level. Hindus have the all-important concept of *dharma* to guide them about the code of conduct, morality, truth, uprightness, *karma* and the role of religiousness in life. Referring to Sikhism he says:

In Sikhism, the prime duty of a human being is *sewa*: there is no salvation without *sewa*, the disinterested service of the community without any expectation. The rights of the individual are thus earned by participating in the community’s endeavour and thereby seeking *sakti*. That’s exactly what the Sikh Gurus did themselves. Thus cultures based on such notions as *dharma* and *sewa* are not concerned with the reductive exercise of defining the ‘rights’ of one individual against another, or of the individual against the society: the individual is but a single knot in a web of material, social, cultural and spiritual relationships and his/her duty is to find a harmonious place in relation to the society, the cosmos and the transcendent world. (“*How do*” 282-83)

The individual in the Western liberal context is provided with all possible avenues to pursue his personal goals and that puts him at crossroads with the community because he makes his own moral choices. The focus is not on the essential values and the ends based on those, but rather the pursuit of whatever ends have been chosen to strengthen one’s position within the society or community. In such a scenario, the individual

often has a collection of varied and fluid contextual identities which preclude his being viewed as an absolute or distinct entity, separate from the society. He quotes Will Kymlicka, who writes appreciatively of Canadian multiculturalism and stresses the importance of 'group rights', to reiterate that it is imperative for European democracies to think beyond the individual as a microcosmic package and consider the society as a collection in which the difference of each community is respected and protected.

To come out of the quagmire that the pluralistic world has turned into, Sardar suggests that the solution lies in the acceptance of the fact that we all see the truth differently, on the basis of our varied perspectives and historic involvements. Our perception of truth shapes our lives as individuals and communities and directs our unique and culturally different ways of being human.

Individuals are persons who incorporate their families, communities and regions within them and should be allowed to lead their lives according to their version of the truth and their interpretation of it:

We need to recognise that any identity is the means to synthesise similarity through difference and to see difference as discrete means of expressing basic similarity. We need to move away from the politics of contested identities and ethnicities that heighten artificial differences towards acceptance of the plasticity and possibilities of identities that focus on our common humanity. Living identity, as opposed to the fossilised to die for variety, is always in a constant flux. It is an ever-changing balance, the balance of similarities and differences as a way of locating what it is that makes life worth living and what connects us with the rest of the changing world. (286-87)

In the other article in the same book titled "Beyond Difference: Cultural Relations in the New Century" he emphasises the key role of history in shaping the present cultural relations which he defines as the relations among different races and communities inside Britain, as also Britain's relations with the world outside. These relations have assumed supreme importance because they come with histories attached and those histories condition our thoughts, preventing us from contemplating any paradigm shifts that would move in the direction of developing an acceptable

unanimity. He stresses how both the concepts of modernity and multiculturalism need to be transcended. Modernity, according to him materialized in Europe after the Enlightenment and posited itself as a higher mode of existence on the hierarchical ladder as compared to the other means of “being, doing and knowing” that are “implicitly seen as inferior” (292). Modernity views the other traditional societies as fixed in the past and incapable of understanding the modern apprehensions about human rights and democracy. The modern Western British Europeans took it upon themselves to disseminate that enlightenment to the not so fortunate regions of the world. The conscious or unconscious aim was always to associate the indigenous ideas of culture with superstition and oppression, to substitute those with the so-called liberal notions considered the passport for the traditional societies to enter into the twenty-first century.

Globalisation, says Sardar, is the new appellation given to the colonial political economy which continues to subvert the systems of sustenance traditionally followed by the apparently backward non-Western societies and he quotes Ashis Nandy, the Indian political psychologist and critic of European colonialism to elucidate the attitude of the elite in such societies, who have acknowledged their retrograde position with regard to modernity. Their interpretation of their own culture and even their resistance to the Western sentiments revolves around this perception, breeding in turn a loss of self-esteem. The quest to replenish that loss leads in the direction of reaffirming the unique features of one’s culture which, more often than not, clash with modernity but have to be “cherished and defended as the essence of one’s self-identity” (290).

It is this essence of self-identity that sometimes takes the extreme form of fundamentalism, in the context of religious identity. Sardar, who is a renowned Islamic scholar and has served as a Commissioner on the Equality and Human Rights Commission, UK, has written the Introduction to *The Britannica Guide to The Islamic World: Religion, History and the Future*. With his in-depth study of the history and development of Islam, he terms the Islamic world a very complex one which is, despite the shared religion, far from being a composite whole and attempts to analyse the factors that led to the spread of fundamentalism among its followers. Muslims, he surmises, are all in a way fundamentalist, as they define a true Muslim to be one who believes the Koran to be the unconditional and incontrovertible Word of God and on

the basis of that they create a “unique vision of a centralized state that would rule all aspects of the lives of their citizens” (Sardar XIX). Such a state usually takes a theocratic and totalitarian form, in which the “persuasive moral God is replaced by a coercive, political one” (Sardar XIX). But a fundamentalist approach of this sort to Islam is, in his view, ahistorical because it perceives Islam not as something that developed in history with all its human strengths and weaknesses, and was interpreted in the lives and thoughts of its adherents, but a utopian notion that existed beyond practicality and had no concept of progress, human advancement or ethical evolution. It is not open to alternative interpretations of Islam and labels those advocating them, as weak, heretic or apostate Muslims, thus obliterating the diversity that Islam had contained for almost 1500 years. He visualizes a viable future for the Islamic world in the 21st century based on acquiescent politics, more liberal latitudinarian society and a new contemporary interpretation of Islam that defines the meaning of being a Muslim in the 21st century. Underscoring the rational aspects of Islam, he iterates:

Fortunately, the tools for adjusting to change and evolving a progressive outlook are at the very heart of Islam. Such fundamental concepts of Islam as *ijtihad* (reasoned innovation), *ijmii* (consensus) and *shiiira* (consultation) can be used to develop contemporary models of governance and social change that are based on the needs and aspirations of ordinary Muslims. ... The last decade, however, has seen the emergence of a new approach focused on reform within Islam based not on accepting the *Shari'ah* as a given, inherited and immutable historic body of law but as a work in progress that needs to be changed, rethought, remade, and updated to accommodate, and be relevant to, contemporary times. (Sardar XXI)

So, there is an increasing percentage of the followers of Islam, that vigorously champions the reinvention and rethinking of religious tradition, while retaining and remaining true to its original spirit. The religious identity of the Muslims is shaped in accordance with the Islamic tradition but they find it disregarded, curtailed and considered derelict as an inappropriateness, in the present-day world. If the future potential of Islamic religious tradition has to be estimated in a balanced manner, it envisages a serious appraisal of the religious thoughts and accepted wisdom, as those have been conveyed through history. The relevance of the “cherished values, ethos,

and world view” of Islam have to be reestablished to daily life in “contemporary circumstances” (Sardar XIX).

Even in his book *Balti Britain*, in which he traverses the major Asian hubs in the UK such as Bradford, Glasgow, Birmingham, Oldham and Tower Hamlets to study the wide range of culture, food habits, origins and religions of the Asian migrants, Sardar brings out with an autobiographical touch, how all these groups have a history of belonging in Britain which has been conveniently forgotten. He charts the whole course of his life right from the diverse attitudes of his two grandfathers towards the British regime, to his family’s migration to an unwelcoming foreign land in the 1950s, through his adolescence which was deeply marked by the hostility faced by the immigrants in their adopted land, to his adulthood in which he emerges as a product of two dissimilar cultures, but realises how deeply entangled the pasts of his two countries are. He points out how in contemporary Britain, migrants were looked at as a new phenomenon, that had suddenly flooded the streets of Britain, with no connections in the past and were dealt with in the same light:

We had come it seemed from nowhere, in such vast numbers that we created pandemonium. Enoch Powell MP predicted ‘rivers of blood and tears’ would soon be flowing on the streets. Mine did and so did that of many like me. As new people, we were washed of history, shorn of connections, confronted only with new ground to break, devoid of expectations, but expected to be grateful for our place in Britain and compliant with what Britain condescended or grudgingly made available. (“*Balti*” 230)

He cites the example of the book *Immigration and Integration* subtitled ‘A Study of the Settlement of Coloured Minorities in Britain’ by Clifford Hill and notes how the history of immigration had been distorted to show that the Asians had begun to arrive from the ‘New Commonwealth’ in the 1950s. Whereas, he is informed by Hamayun Ansari, a researcher on the history of Asians in Britain, that there were four phases of Asian arrivals, with the earliest one being 1600 to 1830s. The second phase was from the 1830s to the First World War, the interwar years constituted the third phase and the fourth one comprised the post-Second World war period or the reconstruction phase of the 1950s and 60s. He learns from him how during the Second World War,

the mainstay of the British army had been nearly 2.5 million Indians, who had fought gallantly and had been awarded 31 Victoria Crosses, the highest bravery awards. Even in the Burma campaign, which was fought after the victory in Europe, 27 VCs were conferred predominantly on Indian soldiers. In 1939 when Britain and Germany went to war, India by virtue of being a colony was understood to be a part of it and the Indian Army came forward as the biggest volunteer army ever accumulated. The auxiliary work for the armed forces also employed the services of around 8 million Indians and munition production absorbed an additional 5 million. Indians labored in nearly twenty centres, assembling aircrafts. “Then there was the matter of the merchant navy, Britain’s lifeline in its darkest hours, which formed the shipping convoys that kept the nation fed and supplied so it could continue the fight for its survival” (236). And yet, until 6 November 2002, there was no memorial in Britain to commemorate the sacrifices of these valiant Indians, majorly Sikhs, who played such a crucial role in the sustenance of the empire and the succeeding generations of the migrants being born there as well as of the natives, were almost oblivious to the existence of this history. Sardar expresses surprise that the presence of Asians like him on the streets of Britain is looked upon as a problem of the new era and the past presence, since as early as the seventeenth century, along with the indispensable contribution made, is totally obliterated from memory. The trouble is not in the retrieval of the past and the migrants’ presence, but rather lies in the reconstruction of the relations and the present day treatment of the Asians, along the new perspective.

He rues, how there is a lack of evenhandedness, transparency and uprightness about the cultural diversity of British culture and how it is the British natives who need to be convinced about the positives of multiculturalism. For the white natives, embracing multiculturalism means subverting the history they were familiar with and “giving the minorities a sense of belonging and pride in their ancestry requires... the wholesale dismantlement of British identity” (335). The British Right, had always suspected immigration and cultural diversity, but the 2001 riots in British areas such as Burnley, Bradford and Oldham and later bigger disasters like 9/11 attacks in New York and the 7/7 terrorist bombings in London, stimulated even the Left-leaning liberals against multiculturalism. Sardar quotes Hugo Young, calling him one of the most respected liberal commentators, who wrote in the *Guardian* on 6 November, 2001 as defining multiculturalism which “can now be seen as a useful bible for any Muslim who insists

that his religio-cultural priorities, including the defence of *jihad* against America, override his civic duties of loyalty, tolerance, justice and respect for democracy” (336).

He stresses the antipathy felt especially towards the Muslims, who are frequently expected to demonstrate their allegiance to Britain and British values, and it is their history and cultural heritage that is threatened by subordination within Britishness. Here too, he refers to the report compiled by Bhikhu Parekh in 2000 and includes a conversation with him in the book. Parekh gives three insights into multiculturalism, explaining first that all human beings grow up in a specific culturally structured world that makes them develop a culturally derived system of meaning and significance, and renders them culturally embedded. Secondly, diverse cultures realize limited facets of human abilities and sentiments, comprehending the totality of human existence only partially. Every culture thus, requires other cultures for better self-understanding, for expansion of its intellectual and moral prospects, and for preventing it from perceiving itself in narcissistic and absolutist terms. And finally, that all cultures are at core, plural and reveal an incessant exchange between its various components of tradition, making the identity based on them liquefied, multiple and dynamic.

3.5 Ashis Nandy’s Interpretation of the Secularization of the Colonial Identity

Ashis Nandy, the sociologist turned psychologist, was a Christian by parentage and his early schooling took place in Christian missionary schools, but he grew up to espouse the ideas of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who, to his mind, gave a purely Indian approach to the question of secularization. In 1983, Nandy wrote his well-known book *The Intimate Enemy* and he claims that upto that time, there was no serious study of colonialism in South Asia, that dealt with those aspects of it which pertained to the colonisers and the colonized as persons or individuals, and the mental or psychological impact expansionism had not only on the colonies but on the perpetrators as well. He defines colonialism as a “game of categories and politics of knowledge” (117), which will survive as long as politics and games survive in the world. The game is initiated by homogenizing the past into a level field, worked upon by pseudo theories of progress, which excluded those communities which declined to let go of the traditional and mythopoetic elements of their past, not allowing those to

be historicized as they were important constituents of their selves. Such communities continue their quest for the vision of an ideal society through their utopic imagination, into the past. They remain however, according to Nandy, at a double disadvantage. They are given to understand that their self-definitions based on traditions have nothing worthwhile to offer to the successive generations, who are besotted with the progressive future, promised to them by the Western notions and developmental ideas. And secondly, if anyone recommends a return to the past as a repository of cultural resources, he is labelled an over-romantic cultural nationalist. Most of the Asian and African elites, says Nandy, cannot revert to their past without a sense of embarrassment. Nandy also points out how the colonial culture revamped the complete system of education and the socialization process to cultivate the notions of rationality, maturity, well-being and sanity which automatically pilloried all disruptive opposition as irrational, immature and bordering on insanity. The colonized were psychologically manipulated to fight the established authorities in accordance with the conventions approved by the colonisers themselves. They started measuring themselves by the yardsticks specified by the foreign masters, who spurred them to join the rat race of progress.

Being a psychologist, Nandy takes recourse to psychology to explain in terms of psychoanalysis the process of “identification with the aggressor” (7), in the context of British colonization of India. In the essay “The Psychology of Colonialism” he elucidates how the ruler and the ruled were bound together in a mutually affective relationship, with the dominant visitors viewing the Indians as “crypto-barbarians who needed to further civilize themselves” and the natives, in all innocence, seeing the “British rule as an agent of progress and as a mission” (7). The Indians, genuinely started looking at the acquisition of more British traits, as the only option for their salvation:

They may not have fully shared the British idea of the martial races—the hyper-masculine, manifestly courageous, superbly loyal Indian castes... did resurrect the ideology of the martial races latent in the traditional Indian concept of statecraft and gave the idea a new centrality. Many nineteenth-century Indian movements of social, religious and political reform—and many literary and art movements

as well—tried to make Ksatriyahood the ‘true’ interface between the rulers and ruled as a new, nearly exclusive indicator of authentic Indianness. (7)

Citing the examples of two texts, Nandy demonstrates how popular mythology was dramatically redefined to fit the changing values under colonialism. First he picks up the Bengali epic *Meghnadvadh Kavya* written by the flamboyantly Westernized Michael Madhusudan Dutt who subverted the heroic roles of Rama and Lakhsmana and projected them as “weak-kneed, passive-aggressive, feminine villains and the demons Ravana and his son Meghnad into majestic, masculine modern heroes. The epic ends with the venal gods defeating and killing the courageous, proud, achievement-oriented, competitive, efficient, technologically superior, ‘sporting’ demons symbolized by Meghnad” (19). Secondly, he picks up Bankimchandra Chatterji’s novels and essays in which he attempts to marginalize the earlier model of Hinduism and projects into the erstwhile glorious Hindu past, the Christian qualities of adult masculinity. The novel *Anandamath* by Chatterji which was instrumental in infusing nationalistic spirit among the freedom fighters, especially Bengali terrorists, transformed the traditional concept of Hindu religion. It was this very consciousness, which Hindu reformists tried to develop further under the belief that the Hindus had been great in ancient times but the spirit had degenerated due to their loss of the original Aryan qualities and drifting away from true Ksatriyahood. As a result, several notions such as converting Hinduism into an organized religion, with systematized priesthood, church and missionaries, approval of the idea of proselytization and religious consecration (*shuddhi*) were, according to Nandy, Semitic elements introduced into 19th century Hinduism, under the influence of Western Christianity. He, thus, traces the mental colonization, which irreversibly reformed the cultural priorities of the colonized societies towards more aggressive masculinity and militaristic traits.

In the other essay “The Uncolonized Mind”, Nandy compares the impact of the colonial experience on the Westerners like Rudyard Kipling and George Orwell, and the natives such as Aurobindo and Mahatama Gandhi. Quoting from Edmund Wilson’s essay “The Kipling that Nobody Read”, Nandy reiterates how India had become an indelible part of Kipling’s idea of an idyllic childhood, concomitant with his “years of safe delight” and his own “garden of Eden before the Fall” (qtd. in

Nandy: 3). Later when he was sent to England for learning the English ways, he forcibly taught himself that his true self lay there and he had to learn not to be over-sympathetic towards the victims of the English aggressors. Through identification with the antagonists and loyalty to their values, the victimhood could be rather glorified. Kipling was torn between his two antithetical selves: “the hero loyal to the Western civilization and the Indianized Westerner who hated the West within him, between the hero who interfaced cultures and the anti-hero who despised cultural hybrids and bemoaned the unclear sense of self in him” (68). Kipling’s dilemma resulted in an imposed choice that became a self-destructive tragedy of his life. His martial, vehement, sanctimonious self which disapproved of passivity and overvalued armed force, faced frequent bouts of depression and stared at fatal madness. Nandy highlights how colonialism in the attempt to make the Western consciousness compatible with its needs, took away the totality of every White man and made him define himself along new lines.

Nandy brings forth how Kipling was a product of the Indian culture, who later adopted the Western consciousness, believing in its moral, martial and political supremacy and compares him to Aurobindo Ackroyd Ghose, who was raised as a culturally European child, whose father abhorred everything Indian and was known among his friends for his fiercely Anglicized manners. Nandy views both as creations of the “psychopathology of colonialism” (85). While Kipling had to despise and abandon his Indianness to turn truly Western, Aurobindo instead gave a more universal response to the dilemma by espousing his truly Indian qualities, without disowning the West. It is his spirituality which helped him transcend the duality and think in terms of the human race and its evolution in general. That in no sense means, that his pain was any less than the torturous experience undergone by Kipling whose, posthumously published autobiography describes his years at Southsea, England as ““a House of Desolation”, characterized by restrictions, bullying, persecution and some sadism” (66) and the outcome of which was “a severe nervous breakdown, made more horrible by partial blindness and hallucinations” (67).

With a sick and hysteric mother and a totally Westernized father, Aurobindo was oppressed by the West, in more ways than one. The school that he attended, was an elite convent where his fellow students were mostly White and the only medium of

instruction was English. Aurobindo indicated signs of introversion and occasional loss of speech. He felt a sense of deprivation and alienness in his own native surroundings. At the age of seven, he was taken to England and left there with strict instructions to his tutors not to let him form acquaintance of anything or anyone Indian. After a span of 14 years, which is comparable to a '*Banvaas*' there, he returned to India with a totally denationalized self. Finding his father dead and mother in an advanced stage of insanity, he renounced the world, heartbroken and began his spiritual quest. He was also pulled into the vortex of the national struggle but he avowed to fight it with *brahmatej* that came through *gyana* in place of *ksatratej* or the martial potency. Aurobindo's life ridden with inner pain and his spirituality were his efforts to retain the values which he had been forced to give up. His ultimate surrender to a Western companion Mira Paul Richards with all his Indianness intact, was symbolic of the "freed East" meeting the "non-oppressive West" (99). Nandy understandingly writes:

What looks like obfuscation and compromise with evil may be seen also as a truer understanding of the oppressors whose suffering and decadence is, for once taken seriously by their victims ... that in every situation of organized oppression the true antonyms are always the exclusive part versus the inclusive whole ... not the past versus the present but either of them versus the timelessness in which the past is the present and the present is the past, not the oppressor versus the oppressed but both of them versus the rationality which turns them into co-victims. (99)

Aurobindo fashioned this kind of a response to the Western consciousness and it emanated out of extended victimhood. The victims of a culture of masculinity, adulthood and, supposed moral and cultural superiority, says Nandy, shield themselves by concurrently on the one hand complying with the typecast images of the authorities, by enhancing those aspects of their selves which take them closer to the powerful, while on the other keeping alive in one corner of their hearts, an underlying defiant awareness of the absurdity of the victors' notion of the defeated.

Nandy further elaborates this idea of response to colonialism, by taking the example of Gandhi who, like a true son of the soil, was successful in designing the exit of the British from India. Having well-imbibed the Western consciousness through the Western education system, having understood its pros and cons and also having

successfully resisted the wrongful impositions of its notions in South Africa, Gandhi adeptly demolished the cognitive as well as the ethical grounds on which imperialism was based. Nandy propounds, that Gandhi established the hegemony of the theory of imperialism, without winners and losers. By evaluating colonialism through Christian values and proving it to be pure evil, and estimating the gains and losses from such political, economic, cultural and technological invasion to critique modernity, Gandhi “threatened the internal legitimacy of the ruling culture by splitting open the private wounds” of its staunchest advocates like Kipling, who considered rulership as a means of “hiding one’s moral self in the name of the higher morality of history, in turn seen as an embodiment of human rationality” (101). Instead of becoming a real antagonist in the Western terms, someone who would be a radical critic of the West or an aggressive champion of Indianness, he looked at the West with the traditional, non-modern Indian gaze and reduced it to just another way of living which had “unfortunately for both the West and India, become cancerous by virtue of its disproportionate power and spread” (102). Gandhi mastered the art of protesting in the most non-protestant manner, the bedrock of which was his inner spiritual sense. To ensure one’s sanity and survival, the trick lay in splitting one’s self, to dissociate the external suffering and violence from the essential inherent strength. The survivor induces a psychosomatic state, in which the real surroundings or one’s immediate context is rendered partly dreamlike or unreal. Nandy quotes Terence Des Pres from *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camp* to elaborate on this state “in order to live and stay human, the survivor must be in the world but not of it” (109). He explains how the Indian spiritualism helps the individual make sense of an inner well-ordered division which, rather than causing any rupture and endangering mental health, creates a peculiarly strong understanding of reality. He also quotes Ananda Coomaraswamy to bring out how an attainment of this state, helps one to “become the Spectator of all time and all things” (109). Through the example of Gandhi’s response to imperialism, he thus underscores the higher courage and endurance required for a non-violent resistance to oppression and a transcendental outlook towards the suffering of the oppressor.

3.6 Hybridised Identities and Notion of ‘Sly Civility’ by Bhabha

Homi K. Bhabha, the Indian-English Postcolonial theorist, has explained identity through neologisms such as hybridity, mimicry, mockery, liminality, ambivalence etc. The notion of hybridisation, is applied to the surfacing of overlapping ambivalent cultural forms, out of multiculturalism. The imperialistic phenomenon of colonialism, rather than being viewed as a happenstance of the past, has been seen and analysed in terms of the influence, its histories and cross-cultural interactions, have had on the present cultural formations especially in the current scenario, which is economically and technically globalised. Focusing on the colonial encounters between diverse cultures and the consequent opportunities of cultural mixing between those, Bhabha identifies how mutual impact results in the emergence of interbred identities, using a biological metaphor. In his well-known essay “Signs Taken for Wonders” he extends the meaning of hybridity to signify a subversive tool employed by the colonised to counter the oppressive strategies of the colonisers. Hybridity appears in many spheres and in different forms such as cultural, racial, linguistic and religious, and cannot be treated as a generalization. It is an indication of the productivity of the colonial authority, whose process of domination is reversed through the production of differentiated identities, that disquiet the imperious attitude of the colonisers:

If the effect of colonial power is seen to be the production of hybridization rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of native traditions, then an important change of perspective occurs. The ambivalence at the source of traditional discourses on authority enables a form of subversion, founded on the undecidability that turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention. (112)

He points out, the schism between “the grandiose rhetoric of English imperialism and the real economic and political situation of late Victorian England” (113), which reveals discontinuities and inconsistencies in history, and leads to an estrangement or lack of faith on the Bible, by the natives. Hybridity, thus becomes a problematic split state in which the disavowed and denied knowledge, converges and initiates a sceptic questioning of the “images and presences of authority” (113). In the context of religious hybridity, the case is not of forced conversions to or imposition of the

foreign belief system, but a kind of interplay that takes place between the disparate cultural-religious frameworks. He even cites examples from the letters written by correspondents of the Church Missionary Society, to the authorities in London about what their principal method of English education was going to be. The natives were going to be given sentences in English to memorize and very strategically the chosen ones could teach them the sentiments that the instructor desired. Although, the education would be started with commercial motives, some could get influenced and convert to Christianity and in turn convince others, thus serving the cause of religion. “In this way the Heathens themselves might be made the instruments of pulling down their own religion, and of erecting in its ruins the standards of the Cross” (106).

In his essay “Of Mimicry and Man—The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse”, Bhabha quotes Lacan, to establish how mimicry displays the existence of dual levels, a surface and a something that is hidden. It is comparable to the technique of camouflage used in human warfare, where dappled covers are adorned to blend well with the speckled surroundings. In the colonial context, this mimicry is seen as ambivalent because it can only be effective through its lacks or deficiencies, highlighting its difference, “a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (86). This kind of mimicry has its nuisance value, as it becomes a menace for the colonial authority, thereby diluting it. The grand moral schemes of the so-called civilizing mission, mockingly boil down to creating mimic men, who were biologically Indians at core but would outwardly adopt English values, mannerisms and tastes. Revealing the gap “between being English and being Anglicized”, layered identities get constructed, that have strategic objectives of making a mockery of the narcissistic authority. They evade the authority with a shrewd defence of their own theology. Bhabha terms this as ‘sly civility’, yet another subversive tool employed by the natives, which denies the colonisers, complete control over them. Some cases of reverse or enforced mimicry have also been seen, where the colonisers observed, selected and enhanced through encouragement, those aspects of the traditional cultures or religions that they found acquiescent with their own belief systems.

Bhabha, while talking of the location of culture, also mentions as a feature of cultural modernity, a continual shifting of categories or its existence in a state of liminality. The usual boundaries between our definitions of tradition and modernity, are regularly

realigned as cultural engagement takes a performative aspect. The original or pre-given identities and time-honored traditions, are transformed and “reinscribed through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness that attend upon the lives of those who are ‘in the minority’” (2). They enter into an interstitial space, which is both here and there and is termed as the ‘beyond’. Selfhood, whether individual or communal, is negotiated in terms of cultural temporalities, through reinvention of tradition. Using the architectural metaphor of Renee Green, he symbolizes this in-between space as the stairwell, which acts as a bridge between the higher and the lower levels and “passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities” (4).

3.7 Centrality of Religious Discourses emphasised by Peter van der Veer

However, Peter van der Veer, who is Professor of Comparative Religion and Director of the Research Centre for Religion and Society, at the University of Amsterdam and the author of *Gods of the Earth* and *Religious Nationalism*, in his article “The Enigma of Arrival: Hybridity and Authenticity in the Global Space” refers to V.S. Naipaul’s novel *The Enigma of Arrival* (from which he takes the title of the article) and Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* to question Bhabha’s claim, of these in-between interstitial spaces opening up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that accommodates dissimilarity without an implicit or enforced hierarchy. Veer underscores that the celebration of hybridity, multiculturalism and syncretism in Cultural Studies is a smugness of the elitist world of litterateurs, a world in which literary texts become the sites of “self-fashioning in modern bourgeois culture” (102). Such texts aspire to take the place of religious texts, as sources of elevated reflection on religious identities. Terming both Naipaul and Rushdie, advocates of assimilation to universal Enlightenment culture, he finds it ironic that such novelists are feted alike by the liberals as well as the state, for their opposition to the supposed backwardness of the religious traditions and on the other hand those whose “identities are authenticated, not by profane literary texts, but by what are to them sacred religious traditions” (102), and who are genuinely resisting the assimilative tendencies, are condemned as fundamentalist. He criticizes the modern tendency to relegate religious expression to the private sphere and affirms that religious faith and other forms of cultural difference rather than being obliterated, are in fact transformed and comfortably accommodated by urban consumer capitalism. Religious revivalist movements,

according to him, have true revolutionary potential as, despite sounding anti-modern, they are not reactionary or conservative. Emphasising the significance of religious discourses, he says:

There are innovative and creative dimensions to these discourses. A truly comprehensive study of migrant culture would need, therefore, to go beyond migrant literary texts, such as those by Naipaul and Rushdie, to examine a wider range of textual interventions including those articulated by migrant-settlers in a religious idiom, as these are played out in the West. (“The Enigma”104)

Bhabha, in his Foreword to *Debating Cultural Hybridity* (2015), himself admits that the high expectations of empowering the minorities and granting a voice to the diaspora, that the notion of cultural hybridity had raised, had been belied, as it had instead degenerated into “a monster of hegemony”, “a ubiquitous form of cultural universalism, the proper name of homogenizing pluralism” (x-xi). Real hybridity needs to be understood in terms of an enabling state that rather than being concerned with accomplishing any essentialized authentic identity, brings about the attainment of intervention and command, which allows the individual to exercise “cultural choice and political agency”. The position of the hybrid thus becomes one of “passionate ambivalence” at best (xiii).

3.8 Summation of Theories

These are only some of the theories on identity formation in the post-colonial and diasporic scenario, that have been postulated by diverse theorists such as Stuart Hall who elucidates a more procreative process of identity formation during which material forces, world-views, political power, history and cultural influences work together to bring about a metamorphosis of the identity. Even in the context of religions, he cites examples of religious hybridity among Blacks. Hall reckons hybridity as being shaped by an on-going process leaving ‘traces’. He gives ethnicity a positive valuation, as a crucial determiner of who we really are, but later admits that it too, is threatened. He emphasizes how different migrants, despite being similarly positioned on the margins, negotiate their cultural, political and economic situations differently. He also brings out how significant a recovery of the discontinuities of history is, as counter-hegemony towards the host countries, especially in post-colonial

scenarios. Paul Gilroy too, denies any kind of absolutism as a basis to identity formation. Using the Black Atlantic as a symbol with reference to Du Bois' theory of 'double-consciousness' he enumerates the complications arising out of the internalization of the host-identity by the migrants. The role played by religious practices in preserving social memory is also indicated. But it is the anti-essential tenor of his theory which displays optimism about moving in the direction of a shared human heritage which he terms as 'conviviality'. Alberto Melucci, on the other hand, regards dominance in construction of meanings, which has been hierarchised in the modern-day information-controlled and technologically connected societies. This, in turn, brings about a redefinition of the individual and collective action in a society that gets ridden with uncertainty and ambivalence. Ziauddin Sardar enlists the dangers of overemphasizing ethnicity and mentions fragmentation as its byproduct. He suggests several identifiable liberal traditions, among the cultural minorities, including Sikhism, that might have the answers to questions posed by the current form of multiculturalism. Ashis Nandy, the Indian psychologist explains the influence of colonial thinking and practices on the Indian psyche as also the effect of the exposure to the colonies on the Westerners. Taking the examples of Kipling and Aurobindo, he evinces how the psyche split between the two kinds of consciousness leads to a fractured self for both. It was Aurobindo's spirituality that helps him transcend the duality and be in control of the situation. Bhabha interprets the colonial situation and consequent identity formation in terms of concepts like liminality, mimicry, mockery and sly civility.

As a phenomenon migration has a history almost as long as the human history, maybe even longer as it was taking place in the pre-historic times as well. It has manifested itself in multitudinous forms, sometimes to closer distances within the country and sometimes to immeasurable expeditions around the globe, some undertaken willingly and some forced due to violence or natural disasters, some with the motive of material gains and some for sheer survival, some to dominate and some to escape persecution. In the globalised and almost trans-humanly connected world of today, the frequency of migration has increased manifold. The inevitable corollary of migration, is cross-cultural encounters and the resultant alterations in the way diverse cultures, races, ethnicities and religious groups perceive themselves and the others. Identity, with its formation and transformation, in the intersectionality of multiple factors such as race,

class, gender, religion, sexuality, centre/margin dynamics etc. becomes a very complex and unfathomable entity. Self-representation, becomes a means of expressing interpersonal distinctions and social categories, that demarcate the boundaries between diverse cultures and also facilitate, to some extent, a mutual comprehension of meanings. This chapter critically surveyed some of the theories and concepts related to identity formation put forward by different theorists. In the following chapters, the selected literary texts, composed by various generations of Sikh and Punjabi diaspora in Britain are going to be investigated, in the light of these theories, to ascertain the impact of migration and its concomitant influences on Sikh religious identity and its transmission to the successive generations of British-born Sikhs.

CHAPTER 4

***'SAB KICH GHAR MEIN, BAHAR NAHIN'*--THE 'MY GRATE' IN MIGRATE**

4.1 Post-materialistic Pattern of Needs

It is astonishing that though Maharaja Dalip Singh was exiled to England in as early as 1854 and the Sikhs, owing to their participation in the two World Wars in maximum numbers, were among the first migrants to foreign shores from India, yet, mainstream diasporic fictional writing on Sikhs or with Sikh protagonists, in English, by the writers from the first-generation of migrants, is a rarity. Since times immemorial, given the invasions and disintegrations that they had witnessed, the Punjabis and especially the Sikhs have been, an on-the-move race. They traversed extensively, initially within the region and then post-colonization, to areas outside the state, serving the police or the army under the British regime. Post the two World Wars, a substantial number poured out, beyond the national boundaries on to foreign shores, such as the UK initially, and the United States or Australia later, covering antipodean distances in search of livelihood. It is these expatriates, compelled majorly by their material need for economic security, whose travels, travails, deterritorialization and reterritorialization, are summed up under the rubric of 'diaspora'. This journey to the chosen 'land of dreams and promises', the resultant transition and the attempts to come to terms with it, may be viewed as a metaphorical journey from materialism to post-materialism in Inglehartian terms.

The post- colonization and pre-Green Revolution, divided Punjab of the early 1960s did not enjoy very high level of prosperity and could boast of little in the name of a secure future, to offer its inhabitants. The economically advanced foreign lands beckoned and the generically hardworking and vagrant Punjabis responded swiftly. In a slightly different aspect, the present day Punjabi migrants, shirking away from working as agriculturalists, and other employment not being easily available, fly or flee in the hope of an easier lifestyle. In pursuit of economic stability, home turf is left behind along with the Punjabi self, and attempts are made to reconcile oneself to the challenges of a new land, its people and its culture. The onslaught brings a sense of

alienation but it is soon immersed in the noise of money churning machines that they tirelessly work on and turn into. The utmost priority at this stage is, survival.

The earliest migrants, who went as soldiers or labour for reconstruction after the World War II, were not very educated and their lives after migratory odysseys were nothing short of a tribulation. As mentioned earlier, their utmost priority was subsistence and grossing money, in that alien land, which was cold in every possible connotation. Having left the warmth of their families and community behind, the grueling and grating circumstances in which they faced inhuman working conditions, unemployment, racial discrimination, health issues, alienation and desolation, were endured with the hope of returning home with loads of money to improve their economic standards. Emotional, aesthetic and spiritual needs were stifled at this stage and questions of religion and identity, took a backseat.

Avtar Brah, charts the course of the transition in their priorities in the chapter “Constructions of ‘the Asian’ in postwar Britain” in her book *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. Segregating the migration of the Asians into three phases with the first one being titled “Coming to Vilayat” she illustrates how the “encounter between Asians and the White population was circumscribed by colonial precedents” (21). Cheap raw material that had been earlier supplied by the colonies during their subjugation, had been replaced with cheap labour in the post-war period. The Asians were, however, considered at the lowest step of the labour-ladder which escalated their problems. The second stage that she refers to as “A home away from Home” is the time from 60s to early 70s, when the integration theories were being proposed, instead of the assimilation model during which the racial discrimination had seen no abatement. This was the stage when having gained some foothold, the migrants were beginning to acclimatize to the new environs and be a little more vocal about their cultural traditions and religious practices. It is in the third stage, beyond the 70s, that Britain faced an acute economic recession, which in turn fueled the racial antagonism, with the leaders like Enoch Powell and Margaret Thatcher expressing consternation at the British culture being threatened by the alien onslaught.

While talking about value-change towards post-materialism, in the Introduction to his book *The Silent Revolution*, Ronald Inglehart, the well-known political scientist writes that the instinctual and evocative needs of one’s self demand recognition and satiation

only after the individual's having reached a reasonable measure of financial security, "hungry people are more likely to seek food than aesthetic satisfaction" (3). Mircea Eliade, the Romanian historian of religion, on the other hand, in his book *Myth and Reality*, talks of 'regressus ad uterum', "the individual's return to the origin is conceived as an opportunity for renewing and regenerating the existence of him who undertakes it" (79). Under duress then, a return to your native origins is invigorating and works well for the desolate souls on distant lands, as a survival strategy. Put very simplistically, it is the mother whom the child remembers first, when in pain. Stuart Hall in his essay "Culture, Identity and Diaspora", however, compares this desire to return to the origins, to Lacan's 'imaginary' and adds that it cannot be fulfilled, but rather becomes an "infinitely renewable source of desire, memory, myth, search" (269), which becomes the fountainhead of narratives. For these so-called 'split' personalities, self-representation through writing is a way of connecting with their lost 'matrix', the dictionary meaning of which is the cultural, social, or political environment in which something develops and is also related to the Latin word for mother. Remembering the past is reassuring and cathartic, in the turbulent present and helps the writers negotiate their fluid and constantly evolving identities in the alien lands, and give voice to the sentiments of other migrants.

4.2 Initiation of the Urge for Expression

Having found their bearings, amidst stringent immigration laws, hostile natives, inhuman working conditions, racism and alienation, the immigrants first began to express themselves around the 1960s and that too in their native tongues. Maybe, writing in their native language symbolized a kind of resistance to the dominant and hegemonising British culture. In his 1989 compilation of the initial writings by the Punjabi diaspora in Britain, titled *The Overtime People*, Joginder Shamsher enumerates poetry, short stories, novels, folk-songs and even Punjabi journalism that the earliest immigrants came forth with. He quotes lines from poets such as Surjit Hans, Swaran Chandan, Niranjan Singh Nur, Sukhbir Sandhu and avers how their poetry is an unpretentious picture of their lives in the foreign land. Among short stories, he cites the incipient example of Lal Singh Kamala Akali's *My Travels in Britain*, which was written just before the Second World War. Poetry flourished more than prose, as it was less time-consuming for the 'overtime-generation'. Yet, short story as a genre developed with the passage of time and writers such as Baldev Singh

with his story “I Don’t Like it Here”, Surjit Hans with “Female Foeticide”, “Toilet Attendant”, “The Destitute’s Bottle”, “Exploding Firework”, Surjit Viridi who died at the young age of 34 with his stories about the turmoil of the human heart such as “Peace of Mind”, “The Race”, “Cancer and the Flower”, “Vegetables” etc., Raghubir Dhand with “A New Kind of Snake”, “Dirty Colour”, “Hand on Mouth”, “You People”, Shivcharan Gill’s “Illusion” and many others including Kailash Puri, Avtar Sadiq, Sathi Ludhianvi and Sher Jang Jangli made tremendous contribution. Generically, the story was still developing around those times and the treatment of themes by most of the writers, is stereotypical.

As far as novel writing is concerned, *Bachnun Vilayat Aai* by Pinky Garewal is claimed to be the first novel on the lives of Punjabi immigrants to Britain and its theme is the struggle of Punjabi journalists to bring out their own publication. Other early ones were Manjit Rana, who penned *Angrez Kudian*, *Dil te Duniya* and *Pritan*, Dilbagh Bassi with *Maape Kumaape* and *Desi Kurian*, *Vilayati Laare*, Balbir Kaur Sanghera’s *Ik Khat Nan Sajnan De*, Swaran Chandan’s *Navin Rishte*, to name some. These narratives deal with conventional themes like marital relations, sexual liaisons, nostalgia, pull of the roots, change in values etc. Shamsheer also enlists some folk-songs, composed by immigrants as tropes of collective memory and he even mentions some traditional Punjabi instruments like *tumba* and *sarangi* being occasionally heard in the pubs of Leamington, Derby, Leicester, Coventry, Birmingham and Wolverhampton. He also gives an account of the rudimentary or foundational Punjabi journalism carried out by Vishnu Datt Sharma, the first issue of whose paper *Ekta* appeared on 26th January, 1964. Several other publications such as Tarsem Pureval’s *Des Pardes* (1965), Gurnam Singh Sahni’s *The Punjab* (1965) and the novelist Manjit Rana edited weekly *Avaz* (1967) were followed by *Sandesh* (1972) from Wembley and *Sher-e-Punjab* (1972) from Southall which went on to become well-established papers later. Another publication *Lalkar* (1967) was published by the Association of Indian Communists living in Britain. Only one Weekly with a specifically religious thrust called *Kirnan* was started by Kesar Singh Mand, a Sikh immigrant from Singapore, who was interested in the Singh Sabha, the Sikh religious organization. This Weekly was later edited by Kailash Puri but ceased publication after a few issues.

The prevalent attitude towards religion, religiousness, places of worship and rituals, has not been brought to the fore in the major literary writings of the earlier phase. Two documentaries, prepared by the BBC titled “Sikhs in the UK: Man’s Religious Quest” (1977) and “Sikhs in Smethwick” (2016) give some glimpses of the place assigned to religious faith and practices among the immigrants, who were the first to arrive. The latter, though produced later, captures the odyssey of the immigrants from an earlier timeline, beginning with the arrival in 1950s, of the first generation migrants as labour in the foundries to their well-settled third generation feeling completely at home in Britain in the 21st century. Billy Dosanjh, the narrator, whose name itself is an indicator of the hybridised identities, takes us through archival footage of robust Punjabi clean-shaven men, schlepping carts of molten iron with bare hands to earn a living and save some money for their families. Tales of misery abound as racism is blatant and jobs are not available to men wearing turbans. Ironically, it is the colonial masters who had encouraged the Sikhs during the post-Ranjit Singh regime in the second half of the 19th century, when they had insisted on drawing the religious boundaries, to maintain their separate Khalsa identity with 5 Ks, and most of the Sikh soldiers who had fought from the British side in the two World Wars had continued to wear all the Sikh symbols, including the turban. In the Britain of 1950s, native residents are shown openly detesting the immigrants and wishing they would rather, return. The narrator cites an incident, that speaks volumes on the adversities encountered by the illiterate immigrants in which two newly employed men, unable to read the sign outside, slept inside a furnace to escape the cold during a break. The other workers, on returning from the break, resumed their work and switched on the furnace without realising their presence inside, leading to the tragic death of both. They were single men who had been lured by the parables of England being a heaven of dreams and were trying hard to reconcile to the unbearable harshness of reality. For such men, leading their mechanized lives from one shift to the other, questions of religion, culture and identity were, at that juncture, consigned to oblivion.

The first gurdwara in England called The Central Gurdwara was established in 1911 (Tatla, 2006, 71), much before the Sikhs went as part of the British army. During the wars too, the Sikh soldiers reverently carried the holy *Guru Granth Sahib* along, to the war-fields and religiously performed the daily prescribed rituals, as depicted in the BBC documentary ‘Remembrance: The Sikh Story’ (2010). For the migrant workers

however, religion and religious practices took a long while before permeating into their grueling daily routine. True to the Inglehartian pattern, it is after stabilizing economically and probably after uniting with their families, when those joined them in their adopted land, that the migrants' emotional, spiritual and expressive needs began to surface. Verne A. Dusenbury in his essay "A Sikh Diaspora? Contested Identities and Constructed Realities" included in the book *Sikhs at Large* quotes W.H. McLeod (1989) and Karen Leonard (1989) to emphasise that consciousness of a Sikh identity took long in forming among the migrants and their initial associations were based on characteristics other than religion, such as region, occupation and language. He attributes the gradual development of this consciousness to the overwhelming discrimination and hostility faced by the first-generation migrants.

4.3 Initial Religious Tendencies Recognized

The documentary 'Sikhs in Britain in 1977: Man's Religious Quest' (2010) covers precisely this aspect of the lives of the Sikh migrants. Featuring an erstwhile congregational church that had been converted into a Gurdwara in Leeds (an indication that they had 'arrived' in the true sense of the word), a Sunday morning in 1977 is presented, with women leading the *Kirtan* singing (an unimaginable happening in a gurdwara in those times, here), though men and women are sitting in segregated groups as is the practice in all Gurdwaras. Unlike the workers in the foundry, majority are turbaned Sikhs wearing English suits. The narrator shares his tale of how growing up in that country was a process of a progressive distancing from his religion. As a small kid, he had been escorted to the Gurdwara by his parents but as he grew up, the entanglements of his work and the attempts to assimilate into the adopted culture, prevented him from adhering to the dictates of religion. The turning point in his life came with his meeting Sant Baba Pooran Singh, an enlightened soul, who in his opinion, had done a lot for the Sikhs in Britain. Meeting him brought about a revival of Sikhism in the narrator's life and in 1974 he took *Amrit* from the pious soul and started religiously following the Sikh commandments of maintaining the 5Ks of *Kes*, *Kirpan*, *Kada*, *Kangha* and *Kachera* and the daily routine of *naam-simran*. He shares how this return has made him a more disciplined, strong-willed, nobler in character and a purer person, more at peace with himself. As mentioned earlier, the turban, which was the distinguishing mark of the Sikh identity, had not been easy to maintain, as the choice usually was between sporting that and good employment

opportunities. Most of them succumbed to the initial pressures but quite a big number returned to it after gaining economic steadiness. One of the Sikh migrants expresses how fortunate he considers himself, to be born into this very progressive and practical religion and how saying his prayers relieves him from all his worries and even works miracles for him. A young teenaged girl, speaking in perfect English with the UK accent, reveals how she is perfectly at ease with the demands of her religion and having been able to compare it with the religions of her Christian and Jew friends at school, it was completely acceptable to her and that there was nothing she wished to change. On being asked the question about her marriage, as early as in the 1970s, the teenaged girl claims that she would have a 50/50 say in her alliance, whereas another grown up girl of around 21 is shown certain of having more than 50% right to her opinion in that matter. The parents of young children express a keen desire to teach the young ones, the mother-tongue and the precepts of religion, which are taught at the Gurudwara. They, on the other hand, articulate a schism between what they would like to do and what they would be allowed to do.

Sikh religion, having been initiated like this by the migrants to the UK, spread with the passage of time and there are believed to be more than 250 gurdwaras there now. Singh and Tatla (2006) record in the chapter, “Gurdwaras and Community Building” that on 30th March, 2003 the largest Sikh gurdwara outside India, Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara (a temple second only to the Golden Temple in Amritsar) was officially opened to the Sikhs with an opening ceremony attended by 40,000 Sikhs. Built at a cost of £17 million, with a capacity of 3,000 people it can serve upto 20,000 meals during weekends. It was visited by Prince Charles shortly after the opening and is “the premier symbol of Sikh presence in Britain, one of the new emerging ‘cathedrals’ of multicultural Britain” (69). The representation of the role that Sikhism plays in the lives of the 21st century Sikh diaspora, majority of whom are now the British-born generations, the evolution that religion has undergone, its transmission to the successive generations and the position at which it finds itself now, as depicted in literature, is the specific thrust of this multi-pronged research.

4.4 Representation of Sikhs in British Literature

In his 2009 book *Young Sikhs in a Global World*, Knut A. Jacobsen, the Norwegian scholar of the History of Religions quotes Eleanor Nesbitt, the Emeritus Professor

from the University of Warwick, who specializes in the ethnographic study of Sikhs, as recommending that researchers on Sikhism in Europe should “look at as wide a range of literature as possible” (2009, Qtd. in Jacobsen: 53). She notes that “[B]iography, autobiography, novels, short stories and poetry offer valuable insights and can generate hypotheses and provide rich contexts of lived experience”, and asks how long it will be before “creative writing ... produced by and about Sikhs in mainland Europe will become a focus of study” (149). For this research, the pursuit was of the portrayal of Sikhs in literature, which turned out to be highly uncommon. Hardly any Sikh characters had been delineated by the English writers and few first-generation Sikh migrants, chose to write in English. As mentioned earlier, writings in Punjabi flourished and it is in those, that the attitude of the Sikh migrants towards religion can be traced. Based on the criterion of Sikh characters being illustrated in the context of migration to the UK, some texts, both fictional and memoirs, written post-twentieth century by the first-generation writers and some by the second and third generation writers, in Punjabi and English, were selected. The fact is corroborated by Jacobsen that the Oxford Handbook of Sikh Studies has included a separate section on Sikh literature, but nothing is said about the genre of Sikh autobiographical/fictional writings among the diaspora. This is a recent type of Sikh literature, that has not yet received much attention in scholarship (“Young Sikhs” 151). Even Singh and Tatla, note that, “Although the colonial encounter between the *raj* and the Sikhs has produced a rich body of scholarship that has been renewed in recent times by fresh interest in colonial modernity, surprisingly there is no comprehensive study of the British Sikh experience” (3).

Writers such as Harjit Atwal, Rupinder Singh Dhillon, Raghubir Dhand, Darshan Dhir, Kailash Puri (although her autobiography *Pool of Life* has been written in English) and Amarjit Chandan belonged to the category of first-generation migrants, having lived almost their entire life in Britain but had favoured writing in their home language. They addressed more conventional subjects that emerged from their experience in the first hand. Consequently, the Diasporic writing by Punjabi and Sikh writers in Britain has for a long time been known as ‘ghetto-literature’. However, the more recent writings, by writers of the second and third generations such as Satnam Sanghera, Balli Rai, Sukhdev Sandhu, Jasvender Sanghera, Daljit Nagra and Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti who began to express in English, and take up topics like transcultural

tensions, hybridities and fluid identities, can be credited for moving Sikh Diasporic writing out of that label.

4.5 Harjit Atwal: A Sikh Writer from the First Generation of Migrants

Harjit Atwal, was born to a Sikh family in Punjab in 1952 and educated in India. Having acquired a degree in law, he practiced in Nawanshahar courts for some time, before migrating to the UK in 1977. He is a famous Punjabi novelist, having penned over two dozen novels, collections of short stories, anthologies of poetry, travel papers, biographies, literary articles and columns. He co-edited a Punjabi magazine called 'Shabad' (The Word), which was published every three months. Based on his experience of migration, he addresses and portrays several diaspora issues such as the exclusion, pull of the roots, racial profiling, linguistic barriers, work overload burden, monopolisation, breakdowns in generations, fracturing of family ties and problems of cultural assimilation. In his works, he discusses and describes many of them. The intricacies of the migratory experience and the troubling attempts of migrants to cope with them are revealed right from the names of his novels and other collections, such as a collection of poems titled *Sard Pairan di Udeek (A Wait with Cold Feet)*, collections of short stories *Suka Pata Te Hawa, (A Dead Leaf in the Wind)*, *Kala Lahu, (Black Blood)*, *Sapan Da Bhar, Bartania, (Britain, Full of Snakes)* delineating the British exposure, *Khuh Wala Ghar, (A House with a Well)* a collection of short stories of reminiscence and several novels such as *One Way, Ret, (The Sands)*, *Swari (The Passenger)*, *Southall*, that focus specifically on the vacuity in a migrant's life. He has written two historical novels titled *Akal Sahai (God helps)* and *Aapana (My Own)*. It is in his last novel yet, *British Born Desi, (Indians Born in Britain)* that some issues related to the successive generations of Sikh diaspora are dealt with.

Atwal's 2009 novel *Southall*, encapsulates the lifestyle of Sikhs and Punjabis in London's Southall City, known as Mini-India due to the overrepresentation of Punjabis among the South Asians in this territory. Singh and Tatla in *Sikhs in Britain* cite the example of Southall as an area of heavy Sikh concentration and a site where the "re-establishment of *biradari* networks recreated the familiar social and psychological norms of Sikh society" (166). However, the novel evocatively expresses the distress of the migrants of the first generation, who have not even tried to acclimate to the new cultural context but just stayed in its proximity and contrasts it

with the attitude of the second generation, born and raised in the same culture, which has not adopted it completely, but has rather created a new culture out of the fusion.

It is not a religious novel like the kind analysed by Elanor Nesbitt and quoted by Jacobsen in his article “Young Sikhs and Literature: Identity Formations in Sikh Creative Writing in Norway”. She picks up three autobiographies titled *I am Prableen*, *My Difference*, *My Strength* and *Young Man in a New Country* written by young Norwegian Sikh writers namely Prableen Kaur, Loveleen Rihel Brenna and Romeo Gill respectively. All three are written in the Norwegian language, cover the period from 1970 to 2012 with Sikh religion holding the central position. They deal with the issue of younger Sikhs drifting away from Punjabi culture and for two of the authors that also means moving away from Sikhism but for Prableen it results in a more fervent embracement of her faith. (Young Sikhs 149).

4.6 Southall: Depiction of a Punjab in the Heart of England

Southall uniquely depicts the lives of several Sikh characters in the London of 1980s with religion being an all-pervading backdrop to the novel. The narrative opens abruptly, with the introduction of one of the protagonists Jagmohan, waiting in traffic, lost in deep thought over the recent murder of a bold and fearless Sikh girl called Sukhi, by her own father, Sucha Singh. The reader is drawn into the vortex of honour killing, right at the outset. The first generation Sikhs such as Sucha Singh, Gurdial Singh and Pala Singh are shown to be compelled to resort to extreme violence as they are shocked by the inter-caste alliances established by their children. The problem of fragile marital relations is also emphasised, as Pala Singh comments “You never know when, what happens in this country. Homes break in the blink of an eye.” (my trans.; 9).

In the background, the communal rivalry between Sikh and Muslim restaurant owners is also mentioned in passing, through the *Kesri* (Orange) and Green exteriors of their respective outlets and how these have become breeding grounds for radicalization, for fueling squabbles and scuffles between impressionable youths from both the communities. Jagmohan also crosses the Ramgarhia Gurdwara being thronged by people, as a new *Raagi Jatha* (team of *Kirtan* singers) has arrived from India. The religious politics in Punjab or the extremist disturbances do not affect this particular gurdwara, as the control is monopolized in the hands of working class Sikhs, such as

the carpenter (*Tarkhan*), mason (*Mistry*) potter (*Kumhar*) or barber (*Nai*) classes, who are believed to be comparatively moderate, as compared to the sizzling and charged atmosphere in some other gurdwaras controlled by the classes considered to be higher in the orthodox social hierarchy, such as the *Jats* (originally the land-owning class) or the *Khatri*s (which is a distorted form of *Kshatriya* or the warrior class). All these distinctions are vestiges of the occupation-based class divisions prevalent in ancient India. Singh and Tatla discuss this trend in detail and underline the “historical evolution of both denominational and caste pluralism and factional rivalries” among Sikhs:

over time, diversity within the Sikh *panth* has emerged as castes, and sects that were initially together in the founding gurdwara, have gone on to establish their own institutions, either because of discrimination or because of a desire to preserve a distinctive sub-identity. (73)

Manjit, Jagmohan’s wife is delineated as a devout lady who is a frequent visitor to the gurdwara and takes her two sons Navjeevan and Navkiran along to develop their faith. Both the school-going kids enjoy going to the Gurdwara and question Jagmohan as to why the epithet *Singh* had been dropped from their names, since people come to know of their identity from that. They even express a keen desire to grow their hair and wear turbans. The father, who was earlier clean-shaven but now sports a beard and a moustache, is ready to teach them how to tie a turban and takes delight in visualizing them in that look. The young boys are genuinely curious to learn about their religion, take pride in their distinctive identity and celebration of the traditional festivals like Baisakhi, although it seems to be adopted in rivalry with the Muslim kids, who celebrate *Eid* with intense fervor and are being taught to read complete passages from the *Koran*. Jagmohan comments disparagingly on the long queues of devotees outside the gurdwara, saying most of them have come there with demands and should have waited, as Waheguru is not going anywhere. His approach towards religion is apparently, practical. The children are being taught about religions in school but he evades his children’s questions about religion, as he does not wish to dissuade them, by confessing his own atheism. He fully comprehends the difficult situation being encountered by the youngsters, as they face an identity crisis. Jagmohan cites the example of one of his friends, who was apprehensive of his children being drawn towards other religions and undertook the mission of teaching them about their own faith right from their childhood. Jagmohan recalls:

Earlier, Jagmohan used to think that he will teach his children about the non-existence of God but then remembers that schools are repeatedly reinforcing the notion of existence of God, therefore what he tells them might lead them to a quandary. Whether God exists or not, will be learnt by them in the school of life, but Mandeep's devotion towards religion has made them fully aware of Sikhism. He is now finding Navjeewan's questions very tricky. He wants, that he should not ask any more questions. He attempts to divert his attention to something else. (my trans.; 177)

Jagmohan, like most of the Sikh characters depicted in the novel, regularly smokes and drinks. These acts are forbidden as per the dictates of Sikh religion, but all the Sikhs are shown to indulge in these, with justifications ranging from initially tackling the extremely cold weather, overcoming the unemployment related struggles, finding strength to counter racism, connecting and sharing problems with other diaspora from the region to efforts in the direction of integration into the native culture, especially by the youngsters. Manjit constantly asks Jagmohan to quit the habit, as it would be a very bad influence on the children but although, he projects himself as a very responsible and caring father, he continues with his ways.

Parduman Singh, a properly turbaned Sikh, the other prominent character of the novel, is presented as a victim of terrorism in Punjab. He had earlier migrated to England but had decided to permanently settle in India and set up business here. During the 80s, when Punjab was under turmoil due to the rise in insurgent extremism in support of Khalistan, extortion of money for the movement from well-to-do businessmen, irrespective of their religion, was a common practice. Parduman is introduced as landing at the Heathrow airport with his family and feeling a sense of relief at having narrowly escaped his extermination at the hands of the terrorists in Punjab. He had gone to his natal home, with nostalgia and expectation to belong, but was forced to return with the shattering of the myth of belonging, disillusionment with home and bitterness towards religion. His wife Gian Kaur, a religious minded lady, suggests one day that they should visit the gurdwara and Parduman replies grudgingly, that "earlier too, what good have the gurdwaras done to us?" Gian Kaur, with her deep faith in religion, replies "How is Waheguru to blame in this! They were His men. Who knows whether they were actually His men, or some other

dubious imposters used His name to malign us, how does it mean that all this was effected by Waheguru with His own hands? The gurdwaras here are comparatively much peaceful”” (my trans.; 28).

Parduman visits the gurdwara with Gian Kaur, prays there and feels the positivity of his faith returning to him. The gurdwara is indeed very peaceful. Distant references are made to the demand for Khalistan by the militant Sikhs in India. Jagmohan’s friend Gian Inder publishes a paper titled *Vaas-Parvaas* and has been capturing the spirit of Southall very well. Articles are written about the expansion of Punjabi community, celebration of traditional festivals, kabaddi matches etc. In the past, he had not shied away from boldly covering the emergency in India and was banned from visiting India. During the Khalistan wave, he had been presenting a very balanced view of the whole situation but after Operation Blue-Star, which became a turning point in the consciousness of most diaspora Sikhs, he also began favouring Khalistan. The general attitude of diaspora Sikhs, however, remains divided, with the ones supporting it, doing it only to gain some political mileage and power in their adopted land, but the majority voicing its disapproval as Grewal, who is a lecturer in the novel also expresses, “I don’t need Khalistan”. He is asked by his friend to write a sensational article on Khalistan and he replies, “I never do anything that is against my conscience” (my trans.; 147). Several rival groups of militant Sikhs, (*Baabe*) as they were called, are shown to have come up and being blamed for Gian Inder’s murder. The Sikhs in the novel are all revealed as unsupportive of the notion of Khalistan. Atwal writes:

In the last few years, the conditions in Punjab had affected the political affairs here as well. The rise of idea of Khalistan had changed the mood of people here. Many believed that formation of Khalistan was a matter of days. Quite a few people had grown their hair and adopted the *Singh* form. People were sporting yellow turbans. But, now there is a decline in the Khalistan wave and people are turning away from it. The gurdwaras under the control of the extremists are now floundering. *Sangat* (gathering of devotees) in the gurdwaras has picked up once again. (my trans.; 75)

Gergio Shani in the introduction to his book *Sikh Nationalism and Identity in a Global Age* looks at the various factors that led to the rise and fall of the Khalistan

movement. He quotes the diverse approaches suggested by several researchers towards the issue. Gurharpal Singh (2004) has called the movement “a traumatic reaction to the ‘crescendo of state led violence’ orchestrated by the Indian state”, Brass (1991) terms it a violent response to “the ruthless centralization of political power in India by the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi”, Purewal (2000) views it essentially in “socio-economic terms as an ideology propagated by rich, capitalist farmers to unite the rural Sikh masses under their hegemony”. The dying down of the movement is attributed to the alteration in the equation between the state and central governments, and the liberalization of the Indian economy. According to Fox (1985), the militant Sikh identity is a construction of colonial Orientalism. As discussed in chapter 2, Hall too, talks of this kind of construction of identity which is pertinent to the colonial experience. In the context of the diaspora, Anderson (1992), projects Sikh nationalism to be a ‘long-distance’ phenomenon driven by the Sikhs settled abroad, especially in the advanced capitalist societies such as Canada, the US and the UK. Tatla (1999); Axel (2001) also talk of the diaspora being mobilized for the achievement of sovereign statehood. Shani however, finds most of the approaches problematic as some essentialize the Sikh identity, some simplistically condense the identity to a single causal principle and some fail to explain its discontinuity.

The Sikhs depicted in the novel, display a censorious attitude towards such militant nationalism and some are shown to be its victims as well. As mentioned in Chapter 1, essentially Sikhism did not originate as a militant religion, though it was revolutionary in spirit. Throughout the evolution of Sikhism, the Sikhs are known to have resorted to violence only against persecution or on provocation. Whether it was against the Mughals, Ranjit Singh’s retaliation against the British, the Anglo-Sikh wars or even in the later incidents of partition-related violence and the repercussions of Operation Blue-Star, the Sikhs have never been the initiators of ferocity. As expressed by the tenth Guru of the Sikhs, the sword is to be used as the last resort, after all other means of redressing a wrong have failed. The same can be cited as an explanation for the movement having lost its steam and being no longer supported by the diaspora.

Guru Nanak’s teachings encourage a Sikh to be hard-working, self-respecting, God-fearing and compassionate. ‘*Kirat karna* (doing good deeds), *Naam Japna* (taking God’s name) *te Wand ke Chakna* (sharing your food)’ are the virtues to be espoused.

The first-generation migrants in the novel are presented as hypocrites, who do not hesitate in stooping to the most disgraceful and dishonest means for the sake of survival and economic improvement, in that adopted nation. Parduman Singh, who is very industrious in his business, a true specimen of the indefatigable and independent Sikh psyche, establishes a flourishing business of selling samosas and other Asian snacks and soon becomes a millionaire. But he does not mind sending goons to beat up his Muslim rival Tariq. His cousin Kaara (Balkaar Singh) runs a well-established Insurance business but goes ahead and sets up a fake insurance firm to cheat people in order to make more money and buy a hotel. When the fraud is discovered by the government agencies, he flees from England leaving his family and Parduman, who had bailed him out, in the lurch. Such men are busy piling more and more money but are left with no time to focus on their children. *Gurbani* recommends the entirely opposite path of this, instead:

“Bahu parpanch kar par dhan liyave, Sut dara pea aan lutaave.

Man mere bhoole kapat na kije, ant nibera tere ji pe lije”. (SGGS Ang 656)

(Practicing shrewd hypocrisy, he acquires the wealth of others and returning home, squanders it on his wife and children. O my mind, do not practice deception even inadvertently, as in the end, your own soul shall have to answer for its account. (trans.; Dhur ki Bani)

Parduman’s wife constantly asks him to pay attention to the children. He regrets the distance that has crept up, between him and his children, and blames himself when the eldest son quits studies, starts taking drugs, leaves home and gets into a gay relationship. His orthodox thinking is exhibited, when he consoles himself, saying that it is bearable, because it has not happened to a daughter. His hypocrisy and loose morals are revealed further, when he sexually exploits the vulnerable women working in his factory under the garb of getting them permanent residency and even manipulates their cases to drag them longer, so that he can take maximum advantage of those women. Men like Parduman Singh are themselves shown reveling in the liberal English atmosphere, openly womanizing and cheating on their wives, who are in England or left behind in India. But in the name of traditions and religion, they impose all sorts of restrictions on their children, especially daughters, to the point of suffocating them and forcing them to rebel.

Pala Singh, another central character, is an upright Sikh with an upright moustache, a regular visitor to the gurdwara and has also been taking his children Mohandev, Amardev and Maninder along. He has worked tirelessly to give them the best of the facilities and they have all done well academically and professionally. Earlier, he used to look down upon Gurdial Singh, whose son could not excel in studies and had joined him in the Travel Agency business, whereas his own sons could secure well-paid jobs with the government departments. However, when Mohan chooses to live-in with a Gujarati girl Chanda, without getting married to her, Pala Singh's dreams are shattered and his religious consciousness traumatized. His pride of being a *Jat* Sikh is hit hard, as the girl's caste is unknown. He ascribes it to the education received by the younger British-born generations and the uninhibited atmosphere prevailing in the country. "The winds of the country are bad enough but my son has been spoilt by education. Had I not educated him so much, such a day would not have dawned", says Pala Singh. "Gurdial Singh's son listened to his father and got married in India as per his wishes because he was not educated" (my trans.;163).

Pala Singh, then pins his hopes on his younger son, Amardev and dreams of his marriage to a girl of his choice. But he meets disappointment in this case too, as Amar has also made up his mind to get married to an English girl, Sandra. He consoles himself with his patriarchal notions and is ready to face others from his community with a Punjabi idiom saying "It is a boy not a girl. Boys skip over fifty walls" (my trans.; 164). In other words, he is conveying the deep-seated notions attached to their sense of identity and honour, that it runs more on the daughters' shoulders, the licentiousness of the boys meanwhile, can still be acceptable. He also talks of a *Jat* marrying anywhere and the woman eventually becoming a *Jatti*. These are fixed concepts pertaining to caste hierarchies, which may be termed as 'traces' or 'presence' of the original Punjabi identity, that were sharpened through the colonial Orientalism influence.

The novel treats the issue of Love Jihad as well. Muslim boys are shown to pose as Sikhs by wearing '*Kadas*' (one of the markers of Sikh form), beguile young and innocent Sikh girls and lure them into marrying them. Reality dawns on the girls too late. Gangs of young Sikhs are very protective about girls from their own religion and fierce fights with Muslim youngsters, over girls, are common. For Muslims, this is a strategy for proselytizing their religion. Heavens fall for Pala Singh when he is

informed by Gurdial Singh about his daughter Maninder too, having an affair with a Muslim boy and how she is planning to get married to him. Infuriated, he resolves to go the Sadhu Singh way and either get his daughter killed by a professional killer or murder her himself.

Gurdial Singh, if this is true then I will go to the cell next to that of Sadhu Singh in the jail. ... You need to be very patient, don't do any such action that things go out of hand and the girl elopes like Sadhu Singh's daughter. Gurdial Singh, she will elope only if I leave her good enough for that. I don't know what I am going to do. (my trans.; 221)

He begins to feel a slight change in the uprightness of his moustache, which is the Punjabi symbol of pride. He contemplates, putting his army training done in the past to use and utilising his '*kirpan*' (another important Sikh symbol) to kill his own daughter. He drinks himself to sleep and confronts Maninder the next day. She keeps on crying and denies everything. Pala suggests getting her married to a boy of their own caste, from their own country. Next morning, he finds Maninder missing with her things. He drinks out of frustration. On visiting the gurdwara the next morning, he even thinks of *Ardaas* and of forgiving her if she returned. He oscillates between retribution and clemency and eventually decides, that only punishing her himself, would give him complete gratification. Pride and honour are shown to be valued much higher than the lives of their own children. This precisely, is the closed kind of digressive ethnicity, under which imaginary grouping of "kith and kin" and "blood and soil", that fixes the meaning of ethnos in essentialist terms takes shape, as elaborated by Mercer in *The Fateful Triangle* (4-5).

These parents from the first generation of migrants had chosen a life that was progressive and had promised them a sparkling future for their successive generations. They had been heretics in their own way, by opting to move out of their traditional and native environs into the world at large, willingly adopt and adapt to its ways and readily face the challenges that such a life would pose. They had left their roots and origins behind or had temporarily relegated those to the background, as they faced in the other direction. Their own parents, for that matter, must have been left behind along with their religion, culture, language, land and customs. The foremost concern at that time, must have been their economic advancement. Now, that adventurous step

taken by them, is bearing fruit in the form of the ideational alienation of their successive generations, as the latter have been brought up in an entirely different environment, consider Britain their home and cannot develop a similar sense of deference for their parents' past and their homeland. As Jacobsen and Myrvold write about the second generation of Sikhs in the Introduction to their book *Young Sikhs in a Global World* that, "while many have naturally felt a belonging to their families, learnt the Punjabi language and Sikh religious practices, they do not necessarily share the diaspora perspective and consciousness of their parents" (2). Unless they are grounded in those traditions right from birth, are fed on their glorious past, apprised of their multifaceted relationship with the British colonisers and most importantly, elucidated the true significance of religion in their lives by emphasizing not only its ritualistic aspects but rightly interpreting its teachings for them, they will not develop a sense of affiliation with those.

There is a reference in the novel, for instance, to two annual processions (the actual religious word for those is *Nagar Kirtan*) taken out in Southall on Guru Nanak's birthday and Vaisakhi which witness the participation of more than one and a half lakh people and are miles long in length. A debauched and avaricious man such as Parduman Singh too, closes his factory early on those days, encourages his staff to wear *Kesri* turbans and participate in the procession. Kids of all races and communities enjoy themselves as lots of eatables are served throughout the route. Majority are the British-born youth who are very enthused about religion. Jagmohan does not like the religious zeal of his sons because he wants them to be aware of their religion, but not to be obsessed with it, like Kaara's son Jatinderpal, who has gone overboard, joined a fanatical Sikh group and become a sort of Sikh youth leader. The gurdwaras are divided on the matter of the route and want separate processions but have to forcibly unite, as the Council grants permission for a single one. As per a Punjabi Councilor Sham Bhardwaj, the Council is deliberating upon whether to spend so much on such gatherings as they require extra police deployment. The discussion concludes on the note that such external demonstration of religious practices, goes a long way in preserving the indigenous culture. This again corroborates the fact that religion has been reduced to an outward expression, either in the form of rituals and practices, or gurdwara politics or to maintaining the outer form and indulging in violence in the name of pride.

In the concluding chapter, the novel is brought full circle to the point where it had started with Jagmohan again waiting in the traffic to reach the Skylink office to pick up his ticket. He observes his surroundings and takes stock of the situation. He tunes in to the radio as there are several Asian channels on offer now, some purely Punjabi, some Hindi and some other Asian languages. News being broadcast is informing about a *Maulvi* (Muslim priest) having raped a minor girl, a *Pujari* (Hindu priest) having been caught indulging in sexual profligacy and a *Granthi* (Sikh reader of the Holy *Granth*) having been nabbed from a red-light area, all pointing towards the decadence in various religions and it being highlighted by the channels to draw public attention. Another news item mentions the case of yet another woman having been sacrificed at the altar of family honour and that she happened to be the tenth woman, in that year, to be murdered on that pretext. He is apprehensive that he would hear news about Maninder too, in the same fashion one day. The traffic moves a little farther and he notices the Macdonald car park where some youngsters are drinking and laughing out loudly with a bottle of Bacardi lying on the car roof. He thinks:

Our next generation is so different from us and so close to the Whites. Like the Whites, they too think only of themselves. Grewal used to say that our children have jumped many generations ahead in this country. It is time that we should change too. (my trans.; 292)

Later, Jagmohan is contacted by some old and retired members of the IWA (Indian Workers Association) which had contributed a lot to the welfare of the Indian community. They now want to involve the British-born generations too with their organization. Atwal concludes the novel with Jagmohan's very pertinent question to those members, asking, "Do you think the generation born here is Indian?" (my trans.; 295)

4.7 *British Born Desi*: Nonplussed Generation of Sikh Youth Born in Britain

The question raised at the end of his novel *Southall* seems to have been answered in his next novel written in 2011 titled *British Born Desi*, which is a kind of sequel to it. This one portrays the lives of the successive generations of the first-generation migrants such as Pala Singh, Jagmohan, Parduman Singh, Gurdial Singh delineated in *Southall* and adds some new characters like Suadagar Singh and Gurmukh Singh along with others. The predominant quest in the novel remains that of identity, as

these British-born generations find themselves simultaneously astride not just two but many boats. This is an expected part of the diasporic process. For the earlier migrants, it was more about uprooting and yearning for the lost territory, whereas for the subsequent generations, it is about settling down and finding new roots. Avtar Brah points out the complexity in the transformations that the values undergo:

the relationship of the first generation to the place of migration is different from that of subsequent generations, mediated as it is by memories of what was recently left behind, and by the experiences of disruption and displacement as one tries to reorientate, to form new social networks, and learns to negotiate new economic, political and cultural realities. ... The reconfigurations of these social relations will not be a matter of direct superimposition of patriarchal forms deriving from the country of emigration over those that obtain in the country to which migration has occurred. Rather, both elements will undergo transformations as they articulate in and through specific policies, institutions and modes of signification. (190)

The novel depicts the first-generation's perception of the second generation which, having performed well academically, is on its way to its own financial progression and to making a significant difference to Britain's economy. These youngsters constitute a confident and independent generation, that has learnt to live with all kinds of difference and having internalized the Western values, does not like any infringement of its liberty. The earlier generation, with its orthodox values and ossified interpretations of religion, rather than easing the integration of their progeny into the alien culture, has only compounded their quandaries and compelled them to interrogate and investigate their identity. Fluctuating between the multifarious identities, that become performative in the ostensibly non-racial, multicultural scenario, has earned this generation the epithet of BBCDs (British born confused *desis*).

Mohan, is Pala Singh's eldest son. He is well-educated and has a good job with the Town-planning department of the Council. The novel introduces us to the persistent problem of racism being faced by the younger generations of the diaspora, despite their being capable and well-placed. Mohan is not only verbally abused and taunted about his culture by his racist bosses Edward Gyle and Peter Murphy but also in turn, falsely accused of being partial towards Asians, in departmental matters. Racist

hostility is shown to have spiked post the 9/11 attacks. Mohan however, having been born and educated amidst the Whites, is unflustered and recognises well that the key to success and respect in that country, lies in attaining higher degrees. He completes his Masters and is working on a thesis based on the map designs of various town-hall buildings. And yet, he is referred to as ‘Paki’ and teased about his curry-eating. Racism is still a harsh reality of today’s Britain that claims itself to be a truly multicultural nation.

The immigrants’ discontent with the nineteenth century homogenizing notion of ‘assimilationism’, inherent in the idea of the West as a ‘melting pot’, that entailed the view of urban society as a racial hierarchy, giving only the option of conformity to the so-called inferiors and outsiders, was well-established and widely documented till the 1970s. Since then, various countries had been proposing ways and policies to accommodate ethnic diversity in a liberal atmosphere and projecting themselves as genuinely multicultural nations. As Will Kymlicka puts it in his report titled *Multiculturalism: Success, Failure and Future*, compiled under an initiative of the Migration Policy Institute, Europe, “multiculturalism was characterized as a feel-good celebration of ethnocultural diversity, encouraging citizens to acknowledge and embrace the panoply of customs, traditions, music and cuisine that exist in a multiethnic society” (72). For instance, he quotes Yasmin Alibhai Brown who labelled the multiculturalism model in Britain as the 3s model of “sarees, samosas and steeldrums” to emphasise his point (72). This model, which was touted as a decided progress over the melting-pot philosophy, was expected to allow various ethnic groups, the freedom to preserve their cultural and religious markers and retain their native identities, in a mutually respectful atmosphere.

Majority of the liberal Western democracies, gladly espoused multiculturalism, with its promise of improved relations of democratic citizenship, inspired by the human-rights ideal. The rights of immigrant minorities began to be attached significance and policies were drafted with recognition of diversity in focus, such as the Race Relations Committee constituted in Mohan’s office, in the novel. Theoretically, the model worked well, with its anti-discrimination principles that challenged the exclusion or stigmatization of ethnic, racial, or religious minorities. A country such as Canada, which was the first to adopt an official multiculturalism policy towards immigrant ethnic groups and where it has been made a part of the Constitution, can

boast of comparative success with at least 46 visible minority MPs elected to the House of Commons in 2015. The European experience however, leaves much to be desired and the effective integration of the immigrants and their successive generations, is still elusive.

For the European Union generally and Britain specifically, it appears that the transition from the Empire in which the sun never sets, with its colonial hangover which Gilroy calls ‘melancholia’, to an accommodating multicultural nation, sensitive to the individual needs of its diverse ethnic and religious minorities, is a gradual and arduous journey. In spite of its ostensible claims of providing religious freedom and respect to the ethnic customs and practices of the minorities, multiculturalism seems to have moved only in the direction of a coercive national culture, into which the immigrants are expected to integrate, more like the earlier hierarchical assimilation because it is the native culture that reigns supreme. Although, assimilation was officially rebutted as government strategy, as early as 1966 when Roy Jenkins who was soon going to be the Labour Home Secretary, insisted that the government did not seek “a flattening process of uniformity, but cultural diversity, coupled with equal opportunity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance”, (qtd. in Rex: 10) yet, it was clear that the difference was legitimized only to be exercised in the private domain, as exhibited in the novel. The minority communities instead, wanted acceptance for their exclusive cultural identities in the public sphere as well. Pnina Werbner makes the same point in the Introduction to her edited book, *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multicultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-racism*, that as a counterpoise to the “destructive power of xenophobia or fetishized culture” minorities are claiming to be “recognised as different, and to retain their right to practise distinctive cultures and religions” (3). Antagonistic assertion of difference however, may not be the solution.

The initial hurdles in this direction had been boldly faced and overcome by the first generation of migrants. The real challenge however, akin to Ashis Nandy’s ‘intimate enemy’ comes from within, from their own offspring, who face a sense of alienation, both from the White culture because of not being able to fully adapt to it, as well as their parents’ original culture, for not being able to comprehend it fully. The parents are witnesses to the gradual drifting away of their own children. In the novel, the elderly character Gurmukh Singh, whose three sons have abandoned him and his wife to live elsewhere, curses the country and laments:

What a bloody country this is, what have we earned by coming here, asses? rather we have lost everything. Lost our children, look at us, we are on the verge of death and we are alone like the trees in the forests, the bubble can burst any time, who knows whether they will come even for our last rites. ... Now it is not easy to get your progenies married off in another caste, another colour or another religion, it is a sort of death and we are dying. (my trans.; 18)

When the mother passes away, these youngsters come for two days to attend her funeral and leave the old father, who then dies unattended and lonely.

Mohan is shown to have been living with Chanda, his Gujarati girlfriend for almost ten years but they break up when she talks of marriage or having kids. Having imbibed the Western values, long-term commitment in relationships is anathema to Mohan. Even otherwise, as Avtar Brah points out in the chapter ‘Second-generation’ or Asian-British, even “‘Asian cultures’ are differentiated according to class, caste, region, religion and gender. Therefore, theoretically at least, there would seem to be as many possibilities of intra-ethnic as of inter-ethnic ‘clashes of culture’.” (40) The differences between the Punjabi and Gujarati cultures, creep into Mohan and Chanda’s relationship, which was never approved of, by Pala Singh. She finds his drinking and aggression too much to handle, whereas he finds her parents’ interference unbearable. Mohan, ticks off Chanda with a comment on her Gujarati cooking, “You better learn how to make *gobhi* (Punjabi style cauliflower), if you again make these *Dokre-chokre* (Gujarati dish) in my house, I am going to throw you out” (my trans.; 75).

Pala Singh’s second son, Amardev chooses to marry an English girl, Sandra, who is a pleasant and adaptable girl. Their marriage, which is opposed by the parents on both sides, is a liberal relationship that allows Amar to have physical relations with his boss Irene, an English lady and Sandra to spend nights with her boss, Daniel Heele. Mohan, with his ‘traces’ of Sikh values left, feels the guilt much more than Sandra does. He even contemplates confessing his sin in the church, where Sandra takes him, every Sunday. He too, takes her to the Gurdwara, just to settle scores. Otherwise, they give each other complete freedom to practise their respective religions, as they like. But later, when their kids grow up a little, the couple begin to get bored of each other. Atwal’s words convey the deep loneliness in Amar’s heart:

He feels all this is fleeting. His real life is somewhere else. These kids, this wife, this house do not belong to him. Then, he wonders maybe it is due to the cultural difference. He notices, that his children keep talking only of their maternal grandparents and feel attached only to them, as they keep visiting them. On several occasions he feels that he is very lonesome. (my trans.; 237)

But the best part about their relationship is that they both understand each other's inner conundrums very well and soon return to each other lovingly, with faith in the strong bond of marriage.

This interracial relation however, continues to be haunted by the colonial past. For instance, Amar's father-in-law Patrick Haze jeeringly reminds him that his people have laboured in their country to build big mansions back-home in India. Amar, who has a very superficial knowledge of history, recalls that the English had ruled over India for hundreds of years and had accumulated the wealth, robbed from there. So, when Patrick proudly flaunts some relics, collected by his ancestors from India, Amar replies, "Mr. Haze, I have never been to India and I consider myself British but these things are arousing strange feelings in me. I feel a sense of attachment, with these things that your ancestors, fleeced my ancestors of" (my trans.; 118).

Mohan too, feels the sting of this dilemma more acutely when his White colleagues pass racist remarks about his native culture. One of his Sikh colleagues, Himmat Singh shares with him how to ward off such bigoted Whites, he narrates to them the tales of courage of figures like Udham Singh from history and the incredible fortitude of the tenth Guru of the Sikhs against the Mughals. Mohan is neither familiar with the colonial history nor the Sikh religion, but is genuinely curious to learn about both. Himmat Singh tells him that this knowledge cannot be gathered from books but rather an in-depth study of Sikhism will improve his understanding. Though Mohan is not religious, whenever he finds time, he starts talking with Himmat Singh about the Sikh past and admits that it fills him with a sense of pride. The significant point here is that the rebellious and revolutionary aspects of the Sikh identity are cherished but the virtuous, tolerant and cosmopolitan ones are not emphasised or properly transmitted to the successive generations.

Pala Singh's daughter Maninder eventually leaves her Muslim partner and is already expecting a child before getting married to another Mauritian friend. It is sad that for

stubborn and impatient parents such as Pala Singh, it takes a heart attack, a related stroke and long hospitalization to accept his fate and ultimately forgive his children. Maninder comes to see him at the hospital, both cry their hearts out and it is she who finally takes care of him. Sadhu Singh returns from jail after completing his term and finds his happy home, ruined. His wife, sheds tears of helplessness, the younger daughter has chosen to follow the wrong path with a vengeance and the son has turned into a wasteful alcoholic. Sadhu Singh is 70 plus now and feels utterly despondent. He goes to the gurdwara but finds no familiar face there. People of his age-group are mostly confined to homes now. Even *paath* and *kirtan* from the gurdwaras has been made available at home now through television channels. He meets one Sarban Singh who enquires about his family's well-being. Sadhu Singh replies with resignation, "One has to stay wherever He keeps" and Sarban Singh adds, "This is the biggest thing Sadhu Singh, He gets everything done, man is a plaything in His hands" (my trans.; 94). The significant point being made about Sikhism here, is that this realization of surrendering to God's Will has come too late. Had Sadhu Singh patiently cogitated the consequences of his hasty and ruthless action earlier, he would have overcome his pride, accepted his fate and not committed the horrible crime. Gurbani says "*Manda mool na kichiye, je lammi nadar nihaliye*" (SGGS Ang 474) meaning if you possess farsightedness, you will instinctively abstain from bad deeds. Sadhu Singh then goes to meet Pala Singh at the hospital, shares with him how his family is shattered and advises him to seek pleasure in the small joys of life and quotes from gurbani saying "*Kothe chad ke vekhiya, ghar ghar eho ag*" (95) thereby, elucidating to him, that they meaninglessly attach significance to the *biradari* (community) and its opinion, as everyone is sailing in the same boat and burning in the same fire.

As Jagmohan says, with every successive generation, the gap is widening further. The novel rummages through the issues being encountered by the third generation of diaspora, who are currently studying in the universities and are exposed to the native English youth, youth from the other countries and cultures, who have migrated to the UK and specifically the youth from Punjab, who have come to study there. They have to come to terms with questions of identity, amidst the intersectionality of multiple factors of race, class, religion, age, gender etc. casting diverse influences on them. In the novel, having failed with his elder son Jeevanjot, Jagmohan is extra careful as a

father, with the younger Kiranjot who has joined the university. The young boy has to share cubicles and a common kitchen with other youngsters from White, Black, Sri Lankan, Pakistani and Turkish backgrounds. Tejinder, who is an FFI (Freshie from India) asks Kiran the reason behind his speaking English all the time. He asks him whether he speaks his mother tongue or not, to which he replies that he is not White, but British. Kiran notices, that possibly due to a kind of colonial hangover or the economic disparity, the FFIs have a different obsequious body-language, while talking to Whites. They also take an exceptional interest in White girls. Tejinder tells Kiran, that he is imagining himself to be White, because he has internalized the White values and has turned into a BBCD (British born Confused Desi). Such Asians, are generally referred to as coconuts or Oreo biscuits in the UK, because they are brown or dark outside, but have turned totally White from inside. Similarly, when Saudagar Singh's daughter Sharon decides to keep her child without marriage, after having had repeated abortions earlier, she fully understands that her parents would be very unhappy. But she justifies herself saying "They are Indian, I am British" (my trans.; 220). This situation of the successive generations is reminiscent of the observation made by Paul Gilroy, as mentioned in chapter 2, about Du Bois' book *The Souls*, on the "transformation and fragmentation of the integral racial self" that desires to break loose from any binding and essentialist understanding of ethnicity.

Multiculturalism has been dubbed practically a failure in Britain because of its deeply embedded supremacist conceptual constructions, yet it may learn a lot from Sikhism's non-essentialist statutes, which were formed as basics of a truly multicultural and egalitarian religion. It is disconcerting that in the instance of Sikh migrants, the true philosophy of Sikhism appears to have been compromised in the pursuit of their worldly goals. The Sikh characters in the narrative come from various socioeconomic backgrounds. As mentioned in the backdrop to the novel, several Gurdwaras have been actively established across Southall and various characters such as Parduman Singh, Pala Singh, Saudagar Singh, Manjit Kaur, and others are depicted as visiting them on a daily basis, but these places are represented more as seats of monetary and sexual corruption, rather than sacred places visited with devotion. For the affluent Sikhs, these *Gurdwaras* also serve as easy paths to attain political power and the elections to the posts there also bring the intra-ethnic partitions among the Sikhs to the fore. Atwal writes:

Pay attention boys, the elections in the *Gurdwara* are about to happen, we will not let the Doabias win this time, work towards creating more and more votes. Need to understand this issue about Doabias! They have had a domination over *Gurdwara* committee for a long span. On this occasion we will establish a joint committee of the Sikhs from Malwa and Ambarsar ... the battle for the grip over the committees has picked up impetus, ever since the income to the *Gurdwara* has been enhanced. (my trans.;302)

Instead of passing on the religion's true ideology to future generations, the Sikh diaspora is preoccupied with concerns about its form, such as turban or *kirpan* campaigns, or with other anti-racist or immigration policy issues. Singh and Tatla in their book *Sikhs in Britain: The Making of a Community* comment on this very aspect:

British Sikhs have failed to evolve national and local institutions that command legitimacy, collective action has been possible mainly on single-issue movements such as anti-racism, immigration policies, turban and kirpan campaigns, or, after 1984, pro-Khalistan, or, post-Khalistan, the politics of victimhood. Single-issue movements are popular as a mode of mobilization because they are more likely to reward a leader and a faction by offering the potential for leadership. (95)

The first-generation migrants, admittedly had to make more effort for sustenance in a country that was chilly in every way and faced harsher odds than the subsequent generations, for whom ratified multicultural policies and government-created Race Relations departments have at least apparently eased out problems with racism, on the surface. The frustration and erosion of dignity, as well as the parents' deteriorating marital ties along with the pressure to blend with the new culture, drove them to drink and smoke, both of which are considered sinful as per the Sikhs code. Manjit, the female character, is revealed to harbour many grievances against her husband Jagga, who ignores her sentiments and refuses to quit smoking despite her repeated entreaties. As a result, their son Jeevanjot has started smoking and has even gone so far as to start taking narcotics. Manjit is having an extramarital affair with Kartar, and she is unable to confront her teenaged son, who is also aware of her adulterous

escapades. Monica and Sunita, two of the other female characters in the story, too are shown to have intimate relations with wealthy and elderly men such as Parduman Singh, a father of five daughters, who appears to be religious and pious on the surface. These men are then blackmailed into facilitating the grant of permanent status in the country to these ladies with questionable morality. Parents and the first group of migrants, of this kind depicted in the novel, have not been great mentors for their progeny, nor have they been willing to guide them about the actual essence of religion, which is to understand the teachings entrenched in the *Guru Granth Sahib* and adopt them as a manner of living, rather than to construct Gurdwaras and visit them just to bow reverentially in front of the sacred scripture.

4.8 Kailash Puri: Kept Afloat by Faith, in the ‘Pool of Life’

The third primary text *Pool of Life* by a writer from the first generation, is the autobiography of the well-known Punjabi writer, sexologist and Agony Aunt Kailash Puri who passed away in June 2017, at the age of 92. It has been written jointly with Eleanor Nesbitt, who is the Professor Emeritus, in Religion and Education, at the University of Warwick and has done extensive research about Sikhs in Europe. The Western academic has authored several books on Sikhism, that include *Sikhism: A Very Short Introduction* and *Intercultural Education: Ethnographic and Religious Approaches*. She met Mrs. Puri in Southall, at the discussion meetings of a group of Christians and Sikhs in the 1980s and their relationship blossomed into a lasting friendship and continued mutual admiration. Puri, mostly writing in Punjabi, had earlier written an autobiography in her native tongue. The fact that she chose this one to be written in English, is an indication of her easy assimilation into the Western culture. The latter is more relevant to this research, as it includes the perspective of Dr. Nesbitt, an authority in her own right in the field of “the contested historical development of the Sikh religious tradition, and its scholarly and devotional representation, and her profound insight into the diverse experience of the UK’s Punjabi diaspora” (1). Darshan Singh Tatla wrote in his 2004 book that very few Sikh emigrants from Punjab have published their memoirs. Nesbitt calls Puri’s autobiography, one of those few. It is the contented life story of a shy, barely educated, fifteen-year old’s transformation into a bold, outspoken and confident writer, counsellor and confidante of people in distress. Puri attributes her adaptability

to her bringing-up in a devout Sikh family and her deep-seated faith, that sustained her through the turbulence of her life.

She shares how her saga, which is inspiring in more ways than one, was rejected by several publishers, who were only looking for stories that reinforced the stereotypical notions about Asian women as victims of racism and sexism. Veritably her experience had not been typical of the British Sikh experience and that she did not perceive herself at the receiving end of either racial prejudice or marital abuse and that is what lends uniqueness to her tale. Hers is a life steeped in deep faith, right from childhood. Having been close to the family of Raja Gurbaksh Singh, who was one of the direct descendants of the Bedi clan to which Guru Nanak Dev ji belonged, the spark of religious belief was lit during her initial years in Pakistan. Her grandparents recited the morning and evening prayers together and then visited the gurdwara daily. At a time when girls were smothered to death at birth (the custom was called *palla pa dena*), her grandmother, *Beyji* to her, brought her up on courageous tales of women warriors like Mai Bhago, who had avowed to sacrifice her life for the sake of the Guru and how Mughal men had fallen to her sword. Such influence made her intensely religious and tenacious by the age of 8 or 9. She had memorized the Sikh *gurbani* (hymns composed by the Gurus) and especially mentions the *Sukhmani Sahib* (the Hymn of Peace composed by the fifth Guru Arjun Dev ji) that had given her strength during a preteen illness. She unfailingly carried on her private devotion and describes the sanctified atmosphere at Damdama Sahib in Pakistan where, as the sacred Aarti was being sung at the Gurdwara, she had lit two lamps (*jotan*) at twilight as symbols of her incessant faith.

It is with this very faith that she had entrusted and surrendered her life to God, with complete sincerity, and which provided her the thew to sail through the storms that rippled her 'pool of life'. Life is unpredictable for everyone, but for her, it was more of a roller coaster ride that literally swept her off her feet and pulled the land from under those. Dreamily and romantically married to a man 14 years her senior, at the tender age of 15 and to be travelling all over the world with him, she could hardly conjecture what to expect from life. Her marriage was unconventional, right from the word go. According to her family belief, boy and girl from the same *got* (*gotra*, sub-caste) could not get married but her mother displayed rare initiative and went ahead with the match. In those days, couples were not allowed to see each other before

marriage, but they went ahead and spent almost a week together in the same house, in the presence of her sister and brother-in-law. He even wrote a letter to her after moving to England, again, something unheard of in those times. These small liberties of affection, taken within the gamut of her religiosity, did not interfere with her devotion, which is rather reinforced through the notion of “*Ek jot doi murti, dhan pir kahiye soi*” (SGGS Ang 788) from *Gurbani* which teaches a couple to lead their married life as two physical manifestations of a common flame within. In Sikh *Gurbani*, women are not only accorded an equal status to men, but rather all mankind is projected as women, carrying unwavering love and dedication in their hearts, and yearning for a communion with the male God. “*Saach kahon sun leho sabe, Jin prem kio tin hi prabh payo*” (SGGS Savaye 9,29). He who is absorbed in true love, shall realize the lord. The worldly love between a man and a woman, is a microcosmic representation of that all-pervading and eternal love for God. A man and woman, at the time of their wedding are given *Sikhiya* (advice) to understand the significance of matrimony. While men are guided to be patient and gentle with their wives, the women are taught the lesson of “the three *Bh* words” as mentioned by Puri, “Bhala, Bhuli and Bhana” (56). These edify the virtues of contentment, admittance of faults and acceptance of God’s Will.

Puri makes a special mention of the fulfilling and uninhibited marital relationship that she enjoyed with her highly learned (Dr. Gopal Singh Puri was a double Doctorate in Botany and Philosophy), caring, encouraging and open-minded husband. He compelled her to eat from the same plate, to the discomfiture of many orthodox people around. He bought her books that she avidly read and encouraged her to write, never making her conscious of the difference in their levels of education. If ever there was a difference of opinion or disagreement between them, she remembered her mother’s advice of never publically criticizing her husband. Puri and Nesbitt write about the younger generations, that they, “aggravate the difficulties in their relationship by publicizing their grievances” (62).

After praying at the Golden Temple, Amritsar to seek God’s blessings, she proceeds on a journey to Britain by ship, to join her husband. She bravely stood by his side to face all challenges of the life of a diaspora. She busied herself with her Sikh prayers and embroidery. As the turban was a curious headgear for their neighbours, relentlessly for the sake of her faith, she took the extra trouble to starch and dry his

turbans at night. She reveals that she did not have to face any racial prejudice, at that time. The White residents of the UK, were “polite, courteous, helpful and friendly” (67) and gave her special priority when she was expecting her child. Though houses were not readily rented to coloured people, Indians, she writes, were treated with respect in the 1940s. It could be attributed to the fact that they, and especially the Sikhs, had been contributing tremendously by fighting wars from the British side and laying down their lives for their sake or that it was only the Maharajas or students who were visiting England then.

Puri admits that her religious commitment had intensified while she lived in London. The Shepherd’s Bush Gurdwara was the only Sikh temple at that time (the number has crossed 300 now as per Singh and Tatla, 2004), and was referred to as ‘*Bhupinder Dharamsala*’ because it had been established with financial assistance from Maharaja Bhupinder Singh, of Patiala. She regularly visited the place of worship and eagerly took part in the reading of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, during *Akhand Path* (the Sikh practice of uninterrupted reading of the holy book for 48 hours). She mentions the names of Sikhs who had risen to prominence in that period such as Dr. Diwan Singh, the only Sikh to practice law in Britain, his son Inderjit Singh, the Editor of the *Sikh Messenger*, Ravel Singh who was into Sports business, Ram Singh Keith with a flourishing business in Britain’s seaports and many others. *Gurpurabs* and other Sikh festivals had begun to be celebrated and even the BBC was thinking of broadcasting the traditional Sikh hymns to India. These Sikhs performed the *kirtan* (singing of hymns) and Puri accompanied them by playing on the *dholak* (Indian drum). The Sikhs had already begun to establish themselves and make their presence felt in that foreign land. As a diaspora, her stay at London had been challenging but pleasant and it was her grounding in the teachings of Sikh religion that contributed to her inner peace, in the midst of those unprecedented demands from her, as a young, immigrant, not very educated Sikh woman.

When her husband’s research grant concluded, the couple returned to India where Gopal found a prestigious placement with the Indian Council for Ecological Research. They were given a big bungalow to live in. Having found a suitable space for it, Kailash was quick to acquire a personal full-size copy of the *Guru Granth Sahib* from Amritsar and it was duly placed in an upper level prayer-room with complete reverence. “From now on one upper room, wherever I lived, would be Babaji’s, a

place set apart for daily prayer and reading of the scriptures” (76). It was in such an atmosphere immersed in religious piety, that she brought up her three children, two daughters and a son, all of whom went on to do very well academically, professionally and at the personal level.

Egged on by her husband’s trust in her capabilities, she took to writing seriously. Beginning with short-stories at his behest, she introduced the first-ever Punjabi magazine for women in India in the 1950s and gave it the title ‘*Subhagwati*’, meaning a bride blessed with good fortune. She wrote features on women, cookery, marital relations, interior décor, indoor plants, current affairs and gardening. For her liberal outlook, her magazine was also criticized by some narrow-minded people who alleged that she was ruining their family life and prejudicing their daughters-in-law. Her mail brought her antagonistic disparagement, along with a continuously growing number of appeals for assistance and guidance. Compassion and sympathetic understanding being central to Sikhism, she handled these issues with an empathetic and broad-minded outlook. She not only helped solve family disputes, but also brought the topic of sexual satisfaction of both the partners, considered taboo till then, out into open discussion. Sikh religion does not recommend any reservations, in a legitimate relationship between a married couple.

That did not at all mean that integration into the British culture, was a smooth ride for her and her family. When she visited London again after a gap of twenty years, this time expecting to settle permanently, the place felt very different from her earlier experience as a naïve bride. For a long period of about two years, her husband was not able to get any employment suited to his qualifications. They lived in a cramped and suffocating two-room rented accommodation. This was a tough phase, when she had even started debating whether to continue her elder daughter’s education or send her to work. Kailash did not lose faith and in the true spirit of *Kirat karna* (doing honest work), determinedly carried on with her grit and inner strength. Like a strong pillar of support for the family, she accepted any and every kind of job that came her way, right from peddling suit-lengths, to working in factories, to being an interpreter or a Punjabi teacher, to clerical work in the Civil Service along with giving cookery lessons. She kept silently and almost unconsciously mumbling her Sikh hymns of prayer even at work. She writes, “Life still seemed bleak and dark, but together we weathered the worst and thanked God for any rays of hope” (109).

More blatant racial discrimination and a generally ever-widening breach between the parents and successive generations of migrants are problems that mark this period of her stay, in Southall. Though permissive and understanding in nature, she too, has to patiently reason out with her teenaged daughter, when the latter wants to wear an unusually short dress to college. She too feels insulted, when a middle-aged English woman instructs her in a patronizing tone to write her name properly and her application, in good English. The incident of some White youngsters hurling 'Go home!' at them, during a stroll with her daughters in the evening, leaves her feeling rattled and cold. When her husband gets a post in Liverpool, they move there to find that people were not ready to let out houses to coloured people. She wonders what kind of people they are, whose approval has to be sought. Self-respect and dignity are very important to the Sikhs. "*Je jeevai pat lathi jai, sabh haram jeta kich khai*" (SGGS Ang 142). At the same place, she becomes the Founder Member of Community Relations Council but resigns soon because of its endemic quarrels. The clash between the Eastern and the Western value-systems, affects her deeply. She deploras:

Most bewildering and hurtful to me were the unfamiliar Western values unconsciously directed at me by our own children. I had, each time, to take stock, to analyse why I felt hurt, insulted or incensed, how far should I take my children to task, how much I should accept without remonstrance. Usually underlying this tension was the West's individualism, the East's belief in the priority of family relationship. (114-115)

The schism was between the formality of the Westerners even in personal relations, and the informality of the Indians. In Asian families everything used to be 'ours', never 'yours' and 'mine' and she questions why she feels hurt. It is her patient contemplation of the matter that makes her stand out as entirely different from the first-generation fictitious characters such as Sadhu Singh and Pala Singh, who act rashly and ruthlessly in the name of fabricated honour and harm or wish to harm their own children. It is ironical that these Indians, who resent the British for their racist attitude, themselves practise the same sense of superiority when it comes to the supposedly lower-castes of their own race.

Kailash Puri is not only a devout Sikh woman but has also imbibed the latitudinarian Sikh teachings as a way of life. In truly religious spirit, she admires Sant Singh Smith, a White Sikh of British origins, who auspiciously visits her in Poona at the birth of her youngest daughter, for his exposition of the Guru's verses from the *Guru Granth Sahib*. She delights in the fact that rather than digressing into other anecdotes (*Sakhian*, tales about the *Gurus*), he explicates only *Gurbani* from the Holy book, which is the living *Guru* of the Sikhs. She could light candles in the Churches of Europe while inwardly ruminating about the lamps lit by her, at the holy precincts of *Damdama Sahib Gurdwara* at her birthplace, Pakistan. She had the courage to point out the hypocrisy of her fellow Sikhs, who had removed their own Sikh symbols like unshorn hair and turban for the sake of securing lucrative jobs, but as members of *Gurdwara* committee criticized her for wearing a saree to the *Gurdwara*. Even while practicing and teaching yoga, which has no significance in Sikhism, she justifies it with the same attitude, asking what the harm is, if both give her mental peace. Out of the urge to help people distressed with various personal, emotional, marital, social and even sexual problems, she adapted very well to the role of an Agony Aunt (*Humraaz Mausi* in Punjabi) which helped her gain insight into the universality of human problems. She said that it was the breadth of one's experience and the centrality of one's inner anchor that helped one sail through the 'pool of life'.

She considered herself British in her attitude. She said that her roots were in India but home was Liverpool, where she was happy to live with her memories. She noticed as a teacher of Punjabi, that in the 1960s some parents insisted on their children speaking in English and did not converse with them in their mother tongue. They were served English food, which they gradually came to prefer. According to her, this was done by the parents with the intention of flaunting these youngsters as '*Sahibs*', when they visited their homes in villages. She observed that children born in Britain were likely to gravitate towards the local language and culture in an effort to assimilate. But at the same time, identifying strongly as a Sikh, she emphasised that "children should be encouraged to feel pride in their parent's culture" (108). Very much like Ziauddin Sardar, she drew attention to the fact that the English had very conveniently forgotten the past and that how during colonialism, they were the ones who had insisted on the outer Sikh form being strictly maintained by the soldiers. Now those very Sikhs were having to fight fierce campaigns, to be allowed to retain their Sikh symbols. Her own

son, Shaminder Puri, had to fight a legal battle to get the intransigent practice of removing and searching the turbans of Sikh travelers, by the Polish Border Guard, eliminated. Kailash admits, that the younger generations are basically ignorant of their inheritance in the form of cultural and religious traditions. But in the multicultural and multiracial environment that surrounded their children, these cannot be simply imposed. She recommends giving the children some liberty and assures that if the parents look at their issues with an open-mind, the children would definitely share all their problems with them.

Kailash's memoir covers a period of 60 years from her birth to 1983. The two significant events that deeply impacted the evolution of Sikhism in the UK are mentioned in the portion included as 'Afterword' in the book. A momentous ruling in 1983 in the House of Lords had demarcated Sikhs as "almost a race, and almost a nation" (170). It seemed to have been an outcome of the strong upsurge of the wave of terrorism in Punjab and the vehement demand for Khalistan, under the influence of the radicalized leader Jarnail Singh Bhindrawale. The movement resulted in the temporary galvanization of the Sikhs' sense of religious identity in Punjab and among the diaspora, but lost its steam soon after and culminated in the storming of the Golden Temple by the troops of the Indian Army, at the behest of the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. As a vindication, she was later assassinated by her two Sikh bodyguards. Especially relevant to the context of diaspora, is the orchestrated violence that was unleashed at the Sikhs, all over the country. Along with the disturbing phase of terrorism in Punjab, it became a major push-factor in propelling mass-migration from Punjab. Puri and Nesbitt write that, "By the mid 1990s violence in Punjab had diminished, but the destruction of the twin towers in New York on September 11, 2001 impacted on the lives of the Sikhs in the UK", as turbaned and bearded Sikhs were identified with or mistaken for Muslims, supportive of outfits like Al Qaeda. They cite the example of one of the first victims of Islamophobia in America, who was actually a turbaned Sikh owner of a Petrol Station. The 7/7 bombings that shook the London tube station, aggravated the situation further. This period, according to the authors, witnessed a Janus-faced response to religiousness among the diaspora Sikhs, especially the youngsters. On the one hand, there was an enhanced zealotry among some to learn about their legacy and religion and on the other, it brought about a kind of disillusionment with religious traditions. South Asian

and especially Sikh families' preoccupation with *izzat* (family honour) and the resultant obduracy regarding the marital alliances of their progeny,ssss has led to extensive defiance and distress among the younger generations. Though the case of Jasvinder Sanghera, who penned down her bitter experiences, is accentuated as an aberration by Puri, a generalized observation is made that many parents from the first-generation of migrants have begun to lose or loosen their control over their successive generations in the UK. As emphasised by Ziauddin Sardar in the context of Islam, the solution lies in a more liberal, undogmatic society and a new contemporary interpretation of Sikhism, though in keeping with its foundational tenor, that defines the meaning of being a Sikh in the 21st century and its perspicuous transmission to the craving, desiderate youngsters.

CHAPTER 5

‘DUBIDHA EH PHAL NAHIN’–BBCDS (BRITISH BORN CONFUSED DESIS)

5.1 Transformed Gaze at Religion by the Uninitiated Sikh Youth

The presence of the past historical and colonial experience along with their faith, inerasably permeates the lives of the migrants, who then, preserve it in a petrified form, and attempt to transmit it to and enforce it on their successive generations, who are born in the UK and are leading transnational and multicultural lives. This chapter proposes to investigate the aspects of Sikh religious identity, raised in the previous chapter, from the point of view of the second and third generations of the migrants. These new generations, educated in the Western system with its liberalized values, perceive the Sikh religion with an altered gaze. The generational differences in the emphases on various issues, their comparative significance and the diverse ways of handling those, are going to form the major focus of this chapter. Jasjit Singh, the Religious Studies scholar from the University of Leeds, has done extensive work in examining the processes of religious and cultural learning among young British Sikhs and studied the impact of these on religious identity. In his article “Family Values: The Impact of Family Background on the Religious Lives of Young British Sikhs”, he states that very little research has been done in the area of ascertaining how the British-born young Sikhs engage with their religious tradition. He quotes Singh and Tatla who say, “The culture of young British Sikhs today remains an area of darkness for the community and a testing ground for its uncertain futures” (15). It is into this unexplored and complicated territory that I would venture in this chapter, on the basis of literary texts in the form of memoirs and fiction, composed by Sikh writers of these generations. The texts to be taken up here are markedly all in English and display a noticeable transition in outlook, from the earlier writings in Punjabi.

The migrants from the first generation had undertaken the challenge of migrating to the completely unfamiliar, other end of the world and toiled tirelessly to give the best opportunities and choices in life to their successive generations. Most though illiterate themselves, understood the importance of education in scripting a success story in those foreign lands. Once they had put a full-stop to the ‘myth of return’, overcoming

the impediments of racial discrimination and ensuring a secure future for their children depended on the economic ascendance of their progeny, which in turn, depended on their education. Fortunately, their adopted country provided it free of cost, at the basic level. These youngsters were exposed to the Eurocentric categories of knowledge in the Western system of thought, according to which, as Ziauddin Sardar (2006) says, rationalism is considered the only way of knowing the truth. It is a system, says Sardar, that is imparting “black-box knowledge” and indulging in a kind of “techno-colonialism” (4) that chooses to pay no attention to the indigenous structures of knowledge and rather presents a very stereotypical view of those, labelling them as inferior. Alberto Melucci points out how in this modern-day information controlled society, the individuals are at the mercy of hidden apparatuses, that bring in to play, systematic regulations which compel them to adopt and alter their behavioural and thought patterns, through greater integration. The second and especially the third generation Sikhs are the products of such a system and it is in this context that their comprehension of their own culture and religion has to be understood. They are on a persistent quest to recognize and negotiate their “patchwork identity”, to use the phrase that Thomas Meyer uses in *Identity Mania* (2001), in the midst of the intersectionality of various factors such as race, class, religion and generation shaping their identity, as illustrated by Avtar Brah in *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. Stuart Hall considers identities as those points of identification, that act as aids in establishing connections with the past and also iterates that these are constantly constituted through representation. In this context, Eleanor Nesbitt observes that the genres of autobiography, memoirs, novels, short stories and poetry are found extremely suitable by these young authors with unbridled minds, to express their side of the story. These also advance useful perspicacity, and bring forth premises and perceptions that provide rich frames of reference, to their lived conversance with their particular situations. Knut A. Jacobsen and Kristina Myrvold in the Introduction to their book *Young Sikhs in a Global World: Negotiating Traditions, Identities and Authorities* emphasise the significance of autobiographies in understanding the formation and negotiation of Sikh identity:

the ritualization of a Sikh identity in autobiographical writing has made possible a disassociation from Punjabi cultural heritage and a promotion of a purely religious identity that is combined with cultural

values derived from the majority society. Autobiographies, as a special literary genre, can be used for understanding the identity formations among young Sikhs since the literature reveals and opens up for a multiplicity of voices, choices and opportunities. (6)

In the context of the second-generation Sikh writers from Norway, whose books Nesbitt analysed, she brings forth how the narratives chart “their path to adulthood, of growing up with Punjabi parents in Norwegian society, and the focus is on the situation of being in between cultures, as either Indian and Norwegian, or neither Norwegian nor Indian” (156). She emphasises how “there is a need to take into account the genre of autobiographies in analysing the sociology of second-generation Sikhs in Europe and North America in order to get a balanced view on the in-between situation” (156). According to Nesbitt, these autobiographies tell of enormous challenges with identity development, both at home and in the greater world, as well as a conflict between alienation and integration. The writers of second-generation memoirs are torn between wanting to assimilate and being controlled by the first-generation migrants, their parents, who represent “fortresses that protect language, religion, lifestyle and traditions”. (Qtd. in Jacobsen: 156)

5.2 Satnam Sanghera’s Exposition of Sikh Culture: A Journey of Self-revelation

A second-generation writer, Satnam Sanghera, was born to Punjabi parents in Wolverhampton in 1976. His father had immigrated to the UK in 1955 at the age of 49, at a time when the UK was mistakenly considered a retreat of racial and religious tolerance. Though his father and elder brother had had their hair cut, Satnam was raised as a Sikh with long *kes* and having a *joora* or a top-knot, lent uniqueness to his experience. His novel *The Boy with the Topknot: A Memoir of Love, Secrets and Lies in Wolverhampton*, written in 2008, which has also been adapted into a film in 2017, is a Sikh journalist’s voyage of self-discovery. It narrates the vastly appealing tragicomic tale of the consequences of attempts by a well-educated, brand conscious London journalist who grew up in an orthodox, non-English-speaking Punjabi Sikh family, to weave together the disparate strands of his life. It is also about the British concepts of “us” and “them” and how both the notions can be encompassed, though cumbersomely, in a single individual leading to the formation of his double-consciousness and hybridized identity.

According to Jacobsen, “A characteristic of autobiographies and fictional autobiographies is to exaggerate real-life events and personal characteristics and to use a type of exaggerated honesty to create empathy and sympathy among the readers for their life choices” (152). Satnam Sanghera however says, that though the latest trend was that of making one’s memoir into a tale of suffering, revealing a wretched juvenility, he had fortunately enjoyed a happy childhood. At the same time, in a rational and analytical manner befitting a Cambridge product, he enumerates his childhood memories as chaotic. Surrounded by the mystery, of his father’s as well as his sister’s mental illness, a fact that was not disclosed to him till he was in his twenties, he justifies and attributes his ignorance to several factors such as general cluelessness, language barrier, too young to know subtle unnoticeable symptoms, lack of inquisitiveness, lack of self-examination in Punjabi culture, self-absorption, aversion to delving into the past, procrastination, denial and weariness. The rationality ingrained in him by his Western education, makes him view his own culture, with the same stereotypical and disparaging attitude that leads to generalizations. The situation is akin to the one mentioned by Gilroy when he talks of the difficulties arising out of Black internalization of an American identity. Satnam Sanghera makes several such stereotypical comments during the course of his memoir, for instance, “social interactions in Sikh community are like wrestling matches over giving money, offending both the parties at the end” (4), or “like most Punjabis, his parents didn’t do spontaneity” (8), or even “speaking loudly is an inherent trait of the Sikhs” (13), or when his mother had once abandoned a cat while moving house, not counting himself as one of them, he says, “Indians can be cruel” (171). Along similar lines, he also comments that “the most irritating thing about Punjabi culture is that the wealthy are respected over the educated and the happy” (116).

Stuart Hall’s idea of the constant positionings and repositioning of identity using Derrida’s notion of ‘traces’ rings true here. The identity of the British-born Sikhs is impacted by the European presence and the original culture of their parents is viewed with the gaze of the “dominant regimes of representation” (Hall “*Representation*” 233). In Nandy’s terminology, it would be the “intimate enemy”, the enemy from within. Satnam Sanghera even quotes from books such as *When the Coloured People Come*, by Canon Selwyn Gummer, an analysis of Sikh Settlement in Gravesend, that the immigrant mothers inflicted fashion crimes on their babies by dressing them

awkwardly, which was a torture to the European eyes. He expresses shock at one of his pictures, wherein his mother had dressed him in a ‘tartan smock’ (36). Similarly, Gummer’s book is also shown to make remarks about the shallow intellect of the Sikh children, which is attributed to the infinitesimally small percentage of literate parents among the Sikh migrants. A note is made, even of the Sikh women making extra noise during labour pains. The book concludes that, “The Sikhs are strangers in a strange land and they are intellectually and educationally ill-equipped to deal with the complexities of a modern civilization” (36). The school experience of young Sikh children was a series of such humiliating experiences, which reinforced similar notions in their impressionable minds. In Satnam’s case the problems multiplied, since he was raised as a religious experiment, with the complete look of a Sikh child (it is the norm among Sikhs), though his own father and brother did not sport that form. His topknot made him the only one with that look in the whole school and consequently the butt of many jokes. He recalls, “My days were marked by taunts of “‘Oi turbinator’ and ‘Is that your packed lunch on your head?’ and (with a squeeze) ‘Oink oink’ and (with a mimicked topknot siren) ‘Nee-naw, nee-naw’.” (174) In an atmosphere like that, he could not perform well either academically or socially, turning reticent and wordless.

Jasjit Singh in his article “Family Values: The Impact of Family Background on the Religious Lives of Young British Sikhs”, however notes that the number of young Sikhs extending their schooling beyond the age of 21 and going in for higher education has increased considerably in recent years. This has also led to a related development, which is the rise in the average age when these young adults get married, having a long gap between finishing university and tying the knot. This gap is employed by these youth, to introspect, formulate and clarify their understanding of life and critically evaluate their own culture and religious tradition. These youngsters are part of a scenario where secure careers for life are not available and they develop “a general psychological orientation of maximizing options and postponing commitments” (17), a phenomenon marked by Melucci as well (2015). Jasjit Singh raises the question whether religious socialization of children, encouraged by the parents during childhood, is prevailed upon by the experiences and exposures of later life or is it sustained through as a perseverant participation in the religious community, as adults. Like brought out earlier in the Documentary *Sikhs in Britain*,

and following the pattern of priorities elucidated by Inglehart, the youth seem to be impacted more by peer-pressure during their initial years, but definitely return to a deeper understanding of their religion in later life, with many adopting the external Sikh form as well.

All these factors exist in Satnam's life and he is undergoing, precisely the same dilemma, which he terms universal. His mother raised him on the tales of the Sikh Gurus and warriors and taught him to do *paath* (daily prayers) and took extra care of his long hair. He had even learnt the *Japji Sahib*. Jasjit Singh quotes Jeffrey Arnett's view from his book *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens Through the Twenties*, who is of the opinion that:

“something changes between adolescence and emerging adulthood that dissolves the link between the religious beliefs of parents and the beliefs of their children”, a change which results from the exposure to new ideas and influences outside the family which young people encounter at college and university. (qtd. in Jasjit Singh: 174)

The extent to which the outside influences from peer groups attract the youngsters is evident in the incident, where Satnam is thoroughly thrilled to hear his first pop song and then picks up his mother's prayer tapes, to record English music in those. This becomes a literal case of the notion of palimpsest in cultural hybridity, given by Bhabha, where the self gets overwritten. Satnam deeply loves his mother and is scared to death, to offend her in any possible way. For him, his Mum's word is the word of God. Nevertheless, he goes ahead and gets his topknot removed and his *kes* sacrilegiously shorn. It was an act of defiance that was going to alienate him from his family and culture. He again offers an analytical explanation, of what led him to commit the errant deed. Advancing several clarifications, like his Sikh faith being adulterated by years of compulsory Christian worship at school, the arbitrary manner of his instruction in Sikhism, the regular weekend Punjabi classes not going beyond teaching basic sentences in the mother-tongue to the young Sikh children and his mother only providing a random set of do's and don'ts rather than “a coherent belief system” (197). The difference between Satnam's uncle (chacha) who sported a turban and a long flowing beard, and his father who was clean shaven, had normalized the fact that a family could have members with both the outer forms. Even his elder

brother Raja used to experiment with different haircuts resembling various Western celebrities. All these factors, coupled with the absence of a clear theological thinking behind the notion of long hair, egged the fourteen-year old Satnam to take the step. At the same time, he admits that there was no crisis of faith and the act was merely an outcome of his being fed up of being incessantly teased due to his topknot. He detested his own appearance. The long hair also imposed a restriction on his freedom, as he could not move out of the house without his mother getting him ready. The extent of his despondency, dwarfed the apprehension about his mother's reaction. Later, he terms himself a heretic and calls that momentous day, a dark day of his life. He also confesses that at that age, had he been conscious of the importance of the turban, as a symbol of the Sikh community and understood how hard the Sikhs had had to struggle for the acceptance of their form in Britain, he would not have had the courage to go ahead with his impulse.

His mother is a pleasant and intelligent woman, an epitome of self-sacrifice, which (according to another one of his generalizations) is the hallmark of Punjabi women. From his Westernized perspective, he completely fails to understand what prompted her to continue to live with a schizophrenic man, to whom she was married off at the tender age of fifteen. She had never seen him before the wedding day, on which she was received by him with an unwarranted tight slap on her face. A little while after the marriage, he had migrated to England. She had faced repeated bouts of physical violence at his hands, when she had joined him in that alien land. With none of her own relatives there to support her, nor any knowledge of the foreign tongue, along with a mentally ailing husband, to say that life was an uphill road for her, would be an understatement. With her sheer grit, tolerance, perseverance and faith in God, she was not only able to create a home in that absolutely unfamiliar land, but also give her children a happy atmosphere in there, to provide for and facilitate their access to a better future. Satnam writes in his memoir that it was written as a kind of tribute to her. Her tale is typical of most of the illiterate Sikh women who had joined their husbands, with their noses to the grindstone, and after having made the tough choice of leaving the secure environs of their native land, had ventured out into the unexplored territory with its unforeseen challenges.

Her deep-seated faith helps her face the ordeal of her life bravely and it is this very faith that she attempts to inculcate in her four children, two sons and two daughters.

Her husband, in dire need of good employment and due to his ailment, could not maintain long hair and at the time of the elder son she had been too busy working for the family, so his hair too, had to be cut. With Satnam however, she wanted to raise him as a religious-minded kid. He regularly accompanied her to the Gurdwara, prayed for an hour every day and on special occasions when *Akhand Path* (the uninterrupted reading of the *Guru Granth Sahib* for three days) was arranged, the whole family used to spend the intermittent nights at the temple premises. The mother insisted on playing the Sikh *shabads* (Sikh prayers and hymns) on the tape-recorder in the house on early mornings with the belief, “Even if you do not understand the words, it is good to listen” (54). She enforces rules about not drinking alcohol at home, a habit she had patiently got her husband to quit, because of its trouble with his own medication. She explains to her son, the significance of his surname ‘Singh’ which means a lion and is shared by every Sikh, something to be proud of. She narrates tales about Sikh gurus to him at bedtime, when all his other siblings go to sleep. He is familiar with the tale of the consecration of the *Khalsa* panth:

It involved Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and most militaristic of the Sikh gurus, a test of faith involving the slaughter of a goat, and ended with Guru Gobind Singh pronouncing that all male Sikhs would henceforth share the surname ‘Singh’ and all female Sikhs would henceforth share the surname ‘Kaur’. (74)

But with this superficial understanding of the concept of *Khalsa* and his practical approach, he adds that the tale did not solve his quandary about his surname at school, with Singh being used by all Sikh children. He looks at the religious tenets through the filter of rationality and practicality but failing to get satisfactory replies to his queries, comes to the conclusion that religious debate was an out of bounds thing in his household, “never confess to a religious doubt” (14), he says.

What adds to the haphazardness of his mother’s religious instruction, is her own belief in superstitions which is also a corroboration of the stereotypical Western perception about Indian superstitiousness. Whenever her son comes back after travelling, she makes him “run his hand through a cauldron of birdseed and then touch a tin of spinach, a packet of kidney beans and a tin of plum tomatoes in the specific order” (9). This is followed by his mother bringing a large red chilli, squeezing it between

her fingers, encircling it around his head five times and putting it on the gas stove to crackle. According to Satnam, while the former can still be rationally understood in terms of interspecies charity, as the birdseed will be fed to the birds and the packaged food will be donated at the temple to bring good luck, the latter was meant to ward off the *nazar* (evil eye), which can affect you if you are admired in any way, for any reason. He puts her in the category of Indians who hang green chillies above their thresholds or wear special bracelets (*taveez*) with the same intent. Out of her religiosity, she stops consuming non-vegetarian food when Puli, her eldest daughter, who also suffers from schizophrenia, faces problems in her married life. She forbade her children to eat beef as the cow was considered holy and herself avoided contact with leather, even refusing to sit in a car with leather seat-covers, leading to a nebulous cognition about religious tenets among her children, especially Satnam. The extent of his befuddled comprehension of the notions can be gauged from the expression, “tea-leaf reader” used by him for a fortune-teller, that his mother goes to, to show his *patri* (the booklet about his birth details), whereas the Punjabi word for tea-leaves is *patti*.

He gradually improves in academics, later winning a scholarship to join one of the prestigious Oxbridge colleges and goes on to become a successful journalist, who routinely interviews celebrities for his paper. He moves to London where he shares a flat with his English girlfriend Laura and veritably begins to live two lives in two different worlds that could not be more disparate and are a literal manifestation of his twoness. Travel from London, the twentieth century modern city to his old town Wolverhampton, which was almost like a Punjabi village due to the predominance of Sikhs in that area was, in his words, a switch from “West to East, South to North, English to Punjabi, rationality to superstition, smoked almonds to salted peanuts” (8). He talks of his personality changing while using different languages. He presents a detailed enumeration of the vast differences between his two lives. Linguistically, he was a university qualified writer of English, whereas not many of his adult relatives used the language, and academically, none of them had ever attended university. Professionally he moved in the most elite circles of London, owing to his job, while he was surrounded by factory workers or tradesmen in his hometown. The kind of variety cuisine he enjoyed in the city, could only be dreamt about in Park Village. Similarly, he points out several others such as geographical, literary, journalistic,

political variances between his dual lives. About superstitions he reiterates, “Reason and rationality ruled in London, but in Park Village, my life was governed by a million and one spooky rules and rites imported from India” (26). The wide schism about religiousness in his dual lives, extends from regularly visiting the Gurdwara and praying daily, to not even admitting you believed in God, as that was considered taboo in London circles. Sexually too, the split is gaping, as nobody dated in his village and contemplating marriage with someone from outside the caste and religion, was forbidden, whereas he already lives with his English girlfriend in London. He is leading an anxiety-ridden life, complicated with these multiple dualities and is on the verge of a nervous breakdown (in keeping with his family’s medical history), as he hides his one life from the other and keeps shuttling between the two. He expresses his predicament in another general comment, “so many British Asians are (like me), for want of a better word, schizophrenic, constantly switching between personas to fit into different worlds” (184).

Another matter that leads to frequent arguments between Satnam and his mother, is his marriage, an “infernal” issue, which according to him, the Punjabis are obsessed with and is statistically confirmed, as the Sikhs have the second highest rate of marriage out of all religious groups in Britain after Hindus. “Sikhs”, he says, “are crazy for matrimony. ... It is an occasion at which two families are united for ever, an expression of a mother and father’s devotion to their child, an exposition of *izzat* (honour) – that most intense of Punjabi feelings – and the fulfilment of a sacred duty” (165). The British presence in his identity, is not allowing him to agree to an arranged marriage with a girl from his own caste and religion, and the Sikh presence in him does not permit him to share this fact with his mother, for the fear of offending her and his being disowned by the family. All his siblings had readily gone in for such marriages and were leading, almost happy lives. When he was with Laura in London, there was no debate, as they gelled together and it assured him that getting married to her would be the right thing for him. He heard songs, read a book or watched TV, for instance, he mentions an episode of *EastEnders*. All of these reinforce the idea that one has to be with the person one loves. “Individual happiness is everything; you can’t live your life for other people” (42). Ziauddin Sardar (2006) refers to this very facet of the Western culture, when he says that the notion of the individual being prioritized before the society, as a “self-contained, autonomous and sovereign being who is defined independently of society” (282), is exclusive to the Western ethos.

Such youngsters, who internalize these values earn the insulting epithet of ‘coconuts’—white inside and brown outside, among the Asians.

However, Sardar observes that in most of the minority communities and cultures that coexist in multicultural Europe, the individual defines himself in terms of his “relation to a holistic and integrated group: the family or clan, the community or culture, religion or worldview” (282). In the case of Satnam’s father too, according to his doctor, he has been able to live at home with his schizophrenia, only because of the enduring support of the family. The doctor says, ““Indian families manage to cope somehow, because the whole family rallies around to give the necessary support. In the Western population—families break up like mad and the outcomes are bad. A similar individual of White origin would be in a nursing home by now”” (125). It is his deep attachment to his family and culture, that prompts Sanghera to quit his highly well-paid job in London and embark on a quest to unravel the past of his family. Rather than writing about those celebrities that he interviewed as a journalist, he prefers to go back to his origins

Yet, he remains depressed and divided between proving his loyalty to his native values and the attraction of the empowering assimilation into the Western world. To express his agonizing dilemma, Satnam picks up a very religious symbol to describe his condition, which also hints at his innate religiosity, the figure of Bhai Mati Das, whose picture he had seen on the gurdwara wall. He was the brave Sikh martyr, who had refused to be forcibly converted to Islam, “and was consequently sawn across from head to loins, under the orders of the Mughal Emperor” (45). (Satnam, however has the wrong information that he had declared Islam to be false). His self is undergoing the same excruciating dichotomy. The irony is that the revered saint had sacrificed his life for his faith, whereas he is feeling divided due to his drifting away from religion or rather his mother’s interpretation of it.

Not having the nerve to discuss the matter openly with his mother, he keeps on procrastinating almost like Hamlet, the dilemma being ‘to marry or not to marry’. He has a break-up with Laura who obviously, is asking for a decision, whereas he carries on meeting other girls, of the right caste and religion, suggested by his mother who, despite being a devout Sikh, believes in and discriminates on the basis of caste. She tells him not to marry a “*churi* or *chamari*” (313). He seeks an explanation from his

mother about the basis of this discrimination based on their occupations, such as sweepers or leather-workers, which are no longer relevant to their life in Britain, but she justifies herself, saying that those are important distinctions from their past history and culture. He eventually writes a letter to his mother in English, gets it translated into Punjabi from India and then gives it to her. When Satnam raises the point of Sikh religion having been founded *against* the then prevalent caste system, she replies that Guru Nanak was above caste because he was an incarnation of God and Guru Gobind Singh had fought to defend the religion. It is very important that the successive generations remain true to their culture.

But having said that, she adds, that she does not want to pressurize him unnecessarily and wreck his life. She has not worked so hard to bring them up to finally see them unhappy in their lives. “What will be will be. It’s neither in your control, nor in my control” (314). Astonishingly, despite the colonial past, the disapproval of a *gori* is not so vehement. She surrenders to the Will of God and reconciles to the situation. She informs him that she had known all along, with the words, “You think I don’t know what’s going on, but I listen to the British news on the Punjabi radio station and I talk to people and I have changed. I have my values, I am religious, but I don’t live like I am in India” (315).

He is happy to get that liberty from his mother. It is the culmination to his perturbation for which, he has been undergoing therapy sessions with a Western life coach, John Rushton, which again reveals his lack of faith on his own culture and more dependence on Western support. The coach, whose area of expertise surprisingly is emotional blackmail in Asian families, tells him that it is not unusual for Asian youngsters to be tormented by their parents, especially mothers, whose expectations from their children, did not at all match, the children’s own expectations from life. He adds, that that kind of burden had led to suicides and nervous breakdowns, and advises him to resolve matters, lest that “mental toothache” should completely engulf him. He encourages him to be strong and firm as the biggest hurdle to be overcome is he, himself. He has to stop living in dread. Interventions such as these, only serve to widen the intergenerational rift.

He writes to his mother in the heartfelt letter, that it had been tremendously strenuous for him to constantly try to please her, along with trying to live a life that he wanted.

He mentions the guilt of perpetually telling lies to her, to his girlfriend and to the girls he met at those matrimonial dates. He admits that he does not completely subscribe to the Western view, of only individual happiness being attached supreme importance, and duties being neglected. He is fully cognizant of his responsibilities towards his parents. He also wants his parents to know, that he will never marry anyone who does not respect their culture and religion, and that it was wrong on their part to presume that anyone from an outside caste or a different religion would not be able to understand their culture. But at the same time, he is not prepared to sacrifice his happiness and that of the innocent girl from his own caste and religion, whom he is expected to wed in an arranged match, just for the sake of some flimsy notion of pride and ‘*izzat*’, which is not even prescribed in the Sikh religion. Satnam in fact, wonders how his mother could recommend an arranged marriage, after having suffered so much in her own. But her final acceptance of his choice reassures him, of her unconditional love for him. He concludes his evocative memoir with the sentence, “Know where you come from, but don’t let it stop you becoming who you want to be” (321).

5.3 Sanghera’s *Marriage Material*: A Glimpse of Intra-Community Rifts among Sikhs

Sathnam Sanghera ventures into the domain of fiction-writing next, with his first novel *Marriage Material* written in 2013. Issues such as racism and hierarchical divides within the Sikh community, which he might have found controversial and awkward to deal with in his memoir, are probed in an unrestrained manner here, given the freedom that a fictional setting provides. This novel charts the lives of two Sikh sisters, who are forced to make several compromises in the name of family reputation and an oppressive interpretation of religion. In the author’s words it is the tale of “English desis forging and celebrating a betwixt identity that is neither here nor there.” (Book cover). The story has autobiographical elements in the form of the protagonist Sikh youngster Arjan Banga, who is a Graphic Designer in London, has a White fiancée Freya whom he is going to marry soon and he is under pressure to continue the family’s small, retail newsagent shop, ‘Bains Stores’ in Wolverhampton (Sanghera’s home town), after his father’s supposedly natural death. Banga’s mother too, is very much like Sanghera’s own mother, almost illiterate, migrated to England around the age of fifteen and equally religious and superstitious.

Rampant inter-racial tensions and deep casteist divides within Sikhism form the milieu to the story of two young Sikh girls. Their father had arrived in England as a migrant in the year 1955, when Britain was apparently considered a haven of racial tolerance. The presumable reasons for that could be the role played by the Sikh soldiers for Britain, in the not too distant past, during the two World Wars and afterwards the dire need of unskilled labour to contribute in the reconstruction of the war-torn England. But by the 1960s, as the number of migrants grew, the White residents had started forming associations to exclude Black and Asian men from buying houses in certain areas and some election leaflets had also started linking some recent cases of leprosy to the en masse arrival of immigrants.

To avoid the prevalent racial prejudice in the job market, their father had slogged hard and built a business, the newsagent shop, that he had run for almost five decades. But despite having spent such a long span of time he was anybody or a nobody, not having established any sense of belonging in that adopted country. Running a shop is considered among “the most profound ways of wiping out your character and individuality” (3), says Sanghera. And it was a newsagent shop, which means that they were selling those papers and magazines that “plant and perpetuate” (5) the stereotypes about a different community. For some customers they were parasites sapping the British resources and fleecing the public. For some others they were ‘Paki perverts’. Some feared and ridiculed them as pedophiles. Arjan mentions the incident of finding the graffiti “declaring ‘Taliban Peedo’” on the shutters of their shop. He says that for many customers they provided the only experience, they had, of multiculturalism and feels a serious need of spending time with them to answer “questions about religion and culture” (5). He wants to explain that a Sikh and Sikhism are very distinct from being a Muslim. The fact that Mr. Bains was cheated by his White assistant, whom he had inherited with the shop and on reporting the incident, the man was let off without even a warning, was devastating for him and he descended into despair.

Gradually, his movement was curtailed as he lost his balance, started getting tremors and was eventually restricted to bed. He is initially helped by Patwant Dhanda, one of his younger fellow workers from the foundry. Together they not only turn the tide of the shop but make it flourish so that, Bains helps Dhanda establish his own shop nearby, on the condition that they will never compete with each other. The

developments bring forth the innate indomitability of the Sikhs based on the virtues of ‘*Kirat karna te wand ke chakna*’ as prescribed in the Sikh religion. Bains then employs a new assistant Tanvir Banga, a 27-year old youth, who belongs to the *chamar* caste (the leather workers), a caste that has been looked down upon according to the indigenous tradition. Tanvir’s family has worked for the family of Mr. Bains’ wife for decades. With the improved business, Mr. Bains is also able to pay for his wife and daughters to join him in England. Dhanda, who is a clean-shaven, un-turbanned Sikh, occasionally comes to meet him and on one particular visit ironically discusses with him the massive march being planned under his leadership, by the Sikhs to protest against the incident that happened with Tarsem Singh Sandhu, “a Wolverhampton bus driver fired for returning to work from a three-week illness in a beard and turban” (11). The six thousand strong march is claimed to be the biggest assemblage of people since World War 2 and is being promoted as a general appeal for religious freedom. As mentioned in chapter 3, Singh and Tatla (2006) reiterate, that single issue movements are undertaken by the present day diaspora with the intention of winning rewards or political mileage for their leadership which is precisely the case with Dhanda in the novel, who is shown to be fast emerging as a politically connected and affluent *Jat* Sikh retailer who does not mind selling alcohol at his shop for maximising profit. Mrs. Bains is very fervent about joining the march as she deeply bewails the fact that Sikhs were being compelled to get rid of their turbans. Her own husband had had to relinquish it for survival, during the partition of India.

The portrayal of Mrs. Bains is comparable to that of Sanghera’s own mother as several likenesses can be noticed. She too, is equally superstitious enforcing beliefs such as not allowing the girls to leave home at a quarter to the hour, considering it bad luck to wash hair on Tuesdays, asking them to fast on Mondays to get good matches in marriage, not leaving one shoe lying on another, getting lamps extinguished with the wave of a hand, not blown out, or believing that houses that are narrow at the front and wider at the rear are ‘cow-faced houses’, and considered lucky. The shape of their shop, being the reverse of that, was consequently unlucky. These and several such notions, enumerated throughout the novel add to the typically stereotypical representation of Sikh traditional women as irrational. Again, like Sanghera’s mother, she is a strong and independent woman handling the shop alone in the face of her

husband's illness (another similar circumstance). She has given a reasonable amount of liberty to her daughters and is sending them to school. But, her thinking in the matter of marriage remains utterly conventional, when she starts talking of their discontinuing school and contemplating marrying them off at the ages of 15-19.

The daughters, though sisters, are purposely created as opposites. They epitomize the contrast between the traditional and the Western values, which is the malaise of the diasporic world and the central dilemma being problematized in the novel. They are separate living examples of that double consciousness of identity, created in the same home, under the same circumstances. They are different even in their looks, the elder Kamaljit is dark and stout while the younger Surinder is fair and slim. The elder daughter leaves school to relieve the pressure on her mother, of simultaneously managing the shop and taking care of her ailing father. She is a responsible girl with a comparatively old-fashioned, yet religious attitude who keeps pontificating to the younger one about the right behaviour and Indian customs. The younger one, Surinder who is continuing at school is a more Westernized teenager, fond of reading novels and sneaking fashion magazines from the shop into her room to explore the latest hairstyles and dresses, though not allowed to try those out. The sisters share a room but their sides are clearly identifiable, with the mess of books, unwashed clothes, draft dresses, cut-out posters (she could not put on walls) on Surinder's side, while that of her sister being spick and span, which she maintained to perform her nightly prayers, cross-legged on the floor. "Surinder could manage only the first four lines of the *Japji Sahib* in the original *Gurmukhi*, and would add the Lord's prayer on to the end of it by way of compensation and apology, but Kamaljit knew the whole of it off by heart" (21). The younger, liberal one, uses her hairstyling knowledge to cut the hair of Tanvir, a Sikh from chamar caste, and is ticked off by her elder sister for the sacrilegious act. Tanvir starts sporting a turban after that, either due to the badly styled hair or under the influence of Kamaljit, who also admonishes her sister for constantly mocking Tanvir for his bad English, as he did not have any other relative there but them to consider his family. She also informs her that she too, would be leaving school soon, as their parents were looking for suitable matches for both of them. This, as mentioned earlier, is projected as another stereotypical act of Punjabi and Sikh families. Young teenaged girls with British passports are auctioned in the

marriage market as a means to getting British citizenship, and the prize is given away to the highest bidder. The girls usually do not have much say, in the matter.

The novel mentions that the dispute between the Wolverhampton Transport Department and the Sikh activists had triggered the ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech by Enoch Powell and made him a star in the eyes of the natives. The march that had witnessed the biggest numbers since WW2, was reduced to just 350 supporters, a few weeks after Powell’s speech. But the issue was far from over, as it rose to international prominence, when Sohan Singh Jolly, an unpretentious double migrant Sikh from Kenya threatened to immolate himself on the Vaisakhi Day, if the monstrous turban-ban was not revoked. He inspired another Sikh Jarman Singh Parmar, the editor of the *Indian Observer*, a lesser known Punjabi Newspaper from London, who also vowed to follow suit fifteen days after him. Dhanda also passionately espoused the cause, organized a pro-Jolly rally and even suggested that he would not hesitate to join in the string of suicides. Sanghera, analyzing the matter rationally, mentions that the turban clash has poisoned race relations and the impression of Sikhs being created in the whole episode, just confirms the stereotypical notions:

People like Jolly and Dhanda were painting Sikhs just as their enemies wanted to portray them—namely as medieval peasants. They were illustrating Powell’s specific complaint in that speech that the Sikhs, in ‘claiming special communal privileges’, were producing a dangerous ‘fragmentation within society’. (79)

He makes Surinder, the logical one, point out the hypocritical fact that Mr. Dhanda, the leader of the protest does not even wear a turban and that the protestants were more interested in the impact of the movement in Punjab rather than Britain. She emphasises that “90% of the male Sikh community were clean-shaven and had given up the turban... so it could hardly be said, as was being claimed, to be a community or a human rights issue” (83). She also adds that in her view the turban is in fact, the least relevant tenets of the Sikh faith and that it amounted to reducing a whole religion to a dress-code. However, her concluding comment in the context is that it is best for the youngsters to keep quiet in the matters of religion. This kind of self-representation reveals the outlook of the successive generations of Sikhs towards the prescriptions of

religion. It also exposes the lack of clarity in their minds, regarding their own past and the evolution of religion. They need to understand the significance of maintaining *Kes* and wearing turbans in Sikhism and they also need to familiarize themselves with the colonial past, about how the Sikhs fought during the two World Wars, for Britain, risking their lives with no other protective headgear. These very British authorities had had no problem with the turbans then, and had rather encouraged the Sikh soldiers to maintain a proper Sikh identity, according to their religion.

It is when Mrs. Bains, Kamaljit and Tanvir were away for the protest march and Surinder was left to take care of the ailing Mr. Bains, that she forgets to check on him and he has a fall that turns out to be fatal. Actually, she had been merrily chatting with a 21-year-old White salesman, James O' Connor, who had come to the shop for some collection from Tanvir. The response that he gives on hearing Surinder's diatribe about the protest march, is typical of the Westerner's attitude as he says that they should allow people to wear what they want. "Where I come from, everyone looks the same." It is this kind of homogenization, which Bhabha says hybridity has been reduced to, and that has been the problem with multiculturalism.

After the death of Mr. Bains, Mrs. Bains is worried about marrying off two daughters although she is confident about their worth as 'marriage material'. She also wants to let her daughters approve of the matches, as she herself had been an independent woman who had defied patriarchal beliefs. Surinder expresses her desire to go in for higher studies. Despite school having been a bitter racist experience for her, the British teacher had noticed tremendous promise in her. But her mother is not too keen to allow her and out of guilt for her role in her father's death, she agrees to quit studies and prepare for marriage. Such incidents of emotional blackmail are frequently delineated in the Sikh and Punjabi context. Mr. Dhanda, who was more of their uncle's age for the girls, cites his strong bond with their father, and makes the proposal of marrying Surinder, to Mrs. Bains, who infuriated at the suggestion, decides to send Surinder to her aunt's place in London. Surinder having overheard Dhanda's proposal, feels apprehensive and en route to London, elopes midway with James O' Connor, which apparently is a better prospect. Before Mrs. Bains is informed about Surinder's elopement, she has already received another shock in the form of Tanvir professing his love for Kamaljit and conveying a wish to marry her. The mother's hopes of arranging suitable matches for both the daughters are

devastated and she decides to move to her sister's place, then onwards. Even in their choice of partners, the sisters could not be further apart. Surinder, the Westernized advocate of liberal values, "influenced too much by the west" (154) according to her aunt, chooses an Englishman, whereas the religiously inclined Kamaljit, well-steeped in the traditional notions and having developed some understanding of the Sikh religion, through her reading of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, overlooks the caste difference between her and Tanvir, and decides to get married to him. They had together read through the Holy book and grasped that it was wrong to discriminate on the basis of caste.

Mrs. Bains leaves it to them to manage Bains Stores, as Tanvir belonging to the caste that was traditionally considered lower, is not very acceptable to her as a son-in-law. Tanvir feels frustrated as he has not only to stand up to his mother-in-law and Mr. Dhanda, but even Kamaljit is not entirely on his side, when it comes to religious and spiritual aspects. This can be understood in terms of the caste 'traces' as cited by Stuart Hall in the context of African identities. Sadly, she inherits her mother's superstitions as well. She is having problems in conceiving a baby and believes that offering *puris* to pigeons, improves fertility. A guru she consults about her inability to conceive, had advised that both the husband and wife keep fasts, hammer a nail into the corner of every single room and take a bath with milk once a week. Tanvir finds it absolutely irrational. The couple rarely argue, but religious and spiritual aspects usually trigger arguments. The divided attitude among second-generation of migrants, regarding their own culture and religion is clearly discernible here. While Tanvir believes, that England provides freedom of speech and that it is important for the kids to learn about the country they are actually living in now, Kamaljit fervidly supports the idea of teaching Punjabi to the kids as they must be connected to their original culture and religion. One major reason behind these dissimilar approaches to culture, is the discrimination and humiliation, that Tanvir has faced on account of his caste. He says that *Jats* like Dhanda aspire to create a Sikh state, along the same caste divides, even in England, in defiance of the founding principles of their religion. He writes a letter of protest to the Editor of a paper. His protest against the introduction of Indian studies, is actually directed against the poisoning of the minds of young children with the "bigotry of the caste system? A system where, for centuries, high-caste Hindus and Sikhs have not only discriminated against but inhumanely treated

their brothers whom they call scheduled-caste or untouchables” (233). It is ironic, he says, that these migrants who are living the reality of racialism in Britain are practicing caste discrimination within their community. It seems that for the diaspora belonging to the castes conventionally considered higher, retaining the established hierarchies is their way of staying connected with their roots and perpetuating a community solidarity. Tanvir emphasises, that through his sheer hard work he had built a thriving business there, and considers himself an Englishman equal to any other. He feels liberated here. So fed up is he of the casteist divide, that he has turned an agnostic, bordering on atheism. He wonders what caste his child is going to be, *Jat*, *Chamar* or *Khatri*. He does not want the word *Chamar* to hurt his child. He would be the most devoted father and his child would grow up British.

The younger sister Surinder, completely besotted by the Western world and escaping from a possible arranged marriage to a man, more than double her age, takes the ostensibly emancipating decision of running away with a White man she supposedly loves. The first thrill that she attempts right at the railway station is that of cutting her hair, but she does not have the nerve for it. Hair is the first thing to be sacrificed by the Sikh youngsters, in the name of rebellion. Jacobsen (2016), in his analysis of the Norwegian Sikh youth mentions this defiance as a frequently traced aspect:

This is in accordance with the autobiographical genre, and in the books suffering and rebellion are described as the results of the authoritarian patriarchy of the Punjabi families described, the rules of honour of Punjabi culture, the difficulty of mastering the codes of Norwegian society and the realization that one has become something very different from the Punjabiness or Indianness of the parents. (157)

Maintaining some vestige of the values instilled in her by her mother, Surinder insists that she will not have physical relations with Jim without marriage and he assures her that they would get married. He gifts her an elastic band as an engagement ring. She considers herself fortunate to be with Jim, as she had found a man who put her first, as opposed to her mother’s lifelong training and advice, of always putting the husband first. The initial 24 hours are like a dream-run, a real honeymoon, during which Jim kisses her publically, buys her new English style clothes, compliments her generously, makes her try various Western cuisines (including beef) and drinks, and reminds her

of being 18. He asks her to dance at the restaurant and abandon herself to enjoyment. Like a person deprived of and thirsting for all these forbidden pleasures, owing to her total lack of freedom earlier, she drenches herself completely in the carousing alongside Jim who drowns himself in his drinks. They both get thrown out of the restaurant and the short-lived happiness, gets thrown out of her life. Jim turns out to be a drunkard who tells her the next morning, “As for the wedding, there isn’t going to be one, you silly bitch” (199). Disillusioned, she realizes that the elopement is her self-induced disaster. She blames it on her own naivety and family’s pressure for marriage, along with the culture she was born into. Due to their apprehension about the youngsters’ alienation from their own culture, the migrant parents raise them in an over-protective and heavily guarded atmosphere, that allows them no exposure to the outside world except in their schools, which leaves them with no understanding of the other cultures and consequently vulnerable, as in the case of Surinder. The elders themselves lead their ghettoized lives and their attempts at elucidating the adopted culture to the impressionable children, become a case of blind leading the blind, as expressed by Sanghera.

Her pride does not let Surinder return and the marriage with Jim does eventually happen, but is only a nightmare. It brings out the worst in both, who never forgive each other’s mistakes making it a relationship of sustained enmity for almost 6 years. The bitterness makes her irate, contemptuous and even ruthless. She refuses to cook or maintain the house. She takes a sadistic delight in the ironic turn that the man, who had encouraged her to leave her earlier life, is appealing to those very values that were being inscribed on her then. She realizes the worth of those values but is not able to implement those. Every kind of flavouring or seasoning reminds her of home, bringing more bouts of depression. She visits a Punjabi dominated area out of nostalgia, but with her trimmed hair and habitual cigarette-smoking, returns feeling more awkward. She lacks the confidence to visit a Sikh temple in her Western clothes and occasionally goes to the local church, for some solace. She finally decides to bury the past, take a divorce from Jim and push herself into her work with doubled vigour. She starts off with managing her landlord’s tenants, papers and accounts, her past experience at Bains Stores standing her in good stead. Gradually, she improves her qualifications, gets an MBA degree in management and goes on to establish herself as

a successful corporate woman. The significant change in her identity is her avoidance of all things Asian. If people tried to converse with her in Hindi or Punjabi, she refused to understand and on being questioned about where she belonged, she said that she was half-Spanish. In other words, her whole life had become a pretense and she was living a false identity. She learns to take consolation in the very un-Indian notion that “solitude was the key to contentment” (280) and gets converted into a youngster full of disdain for her own culture.

Less than a month after Kamaljit’s marriage, Dhanda too, had married a girl, fifteen years younger to him. The time during which Kamaljit had rued her failure to conceive, Dhanda had fathered three children, two daughters and a son. Later Kamaljit also conceives and Arjan Banga, the protagonist and narrator of the novel, is born. It is with Ranjit Dhanda, the elder Dhanda’s son and Arjan, that the other play of contrasting identities, is brought out in the novel. The former belonging to the higher caste, *Jat* and the latter considered *Chamar* due to his father Tanvir’s caste, exhibit the still prevalent divide within the Sikh community. Their disparate identities as well as their hot and cold relationship throughout the novel, depicts skillfully the extreme forms that Sikh identity can take among the successive generations.

Ranjit belongs to that category of Sikh youth who have understood only the martial aspect of Sikhism and turn into warriors of sorts, ready to resort to violence at the slightest provocation. His characteristic *Jat* Sikh pride, adds an extra edge to his belligerent nature. He has not heard of the ‘a’ of austerity, as they say. Everything about him is so ostentatious and flamboyant, counter to what the Sikh religion prescribes. He and his well-connected father, have together made the right moves trade-wise and now own a superstore by expanding heavily into Asian groceries, setting up greengrocer’s and butcher’s sections, opening 24 hours a day and selling alcohol. The outbuilding garage, next to the garden in his house, where he and Arjan used to play as kids, has been done up and converted into an Amusement den, installed with a pool table, walls plastered black, with a 60 inch flat-screen TV fitted on one side, which is plugged into an Xbox and faces a leather sofa, along with a big collection of martial arts CDs. Clean shaven, into smoking and drugs, he teaches the urbanized Arjan, lessons about the Sikh heritage. Inside his den, he displays to him a complete armoury containing a terrifying array of weapons with these words:

When it comes to family, man, ain't no laws, ya get me? That bredrin Guru Gobind Singh, he was the geeza who's saying we carry kirpans. You don't want to defend your yard? I'd rather die than watch mans abduct my gyals, innit. (96)

He is 36, has followed the accepted tradition of Sikh migrants marrying a girl from India, has two kids and yet, has relations with several Asian and White women, his only interests being bodybuilding and smoking weed. Wanting to be called 'Jay' instead of Ranjit, he is a glaring example, of a completely misunderstood idea of Sikhism and Sikh identity.

Arjan, on the other hand is a city-bred, sober and down-to-earth person with an extremely rational attitude towards all aspects of life, including religion. He is addressed as 'professor' by Ranjit, as he has studied at the university. Currently, he works with a firm as a Graphic Designer and lives with his English fiancée, Freya. In her, he has found a loving, like-minded and understanding companion, whom he plans to marry in a few months. His parents Kamaljit and Tanvir Banga have been managing Bains Stores in Wolverhampton on their own. The mother being the typical prototype of the migrant Sikh mother, is not happy with the idea of a '*gori*' daughter-in-law and keeps pointing out to him, the excessive and objectionable aspects of the lives of her White customers. Presently, Arjan has been forced to hurriedly return to Wolverhampton on account of the totally unexpected and sudden death of his father. Being practical, he had been prepared for this kind of a call and the odd-hour drive home, but it was on account of his mother's suffering from bowel cancer and continuously deteriorating health. The father's death under suspicious circumstances, is a shocker, shaking up his whole world with its repercussions. The police have labelled it a death due to natural causes and closed the investigations.

His logical attitude towards everything makes him scrutinize even the customs and religious traditions observed at the time of death and draw comparisons with the same in other cultures. He feels the intense guilt of having abandoned his parents. He had "spent his twenties and early thirties gallivanting around London, being 'creative'" (29), while his father, aged 70 and a heart patient, had been dragging heavy boxes up and down the road, struggling to keep up the sagging business. He should have stopped him. He deeply regrets that he did not save any money for his father's

retirement. In his father's death, Arjan finds himself clinging to ritual, though examining it critically. He searches for logic behind bathing the corpse and making it wear new clothes before cremation, which is a practice followed in Judaism and Islam, as well. He explains it in terms of the circularity of life, connecting it to the washing of babies when they come to the world. "It could symbolise the washing away of sins, a return to the state of perfection we experience in the womb" (34). Similarly, he observes that though Sikhism prescribes treating death with equanimity and the singing of hymns of detachment, there is endless weeping and an almost invasion by strangers into the house with no one knowing, when they would come and when they would leave. He still finds it better and healthier than the stiff upper-lip English funerals, governed by dress-codes. These third-generation, Western educated pragmatic youth such as Arjan, will not easily accept the irrational and illogical aspects of tradition, transmitted in the name of religion, as they are well aware that this religion "was founded as a reaction to the pedantry of many established Indian faiths" (25).

Arjan, the considerate one, hates Ranjit for his insensitive behaviour such as not turning off the engine while getting the car washed and workers having to work with fumes blown into their faces. Similarly, he continues to play the stereo at full blast, again forcing them to listen to the "bassline of a succession of Malkit Singh tracks" (30). When Arjan returns for his father's funeral, Ranjit on meeting him, is more interested in his car than offering consolation. Such lack of concern for others' feelings, is in clear disregard of the Sikh ideals, universal compassion being one of its central fundamentals. As Ziauddin Sardar, despite being a Muslim, fully understands and says that '*sewa*' is the prime duty of a human being, in Sikhism. It is the selfless service of the community without the expectation of any returns. This is what true Sikhs are and should be known for.

After his father's funeral, Arjan tries to convince his mother to sell the shop and move to London with them. The mother however, is not only keen on continuing but rather proving to men like Dhanda, that she can manage it better than men. They have an argument and she asks him to go back to his English girlfriend, which he does after getting CCTV cameras installed around the shop for security. A little later when the 2011 riots happen in London and corresponding rioting breaks out in Wolverhampton as well, either because of police inefficiency owing to political correctness or the

underclass that had been oppressed for long wanting to take it out on the mainstream society, the retailers on the Victoria Road had been advised to either close down or keep guard. Arjan is reminded of the notions about the innate fighting spirit of the Sikhs. “We are by tradition warriors and soldiers, renowned for our daredevil courage” (94). Ironically, he has to turn to the pugnacious Ranjit for help, in such a situation because he is the closest one Arjan knows, to that warrior like identity. He visits him for advice and is given a glimpse of his huge collection of Asian weapons; Chinese, Japanese, Indian. Totally overwhelmed, since Arjan had only wanted to keep something for self-defence as a purely precautionary measure, he comes back, having selected something like a mop-handle. Ranjit, is also instrumental in forming a 15 strong vigilante group to guard the Sikh temples and shops in the area. Most of the shop owners, have fortified and braced themselves, with some or the other weapon and Arjan suddenly begins to feel, that being with the community is so strengthening and reinvigorating. Late at night, when the shop does get attacked by a group of White kids in a van, he has a close shave with them. He is even able to recognize one of the kids from the neighbourhood, whom his own mother had given food when he was hungry. During the encounter, his inherited warrior genes suddenly resurface and he is able to land solid punches on those youngsters before Ranjit appears for help, with his dangerous weapons. Ranjit compliments him for his impressive display of bravado and even expresses a suspicion about the involvement of these very groups in his father’s death, and Arjan, clutching his hand utters the words “bhenchod gora” (sister-fucking White man) (105).

This is the first racist remark, Arjan recalls ever making and it is a revelation of a facet of his identity that he himself is not aware of. “Where had my anger and violence come from” (105)? All his adult life has been built on the belief, that races can amiably co-exist. He is engaged to a White girl. But the kind of incidents that happen, make him question that belief and with much consternation realize, that probably Ranjit is right. He has broken up with Freya, because they have an argument about sending Arjan’s mother to an ‘old people’s home’, though he later finds out that it is a very good culture-specific place for relaxation. He compares his life to that of Ranjit and concludes that having married an Indian girl, he is in a much more comfortable relationship, “that didn’t require constant explanation of cultural difference” (124). Till that time Arjan had hated Ranjit as a bigot but the incidents of that night prove him correct in many of his estimates about the Whites and the local

police. He had noticed that most of the looters during the riots had been Black or White, whereas the Asians were mostly the shop-owners or people trying to protect them. Anger at the happenings creates a new kind of cohesion, a reinforced bond with one's own community.

He is facing that dilemma or that twoness, that has been emphasised by the theorists on identity such as Hall (1992), Gilroy (1993), Melucci (1996) and Sardar (2012) who accentuate, that we all live with multiple identities and implement a different identity in various contexts, and despite the constrictions of community and tradition, we have the availability of choice to prioritize between simultaneous alternative identities. Avtar Brah (2005) goes beyond two and talks of the intersectionality of several factors, that result in multiple identities. Arjan talks of changing, from being colour-blind to how he begins seeing the "world in monochrome, embraced casual racism, I felt liberated" (135). In the whole rioting episode, the Sikhs actually get appreciated by the Prime Minister, as a community for volunteering to stand guard. Arjan had hoped his mother would be scared by the riots into selling and moving, but her resolve to stay was rather strengthened.

Arjan attempts to reclaim the lost ground in his connect with his mother, as he is yet to talk about his marriage to Freya. He starts socializing with Ranjit in his style, driving through the town in his expensive cars, with cacophonous Punjabi music and drinking at the *desi* pub 'Singhfellows'. He shares his frustration with Ranjit, who typically advises him against marrying an English girl. They are good for a while, he counsels, but wives should be from the same community, as there is a wide gap between the values, complicating Arjan's situation further. He tells him however, that his aunt who had been lost, all this time and had earlier snapped all relations with the family, might play a positive role in convincing his mother. The pull of having another close family member to talk to, is too much to resist in the desolate times. The fact that she had had an inter-caste marriage with a White man, is an added attraction.

They both start frantically searching for Surinder and Jim O' Connor and eventually locate Jim's house, but are disappointed, as Surinder had taken a divorce long back and does not live with him. Surprisingly, it is Freya who ends up tracing her through various directories. His aunt is a well-established corporate woman now, working as the Manager of a well-known chain of hotels. Arjan has apologized to Freya and they both decide to pay her a visit. They find her, a complete antithesis of Arjan's mother

with her short hair, Western dress, shapely figure, commanding demeanor, accompanying pet dog and habit of smoking. She is awfully busy with her work, it being New Year's eve, and after a brief introduction, Arjan leaves his phone number with her and they return.

Despite having adopted the Eurocentric values, amidst all the physical and psychological alienation, for the migrants the comforting pull of the family and roots is certainly irresistible. It is reassuring to know that they love you or will support you, irrespective of your multiple identities. As Ziauddin Sardar notices, a self-reliant, independent and free individual, who is defined solitarily, of the society (Sardar 282), is a Western entity. In the Eastern communities, which are a significant part of the fabric of multicultural Europe, the individual understands himself in terms of his relation to a collective group such as the family, the community or the culture. This very pull, tugs at Surinder's heart and when she is informed about the worsening health condition of her sister Kamaljit, she sheds her pretense of a constructed identity, leaves her job and shifts in with her sister, to be with her in her time of need. These are the innate family values of compassion and self-sacrifice, which Arjan says, are the defining characteristics of a Punjabi woman. The sisters still have frequent arguments over several issues such as the dog, Surinder's habit of smoking, Kamaljit's superstitions and even on religion, as Surinder could not check herself from expressing her doubts and objections. Both sisters thus, represent the two extremes of the ambit of the diasporic Sikh identity.

Surinder, with her sharp business acumen starts bringing positive changes in the shop and being liberal, suggests expansion by applying for an alcohol license. When Arjan goes through the papers of the shop, he discovers that even his father had initiated that process. His aunt advises that keeping their long lasting relationship in mind, it would be better if Dhandas' consent is taken beforehand. When Arjan invites Ranjit for a consultation to Singhfellow's, he comes there straight from a wedding, half drunk. He gets infuriated at the proposal and his *Jat* pride takes the better of him. He wrathfully bashes up Arjan, throws him near a dustbin in the toilet and irately comments that he must be feeling at home there, as that is what his ancestors had always done. "Once a Chamar, always a Chamar" (332). Having smoked a drug laden cigarette in his agitation, he totally loses control and blurts out that it was the same problem with his father as well, that he did not know his place in the world. When Arjan tries to

retaliate, Ranjit attempts to strangulate him with a garbage bag revealing how it is a convenient way of eliminating anybody, as it does not leave a single mark on the body. He also adds that it works even better, if the victim is already a heart patient, disclosing the horrifying truth about the death of Arjan's father. The climax of the novel definitely brings to the fore, the grotesque shape that Sikh identity under the impact of misconstrued pride and ostensible warrior-like qualities has taken. It also underscores the marked severance that is discernable within the community, due to fossilized notions of inter-caste differences, despite having moved to another part of the world and despite belonging to a religion that was founded to oppose such notions. The deep cleavage is also visible in the frequent establishment and disbandment due to intra-group strife, of separate caste-based gurdwaras all over Britain as mentioned by Singh and Tatla (2006). Such developments are more than enough to drive the rational, sensible and Western-educated Sikh youth, away from their religion. The novel concludes with Dhandas being tried and punished for the crime, Arjan's mother dying of shock at the revelation and Arjan finally getting married to Freya in a traditional Sikh ceremony at his aunt's recommendation, who had found Freya a considerate, understanding and compassionate girl. It is the virtues inherently recommended in Sikhism which are accorded centrality in the conclusion, irrespective of caste and religion.

5.4 Jasvinder Sanghera's *Shame*: Lifting the Veil off Honour-based Abuse in Britain

The other second-generation writer, whose autobiography has been taken up in the context of the delineation of the diasporic experience of the Sikhs, is also surprisingly a Sanghera by caste, though both are not related in any way. She is Jasvinder Sanghera, a CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) awardee, a courageous survivor of a forced arranged marriage and the Founder of Karma Nirvana, a charitable organization that provides support to the victims of honour-based abuse and caste-ridden marital alliances that youngsters from migrant families, especially Sikh and Muslim, are compelled to accept, and which if resisted, entail unspeakable atrocities for them. Sanghera is credited with bringing these issues to the public domain, providing indispensable support, in most cases life-saving, to these youth who have not only been abandoned by their families but their lives have been threatened by the ones, who should have been their unconditional strength. It is

unbelievably appalling that these incidents are happening in the 21st century contemporary permissive society of Britain. She has poured her heart out in the form of her poignant autobiography which appears in the form of a trilogy, very appropriately titled *Shame*, *Daughters of Shame* and *Shame Travels* because all such horrendous happenings are carried out in the name of the family's 'izzat' (honour), and these innocent, gullible and confused teenagers are blamed of bringing shame upon the family. For the purpose of this research, only the first and the third books are being considered as the second one mainly enumerates the disturbing tales of those victims, who sought support from her charity and majority of them are Muslims, thus not very relevant here. But the fact that honour killings have been recurrently depicted even by the first-generation writers of the UK in Punjabi, as discussed in Chapter 4, corroborates their current, frequent occurrence.

Sanghera's first book *Shame* is the traumatic tale of a fourteen-year old girl from a *Jat* Sikh family, the head of which had migrated to the UK in the early 60s. Her father, like most migrants at that time, had put in hard labour for his survival and was later joined by his wife and daughters. She has five sisters and one brother, born there. She too, is expected to follow the accepted norm of her household, that as soon as a girl attains the age of fourteen to fifteen, she is deceitfully taken to India under the garb of a holiday by her parents, and forcibly married there to a person of their own caste, before she can even fully comprehend what is happening to her. She decides to challenge that norm by refusing the arranged marriage to a stranger and the book is her honest and unflinching narration of the aftermath of that decision, which made her realize how, to her conformist family, 'honour' and 'pride' override everything, including life. Ironically, she dedicates the book to her parents who, she believes, must have wanted what was best for her.

Her memoir begins at the moment when her own daughter, Lisa is dressed as a bride and is about to get married. She is watching her with Lisa's father Jassey, her first husband and taking pride in the fact that she has given her children the life that was denied to her. She has taught them to respect all castes, cultures and religions, unlike her own mother, for whom all cultures 'other' than her own were bereft of any honour. This is yet another ironic example of that process of othering and inferiorizing that some of the migrants are facing on the one hand, as victims in the

form of racism, and on the other, are perpetrators of the same, on the supposedly lower classes of their own community. These are the wrongly assumed and ossified values that the first generations of diaspora have carried along as a baggage and refuse to let go of. We meet the writer as a person who is totally alienated from and completely disillusioned with her own culture and religion, so much so, that she has not even given Asian names to her children and calls them Lisa, Maria and the son Joshua.

The daughter's marriage is a nostalgic moment for her when her whole life, till then, flashes before her like a film, filling her with bitter memories. Being the dauntless one out of all her sisters, at the age of 7, she had started questioning her mother about her discriminatory attitude towards her daughters and the only son. Why could the girls not get the freedom that was easily available to him? Navtej K. Purewal (2010) in her book *Son Preference: Sex Selection, Gender and Culture in South Asia*, gives a detailed analysis of the preference to sons and the role played by South Asian women in that choice among the diaspora in the chapter "Narratives of Reproductive Choice and Culture in the Diaspora". Sanghera's mother too, is yet another specimen of the stereotypical Sikh mother, as viewed by the Westernized gaze of the successive generations. Her faith is very strong but her understanding of it is very poor, resulting in its wrong transmission, prompting rebellion. At 5.30 am daily, she played the Sikh prayers on full blast in the house, with the youngsters trying to block out the sound. She left for the Gurdwara around 6.30 am to offer prayers there and brought back holy water to sprinkle on all of them. The Gurdwara also served as a 'gossip shop' to update her on all the happenings around the community, in England as well as back home in Punjab. Religion is thus, reduced to its ritualistic and external aspects with no significance attached to and no efforts made in the direction of making the youngsters grasp its conceptual and foundational aspects, as neither of the parents has time. The father smoked, visited the pub or worked tirelessly from morning to evening. He found time to secretly brew his 'desi' out of aniseed at night with friends, at a hidden corner of the house, though. The highly superstitious mother typically kept caviling about bringing up seven daughters and how Jasvinder had been a trouble right from the start, as she was delivered through a breech birth at the hospital and was now beginning to affect the family reputation by being tomboyish in her behaviour, unlike

her other sisters, who were taught and groomed to be good prospective daughters-in-law.

In *The Fateful Triangle*, Hall mentions two kinds of community associations created among the diaspora, through a shared past, language, practices and religion: closed and open. The closed forms generate a strong sense of “kith and kin” and “blood and soil” and fix the notions of ethnicity in essentialist terms whereas the open-ended forms look at the “myths of purity and origin” with suspicion and consent that shared associations are fluid and susceptible to mutable circumstances and social positions (Mercer 4,5). In the case of Sikh diaspora, it is the first generation that has adopted the closed forms, whereas to the second and the third it is the open-ended forms that appeal more, given the environment in which they are born and raised. For Sanghera’s mother, for instance, hereditary pride and maintaining a good impression among the community, along the essentialist bases of identity and values, overrides all other considerations. The happiness and well-being of her children, especially daughters, being secondary or rather immaterial in comparison to the family ‘*izzat*’.

Jasvinder’s memoir makes an even better reading from the feminist point of view, as the agonizing stories of her four elder sisters, become strong cases in point. One of them, Robina had been murdered by her husband, Parkash the eldest had lost her husband to a liver failure due to excessive drinking, and the other two Yasmin and Ginda were frequently ill-treated by their male chauvinist *Jat* Sikh husbands chosen for them by their dominating mother, but were not allowed to say so, as keeping a good face in the community at any cost, was important. Any expression of any kind of problem would be met with sternness, rather than sympathy from their mother. The principle was to keep things private, as then, you cannot be judged or shamed. Their childhood lives had also been like living in a cocoon, eating Punjabi food, mixing with Punjabi friends, wearing suits and shutting the door on the outside world, the moment they came home. They were brought up being repeatedly told about the dirty ways of the Whites. By Jasvinder’s teens, her elder sisters were married and she got her first job with a News Agent at the age of 13. The paper delivery round was like liberation for her, as her mother strictly watched her timings of going to and coming from school, the rest of the day. Meenakshi Thapan, in her article, “Punjabi Youth in Northern Italy: The Family, Belonging and Freedom”, calls this phenomenon ‘double exclusion’:

The importance of the family in migrants' lives and intergenerational influences ensure that Punjabi youth, young women in particular, experience a double exclusion, in their community through a kind of enforced seclusion, after school hours; and in the host community, through forms of social exclusion and marginalization. At the same time, they seek higher education, an independent lifestyle and secure employment and through these, a movement away from the lives they have known with their families. (56)

In the case of Sikh youngsters, who observe their White friends behaving liberally, as mentioned earlier, the first act of rebellion noticed around teenage is the cutting of hair that their mothers had very painstakingly maintained for them. At 14, Jasvinder starts saving for a haircut and eventually gets her hair cut and permed. She admits not having a moment's regret thinking only about her mum's rage. Her mother's reaction is that Jasvinder has expectedly brought shame to the family and is herself extremely worried about what the people at the gurdwara would say. She feels someone has cast a spell on her. The senseless solution, that she finds to this problem, rather than giving a rational explanation about the Sikh faith and the importance of unshorn hair in that, is to take Jasvinder to a Hindu priest in a temple, who would analyse the matter astrologically and calm her troubled spirit, with some medicine. Such acts reveal the mother's own lack of faith in her religion which proscribes any such acts. Parents with such mindsets cannot be expected to instate that faith in the successive generations who, being rational and Westernized, are driven further away from their religious and community practices.

The issue of caste-based discrimination assumes horrific dimensions in the case of Jasvinder Sanghera. The best thing in her teenage is a like-minded Sikh friend Avtaar, who belongs to the *chamar* caste. Jasvinder had been beaten up by her mom for mixing with her, but no explanation had been given. Avtar's brother Jassey was only the third male Jasvinder had closely seen, after her own father and brother. Avtar works towards encouraging a friendship between the two. Jasvinder had found somebody she had been desperately longing for, someone who was interested in what she had to say. She started going out with him, enjoying herself like she had never done before and began living in that bubble of happiness, away from the prying eyes of the Asian community. Jassey professed his love for her but she "wanted to be with

him more than anything for that moment” ... but certainly wasn’t thinking that ‘I want to spend the rest of my life with this man and have his babies’” (56). This lack of commitment to long-term relationships is another Western trait, that we see the youngsters picking up under the influence of the philosophy of *carpe diem*, as opposed to the Eastern virtues of life-long love and devotion.

Jasvinder confesses her romantic entanglement to her mother, only to be told that she wishes to see her mother dead, how she had brought dishonour upon them all and even ruined the marital prospects of her younger sisters. Mum, coming to her true element of having handled so many daughters earlier, decides to get her married forcibly and locks her up inside her room. For gaining freedom, she pretends acceptance of marriage to the man of her mother’s choice, but secretly prepares to elope with Jassey, who genuinely loves her. In fact, Jassey sacrifices a bright, well-paid career and a settled life for her sake, only because she does not feel safe in her house any longer. They elope to a completely uncertain future, in which the only bright spot is Jassey’s patient and understanding nature. He keeps smiling through the anxieties, never taking any undue advantage of Jasvinder and never forcing her to do anything against her wishes.

She is too self-absorbed to notice anything about him, as she aches with longing for home. Laura Hirvi in her article “Young Sikhs in Finland: Feeling at Home Nowhere, Everywhere, in Between and Beyond” talks about the double alienation felt by the young Sikhs of the second generation in Finland as they feel at home neither in Finland, where they face racism due to their skin colour nor in the original homeland of their parents in India as there too they are referred to as foreigners. She interviews young Sikhs on the question of what home means to them. Satleen a young Sikh girl born in Finland replies:

My home means everything for me. I am outside and everything goes well and all but when I get tired then home is the best place; it is where I step in. All my family is here, siblings and parents. And nowadays, when you think that most children want to move away from home, I at least don’t want to move away from home, I feel better here than outside. (39)

The picture of home drawn by such youngsters is that of a protective place of shelter that guards you against any outside harm and when the youth face problems in the

outside world, home is the haven they can return to for love, support, and a sense of belonging that is denied to them in their birthplace, as outsiders. This 'in-between' state of their identities is not viewed by them as anything positive and they are left with 'a homing desire': a wish to belong (16), as Avtar Brah says but clarifies that it is not the same as a desire for the homeland. These fragmented youngsters devise strategies to come to terms with this duality.

Their condition can be well understood in terms of the 'homely' and 'unhomely' spaces elaborated by Bhabha (9). In an interview taken by Klaus Stierstorfer, the Professor of British Studies at the University of Münster, Germany on September 22, 2013, Bhabha talks in detail about the concept of home among diaspora. The interview was published in the book *Diasporic Constructions of Home and Belonging* (2015). Bhabha here, dwells on the perception that 'home' as a concept has two facets. One is the normal, original sense of home, which is a familiar landscape of which you understand the language, know the people and share the memories. It is your own home, carrying the "thereness of your existence" more than the "hereness of your existence" (1). The second facet, according to him, is a "Conradian idea that home is what you return to" (1). So, the notions of departure and repossession, are inherent in the concept of home. It is between these two transient states, that an individual moves making well-considered choices based on certain reasons, incurring gains or losses. Bhabha emphasises, that with generalized terms such as "cosmopolitan, planetary or nomadism", that sense of choice and judgement is lost. Life, he reiterates, is not led around these general theoretical terms which convey a perennial sense of movement but there are well defined criteria such as "certain needs, certain interests, certain passions and affects, which actually then create that life-world, that existential comfort that you associate with home"(2), on the basis of which the locations are evaluated on their 'homeyness' and that too, is constantly shifting, as per the uncanny and the unhomely moments that constitute the tensions at home.

In the context of Sikh youngsters like Jasvinder Sanghera, it seems to be a case of not just double but triple exclusion, with an additional one imposed by their own families. Using Stierstorfer's phrase, they become 'misfits' everywhere. Their desire to assimilate in the native British culture is met with racial discrimination, path to the original homeland of their parents is untraversable as they remain foreigners there and most importantly their own family, the only support that one expects to return to in

the diasporic space, has converted home into the most unhomey place with their rigidified values about religious practices and caste divisions.

Such outward movements from home bring uncertainties leading to a fluidity in the identity. Sanghera writes, “I felt so isolated I didn’t know who I was anymore (82). The homing desire gets enhanced in such situations and the anchor of family is desperately needed, when one is sailing in this welter of disconsolation. In Satnam Sanghera’s *Marriage Material* too, the protagonist Arjan goes looking for a blood relative to find some genuine guidance or sense of security, in his highly fractured life. Jasvinder repeatedly tries to establish some link with her family, which has pronounced her dead and washed their hands off her, for the blunder of choosing to elope with a Sikh, but *Chamar* boy, at the tender and vulnerable age of fourteen. According to the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the role assigned to a mother in Sikh *gurbani* is that of an ever-forgiving, magnanimous and patient exemplar as brought out in these lines: “*Sut apradh karat hain jete, Janani cheet na rakhas tete*” (SGGS Ang 478). Jasvinder’s mother, though outwardly and ritualistically religious, is the exact antithesis of this principle. Habitually dominating, she is used to being obeyed and not questioned on anything. Her formula of life for her daughters is to silently forbear any and every trouble that comes their way, without complaining and without sharing it with anyone, for the sake of family honour. Women, according to the Sikh *gurbani* are to be treated with respect and not to be subjugated, which is well-brought out in the lines: “*So kyon manda aakhiye, jit jamme rajaaan*, Never speak ill of the bearer of kings” (my trans.; SGGS Ang 473). At the altar of the pride of an ostensibly higher caste, she bulldozes four of her six daughters (one step-daughter is left behind in India as she was already married there) into marriages of life-long torture. Jasvinder who attempts to escape this fate is completely ostracized by the family and left to fend for herself.

Fortunately for Jasvinder, Jassej is a gem of a person, a fact that corroborates the idea that virtues do not have any correlation with the constructed supremacy of caste, race or class. He is a perseverant and hard-working person who is ready to go to any length, to make Jasvinder happy. She, on the other hand, only seems to be exploiting him as she does not in her heart of hearts, really love him. This constant positioning and repositioning of her identity, can be comprehended in terms of the “traces” or “presences” as explained by Stuart Hall in his essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”.

The Western traces in her identity make her prioritise her own individual happiness above everything else and the *Jat* Sikh traces in her identity make her unconsciously reject Jassey. She is pressed by circumstances into marrying him and even has a daughter with him, but inwardly cannot bring herself to respect him. Together, they work determinedly to earn and save money, buy a house and create a respectable life for themselves.

Gradually, some connections with the family resume through occasional phone calls and some chance meetings with her sisters, as she moves residence closer to her earlier area of habitation. To her utter consternation, she notices that Lucy, her youngest sister has been allowed complete freedom to do all those things such as wearing Western clothes, going out and even cutting her hair, which had been vehemently denied to her. Lucy says that she was handed her freedom on a platter because of Jasvinder's running away. This is shattering for Jasvinder. She feels cheated and frustrated. She is a wife and mother, but hardly twenty years of age. When she sees her younger sister enjoying her life, the sense of having lived a deprived and disadvantaged life, takes the better of her. In the quest of her individual contentment, she starts her missed out teenaged social life, a little late, by going out to pubs and nightclubs, by smoking her first cigarette, getting physical with other youngsters and gets addicted to its forbidden pleasures, like to a drug. She eventually cheats on Jassey with a tall, hefty *Jat* Sikh guy Surjit, who turns out to be an over-possessive bully, regularly hits her and calls her a slut. Filled with resentment and self-loathing, she tells herself that she got what she deserved. She was paying for her selfish recklessness. Jassy, the benevolent one promises to sort things out with Surjit. Jasvinder comes back and keeps waiting for that "cleansing confessional session" (132) that does not happen. After this episode, Jassy's affection for her becomes more muted and mechanical. She tries to be the dutiful wife, but another part of the relationship perishes at this juncture.

Satnam Sanghera had also mentioned in his memoir, about these confused youngsters with divaricated identities, having dysfunctional relationships. Jasvinder too, carries on her journey of follies like a rudderless ship or an uninitiated young woman. She had made choices and failed and has to deal with her gains and losses herself as there is no one to turn to. She resolves to get on with her life and joins aerobic classes where she gets trained and occasionally gets an opportunity to teach as well. It is emotionally gratifying for her. Meanwhile, she is one day rung up by her elder sister

Robina, who is having trouble with her second *Jat* Sikh husband. Robina calls but is not able to say anything. This husband Baldev, had been her own choice after a divorce with the earlier one, who had been chosen by her mother. The second one too, had been accepted by the family because he was from the right caste. Robina, wanting to prove herself to the family and the community, could not say anything. The parents had already abandoned their daughter. She does not ask for a separation as the tag of twice-divorced would bring a lot of shame to the family and she had been taught to always put the family first.

Robina is asked to seek the advice of the community leader, who too, firmly believing in caste, the rationale behind forced marriages and the importance of honour, guided her to patch up with her husband for her son's sake. Pressurised by that man of stature reinforcing those values, she is compelled to return and the final news that comes is that of her getting burnt and dying. No one is held accountable for her death due to lack of evidence. A completely jolted Jasvinder thinks that this incident would transform her mother, who is now suffering from colon cancer. But even at this heartrending moment of her daughter's death, she cannot think beyond her family's honour. She does not allow Jasvinder to see her dead sister but rather shoos her away when the other sisters come. The sight fills Jasvinder up with a paroxysm of rage, as she notices them "parading their sorrow: a respectable emotion dressed up in a solemn expression and white mourning dress" (148). Robina had spared her parents the 'shame' even in her death. Friends and in-laws are chosen by an individual but family is God-given. One looks up to the family, more than anyone else to unconditionally ensure the happiness of a person. And the need for that sense of security, which Bhabha calls 'thereness', is all the direr among the already alienated youngsters in the diasporic context. Robina is abandoned by all that she seeks help from and her life is stamped out by that corroded value-system which is completely incongruous with the religious teachings on which it claims to be predicated.

Jasvinder realized, that in order for her to live, a part of her had to die. She longed for her family still, but she was not going to let that yearning control her or rule her life. Her anger and grief wanted to see Baldev, Robina's husband, punished. The resolve with which she called up her mother this time, must have immediately convinced her. Jassey supported her in this too. Ironically her mother happened to especially like Jassey and they both get along very well, once she gets over the fact of his caste. They

go to the solicitor and file a case against Baldev, expecting justice, but it ultimately comes to nothing, for want of evidence. Jasvinder wonders if she should have guessed about Robina's condition, the day Robina had called her. She blames herself for not being able to save her sister's life.

Meanwhile, in her own life, she and Jassey move to a new bigger house in Derby. She paints and decorates the house as per her wishes and it soothes her mind. She finds a fondness for gardening, which is a trait she has inherited from her father, who had been a farmer in India. In her childhood, the time that she and her father spent gardening at the small patch of land allotted to him, used to be the best moments of the day for her. Touching the soil, brought memories of homeland to him and he narrated endless tales about his life there, which completely enamoured Jasvinder. She recalled her own childhood reminiscences while turning the soil in her garden. Soil, too becomes an important symbol of home for the diaspora. When she requests her father to take her to their village Kang Sabhu in India, for the sake of those old moments and shared tales, he refuses saying he cannot as 'shame travels', leaving her with her unquenched appetency and a sense of deep guilt.

She and Jassey have been able to create a life that many would have dreamt of, but the business that they had built together in Leeds, was somehow not clicking in Derby. She decides to set herself up as an aerobics teacher and another bond between them is cracked. Then onwards, they lived their separate lives under the same roof and just co-existed. Jasvinder, who is struggling for breath in this emotional vacuum, feels a tingle of expectation when she meets this young, good-looking *Jat* Sikh attendant at the petrol filling station. Given the influence of her Western liberal attitude and her wistful notion of love, she is tempted again and decides to leave Jassey. He pleads her to stay for their daughter Lisa's sake, but she walks out, on her once knight in shining armour. This is how she pays him back for all that he had done for her. She admits though, what she is doing to Lisa is worse than what her parents did to her. Her mother too, from her deathbed, dissuades her from leaving a caring man like Jassey and prophesies that she is going to regret her decision.

Sikh youth like Jasvinder, are alienated from religion or religious teachings due to their parents' irrational misinterpretation of those. Being naïve, they are quick to selectively pick up those values inscribed in religion, that suit their purpose such as all castes being equal. They emphasise this aspect particularly as it opens the doors to

their freedom, in the choice of their partners. But Sikhism, is also a religion about sacrifice for and devotion towards, someone or something that one genuinely cares for. Marital bonds formed with a deeper understanding of Sikhism, expect both the partners to cherish the relation and work towards its sustenance as Kailash Puri demonstrates in her own life and advises other young women too. *Gurbani* says: “*Dhan pir eh na aakhian, behn ekathe hoe*”, “Those are not husband and wife, who just live together.” (my trans.; *SGGS Ang:788*). Such adjustments and accommodations for strengthening the relation are considered a virtue as per the Sikh ethos, but the Westernised youth find these restrictive.

At the unconscious level, Jasvinder has been pining for a solid respectable marriage. This time she picks up a dutiful son who has been running his father’s business and most importantly is a *Jat* Sikh. The utterly confused state of her mind about what she wants from life is clear from her words:

I’d always despised the strict censoriousness of Mum and Dad’s community, but in the years alone with Jassey I’d come to understand that it did afford a safe place in the world, a clear pattern, and I’d found nothing to replace that. I wanted to show the people I’d come back to live among that I wasn’t worthless.” (168)

This was an attempt on her part to show her unconcerned family that she too did not need them. Both she and her husband Rajvinder Sanghera were, for a while the typical golden couple in people’s eyes. Both trained together for aerobics and joined adult education classes to pursue further studies. Jasvinder found education empowering and it encouraged in her, the urge to do something to change the world that had failed her family. She volunteered for help at the Women’s Centre which was flooded with girls and women in need of emotional, financial and in some cases physical support, when the lives of victims of all kinds of abuse were at stake. They were supported unconditionally, irrespective of what kind of choices they had made. She found this work appalling, eye-opening and cathartic at the same time.

As part of her English literature syllabus she reads Maya Angelou’s poem ‘I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings’ and can completely identify with her feelings of abandonment and isolation. Raj, filled with his *Jat* pride cannot accept her outperforming him in the class and begins to mock her constantly. She starts losing

her confidence. She is pregnant with her second child. When she delivers her younger daughter Maria, her in-laws are not happy. She does not want to disrespect them but feels threatened that she is falling into the stereotypical pattern. Having internalized, the Western feminist belief in the inferiority of homely women, she fails to play what Sylvia Plath calls the “kitchen mat role” in her 1971 novel *Stuck in the Bell Jar*. The caste problem too, persists as Raj and her in-laws refer to her elder daughter Lisa as *chamar*. Frequent bickering and violent arguments poison her already acrimonious life, further. She fails in her choice, yet again and is benumbed to learn that her mother had been proved right. She is pregnant with her third child, when she is forcibly thrown out of Raj’s house, with her two terrified daughters and all her life in the back of a car, with no place to go to.

Steeled, not shaken by her misery, she goes to the Women’s Centre but does not want the associates there, to know about her derelict state. Raj returns, apologizes with flowers and they decide to move to a separate house. Her ‘homing desire’ is pulling at her heart, as she desperately wants to belong. She starts afresh, floating on a new cloud of hope and romance, but hardly have they moved in, then her fragile fantasy of happiness is shattered. She is informed on the phone about his extra-marital affair and with a firm resolve, asks him to leave.

She has been hearing inhuman tales of horror and atrocities perpetrated on women by their own families at the Women’s Centre and at the Rape Crisis Course, where they share their intimate experiences with total strangers. For her, it is a replay of her own horrifying narrative. Her only sanity lies in her work, now. With the support of her friend Ayesha, herself a victim of sexual abuse within the family, she decides to set up an organization to help such women. This is the birth of ‘Karma Nirvana’. To her mind, it is also a kind of vindication for Robina. She is prepared to brave it all. She completes her University education, despite her critical health. She writes a dissertation on ‘Sikh women who had been disowned by their families’. During the course of her research she discovers that:

Guru Granth Sahib believed in equality between men and women and was against forced marriage as well as caste system. Mum had always used his teachings as a weapon but I learnt they couldn’t have been more different from what she taught me. (236)

Undeterred, she throws herself into her work with full gusto. She dedicatedly works out the modalities of Karma Nirvana, giving presentations and talks, securing financial grants and transforming into a strong anchor, from someone who was desolately looking for one. The duality, however continues to pester her as she is filled with a sense of having failed at every relationship. During the day she valiantly fights for the rights of Asian women, while craving for acceptance from the same community through lonely nights. Jassey, always the considerate one, comes with the proposal of Jasvinder returning to him, as his love for her was genuine but she refuses saying that she did not want to hurt him again. She takes a divorce from Raj and makes him pay through his nose, since he was the guilty party. She determines to soldier it all alone.

Close to her delivery date, she temporarily hands over the work of Karma Nirvana to other volunteers and submits her thesis. Ayesha comes to her help, when her son Joshua is born. She clears her graduation with a first class. Her mother passes away and father does not bother to come for the graduation ceremony. She moves into a new house with her children, intent on providing them the life that was denied to her. Post-delivery, back on her feet, she pitches herself into her work with renewed vigour. She launches the Karma Nirvana project at an impressive event naming it the Women's Health Day. She gets speakers to address the audience on mental health, depression, nutrition and cervical screening. Flyers about the event are distributed and even the local MP promises to inaugurate it. She asks all the visitors to fill in evaluation forms that are the key to Karma Nirvana's financial future, which she turns into a success and a genuine support for victims of honour abuse and forced marriages.

She buys her new house outside Derby, in an area where she is the only Asian but she loves that. She does not wish to hand down, that legacy of rejection to her children. Turning into a complete 'coconut', as they say, she turns away from the community, she never fitted into. She understands that her mother was driven by the fear that haunts displaced persons severed from roots and families, and community was the only framework for her to cling to. Sikh *gurbani* outrightly disapproves of any violent acts committed to please the community, which is clear from the lines "*Kartoot pashu ki manas jaat, Lok pachara kare din raat*", "Born in the human form, people act like animals to day and night please their fellows" (my trans.; *SGGS Ang* 267). She

realizes that her “parents’ lives had been constrained by their warped perspective on their cultural and religious convictions” (295). At the same time, she questions how running away could amount to shrugging off one’s whole identity, as the pull-back to one’s original culture is inescapable.

5.5 Search for Truth: Religious Quest in *Shame Travels*

It is on a nostalgic note of the pull of the roots, that Jasvinder Sanghera’s third volume of the memoir trilogy, entitled *Shame Travels* is predicated. Burning intensely with the homing desire and yearning forlornly for a family, she had requested her father to take her to their ancestral village Kang Sabhu, where she had a step-sister she had never met. But her request had been outrightly rejected as the image of a proud matriarch from the UK, that her mother had created of herself back in the village, would be tainted with dishonor because of what she had done. Even twenty years after she had eloped, she is not allowed to sit with her family. Though some of those members of the family do not mind contacting her for their personal matters as she is a successful woman now. All her sisters had been to their village and even her nephew Sunny (Robina’s son who had been brought up by her parents after her death) had been taken there. She decides to explore her roots on her own and find another part of her family, that too had not been accepted fully. This account of her journey to India is more relevant to this research, as it is also more importantly a journey of religious quest for her. She was looking for answers to all the questions that her parents had left unanswered and clarification of her doubts regarding Sikhism.

Her father Chanan Singh was an atheist and did not go to the Gurdwara. He even tells his wife that she went there only to gossip. He smokes, drinks his self-distilled alcohol and is a regular at the pub for playing cards. Purewal terms these as “male-dominated domains such as the pub in Britain or the workplace and gendered professions in Europe and North America could be viewed as cultural spectacles of male spheres, as they illuminate the particularities of how gendered spaces are created and sustained in the West” (93). He loves working on his small allotted patch of land and reminiscing about his village life, that he had left behind to resolutely work to give a better future to his successive generations. He had worked like a horse, supported by his wife, who too worked very hard, but there was no inclination or time to instill any religious values in the children. No wonder then, that most of their children end up with broken

families. Even the son had been divorced twice and had turned into an alcoholic. Jasjit Singh, quotes Phil Zuckerman in his essay, who concludes that “ultimately, religious identity and conviction aren’t generally so much a matter of choice or faith or soul-searching as a matter of who [sic] and what one’s parents, friends, neighbours and community practice and profess” (18). So, the importance of parents in the precise transmission of religious values cannot be overstated.

The mother’s religiousness was limited to visiting the Gurdwara every morning, playing the *shabads* (Sikh hymns) at full blast in the home, displaying pictures of Guru Nanak that said ‘God is One’, all over the house, burning incense sticks in front of them and sprinkling the Holy Water brought from the Golden Temple during her annual visit, all around and on everyone. As for values, it was only her frozen values about bringing up children, especially the girls, under stringent control that were transmitted. She had refused to learn the language of her adopted country and continued to live her ghettoized existence, cocooned within her community. A rational discussion on religion and the relevance of its practices was unthinkable in that repellent atmosphere, leading to the youth meandering away from their own religion and culture.

Jasvinder having closely witnessed the oppressive misinterpretation of Sikh religion, both in her own family and during her work at Karma Nirvana, had also detached herself from it. Much like Maharaja Dalip Singh, considered the Sikh diaspora prototype, she consciously adopts Christianity as her religion, finding it non-prescriptive and the psalms more meaningful, that allowed her to be herself. Hearing all the bad things said about her in the Sikh community, she had internalized those and completely lost her self-belief. She deeply regrets why her mother could not have explained everything to her. Sikhism, she says is something pure and good, but her mother, misled by the parochial community, had drawn a distorted concept of it. “They failed their children and ultimately they failed themselves” (263).

Again, very much like in Dalip Singh’s life, however Westernized one might become on the exterior, the internal pull of one’s roots and the original religion into which one is born, keeps haunting the alienated individual, who remains fragmented and unsettled. Dalip Singh, as mentioned in Chapter 2, got baptized as a Sikh in his later life and kept making anguished attempts to return to his homeland, that were thwarted

by the British government. He died a distraught man, in exile. Jasvinder in search of some strengthening familial bonds beyond rejection and in quest of the real essence of Sikhism, decides to explore her parents' original homeland herself.

Jasvinder visits her native village with an English male friend and associate Tony Hutchinson, who is a police-officer along with her soon-to-be son-in-law, Anoop. She is still filled with anxiety and uncertainty about how she is going to be received by her eldest sister Bachnu. Rest of her sisters had been meeting her and Jasvinder did not know what they must have told Bachnu, about her. It is quite a hunt first for the village and then for Bachnu's house. But eventually the reunion is an exhilarating experience for her as she, her friend and Anoop are openly and warmly welcomed as family by Bachnu and her wedded family. She is told by Bachnu about her resemblance with her sisters, which she finds reassuring as it somehow confirms her not being an imposter. Another cousin in India is appreciative of how she stood for herself and feels that her parents should have understood that their children were going to integrate in their birthplace. She is also relieved to find out that for the family here, the marriages and divorces that happen in the UK are of no concern and that 'shame' does not travel like her father had said. She heartily invites Bachnu and her family to her daughter Natasha's wedding and proudly embracing her Punjabi heritage, embarks on her other quest.

Her first response on her visit to the Golden Temple is, a Westernized one. She finds the *kirtan* playing there, "an amplified version of the prayer my mother listened to every morning" (234). She is reminded of her childhood, when she used pillows to drown that early morning noise. At the same time, the sheer experience of being at that sacred place, has a transcendental influence on her, "I feel I am simultaneously being transported forward into the magical world my mother must have dreamed about, when she knelt in our front room listening to this music" (234). She drinks deep, every bit of that breathtaking experience and realizes that the plastic bottles, her mother had taken back with her to Derby, did not contain water, "but they held sacred ambrosial nectar, a liquid that made a connection with the very founders of Sikhism" (238).

She finds herself kneeling down to pray, with the chanting of *Ik-oan-kaar*, *ik-oan-kaar* (God is one) ringing in her ears. She is no longer a Sikh, but a Christian after her

disownment. Yet she feels, that she is thankful to God for having arrived there by His Grace, as she can pray to that one God. Her research for her dissertation, had overturned a lot of what she had been told about the Sikh religion, as a child. Before arriving at the temple, she had fixed an appointment with a senior Sikh Mr. J. Singh, who had a comprehensive understanding of the Sikh scripture *Guru Granth Sahib*, to seek answers to her pressing questions. As a child, she had understood the Sikh religion to be an oppressive one, which was only about restrictions. She articulates that first question about what her mother had told her, that it was 'likhian' in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, that the children had to marry the one chosen by their parents. To which Mr. J. Singh vehemently replies that there is not a single line to that effect in the sacred scripture. In his words, "These are illiterate people, they haven't read the *Guru Granth Sahib*, they haven't followed it properly" (243). Her second question, pertains to caste and she tells Mr. Singh about being slapped at the age of nine when she had sought explanation on that matter. Mr. Singh again shakes his head and elucidates that *Guru Granth Sahib* is for every human being, it teaches a method of leading your life. In the context of caste, he cites the example of how when the Golden Temple was founded by the fifth Sikh Guru Arjan Dev ji, a Muslim Saint Sai Mian Mir, was especially brought from Lahore to lay the foundation stone, because Guru ji wanted to abolish the caste system from the world. He also explains the significance of the four gates of Harimandar Sahib which symbolize its openness to all castes, creeds and religions as brought out in this line from Sikh *gurbani* "*Chaun varna ko de updesh, Nanak us pandit ko sada aadesh*", "That expert is most respectable, whose teachings are common for all four classes" (my trans.; *SGGS Ang* 274). Her third question pertained to women. She was taught by her mother that Sikhism had no place for women. Mr. Singh feels indignant again and emphasises that it was through a woman, Bebe Nanki, Guru Nanak Dev ji's sister, that the first word about His holiness and that he would preach the message of God, was spread. There is no gender discrimination in Sikhism and women are accorded an equal status. He reiterates that the 5Ks, the five symbols of being a Sikh can be as easily adopted by women as men. Jasvinder absorbs all this with deep regret, as the practice of Sikh religion is at sharp variance with the written Word and due to that she had detached herself from such a beautiful religion. She asks Mr. Singh to suggest passages from the Holy *Granth*, that would corroborate these facts. He recommends that she should take a copy of the *Guru Granth Sahib's* translation into English and start reading it

and look up those verses herself as that would help her, as well as bless her. After this talk with Mr. Singh, she feels vindicated, empowered and enlightened and is eagerly waiting to bow down at the holiest of places and follow in her mother's footsteps, seeing what she saw. Bowing down there, was like reuniting with her long-lost mother, for her.

With Sikhism never having been properly explained to her and having witnessed only the misconstrued and illogical aspects of it since her childhood, she had readily clung to Christianity for support during her exigent times. Sharon, one of her Christian friends had supported her during her post-natal period when her son was born and had given her the Bible, for finding inner peace. Jasvinder had found the psalms comforting. Finding the religion non-prescriptive, she was happy to be baptized as a Christian. Now, after visiting her native village, paying obeisance at the Golden Temple and having clarified her doubts about Sikhism, she regrets why these aspects of Sikh religion could not have been explained to her earlier. She returns to England, feeling tremendously proud of her heritage that she wants to correctly and truly transmit to her children. She returns, reinvigorated, to carry on the philanthropic work that she had found healing and rewarding, and in keeping with the Sikh ethos.

This chapter has analytically looked at the notions about religious identity, of such second and third generation Sikhs, through their memoirs and fictional writings. Evidently, their lives are confused and fragmented due to the contradictory influences of their Western education and environment, with its emphasis on liberal values of personal freedom and gratification of the self on the one hand and the misleading and unfounded transmission of the indigenous religious values by their parents on the other. Parents who had relocated and refused to assimilate are fearful of surrendering their children to their current country's cultural influences. In an effort to prevent the ideational migration of their progeny, they try to impose their faulty understanding of their religious and cultural values on them. Having been brought up in a permissive and multicultural environment, the youngsters have internalized its values and begin to inferiorise their parents' culture and values, which they find restrictive. These are generations of British Sikhs that have not been properly acquainted with the founding principles of Sikhism, the sacrifices of the Gurus, the incomparable support advanced by the Sikhs to the British during the two World Wars, colonial struggles of the Sikhs against the British despite that support, the wiping away of the Sikh kingdom by the

colonisers and the exiling of the last descendant of that empire, Maharaja Dalip Singh for life. A positive development however, is the revived interest of the third generation Sikhs to grasp their religion and its principles more accurately and embrace those with a deeper understanding, not in the fundamentalist way but through a cognition of its underpinnings, history, evolution and expansion.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: “*MANN PARDESI JE THEEYE, SAB JAGAT PARAYA*”; NOT A ‘RACE OF ANGELS’

6.1 Stages in the Intellectual Evolution of Sikh Youth

What Frantz Fanon says of the native intellectuals in Africa during colonialism and then compares them to the Negroes, who live in the United States and in Central or Latin America, in his essay “On National Culture” in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) is also applicable to the second and third generations of Sikh migrants, which this research has focused on. In the colonial context, he talks of three phases in their intellectual development namely the first in which they completely assimilate the culture of the colonisers and inferiorise their own, the second in which they get disturbed and attempt to realize who they really are, and the third in which they try to immerse themselves entirely in their own cultural matrix but remain foreign to it because what is available to them are “mummified fragments” (224) of a culture that has “deteriorated into custom” (224). This race of “individuals without an anchor, without a horizon, colorless, stateless, rootless” is what he calls “a race of angels” (215). The British-born Sikh youngsters too, undergo similar phases of initially being infatuated with the culture of their birthplace, finding their own homes “*unheimlich*” (51) to use Freud’s phrase from *The Uncanny*, but meeting alienation and consequent disruption instead, venture on a quest for their real identity and their roots, a desire to belong, what Avtar Brah names “the homing desire” (16). Rather, being repelled by the frozen and lapidified version of their past and traditions, and not being able to find a strong anchor, they run the risk of turning into rootless angels as they face the multiple demands on their unsteady identities, as quoted by Stuart Hall and mentioned in Chapter 3.

Alberto Melucci (2015) too, says that since the same pattern of acting and thinking cannot be transferred from one sphere to another, uncertainty and ambivalence become staple components of the lives of these floating individuals and they are in search of some “firm foundation” or “permanent anchor”. This persisting anxiety and fickleness is evident in the lives of most of the second and third generation Sikhs delineated in the fictional texts and represented through the memoirs. The interesting

observation is, that whether it is the first generation migrant writers expressing themselves in their native tongue Punjabi or the second generation writers, born and educated in the West, and sharing their experiences in English, the views about the disquietude and incertitude prevalent among the Sikh youngsters in Britain, remain similar.

6.2 Reports Published by Sikh Organizations in Britain

The **British Sikh Report** is an extensive document published jointly by various Sikh organizations in Britain, such as the City Sikhs, Sikh Assembly etc., about the lives of the Sikhs living in England. It has been annually published since 2013 and is based on a survey of Sikhs living there, gathering information about views on their faith, and on topical British issues – political, economic, social and cultural. Its eighth volume was published in 2020 and deals with “topics such as organ donations, disability, loneliness, marriage and weddings, relationships and sex education in schools, Sikh faith schools, the arts, connections with Punjab and India, drug abuse in Punjab, and voting preferences in the December 2019 General Election” (BSR 2). Responses to a question asked in the survey questionnaire about the feeling of loneliness among the Sikhs, corroborate that it is the youngest among the Sikhs who are experiencing loneliness and a sense of alienation more than the elders, “The age group that felt lacking in companionship “Often” most, were those aged 19 or less, at just over 16 per cent” (BSR 43). Even “the percentage of respondents feeling left out often or some of the time, decreased with age, while those feeling hardly ever left out increased with age” (BSR 44). The elders or the first generation of migrants, having made peace with their secluded existence within their community cocoon at the periphery of the mainstream society, do not feel any kind of isolation. The lives of the younger generations, on the other hand, are led in the everyday of that performative multicultural space, in which intermingling and hierarchizing of diverse races, faiths, and cultures incessantly takes place. Unmistakably then, it is the successive generations of Sikhs, which are finding themselves at precarious crossroads of choices which often, for want of proper guidance, turn out to be wrong as we witnessed in the various texts. If they attempt to assimilate with the English natives by internalizing their values, they earn the derisive epithet of ‘coconuts’ who are white inside and brown outside, from their fellow community members. When they are not able to integrate fully due to pressures by their parents and community, they are referred to as

British-Born Desis estranged from both the White English natives, as well as the freshly arrived Indian natives in England, along with their relatives back-home in Punjab, who too, treat them as foreigners. The field of choices and the quick transition from one to the other identity, becomes a very complex and tormenting issue for them, affecting them socially, psychologically, collectively and even professionally.

6.3 Findings of the Online Survey conducted in Britain as part of the Research

I conducted an Online Survey through Snowball Sampling method, of Sikhs based in Britain. 115 respondents, out of which 54.8% were first-generation migrants and 45.2% were second and third generation Sikhs born in Britain, took part in the survey. Gender-wise representation was also well-balanced with 47.8% respondents being males and 51.3% females. 0.9% preferred not to mention their sex. The questionnaire contained 36 questions based on Sikh past, its evolution, its contemporary positionality in Britain, and its perception among the different generations of diaspora Sikhs. The Online link to the Questionnaire and the list of questions is included in the Annexure I. The collected data from the responses, was then divided and analysed on the basis of the variation in responses of the different generations. The detailed graphic representation of the data, in the form of comparative Pie Charts and analytical Bar graphs, is attached in Annexure- II. The following information was gathered on the basis of the survey:

- Out of the respondents 86.6% Sikhs born in Britain agree that religion is a very important facet of their lives and they take tremendous pride in belonging to the Sikh religion as compared to 80.9% migrants expressing the same feeling.
- Among the migrants 93.6% feel that the host country allows them to freely practice their religion whereas the percentage is 86.4% for the ones born in Britain.
- On the topic of the significance of the maintenance of the external Sikh form, the ones born in Britain attach more importance to it at 61.6% than the migrants at 57%.

- 52% of the respondents born in Britain agree that historical cross-cultural encounters between the British and the Sikhs, shape the present relations between the two races as compared to 58.7% of the migrants feeling so.
- 100% of the migrant respondents are interested in the glorious past of the Sikhs whereas this interest has come down to 88.4% for the ones born in Britain.
- Only 53.8% Sikhs born there observe, that enough sources are available to familiarize the succeeding generations of Sikh with their past and the for the migrants the percentage is 68.3%.
- On the subject of the significant contribution made by the Sikh soldiers for the British army to the two World Wars being duly recognized and honoured by the British authorities, only 31.7% of the migrants and only 38.5% of the Britain-born Sikhs, express agreement.
- On being asked if the Sikhs are being appropriately represented in visual media and literature produced in Britain, only 27% of the migrants and 42.3% of the Sikhs born there, agree.
- Following one's religion in a foreign land as a challenge, and its weakening due to moving away from the land of origin, is felt by 33.4% of the migrants and only 25% of the Britain-born Sikhs.
- 84% migrants and 75% Britain-born Sikhs agree that Gurdwaras are important places for building community-relations but only 46% migrants and 53.9% Britain-born Sikhs agree that the sermons and lectures delivered there help them in forming a clear understanding of Sikhism.
- That the positions of authority in the Gurdwaras are means to building clout and serve as channels to political eminence, is agreed to by 52.4% of the migrants and 46% of the Britain-born but at the same time a significant 73% migrants and 75% Britain-born Sikhs agree that funds generated in the Gurdwaras often lead to conflicts among various factions.
- Sikh religion is accepted as a liberal faith by 63.5% of the Britain-born Sikhs and 77.8% of the migrants, although 66.6% of migrants and 63.4% born there agree that caste distinctions are still an important element of the Sikh faith.

- 44.2% Sikhs born in Britain admit that the elders in the family impose their choice of religion of marital partners on the youngsters whereas only 33% of the migrant Sikhs think so.
- At least 25% Sikh migrants and 23% Britain-born Sikhs feel that inter-caste marriages, within different castes of the Sikh community, entail condemnation and exclusion and 3.8% Britain-born Sikhs and 17.5% migrant Sikh respondents conceded that even honour killings are taking place in the cases of Sikh youth, marrying youth from other Sikh castes.
- That the State is taking adequate measures to promote the native tongue Punjabi, is accepted only by 21.2% of the Britain-born respondents and 23.8% of the migrants. 80.2% born in Britain and 87.3% migrant Sikhs agree that the youngsters are speaking a hybridized version of Punjabi and that new forms of Bhangra Pop and Punjabi music are examples of that hybridization and mixing-up of cultures.
- That the other faiths and cultures prevalent in Britain have a major impact on the religious identities of the Sikh youth is accepted by 51% of the Britain-born respondents as compared to 39.7% of the migrants.
- 65.4% of the respondents born in Britain and 57.2% of the migrants concur that Sikhism was originally a multicultural religion, while only 36.5% migrant Sikhs and 48% of the Britain-born ones, consider that the multicultural policies of the Government of Britain have been successful.
- About the future of Sikhism as a way of life and as a world-religion, 59.6% of the Sikhs born in Britain and 52.3% of the migrant Sikhs there predict that Sikhism is going to be well-preserved and truly adhered to by the future generations of Sikhs in Britain.

6.4 Summative Analysis of the Collected Data

It is amply evident from the gathered information that Sikhs from both the groups or generations, whether first- generation migrants or second and third generation Britain-born citizens agree that religion is a very substantial aspect of their globalised lives and they take tremendous pride in their religion. The general observation is that the host country which is the birthplace of the younger generations, allows reasonable freedom to them, to practice their religion. A noteworthy point is that more youngsters than the older migrants attach significance to the maintenance of the

external form of a Sikh, prescribed by the Sikh edicts. The historical cross-cultural encounters between the British and the Sikhs do influence the present relations between the two races and all the Sikhs there, are interested in familiarizing themselves with the glorious past evolution of Sikh religion although they regret that the supreme contributions made by the Sikh soldiers to the two World Wars, have only recently been acknowledged and that sufficient sources are not available to make the Sikhs fully conversant with their past. Preserving one's religious devotion after moving to an alien land or in the midst of other cultural and religious influences, is viewed as a challenge more by the youth than the earlier migrants. Gurdwaras are viewed as places for community-strengthening and creating political clout through positions of authority, but few accepted the role of Gurdwaras and the sermons delivered there, in clarifying the basic concepts of Sikhism to them. The conflicts between various factions of Sikhs over funds generated in the Gurdwaras have also been commonly admitted. Sikhism is perceived as a liberal faith by a good number but at the same time they accept that caste distinctions are still an important element in it. A very pertinent point, from the point of view of this research is that forced marriages arranged by the parents are a reality and even honour killings, in case the youngsters refuse to comply, have been admitted to. The multicultural initiatives by the government, it emerges, have been deemed ineffective and there may be some insights to be gained from Sikhism, which was established as a multicultural faith. The respondents have also observed that the British authorities have not been undertaking adequate efforts to promote Punjabi, the native tongue of the Sikhs and it has led to a kind of creolization of the linguistic inheritance and a hybridization of the traditions of Bhangra and Punjabi music. On a positive note, the Sikhs born in Britain are more optimistic about the future of Sikh religion and its preservation there, than the first-generation migrants.

6.5 Application to the Issue

The basic focus of this research is the inter-generational conflict between or among the various generations of Sikhs in Britain in the context of religious identity. As brought forth in the above survey, the British Sikh Reports (2013-20) and on the basis of the detailed critical analysis of the literary texts pertaining to Sikh characters and their negotiation of their identities, it can be veritably concluded that the first-generation migrants had covered those extensive distances and moved to alien shores

with the impetus of giving a better life to their successive generations. The odds had been really against them with the hurdles of linguistic, racial and economic challenges to be overcome. The experiences of the colonial past and the cross-cultural encounters with the British were also carried along as memorabilia, making their assimilation or integration in the adopted country, neither desirable, nor comfortable. They confined themselves to a segregated existence on the margins, making their faith and community, their only *métiers*. They stayed insulated from and almost unaffected by the racially hierarchized multicultural locale that Britain offered, and continued to toil in the direction of shaping a better future for their progeny.

The newer generations of Sikhs born in that country on the other hand, receive education in the Westernized system and tend to internalize those very liberal values, do not have much familiarity with the past in the name of memory, are more exposed to the influences of other cultures and have to face and deal with those in the everyday goings-on of the multicultural scenario. The parent-generation, in an attempt to prevent the conceptual and psychic migration of their children away from their own culture and religion, exerts itself to control the youth in the name of tradition and religious practices, often misinterpreting those, leading to a very rigid and an erroneous transmission of Sikhism and its related system of beliefs. These youngsters raised in a value-system that attaches tremendous significance to individual happiness and satisfaction, along with a rational outlook towards all aspects of life, including religion, tend to question the restrictions imposed on them, and in the absence of some proper elucidation tend to drift towards other cultures and religions that are readily and abundantly available. When it comes to the question of identity, their selves remain fragmented as they switch between multiple and fluid identities and take recourse to strategies like hybridization and hyphenated identities in an effort towards acculturation. But being socially and psychologically affected by these processes, the end result is a feeling of alienation and rootlessness. The proposition made here is that the transmission of a properly interpreted Sikh religion, which is a liberal and a latitudinarian faith right from its origin, and an identity formed on the basis of its teachings and principles, which were multicultural in tenor, shall certainly provide that rootedness and stability, earnestly required by these wandering angels.

6.6 True Religion as a Strong Anchor in the Multicultural Sea

In his book *The Intimate Enemy*, when Ashish Nandy compares how Rudyard Kipling and Aurobindo Ghose, two individuals who faced the turmoil of living through these interstices of cultural conflict in terms of the “psychopathology of colonialism” (85), he gives the credit to Ghose’s being steeped in the Indian spirituality that sustained him through the crisis. Similarly, if I can employ the term ‘psychopathology of migration’ to the situation of the Sikh youth, it may be suggested that a deeper understanding of the Sikh religion, its founding principles, its struggles and evolution through history, its brush with colonialism and the resultant impact, and its reinvention in terms of its augmented position as a globally spread religion can well provide that strong anchor to these drifting, rudderless ships in the tempestuous sea of multiculturalism, with all its diverse currents.

The policy of Multiculturalism that has been theoretically adopted by most of the nations of the world, especially the Western countries and its impact on the migrants can be gauged from the selected texts. Earlier these countries had been popularizing the homogenizing notion of “assimilationism” inherent in the idea of West as a melting pot, but that entailed the view of urban society as a racial hierarchy, giving only the option of conformity to the so-called inferiors and outsiders. This idea had been well-established and widely documented till the 1970s. Since then, various countries had been proposing ways and policies to accommodate ethnic diversity in a liberal atmosphere and projecting themselves as truly multicultural nations. As Will Kymlicka puts it in his report titled “Multiculturalism: Success, Failure and Future” compiled under an initiative of the Migration Policy Institute, Europe, “multiculturalism was characterized as a feel-good celebration of ethnocultural diversity, encouraging citizens to acknowledge and embrace the panoply of customs, traditions, music and cuisine that exist in a multiethnic society” (Migration Policy Institute, Europe 72). This multiculturalist model, which was touted as a decided progress over the melting-pot philosophy, was expected to allow various ethnic groups the freedom to preserve their cultural markers and retain their native identities in a mutually respectful atmosphere. For the European Union generally and Britain specifically, it appears that the transition from the Empire in which the sun never set to an accommodating multicultural nation sensitive to the individual needs of its diverse ethnic minorities, is a gradual and arduous journey. In spite of its ostensible

claims of providing religious freedom and respect to the ethnic customs and practices of the minorities, multiculturalism seems to have moved only in the direction of a coercive national culture into which the immigrants are expected to integrate, more like the earlier hierarchical assimilation because it is the native culture that reigns supreme. Rather than being seen in the hype created by the government, it is in the everyday enunciative goings-on on the streets, that the reality of multiculturalism becomes visible. With the increased intermingling of diverse ethnicities in the globally connected world of today, the earlier stratified and ideological East-West confrontation of the 20th century has been taken over by a cultural self-awareness and with it an increased cognizance and commodification of the cultural differences.

The complete lack of social acceptance and a feeling of incapability at not being able to do anything about it, makes the individual interrogate his 'patchwork identity', to use Thomas Meyer's expression in *Identity Mania*. In order to be a socially responsible and acceptable being, a person needs to be clear about how he is perceived by the 'others' in terms of his behavior, belief system and ethnicity. Members of racial minorities appear to be in a state of confusion regarding who they really are and where they actually belong. Here, begins an individual's earnest quest for his true identity which according to Meyer is fueled by the politicization of cultural differences in a multicultural scenario where divergent identities are expected to be preserved. Rootedness in one's native identity and establishment of its supremacy over foreign cultures is viewed as empowering and attracts the fragmented psyche of the migrant individual. It requires that the individual possesses the requisite inner strength to deal with contradictory social demands, create an identity indomitable enough to handle divergent social pressures and not feel threatened or insecure. A truly multicultural society would be one that is conducive to the forging of such fearless identities and liberal enough to allow them to flourish simultaneously and collectively. As Will Kymlicka, the diehard advocate of multiculturalism, quotes from *The International Comparative Study of Ethnocultural Youth*:

Immigrants do best, both in terms of psychological well-being and socio-cultural outcomes, when they are able to combine their ethnic identity with a new national identity. Scholars often call this an "integration orientation," as opposed to either an "assimilation orientation" (in which the immigrants abandon

their ethnic identity to adopt a new national identity) or a “separation orientation” (in which immigrants renounce the new national identity to maintain their ethnic identity) . . . Members of immigrant minorities will be more likely to identify with a new national identity if they feel their ethnic identity is publically respected. (12)

So, whatever we are seeing happening the world around, in the recent Black Lives Matter movement in the US, or racial and religious alienation in Britain or even closer home in India in the form of enhanced communalism, needs to be addressed from this perspective. Therefore, rather than pronouncing multiculturalism dead, this research proposes that let us learn from the reasonably successful Canadian example and make efforts to revive it and sustain it in its true spirit of liberal and democratic multiplicity. The differences have to be retained, but neither commodified nor asserted.

Peter van der Veer underscores that the celebration of hybridity, multiculturalism and syncretism in Cultural Studies is a smugness of the elitist world of litterateurs, a world in which literary texts become the sites of “self-fashioning in modern bourgeois culture” (102). He criticizes the modern tendency to relegate religious expression to the private sphere and affirms that religious faith and other forms of cultural difference are not obliterated but transformed and comfortably accommodated by urban consumer capitalism. Pnina Werbner (2015) also reiterates that there are innovative and creative dimensions to religious discourses. “A truly comprehensive study of migrant culture would need, therefore, to go beyond migrant literary texts, such as those by Naipaul and Rushdie, to examine a wider range of textual interventions including those articulated by migrant-settlers in a religious idiom, as these are played out in the West” (104).

According to Brah (1996), multiculturalism in the United Kingdom has come with some trappings. Although it is alleged to have a discriminatory agenda and to be a rhetoric about the “ethnocultural other,” it was also seen by the migrants as a protective deterrent against hegemonic strategies. In Britain, multiculturalism has been called a failed experiment because of its deeply rooted racial inequality and didactic structures. However, there is much that multiculturalist policies can pick from the non-essentialist original precepts of Sikhism, which was created as a

genuinely intercultural faith. It is extremely troubling that in the instance of Sikh immigrants, the true character of Sikhism appears to have been lost on the Sikhs themselves, in the pursuit of their worldly goals. Rather than passing on the religion's true undogmatic ideology to future generations, the Sikh diaspora appears to be preoccupied with concerns about its form, such as turban or *kirpan* campaigns, or with the other anti-racist or relocation reforms, as iterated by Tatla (2006). Undoubtedly the first-generation migrants had to fight hard for survival in a society that was frigid in every aspect and they encountered challenges different from the subsequent generations, for whom the government's multicultural policies and Race Relations ministries apparently reduced racism issues superficially. Frustration and low self-esteem as well as the couples' deteriorating marital relationships and botched attempts to fit in with the new culture, led to their drinking and smoking habits, that the Sikhs consider sinful. It was a transition from extreme deprivation to complete materialism. Evidently then, most of the migrants from the initial waves have neither been effective precedents for their offspring nor taught them the true philosophy of religion, which is not merely constructing Gurdwaras and visiting them, but rather understanding the values on which the *Guru Granth Sahib* is premised and incorporating those into their lives.

As a result of their extreme discontent with their children's social depravity, these parents begin to fiercely resist their outside relationships, and the most alarming fact in England at the period is the regularity with which compelled weddings, elopements, and honour killings are taking place. As elucidated in this research, Sikh autobiographies and memoirs from the following generation like Satnam Sanghera's *Marriage Material*, *The Boy with the Topknot*, Jaswinder Sanghera's *Shame* and *Shame Travels*, and the Sikh character Hardjit in *Londonstani*, all discuss such generational problems. Eventually families that are losing authority, turn to force in the name of religious dogmatism and pressurize their children into marriage alliances that the latter completely detest, and in extreme cases ostracize or eliminate their own children, as in the novel *Southall*, Sadhu Singh does to his daughter Sukhi when she has an affair, or Pala Singh endeavours to do to his daughter Maninder. The complete abandonment of Jasvinder Sanghera by her family is also an instance of the same kind. They continue the highly patriarchal and patrilineal social setup, and the caste hierarchies of their native land under the garb of preserving tradition and religion.

Economic factors such as the struggle for survival in the cut-throat competition in the foreign land could also be playing a part in retaining the caste-divides. To realize, that followers of a religion founded by Guru Nanak on the principles of love and tolerance for all, with guidelines such as "*Janoh Jot na pucho Jaati, Aage jaat na hai*", Recognize the Lord's Light within all and do not consider social class or status; there are no classes or castes in the world hereafter (my trans.; *SGGS Ang 349*) and "*Eko pawan, maati sabh eka, sabh eka jot sabaiya*", There is only one breath; all are made of the same clay; the light within all is the same (my trans.; *SGGS Ang 96*), have degenerated to this level, is indeed abysmal. The absurdity is that some of these parents have low self-worth, maybe owing to the mental colonization and are open to recognizing their children's ties with the *Goras*, but they will not consider having their children married to *Tarkhan* or *Chamar* caste Sikhs, for the dread of creating a horrible image among their peers in the community. This results in a completely misconstrued interpretation and transmission of the Sikh religion to the successive generations.

6.7 British-born Sikhs: A Generation at Sea

These new and mostly uninitiated generations of Sikhs, growing up and living amidst foreign cultures, religions and their influences, need to be well-steeped in their own religion, which sadly has either been neglected or grossly misinterpreted by their preceding generations, allowing or rather encouraging them towards adoption of other faiths and cultural practices. This intercourse is inevitable in a multicultural scenario, specifically in a country such as Britain, which being economically advanced is a coveted destination of people belonging to several diverse religions and cultures. Singh and Tatla quote from Bali Rai's *(Un)arranged Marriage* (2001) the difficult predicament of its main character Manjit:

I've been reading up on it [Sikhism] lately and I've found that Sikhism preaches tolerance and equality towards everything... Men, woman, Black, White. All the same. The problem is that people like my old dad tie all these old traditions to the religion—arranged marriages, all the racist shit [against Blacks], the caste system stuff, things which have nothing to do with religion and more to do with culture and politics and social norms. (qtd. in Singh and Tatla: 198)

Sikh religion, rather than being a religion, is a *panth* (path) or a way of life. It was founded and recommended for all established religions then, to purge them of their unscrupulous and disreputable practices. It spurred Muslims to be better Muslims and the Brahmins to be better Brahmins and did not believe in proselytizing in any way. The fact that it was founded as a method to peacefully deal with the existing interstitial problems in a multicultural (owing to the tremendous linguistic and regional diversity in India and Punjab, especially due to frequent foreign invasions) and multi-religious space that our country constituted, makes it highly relevant in the contemporary global context. The word ‘Sikh’ literally means someone who is ready to always learn and a true Sikh was conceptualised as one who would be able to transcend the distinctions of caste, language, race, religion and follow the path shown by the *guru*.

For the Sikhs, as pronounced by the tenth and the last living Guru, Sri Gobind Singh, the role was thereafter to be played by *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, the sacred text, the ‘Word’ (*Shabad*) in which, was accorded the position of an incarnate *Guru*, after its completion in 1708. The cosmopolitan and latitudinarian character of this compilation is evident from the fact that it exhibits complete respect for the other prevalent religious traditions of that time, and even included the poetic teachings of thirteen Bhakti movement saint poets from the Hindu religion and two Sufi poets from the Muslim religion. The extensive teachings ensconced in this revered text have ubiquitous relevance that transcends time, religion, race, caste and other differences. The precepts prescribe a *Jugat* (method) which is applicable or accessible at two levels: one that leads to spiritual fulfilment and communion with God, and is a higher or other-worldly level, requiring a different kind of *Bhakti* (devotion) but the entry into this level is through the doors of the second, the worldly way of leading one’s life prescribed for every Sikh, which is the path of virtuous living as per the edicts of Sikhism. No devotion or any higher attainment is possible without the initial step as brought out in these lines from *Gurbani*: “*Vin gun keetay bhagat na hoi*” (*SGGS* Ang 4).

The successive generations of Sikhs need to be imparted comprehensive information about the circumstances under which the Sikh religion was founded, the struggles that it underwent during the historical clashes with Muslim rulers and later, the hot and cold relationship with the British colonisers. The important aspect that needs to be

understood by all the youngsters who take to excessive violence and adopt an extremely fundamentalist attitude, such as the one adopted by Ranjit, one of the hardcore and ruthless characters delineated by Satnam Sanghera in his *Marriage Material* or even exhibited by the merciless father Sucha Singh, who murders his own daughter for the sake of family honour, depicted by Harjit Atwal in his novel *Southall*, is that vehemence and radicalism were never the essential ingredients of original Sikhism. As elaborated in Chapter 1, it is evident from the evolution of Sikh religion in the past that Guru Nanak Dev recommended and employed passive but firm resistance to tackle Muslim oppression and freely disseminated his message of love, tolerance and benevolence to people of all religions and castes. In the case of later incarnations of Sikh Gurus again, the notable attribute is that the martial aspects of the race were strengthened majorly by the Sixth Guru Hargobind Singh in the 17th century, who talked of the two swords of ‘*miri*’ (worldly strength) and ‘*piri*’ (spiritual strength) and then by the Tenth Guru Gobind Singh in the later 17th and early 18th century, who introduced the concept of *Khalsa*. It is very significant to observe that these developments were preceded by crucial sacrifices of the fifth Guru Arjan Dev in 1606 and the Ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1675. The words of Guru Gobind Singh, who was himself assassinated along with the supreme sacrifice of his whole family in 1708, protesting against the forcible conversions to Muslim religion, by the then emperor Aurangzeb, convey very well the basic idea underlining the Sikh way of thinking drafted as the *Zafarnama (The Epistle of Victory 1705)*, “*Chu kar az hameh heel-te dar guzasht, halal ast burden b-shamshir dast* , All modes of redressing a wrong having failed, raising of sword is pious and just” (my trans.; Verse 22).

This is one of the most quoted verses from Guru Gobind Singh, while advocating the path of justice but its correct interpretation is pivotal. Lifting of the sword is to be resorted to, as the last effort and not the first one, as wrongly presumed by many. It is forbearance and sacrifice for the right cause, that is more in keeping with the essence of Sikhism. Later incidents in Sikh history such as the Anglo-Sikh wars, the violence at the time of the partition of India, Operation Blue Star or even the anti-Sikh riots of 1984, corroborate the fact that indulgence in unprovoked and unreasonable violence is not a Sikh characteristic.

The concept of *Khalsa* introduced by Guru Gobind Singh was a need of those times, to forge Sikhs who would be emboldened enough to face the Muslim onslaught.

Again it would be pertinent to remember that the Sikh Guru had not tested the martial skills in a contest to choose the first ever pure Sikhs (the *Panj Piaras*), but asked them to volunteer to lay down their lives for the sake of their principles. This notion is not different in any way from the attributes of a genuine Sikh enumerated by the founder, Guru Nanak Dev. The emphasis on the inner purity remains the same for both. The outer form of a Sikh, adorning the five Ks was also recommended to give the Sikhs a singular recognizable identity and infuse in them the sense of a *qaum* (a distinctive race) in those challenging times but the epithet *Khalsa* was reserved for the Sikhs who possessed qualities of both body and spirit and not just the external traits.

It is such qualities that were engendered in Banda Bahadur, a Saint-Soldier, a sort of model Sikh prepared by Guru Gobind Singh to counter the Mughal forces. The Sikhs of those times were then fashioned around those attributes and such virtues were considered desirable. But as brought forth in the first chapter, several Western and Indian historians have recorded a kind of neglect and degeneration of the saintly aspects of interior virtuosity to the escalation of the exterior aggressive and soldierly ones, in the period following the execution of Banda Bahadur which also brought about large scale badgering of the Sikhs and the temporary trouncing of the Sikh collective. The Sikhs did not turn to the 'Word' *Guru* in the form of the teachings of the *Guru Granth Sahib* but rather owing to a serious void of a capable living leader, disintegrated into small *Misls* ridden with internal squabbling and conspiracies. Ranjit Singh's authoritative and administrative control brought the sovereignty back to the Sikh *qaum*, but the resplendent phase was cut short by his early death in 1839, with no immediate heir in sight. The valiant Sikh armies, raised and trained by him, were left to fend for themselves in the face of another imminent foe, the British colonisers.

The British rulers despite much strategic planning in that direction, had not been able to overcome the Khalsa army and annex Punjab during Ranjit Singh's reign. They had been earlier employing the brave Maratha warriors in their armies but had almost exhausted that resource by that time. The death of Ranjit Singh provided them that opportunity and they started looking at Punjab, and especially the excellently groomed Sikh army, as another rich storehouse of valiant and intrepid human resource to exploit, to their advantage. The near-equal contests, despite the odds being against them, fought by the Sikhs during the Anglo-Sikh wars and the rare pluck displayed by them, was admired by all alike and the annals of history are piled high with those

accounts as brought out in Chapter 1. The Sikhs happened to establish a reputation as a martial race, a construct that was going to be abundantly capitalized on by the shrewd British authorities. Desirous of harnessing their characteristic resilient spirit (*chardi kala*, the hallmark of a *Khalsa*) and their battle-hardened skills, the rulers began to employ Punjabis and especially Sikhs in their armies in huge numbers, making them a predominant presence in those. The officers insisted on the employed Sikhs maintaining the proper Sikh form in the army, making it convenient for them to segregate between various religions and their respective practices. This however, encouraged the adoption of the external Sikh form and the soldierly attributes, for the sake of employability by many Sikhs who were not so conscious of the interior qualities needed to be imbibed by a true *Khalsa*. The ‘combative’ identity, that was enhanced and sharpened by repeated invasions on Punjab and sustained oppression of the Sikhs, was internalized by them. In due course the Sikh psyche turned towards a pride in warrior-like attributes at the detrimental cost of a dilution of the virtuous aspects of Sikhism. The colonial masters, projecting them as a martial race, made optimum use of this potential of the Sikhs, who fought and valiantly laid down their lives for the British army during the two world wars. The younger generations of both the Sikhs and the native English born in Britain, would do well to familiarize themselves with this tremendous contribution made by the Sikhs to the British history. It had not even been acknowledged properly, till recently in 2016, when a memorial was erected in Brighton, in the memory of those gallant martyrs. The young Sikhs born in Britain and besotted with the culture of their birthplace also need to be apprised of how despite these selfless sacrifices, the Sikhs on their return to India, were let down and completely disillusioned with the British regime, that ordered the Jalianwala Bagh massacre, imposed the Martial Law in Punjab and eventually partitioned Punjab, dealing a death blow to the Sikh sovereignty. Certainly there are valuable lessons to be learnt from the past that was lived by their preceding generations just like Gilroy says, “The imperial and colonial past continues to shape political life in the overdeveloped-but-no-longer imperial countries. (2004, 2)

Nevertheless, travelling to different parts of the world under the British army, gave the characteristically adventurous Sikhs, an exposure of the world and encouraged them to venture out. The partition of their home-state, also turned out to be a major push-factor in that direction. Thus, began the saga of large-scale diasporic movement

of the Sikhs to various parts of the world. As Stuart Hall says, identity is not a sense of security that places ourselves in eternity but the name given to the diverse “ways we are positioned by and we position ourselves, in the narratives of the past” (Hall 225). Conversancy with one’s past thus, becomes imperative for a comprehensive understanding of one’s positionality in the society. The Sikh past, very much like the colonial intercourse with the Muslims that Sardar mentions in *Balti Britain* (230), has been very conveniently forgotten by the erstwhile colonisers and their successive generations. Refurbishing the shared past and recognizing its obliterated glories will help, the younger generations of Sikhs develop, a sense of dignity in their faith and elevate its public perception in the eyes of the native residents of the Britain.

As brought out by various researchers Brah (2005), Shani (2008), Myrvold (2016), and in the Survey conducted by me, the younger generations of Sikhs are keen to learn about their history and religion, and cultivate in themselves a sense of pride about those. In the present times, as the Sikhs have spread to the remotest corners of the world and Sikhism is fast moving towards becoming a global religion, the need is to reinvent and transmit to the successive generations those aspects of the religion which are highly relevant to the negotiation of their identities in the current multicultural spaces. As Ziauddin Sardar iterates about liberalism not being the monopoly of the Western traditions and advocates the adoption of a progressive approach towards Islam, similarly the Sikh tradition that was originally founded in a multicultural context, proposed a system and a method of living, that can be reinterpreted and utilized effectively to furnish a strong anchor to the rootless and alienated youngsters inhabiting the foreign lands. Sardar cites concepts from Islam, such as *ijtihad* (reasoned innovation), *ijmii* (consensus) and *shiira* (consultation) (2009, XXI) which may be employed to make it more contemporarily relevant. Similarly, Sikh *Gurbani*, offers a *Jivan Jugat* (a way of life) that offers valuable insights into most of the aspects of life and it advances nonpartisan concepts to provide guidance to all seekers, irrespective of caste, race, class or religion and rather, teaches them to skillfully navigate through those differences in multifarious situations.

6.8 Ubiquitous Applicability of *Gurbani* Concepts

The trope of diaspora occurs at several levels in Sikh *Gurbani*. First, there is the fundamental premise, a general conception of all humankind being diaspora in this world, as we are all displaced from our eternal home, beyond this world. It is a unifying concept, bringing human beings together on a single platform and urging them to transcend their petty worldly attachments and lead their lives here, as a temporary guest. “*Aasaa mansa jallaye tu, hoe raho mehmaan*” (SGGS Ang 646). Secondly, as an extension of the same concept, *Gurbani* brings forth the notion of all humans being equated with women “*Is jag mein purakh ek hai, hor sagli naar sabai.*” (SGGS Ang 591), who are living in this world, which is their maternal home. The ultimate communion with God, based on love, will be their marriage ceremony, after which they will migrate to their marital home, like diaspora, where their virtues and what they have learnt during their lives is going to be evaluated in a sort of ‘final judgement’. This conception accentuates two significant aspects that are central to the Sikh ethos, that are the emphasis on inculcating the prescribed virtues and the equivalent, or rather more respected position accorded to women in *Gurbaani*. These virtues of tolerance, compassion, magnanimity, sincere effort and humility, contained in the teaching of “*Kirat karna te wand ke chakna*” are positioned in a very liberal framework, imposing no ritualistic, superstitious or methodological restrictions on the adherents of this permissive faith, which had in fact, been founded to purge the other prevalent faiths of such degenerative practices.

At the interior level too, Sikh religiosity underscores a control over the senses symbolized by the ‘*mann*’ or the mind which has to be grounded and rooted firmly for an inner equilibrium and equanimity. In the absence of this inner peace, which provides a strong anchor, the ‘*mann*’ keeps racing in ten different directions, “*Manua deh dis dhawda*” (SGGS Ang 565) leading to a fragmentation of the individual who becomes a stranger or a diaspora, to himself. Such an imploded being is not at home anywhere, as is well brought out in this line from *Gurbaani*, “*Mann pardesi je theeye, sab des praya*” (SGGS Ang 767). The homing desire and an urge to stabilize pulls strongly, at both the spiritual as well as the physical level and the importance of rootedness and a sustaining anchorage cannot be overstated, especially on alien shores. A deep cognizance of the concepts ensconced in *Gurbaani* and its proper exegesis as ‘Word’ the *Guru*, to guide through the challenging situations that the life

of diaspora entails, shall definitely facilitate their negotiation of their fugacious and swiftly changing identities in multicultural spaces. Alberto Mellucci in his book *Challenging Codes* posits the multiplicity of choices as the real challenge, that the present information-ridden society hurls at an individual, bringing about a kind of disintegration and fragmentation of the self. The burden to make choices and face their consequences adds to the struggle of everyday lived experience. In such a situation, an assuring method to find one's way through the maze of choices, a system that would facilitate and guide in the enunciation and representation of multiple identities, and help them understand the processes of identity formation, would be more than welcome, for such harried beings.

Gurbaani, being a timeless and fathomless resource of knowledge, about life in this world at the microcosmic and its connection with the other worldly system at the macrocosmic level, proffers cosmopolitan insights into many aspects of identity formation, comparable to some concepts emphasised by various theorists. Paul Gilroy, in his *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* projects the Atlantic Ocean or the sea to be representing that space of routes between various identities but at the same time, finds that the space is a problematic one as it fails to completely configure the mutations that occur in an individual's identity, due to the influences of migration. In Sikh *gurbaani* too, the trope of an ocean has been repeatedly used to represent the world through which the individual has to swim during his life-course and the ones who will take the trestle and board the ship of Guru's shelter will be ferried across safely. "*Bhavjal jagat na jayi tarna, jap har har paar utaari*" (*SGGS Ang 1198*). This ocean-like world is a place of uncertainties and apprehensions, to steer through the tempests of which, a strong ship with a well-founded anchor is imperative. It is in this tumultuous space, that the counterforces of ethnic fulfilment and transfiguration according to the demands of the host-society, create what Gilroy cites as an example of 'double-consciousness', elaborating on Du Bois' concept. This notion too is congruent with the idea of '*dubidha*' (duality) propounded in Sikh *gurbaani* at multiple levels. Just like double-consciousness, makes the diasporic individual constantly aware of and splintered between his twoness, making it a disagreeable space, *dubidha* in *Gurbaani* is an undesirable condition that dissuades the individual from the right path. "*Dubidha na padou, har bin hor na pujo, madhi masaan na jayi*" (*SGGS Ang 634*). At the very initial level, it refers to a sense of 'duality' as a consciousness of one's segregation from the Almighty which is alluded

to as the root of all worldly problems, the germination ground of the seed of '*Haume*' or ego (consciousness of self). This one is, of course, more pertinent to the ones aspiring for more profound goals in religion. There are several kinds of dualities manifesting at the worldly level, mentioned in *gurbaani* such as between good and evil, *Gurmukh* and *manmukh*, male and female, *sach te bharam* (truth and falsehood), *kathni* and *karni* (preaching and practice) etc. At a mundane level, this duality also occurs and bothers an individual while making the choice between the virtuous path of righteousness and morality, or the easy-going path of outright materialism. It is in this sense that it approximates more with double-consciousness. It is a dilemma which is congruous to the one experienced by diaspora while choosing between his two or multiple identities. It is like sailing in the turbulent sea, when the shore is not in sight.

Bhabha suggests 'hybridity' and 'liminality' as either the outcomes or strategies devised by the diaspora to come to terms with this duality. They internalize the western values and begin to judge themselves, along with their own culture and traditions, through the gaze of the other, usually inferiorizing the indigenous systems. These hybrids, inhabit the liminal zone and consider themselves, neither here nor there, rather living in a third space connecting the two, which he explains with the symbol of a stairwell in his *Location of Culture* (4). This notion of liminality appropriates to or can be better comprehended in terms of the idea of '*nirlepta*' or '*anjan mahi niranjan rahiye*' (*SGGS Ang* 332) put forward in Sikh *Gurbaani*. It teaches the Sikhs, the method or the *Jugat* to deal with the 'other' surrounding world. The key is to stay detached and unaffected, while staying connected to your roots and origins, and soundly anchored inwardly. *Gurbaani* does not advocate any isolation from, rejection or renunciation of the world. The trick lies in staying in its midst and yet, not allowing it to influence you. "*Hasandya, khelandya, painandian, khavandyan, wiche hove mukat*" (*SGGS Ang* 322). Hybridity, according to Bhabha, further involves 'mimicry' and 'mockery' to subvert the power of the dominant systems. He especially uses the term 'Sly Civility' (93), through which the natives evade the authority with a shrewd defence of their own theology. This idea corresponds very well with the concept of "*thatha baaga*" recommended to the devout Sikhs in *Gurbaani* to deal with the outside world. "*Mann saach naam mera laga, logan seon mera thatha baaga*" (*SGGS Ang* 384). Very similar to 'sly civility', it teaches the Sikhs to join in and superficially behave like the people from the materialistic world, maintaining a kind of outward working relationship with them, giving them an impression of

courtesy but inwardly being true to your values and virtues, and treading the path of rectitude. It is a mimicry lined with an inward mockery, which helps them adjust with and accommodate the 'others'. As mentioned in Chapter 2, when Nandy (1983) says that "one must be in the world but not of it" or quotes Coomaraswamy, who talks of "becoming the Spectator of all things of all times" (109), they are also bringing forth comparable notions. This method can be very effectively employed by the diaspora Sikh youngsters in their everyday enunciative and performative space that they share with the others in the multicultural setting. Being connected with their revitalizing faith which is going to be their anchor, will give them the strength to come to terms with the alienation that they experience in various spheres of their lives. So, rather than being termed 'coconuts' who are brown on the outside and white inside, as they have internalized the western values, if they follow the method suggested here instead, they can turn into some kind of 'apricots' (ostensibly, like the whites but brown on the interior) who are internally well-grounded in their indigenous values but externally integrate well with the native or host culture.

Gilroy, in his other book *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (2004) alludes to a general melancholia pervading among the natives in Europe, at having lost their ascendancy over their colonies and the whole world. In Britain especially, having to put up with the presence of immigrants who were once their subjects, is looked upon as an irksome intrusion leading to everyday complications. As an alternative to that acerbity, he envisions a 'conviviality' based on a planetary humanism that focuses more on the likenesses between human races than their differences and works with a belief that communication is possible with a recognition of mutual worth. This notion is analogous to the concept of '*sada vigaas*' (eternal bliss) in *Gurbaani* which exhorts the Sikhs to stay positive, optimistic and in high spirits despite the challenges and obstacles in their path. "*Nanak bhagtan sada vigaas*" (*SGGS Ang 2*). In fact, being deeply connected with the faith is believed to fill the person with a general sense of euphoria, turning one into a congenial and pleasant individual. Gilroy also talks of revisiting the horrors and atrocities unleashed by various races on each other, in the 20th century as it might reveal some insights on how to deal with contemporary global circumstance of living in close proximity to difference, in a harmonised and intrepid manner, without any trace of hostility. It is here that Sikhism, which was founded as a path in an actually multicultural and multi-

religious setting, has valuable propositions to make. As Avtar Brah (2005) iterates, multiculturalism, which was touted as a panacea in the earlier problematic contexts of hegemonic assimilation and integration, has its own set of problématiques. Being adopted both as a tactical option against coercive adaptation by the migrants and as a discriminatory initiative towards the cultural other, leading to the stereotypical commodification of difference by the natives, it is claimed to include both ends of the spectrum. In the survey conducted in Britain, only 36% of the Sikh respondents agreed that multicultural policies of the government are working well. It needs to be remembered that Sikh religion was founded as a revolutionary mode of life, at a time when corrupt practices had crept into most of the prevalent faiths. It was initiated as a cosmopolitan approach, that was essentially non-essential and highly pertinent to the multi-religious setting. Being ubiquitously applicable, it was open to diverse castes and credos and exhorted all to rise above their differences and tread a new, yet unchartered course of unbigoted and unbiased devotion, rid of any ritualistic or methodological restrictions. The kind of liberal and democratic space for diversity envisaged by that prototype, in which each faith is treated with dignity and given ample freedom to harmoniously reach its own acme, can be effectively incorporated into today's multiculturalism. Gilroy's expectation from multiculturalism (2000), of respectable citizenship and a quest for a space that would be autonomous in respect of occidental modernity, will be very well achievable in a multiculturalist model along these lines.

Again in *Challenging Codes* (1996), Alberto Melucci emphasises the significance of collective altruistic action as a conscious expression of one's efforts at reconnecting oneself to one's roots. Willfully engaging in such philanthropic action and expressing solidarity with like-minded people, according to him, is cathartic in the highly complex information-controlled societies of today that create exclusion, minoritization and alienation. The motivation for such positive action comes from lay or religious inspiration, he avers. In Sikh *Gurbaani* the concept of selfless service or 'sewa' has a pivotal position and has always been emphasised for an individual's moral and spiritual resuscitation. Jasvinder Sanghera, in her memoir, shares how her mother insisted on she and her sisters' doing *sewa* at the Gurudwara and even doing the household work with the same sentiment. But it was dictated more as a religious

order to the young girls rather than inculcated as a devotional feeling, with a specific purpose. In Sikhism this benevolent practice is recommended for fostering humility in and effacing one's self for inner contentment and maximum inclusion. In fact, the rich and unique tradition of serving 'langar', that was introduced by the founder Guru Nanak Dev, also had the same humbling, unifying and gratifying belief as its basis. Inclusion and compassion thus, remain the cornerstones of true Sikhism, and it is to these aspects of it, that the young Sikhs need to be drawn and motivated to participate.

6.9 Self-representation or Reinforcement of Stereotypes

The basic premise on which this research focused its exploration of the Sikh religious identity and its transmission among the different generations of Sikh diaspora in Britain, was pieces of literature. These are composed by Sikh writers who either migrated to or were born in Britain and have Sikh characters as protagonists in their works that include fictionalized writings or novels, and memoirs and autobiographies of Sikh authors, both men and women. Hall, in his books *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (2003), *Selected Writings on Race and Difference*, edited by Paul Gilroy (2021), *Modernity and its Futures: Questions of Cultural Identity* (1992) edited by Hall and Paul Du Gay, places a great value on the politics of representation, especially the representational practices and regimes in the context of representing 'others'. There are precise cultural and political procedures that have regulated, governed and normalized representational and discursive spaces in the English society, which is how, he elaborates, these representational strategies place others at the margins (2003, 253). To address these issues, a form of representation was needed that contested prevalent norms of representation—first in performance styles and later in literary, visual, and cinematic manifestations, as well as opposed and altered them, wherever possible (253). Referring specifically to the case of Blacks, he emphasises how the fetishized and stereotypical nature of their representation, seriously required to be disputed:

In these spaces blacks have typically been the objects, but rarely the subjects, of the practices of representation. The struggle to come into representation was predicated on a critique of the degree of fetishization, objectification and negative figuration which are so much a feature of the representation of the black subject. There was a

concern not simply with the absence or marginality of the black experience but with its simplification and its stereotypical character. (253)

A positive self-representation, iterates Hall, would work as a strategy to contest the subjectively objectified nature of representation by the native 'others' and would contribute towards transforming what he calls the "relations of representation" in the discursive space. (253) Thus, he assigns a constitutive and formative role to representation, rather than a merely reflexive one. Adding to this in his article "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" (1990), he dwells on how the "practices of representation always implicate the positions from which we speak or write—the positions of enunciation" (222). He brings out the notion that though we speak about ourselves in our own idiom, yet there is always a gap between the one who is speaking or writing and the subject who is written about. They are, according to him, "never identical, never exactly in the same place" (222). He refers to these as locations of intonation, the tone which we choose to express in.

In the Chapter 4 of his book *Representation*, which is titled "The Spectacle of the 'other'", Stuart Hall uses commercial advertisements, magazine illustrations, and even novels and movies to highlight the process of stereotyping of the blacks. He explains the difference between 'type' and 'stereotype'. Type, according to him, is how we make sense of diverse groups in terms of the roles performed by them and we assign them membership of different categories (personality types) by positioning them in various orders of typification. Stereotyping, on the other hand, is the process of reducing everything about the individual to those characteristics, popularizing and magnifying those and "fix them without change or development to eternity" (258). Fanon (1963) calls the same procedure fixing with a dye, in the context of Africans. So stereotyping, "essentializes, naturalizes and fixes 'difference'" (258). The second aspect of stereotyping, that Hall emphasises is, that it segregates the standard and appropriate, from the unusual and inappropriate and then "*excludes* or *expels* everything which does not fit, which is different" (258) thus symbolically fixing the limits and marginalizing or inferiorizing everything that does not conform. The third facet of the process brought forth by him is that stereotyping is facilitated by inequities of power and is usually targeted against the supposedly lower-ranking or

the dominated sections. He quotes Julia Kristeva who uses the word ‘abjected’ meaning ‘thrown out’ for them and Derrida who points out the “violent hierarchy” always prevalent in “binary oppositions” (266). He also cites the example of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* and says, “Orientalism was the discourse by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively” (267).

In the context of the cross-cultural encounters between the Sikhs and the British, the representation from the Western perspective was done majorly during the colonial times, when the visitors were making attempts to comprehend the local culture and various religions of their empire. As detailed in Chapter 1, the Western historians such as Major James Browne, George Foster, John Malcolm, Henry T. Prinsep, W.L. McGregor, Joseph Davey Cunningham and Lepal Griffin wrote copious accounts of the exploits of the Sikhs and contributed generously towards constructing, projecting and encouraging the development of a particular aspect of the Sikh identity which suited their own interests. Especially after the Anglo-Sikh wars, the martial-race theory was created, popularized and as Hall (2003) says ‘fixed till eternity’ about the Sikhs. It was exploited by the colonial rulers to their optimum advantage. Other notions, such as Sikhs being irrational, aggressive, impulsive and the Sikh religion being ridden with rituals, caste divisions and superstitions were expressed by Western historians who focused specifically on the study of religion such as W.H. McLeod, Roger Ballard and Ernest Trumpp. Ballard, for instance in his essay “*Panth, Kismet, Dharm te Qaum: Continuity and Change in four Dimensions of Punjabi Religion*”, included in the book *Punjabi Identity in a Global Context* (1999) quotes from Mark Juergensmeyer's work and elucidates the distinction which he makes between the *panthic*, *dharmic* and *qaumic* dimensions of religion. Ballard explains that the spiritual dimension of religious ideas and practice could be termed *panthic*, the this-worldly moral and/or social dimensions can be covered by the term *dharmic*, while the capability of the religious concepts and its affiliations to bring about ethno-political mobilization, can be named the *qaumic* dimension, which is more or less close to the original understanding of these terms. However, it is the fourth dimension added by Ballard to Juergensmeyer’s categories that turns out to be problematic. He calls it the *kismet* dimension and includes the superstitious aspects such as ‘*nazar*’ (evil eye), *jadu* (magic), *tuna* (black magic) etc. as part of the Sikh belief system. It is

such erroneous interpretations that lead to stereotyping and are detrimental to the faith. There is no evidence of these ‘*tantrik*’ concepts being valued in Sikhism. In fact, it was initiated to bring people out of these misconceptions, though it will have to be admitted that some Sikhs, especially women, under the influence of the remnants of ancient Brahmanical or Muslim systems, have still not been able to remove these fully, as represented in the literary texts by the successive generation writers, discussed in this research.

John Malcolm was among the few who explored genuine Sikh resources, gathered authentic information, and gave a more balanced and sympathetic account of Sikh religion and its history in his *Sketch of the Sikhs* (1812). However, the most accurate explanation of Sikhism by a Westerner came from Max Arthur Macauliffe in 1908 in his translation of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Such accounts by the Westerners provide a valuable and balanced outsider perspective on Sikhism. A detailed analysis of the views expressed by various Western historians on Sikhism is available in Darshan Singh’s *Western Perspective on the Sikh Religion* (1991). The stereotypes were thus created and perpetuated, since the colonial times and have become an indelible part of the racial memory of the erstwhile colonisers as well as been internalized and imbibed by the Sikhs themselves.

As far as representation of the Sikh diaspora in Britain in the present times, that is in the 21st century is concerned, there are factual accounts based on research by scholars such as Verne A. Dusenbery, N. Gerald Barrier, Eleanor Nesbitt, Knut A. Jacobsen and Kristina Myrvold, the last two primarily focusing on the Sikhs in Europe. But in the literary field, especially among fiction and prose writings, there is hardly any example of Sikh characters being delineated by any native English writer. Thus, for representation of the Sikh diaspora in literature and to understand the variation in their perspective on religion and its transmission, it was necessary to turn to the writings by the Sikh writers themselves. As seen from the selected texts, writings by different generations were picked up, to observe the comprehension of the Sikh religion and changes in the attitudes towards it, with the transition from one generation to the other.

This self-representation, according to Stuart Hall, can be an effective strategy to contest the existing stereotypical and fetishized representation by the others and work

towards transforming the “regime of representation” (2003), to use his words. However, in the context of writings by the Sikh diaspora in Britain, the observations have been quite contrary to this concept. The representation of the Sikhs and Sikhism by writers belonging to different generations of diaspora, has been more a corroboration of those stereotypical notions than a counterstatement to those.

As elaborated in Chapter 4 which deals with the writings of the first generation migrants, the representation of the Sikh characters and their perspective towards religion in their works, is more an endorsement of the established stereotypes about the Sikhs and the erroneous understanding of the religious precepts of Sikhism. Among the selected texts, Harjit Atwal’s novels are thankfully written in the native tongue Punjabi and are not accessible to the ‘others’ in Britain, unless they are translated. In his novel *Southall* for instance, the Sikh men are depicted as very hardworking and shrewd, with tremendous entrepreneurial skills and sharp business acumen, but at the same time they are shown to be alcoholics, womanizers, corrupt and frequently resorting to violence. Their gross misinterpretation of Sikh religion is evident in the sharp caste divides that still blight the community, despite having moved to Britain and are visible in the form of separate caste-specific Gurdwaras. Honour killings and honour-related abuse of youngsters, which form the central theme of this novel and carry on into its sequel *British Born Desi*, are glaring examples of Sikhism and its original tenets, being totally misconstrued or ignored by the earlier generations of migrants. Rather than making efforts towards understanding the foundational concepts of the tolerant religion themselves, and genuinely transmitting those to their progeny to facilitate their adaptation into their alienated birthplace, they employ an orthodox and inflexible interpretation of it to control them and prevent their perceptual migration into the Western culture. Their own religious perspective remains divided over the issue of diverse castes and their established hierarchy, within the Sikh community and the same is imposed in the name of religion, on the youngsters who wish to choose their marital partners from outside their respective caste, community or even race. The positive thing about Atwal’s novels however, is that some migrants of the first generation are shown to widen their mental horizons and reconcile to such developments, which are almost inevitable in the multicultural situation prevalent in Britain. Such an approach is more in keeping with the original

propositions of Sikhism. Otherwise, the stereotypes about Sikhs being aggressive and impulsive, and Sikh women being excessively superstitious, are strongly corroborated by the depiction of characters in the novels.

Sikh religion forms an environmental setting to the lives of various characters, though not playing a very significant role in their lives. It becomes more of a ritualistic dissembling for them. Their devotion is limited to just occasionally visiting the Gurdwara, participating in the processions taken out on *Gurpurabs*, joining the protest marches against the turban-ban or compulsory helmet wearing etc. and bequeathing a very superficial understanding of the religious notions, that focuses on its caste-ridden and ceremonial aspects, to their successive generations. The Gurdwaras, which are segregated on the basis of specific castes, are depicted as seats of political rivalry and a means to earn recognition in the local political scenario for personal benefits. Disputes among various factions over the funds generated in the Gurdwaras are portrayed as regular features. The elders in the novels are themselves given to smoking and alcoholism, leading debauched lives of extra-marital relations resulting in illegitimate children, have strained and broken marriages, but are trying to use religion and cultural conventions as a defence to take charge of the lives of their children making the novel a critique of patriarchy. This is also their way of proving their allegiance to their respective castes within the community, which is probably sociologically strengthening in a foreign land and economically rewarding in the highly competitive scenario of limited employment. On failing to do that, they take recourse to extreme violence. Ultimately, the characters who indulged in or attempted honour-killings in the novels are shown to lead regretful lives of repentance. The writings conclude on an optimistic note advocating acceptance of circumstances, and consequent change in attitude and religious perception, for the proper transmission and sustenance of Sikh religion among the young diaspora Sikhs.

Among the writings by the first generation migrants, the autobiography of Kailash Puri, which she wrote in collaboration with Eleanor Nesbitt stands out for her comparatively better appreciation of religious concepts. She preferred to write it in English, despite having been a writer in Punjabi all her life and that is an indication of her inner tranquility and plain-sailing assimilation into the adopted culture of a foreign land. The title *Pool of Life* reflects the notion of *Bhavjal* or the world being

compared to a sea that has to be navigated through, from Sikh *Gurbani*. It is her story that can be counted in the category of representation that Stuart Hall recommends, as it does shatter some of the stereotypes about Sikh men and women. Her life is not a smoothly navigated voyage, but she faces the tempests strappingly and gives the credit for that to her abiding faith which had been instilled in her right from childhood by her religiously oriented and devout family.

Since her story is not the stereotypical trauma narrative that is usually expected from Asian women, it does become a sort of counter-narrative to the dominant discourse about Sikh women in particular. Being well-anchored in her faith, she is at home wherever she goes and adapts effortlessly. Despite not being educated beyond class 5 and being married to a complete stranger at the tender age of fifteen, with her husband's encouragement she goes on to become not only a self-assured and popular author but also finds herself capable of offering advice liberally to others in their personal matters as an 'agony aunt'. She understands what it means to be a Sikh, the literal meaning of which is a 'learner throughout life', and continues to learn languages, home-keeping, gardening, cooking and various other skills and even goes on to teach those to other learners. She is well-steeped in the religious values and implements those as a way of her life, though her thinking too, is not completely rid of superstitions. She takes, the 'Word' form of Guru that is the *Guru Granth Sahib* along, to all her abodes and seeks guidance from it constantly. Differences with her children and arguments about their Westernized attitude rattle her life too, but she is able to give them a patient and understanding hearing, becoming the kind of parent that Sikh *gurbani* recommends. Her children, in due course beginning to comprehend and assimilate the religious concepts elucidated by her, lead their lives according to those and go on to become academic achievers with stable relationships. She is broad-minded enough to be cognizant of the fact that cultural inheritance or religious precepts cannot be simply imposed on the Sikh youngsters born and brought up in the multiethnic and liberal atmosphere of Britain. She advises parents to catch them early and tolerantly inculcate in them, respect for and a clearer understanding of their religion.

Chapter 5 was a critical engagement with the conflictedness of identity experienced by the writers of the successive generations, their perspectives on their parents' interpretation of religion and their representation of those in their writings. As

mentioned earlier, Ashis Nandy (2009) in his essay “The Psychology of Colonialism” cites how under the influence of the Western psychology, which preferred hyper-masculinity and competitiveness to feminism and innocence, certain elitist Indian writers had internalized the Western values and had sought to redefine the Indian culture and mythology to suit those values, psychologically becoming what the colonisers wanted them to become. Something analogous to this is evident in the writings by the younger British-born writers of the Sikh diaspora in Britain. These are youth in their thirties, who in the absence of a proper and intelligible initiation into their religion and its foundational concepts at the right age, have under the influence of their liberal and ostensibly more rational Western education, come to perceive their own religion (or at least their parents’ interpretation of it) and religious practices with undue skepticism and sometimes disparagement.

Unlike the writers from the first generation, who found writing in their native tongue Punjabi, cathartic, these younger authors have chosen to express themselves in English, the language of their birthplace. Hall writes in the Introduction to his book *Representaion*, “language is central to meaning and culture and has always been regarded as the key repository of cultural values and meanings” (1). By selecting to express themselves in English, these Sikh writers indicate a shift in the values and meanings, and reveal the gaze through which their own religion and culture are going to be viewed. A self-representation from this perspective is more likely to reiterate the dominant discourse and its stereotypes, rather than disrupting or countering it. The restrictive and coercive attitude of the parents, influences them negatively and in extreme cases has violent outcome in the form of honour-related abuse and killings, a fact revealed in most of the writings.

Jasvinder Sanghera’s trilogy of memoirs for instance is a typical example of trauma-narratives, that narrates the horrendous experiences that she herself suffered and heard from other victims of similar abuse, who took help from the NGO Karma Nirvana that she started after her sister’s death due to a forced marriage. Being the boldest out of her seven siblings, who had been dominantly controlled by her authoritative and rigid mother, who with her gender bias was especially stringent with her daughters, Jasvinder refused to accept her directions about her marriage. She preferred to elope with a Sikh *Chamar* boy instead, who again was not approved of, by her conservative *Jat* Sikh family which is considered higher in the orthodox caste-hierarchy of Sikh

castes, but has no significance as per the dictates of original Sikhism, a religion initiated as a way of life contrary to such practices in other religions. Her father had been busy earning his living and religion did not have much consequence in his life. The mother on the other hand was outwardly very religious, but was bogged down by a complete misunderstanding of the Sikh religion. Prone to superstitions and baseless rituals, she used her position as a mother to impose her notions on her children and steer their lives accordingly. This self-representation which reeks of rebellion against and absolute disapproval of the ideas of the parent generation, thus ends up reinforcing the stereotypes about Sikhs being superstitious, inclined towards ritualistic worship, and caste-divisions and *izzat* (family honour) still being given a prominent place in their philosophy. The older generation, which is keen on preserving and disseminating its religious and cultural inheritance, is doing more disservice to the cause, as in the long run it drives the successive generations away with its inflexibility of religious concepts.

Avtar Brah (2005) iterates that a “homing desire” is a natural corollary to migration and deterritorialization. The youngsters for whom their parents’ adopted country is the homeland, desperately yearn for a home in that alien environment. As explained in Chapter 5, these youngsters are sufferers of a triple alienation. Outside their homes, they face the racially hierarchized marginalization at the hands of the natives who have mindsets riveted with colonial stereotypes. At their parents’ distant homeland, that some of them have never even visited, they are always accorded the status of foreigners and are not able to feel at home. The third and no less significant facet of their psychological and emotional isolation comes from their real homes, which should have been their safe harbors, but which rather become the most ‘*unheimlich*’ places for them, due to the obdurate attitude of their parents who continue to live in the past carrying the baggage of colonial memories and impose their interpretation of the cultural and religious inheritance on the succeeding generations with the objective of preserving it and guarding their progeny against the extraneous influences of the multicultural scenario, including its Westernized education. Such an approach to religion and its forced exaction in this manner cannot be farther from the precepts of Sikhism, which advocate tolerance and a broad-minded acceptance on the part of parents who should first understand the basic premises of religion themselves and then, gently guide their children on to that path.

In the memoirs and the fictional world of the other Sanghera, that is Satnam Sanghera too, the impression created about the first generation migrants or his parents remains one that substantiates the stereotypes of superstitiousness, irrationality, Sikh women being self-sacrificing, and highlights the gap between precepts and practice in Sikh religion. He contemplates them and in case of the fictional account titled *Marriage Material* etches them with the rational and liberal Westernized gaze, typical of his birthplace and its education. As a youngster belonging to that British-born confused generation with fragmented selves and fluid identities, he genuinely narrates that dilemma experienced by the Sikh youth when they cannot decide as to where they actually belong. They initially consider themselves British and attempt to assimilate with complete external transformation but realize that however much they wish to, they will never be truly accepted by the natives despite their grand promises of multiculturalism. With a keen urge to belong and appreciate their own culture, to be cognizant of their roots, they look towards the preceding generations for direction. But having moved away from their homeland nearly centuries ago, the parent generation has carried only a frozen version of culture (Du Bois, qtd. by Gilroy, 1993) and offer a merely ritualistic observance of religion to be transmitted to the successive generations. Being completely put off by the parents' relentless and restrictive version of religion which they find illogical, the youngsters are more likely to adopt a rebellious and reproachful attitude towards it.

Maintaining the '*kes*' (unshorn hair) for instance is one of the intractable dictates of Sikhism for maintaining the *Khalsa* form initiated by the tenth Guru. Nicola Mooney says in her article "The Impossible Hybridity of Hair: Kesh, Gender and the Third Space" (2016) that keeping the hair long is an aspect of Sikh identity in which there is no scope for hybridity. It will not be acceptable to the Sikh *Rehatnama* (Code of Conduct) under any circumstances and the ones who do not abide by this code, shall not be included among the Sikhs. Among the diaspora Sikh youngsters, as gathered from the memoirs, getting their hair cut is a liberating act of defiance against the stringent rules about their behaviour in general and Sikh religion in particular, enforced by their parents. That kind of control cannot be sustained by the parents beyond the children's teenage. Whereas Jasvinder Sanghera does it only for pleasure and with the motive of assimilating with her White friends, Satnam Sanghera cites several reasons such as being ridiculed by his friends for his topknot, his freedom

being curtailed as he was dependent on his mother for tying his hair, along with no logical explanation being given to him for keeping it long. The parents need to be cognizant of the fact that they had themselves chosen to move to a foreign culture, where the appearance of Sikh children, especially boys, will make them stand out in a crowd and exacerbate the racial alienation that they had to inevitably face there. It is imperative therefore that the issue is dealt with, with utmost patience and the significance of this religious practice is elucidated to them from as early an age as possible. Any deviance in the matter too, needs to be viewed empathetically. An oft quoted line, which though has not been uttered by any of the Sikh Gurus, yet when understood in the context of *Gurbani* is relevant here. “*Rehat Pyari Mujhko Sikh Pyara Nahi* (Sikh philosophy) which, when translated means what is within, is more important than what is on the outside. It is more important to inculcate the right virtues recommended by Sikh religion, than to just assume the outer form of a Sikh. Rather than just compelling the Sikh children to adhere to the prescriptions of religion, the parents need to initiate them into its basic postulates, familiarize them with its process of creation, its past evolution, its struggles and challenges. It is indispensable that the schism between the Western liberal values with their emphasis on individual satisfaction and the Eastern notions of community based on *dharma* and *sewa*, be elucidated to them. Just shepherding them to the *Gurdwara*, playing the Sikh prayers around the home and compulsorily sending them to Punjabi classes, which most of the parents seem to be religiously doing, is not enough. The religion which is originally liberal and accommodating in its basic tenor, can be reinvented and contemporized, in keeping with the changed circumstances, especially for the diaspora Sikhs, just as Ziauddin Sardar recommends for Islam in the Introduction to *The Britannica Guide to The Islamic World: Religion, History and the Future*.

6.10 True Sikh Stream of Life, Drying up in the Diasporic Desert

The genuine Sikh *panth* or way of life then, has been gravely misinterpreted and fallaciously transmitted by majority of the parent generation of migrants to the youngsters born and brought up in Britain. The impression created on the minds of these vulnerable and disgruntled youth, especially girls, is that of Sikhism being a very restrictive, stringent and orthodox religion which is still ridden with caste distinctions and meaningless rituals, and in which *izzat* or honour is valued above, even life. Another misconstrued aspect of Sikh identity which has become an

indelible part of the Sikh psyche and has been adopted by many youngsters, especially males, is the notion of Sikhs being an inherently martial race. These youth don a perpetually aggressive demeanor and consider it their foremost duty to resort to violently remedying any injustice happening around them, turning into self-styled henchmen and custodians of religion. Characters such as Ranjit in *Marriage Material*, Pala Singh in *Southall* and Hardjit in *Londonstani* illustrate this very category. The Sikh writers from the British-born generation, whose works were selected for this research, have represented and critiqued Sikhism for this very erroneous interpretation and have reinforced the stereotypes about Sikhs, created since colonial times.

It is such Sikhs with belligerent and radicalized mindsets who usually take to the fundamentalist path and have been demanding a limited territorial space for the Sikhs in the form of PunjabiSuba/ Khalistan and were believed to be misguidedly instrumental in the violence-ridden phase of terrorism, which irreversibly damaged Punjab and the Sikhs' image in the world. In this context, I would agree with Verne A. Dusenbery (2008) who, in his article "A Sikh Diaspora? Contested Identities and Constructed Realities", citing Guru Nanak's travels to various parts of the world in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, emphasises the naturally expansive and universal nature of the messages of the founder of Sikhism, rendering it suitable to be a world religion:

The founder of Sikhism in effect circumambulates—and thus metonymically and metaphorically incorporates—the known world. The effect is intentionally outward looking and inclusionary. Far from delimiting a territorial boundary to the Sikh world, the Guru's travels suggest a boundless and boundaryless world of Sikh sacred space which carries itself into the very heart of Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim lands. (99)

Guru Nanak's message was inherently ubiquitous and could not be limited to the confines of any territorial boundaries. Thus, as brought out in Chapter 4 from Atwal's novel *Southall*, majority of the diaspora Sikhs disapproved of the idea of Khalistan. Despite being away from their natal background, they are never really distanced from their religion. This aspect of Sikhism, is very relevant from the point of view of the diaspora, as it is well-illustrated in *Gurbani* that any space can be lent sanctity by the

presence of the Guru, whose authority is now vested in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. “*Jithe jaaye bahe mera Satguru, so thaan suhava Ram raje*” Wherever my True Guru goes, that place is beautiful, O Lord King (my trans.; *SGGS Ang 450*). As pronounced by Guru Gobind Singh about the Sikh *Sangat*, wherever five Sikhs assemble in the presence of the Sacred scripture, the Eternal Guru shall grace the place. So, the rhetoric of a territorially specified Sikh space goes against this disposition of Sikh ethos.

In the eyes of the younger generation, religion has been reduced to a ‘hollow halo.’ This perspicacious, responsive and interactive next generation of Sikh diaspora needs to be conducted into the religion right from childhood and better acquainted with its emergence, conflicts, and advancement. They must be properly explained the importance of *Khalsa* in Sikhism. They must understand that a true and pure Sikh is not just someone who takes on the form of a *Khalsa* but along with that, lives up to the prescriptive virtues of the Sikh faith. When they recognize the right way to live, parents will not have to complain about their children marrying outside their caste, because they will be raising Sikhism to a higher level, permeating caste boundaries and creating more Sikhism enthusiasts and adherents around the world. Guru Nanak founded a revolutionary path in which he advocated the attainment of the *Sehaja avastha* (a state of equipoise), in which the individual is in harmony with the universe. It is a transcendental state which helps the individual rise above the various distinctions and hierarchies, through self-realization. Gurbhagat Singh, in his book *Sikhism and Postmodern Thought* (2016), compares this state to postmodernism as it is beyond the binary oppositions and posits the “necessity to organize social and cultural network in contra-distinction with the ways of the ruling class” (53). It was the original method of passive resistance, later practiced by Mahatama Gandhi during the struggle for India’s independence and appreciated by Ashis Nandy (2009), which he terms something that was difficult to comprehend for the invaders. Guru Nanak’s was a decolonizing vision that destroyed the subjugating power metaphors of the Mughal rulers, the Brahmanical Gods and their constructed social stratifications. Respect for basic human rights was a natural corollary of this method that created liberated individuals and envisaged the possibility of a new world-order or *weltanschauung*.

Atwal too, in his writings shows the virtues ensconced in Sikhism eventually winning, as the heroic father Sucha Singh, who killed his daughter, returns after the jail term and laments the devastation of his family and the father Paala Singh who contemplated murdering his daughter Maninder and disowning his sons Mohan and Amar for inter-caste marriages, in due course reconciling to the circumstances. The affirmative and encouraging observation that emerges from this research is the keenness displayed by the Sikh youth to fully grasp their religion and mould their lives according to its directions. Jasvinder Sanghera, for instance, in spite of the unspeakable treatment meted out to her by her parents and family ostensibly on the basis of religion, travels to India and visits the Golden Temple with the purpose of holding a discussion with a learned Sikh there to clarify her doubts about Sikh religion and its practices. Similarly, Satnam Sanghera, despite committing the sacrilegious act of getting his topknot which had been very painstakingly maintained by his mother during her very challenging circumstances, cut against the edicts of Sikhism, says that given a choice, he would always choose to adopt the same religion. The transition from his Westernized gaze towards his own past to a deeper understanding of his native culture is discernible in his subsequent work *Empireland* (2021) which is a book about how “imperialism has shaped modern Britain” (Book cover). It is a work that in fact corroborates the central point made by this research that the shared past has a significant bearing on the current inter-cultural relations between the English and the Sikhs in Britain. In the chapter “The Origins of our Racism”, Sanghera has very boldly criticized and openly blamed the British for the persistent racism, gazing at them as a descendant of colonialism, indicating a definite departure from his earlier perspective. In his support he quotes the Jamaican British poet Linton Kwesi Johnson who has said, “I’ll be crucified for saying this but I believe that racism is very much part of the cultural DNA of this country, and probably has been since imperial times” (138). Even in the survey conducted by me in Britain, the British-born respondents have revealed a deep desire to acquaint themselves better with the origins of the religion and its historical evolution for a better grasp over its basic tenets.

Alberto Melucci (1996) mentions altruistic action at the individual and community level as an example of consciously reattaching oneself to one’s roots. Such action in which the individuals willingly participate, is inspired by uninitiated or religious

inspiration and is an expression of allegiance with a particular community, according to him. In Sikhism, such deeds with philanthropic spirit are accorded a central status as *sewa* (selfless service) and the tradition of *langar* (common community kitchen), and have been an inseparable part of its original philosophy. It is very heartening to learn that young Sikhs have well imbibed this value of indiscriminate service towards society, as evidenced from the commendable ameliorative work done by Jasvinder Sanghera for the victims of honour-related abuse, or the Sikh youth actively contributing to the cause of organ-donation and other health issues during the testing times of COVID 19, as learnt from the British Sikh Report 2020. The characteristic intrepidity of the Sikh youth, both men and women is being better channelized by their augmented selection and ready enlistment into the British Army as seen in the BBC documentary *Remembrance: The Sikh Story* (2010). A good number of the members of the successive generations of Sikhs are thus faring well as far as engaging in the activities recommended by their religion is concerned. These will be effective in redeeming the religious dignity of the otherwise successful diaspora Sikhs in the multicultural scenario of Britain. True Sikhism however, would be better preserved and its teachings better transmitted if the youth are able to grapple with the meaning of its non-essentialized core that is liberal and latitudinarian and not restrictive in the least. They have to aspire to reach that state of equanimity which comes from having a firm anchor for stability. As *Gurbani* emphasises here, “*Kya padhiye, kya guniye, kya ved puranan suniye; padhe sune kya hoyi, je sehaj no milyo soi*, that acquisition of all knowledge and deliberations upon it, are futile if they do not naturally lead to inner peace” (my trans.; *SGGS Ang* 655).

Again, to conclude with late Albert Melucci’s observation that in the contemporary information societies, where the erstwhile individual dimensions such as the brain structure and biological development too are susceptible to manipulation and the basic meanings are vulnerable to interference and reconstruction, the real power lies in the hands of the agencies that have the capability to inform. Generating and disseminating the right information to counter the hegemonic palimpsest by the regimes of representation, thus becomes indispensable for any religious community. As early as 2007, Preminder Singh Sandhewalia, in his fictional book *Beyond Identity*, passionately searches for an idea to ensure that the true identity of the Sikhs continues to prevail. His characters are Sikhs who are doing exceptionally well in Britain

commercially, but they do not want to lose their history, culture, language and religion in the era of globalization, conformism and mass-culture. As a diasporic minority, they want to be accepted as equal players in the future world market-place. The protagonist Ranjit suggests a method of solving this quandary with the employment of the latest technology to create information repositories, websites and apps, where the seekers, desirous of in-depth knowledge about religion and clarification of any related skeptic queries, can have easy access to the answers. Learned scholars from all over the world need to be involved, to deliberate in detail upon the religious concepts with the Guru's word in the form of the sacred scripture being the final authority. Now in 2021, many such sites and apps already exist such as *Dhur Ki Bani*, *Sikhnet*, *Sikhiwiki*, *Amritsarovar.com* and many more which carry translations of *Gurbani* into other languages, elucidation of the lines in multiple languages, information about the Sikh history and the evolution of Sikhism. Such sources, if chosen discreetly (as there are several encouraging the fundamentalist and radical sentiments), can serve efficaciously not only to impart the correct information and preserve religion in its pristine form for the successive generations, but also to weave together the diverse threads of Sikhs spread all over the world into a single fabric, enveloping all distinctions of castes and forms. It is Sikhs enlightened by such authentic knowledge of Truth who will aspire for that state of equipoise known as '*sehaj*', will be able to rise above the distinctions in a postmodern and post-material way, and by impressing and inspiring others take Sikhism to the pinnacle of a world-religion.

The concluding chapter has thus, revisited the ideas and observations made in the preceding chapters, in the direction of crystallizing the notion of Sikh identity in terms of the processes of its negotiation by Sikhs of different generations and arrived at the point of how it is perceived and represented by the contemporary Sikh writers in Britain. The conclusions drawn on the basis of the exploration of the written texts, along with the real evidence gathered on the basis of relevant documentaries, the British Sikh Reports and the Questionnaire for the Sikh citizens of Britain is expository in nature and has revealed the diverse interpretations of various facets of the Sikh faith in particular, and the veracity of multiculturalism and its related policies in Britain in general. The current inclinations in Sikhism there and its level of assimilation into the other cultures through negotiation of challenges faced by the diaspora Sikhs, has been fathomed to a certain extent. The research has also offered

some suggestions towards a better integrated and firmly anchored Sikh *qaum*, steeped in the true philosophy of Sikhism, especially to the successive generations, which seem to be more in sync with the basic tenets of this liberal faith and are already working towards a sort of religious revival. This research was limited to the study of the Sikh migrants to Britain but offers several points of entry for future research in the areas of Sikhism in the other countries and could also be further extended to other races and ethnicities among diaspora.

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ANNEXURE I

QUESTIONNAIRE ON RELIGIOUS IDENTITY FOR THE SIKH RESPONDENTS OF BRITAIN

Link to the Questionnaire

<https://forms.gle/F32ztTsBCPseYEpRA>

Created by:

Ms. Sukhpreet Bhatia

Associate Professor

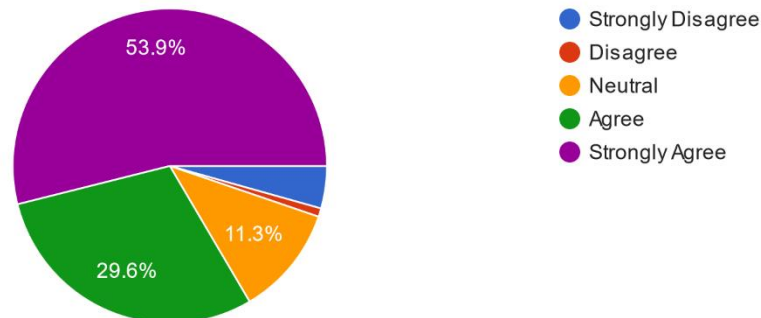
Postgraduate Department of English

Mehr Chand Mahajan DAV College

Chandigarh, India

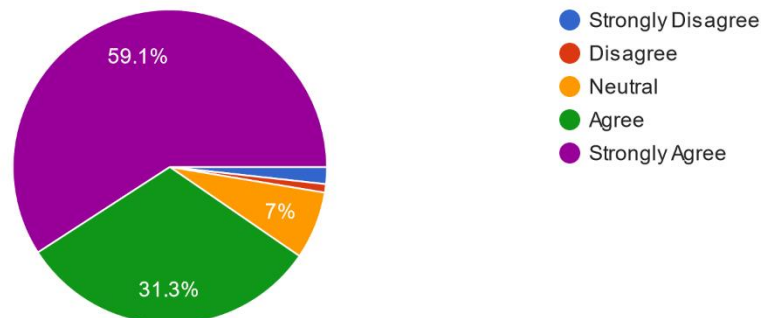
1. Religion holds a very important place in my life.

115 responses



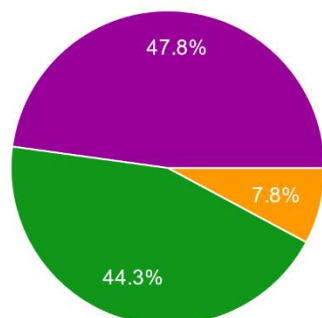
2. I take tremendous pride in being a person of the Sikh faith.

115 responses



3. This country allows me to freely practice my religion.

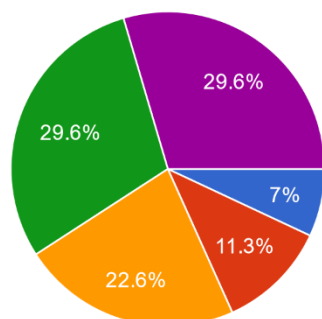
115 responses



- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

4. Maintaining the outer form of a Sikh, is essential to the understanding of the Sikh religion.

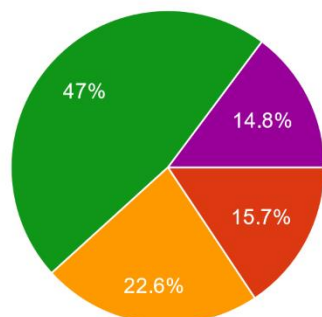
115 responses



- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

5. Belonging to the Sikh community, has helped me in my acculturation in the UK.

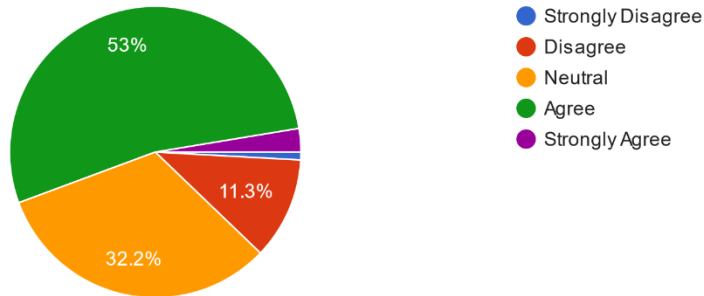
115 responses



- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

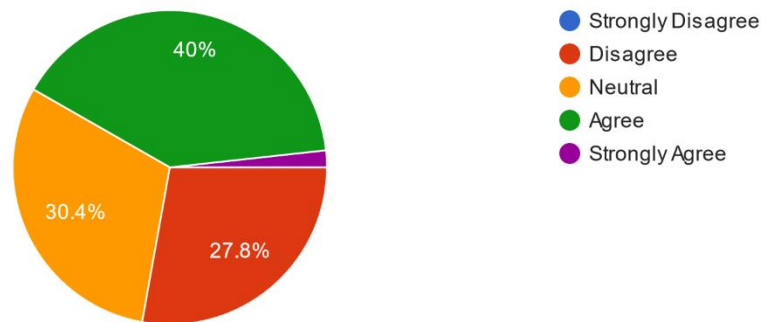
6. The historical cross-cultural encounters between the Sikhs and the British, both colonial and postcolonial, have a bearing on the contemporary relations between them in the UK.

115 responses



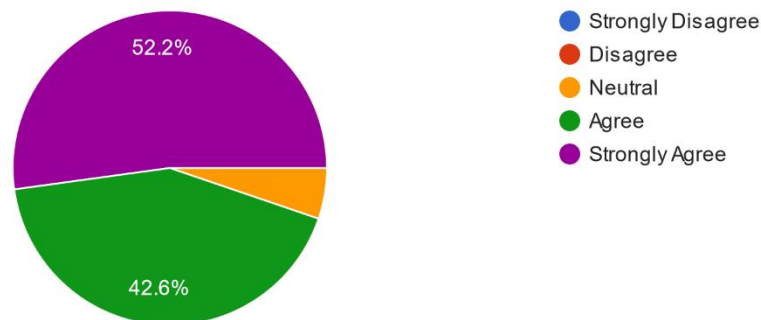
7. The shared past, influences the framing of current policies, for the migrants, in the UK.

115 responses



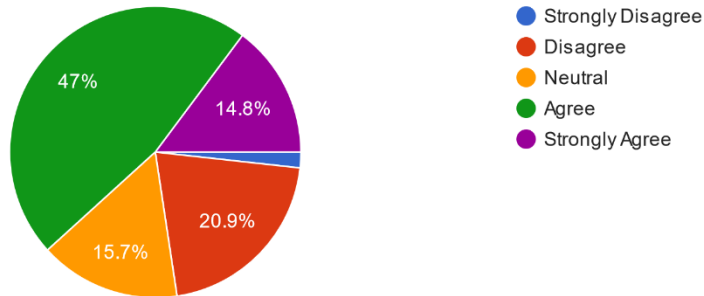
8. The glorious past of the Sikh community interests me.

115 responses



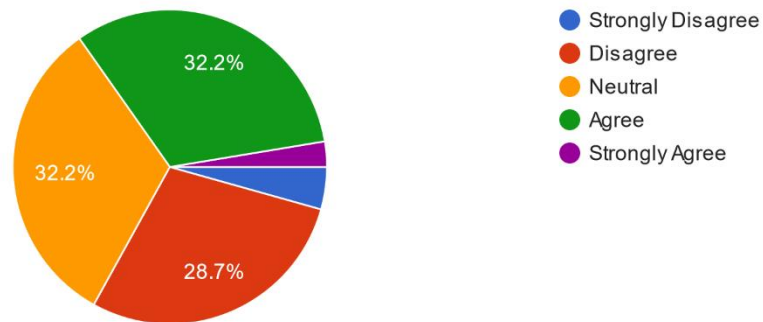
9. Enough sources are available, to familiarize the succeeding (British-born) generations of Sikhs, with their past.

115 responses



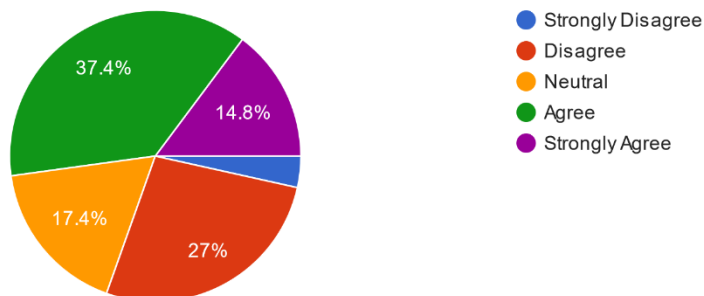
10. History accurately documents the past interactions between the Sikhs and the British.

115 responses



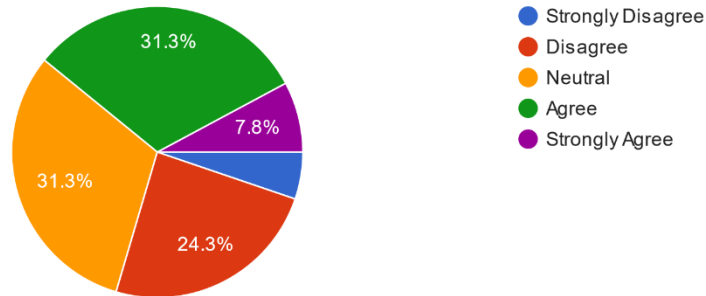
11. The significant contribution made by the Sikh soldiers for the British Army, to the two World Wars, is duly recognized and honoured by the UK authorities.

115 responses



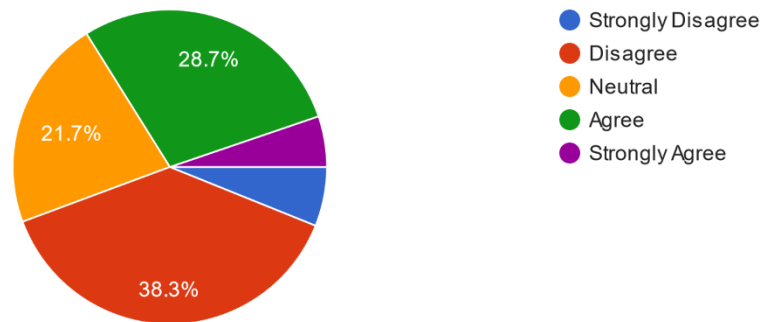
12. Maharaja Dalip Singh, the last emperor of the Sikh sovereign state, is a well-known hero among the present generations of Sikhs in the UK.

115 responses



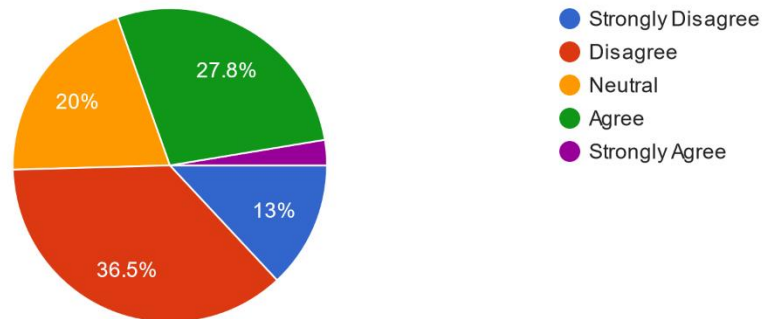
13. The Sikhs are appropriately represented in visual media and literature produced in the UK.

115 responses



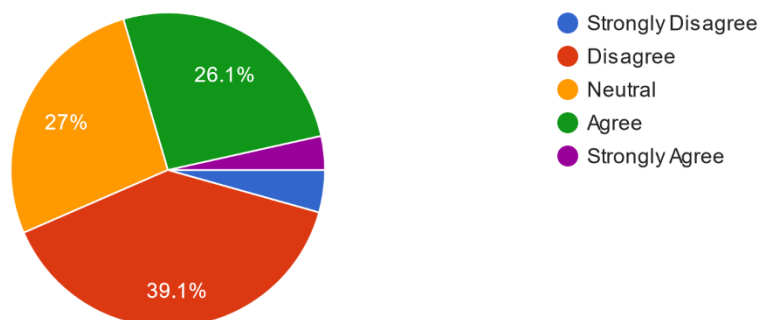
14. Being away from one's native country has a weakening effect on one's religion.

115 responses



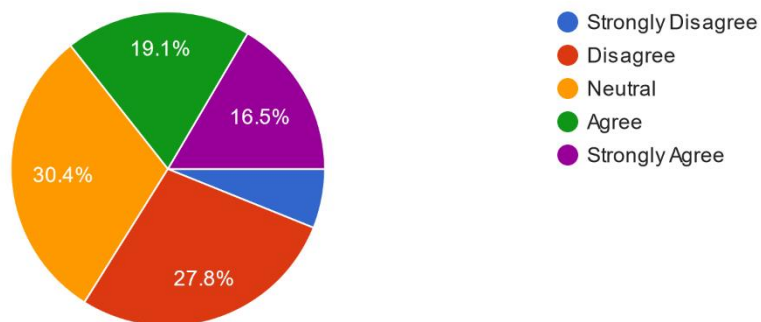
15. Following one's religion, in a foreign land, has been a challenge and struggle.

115 responses



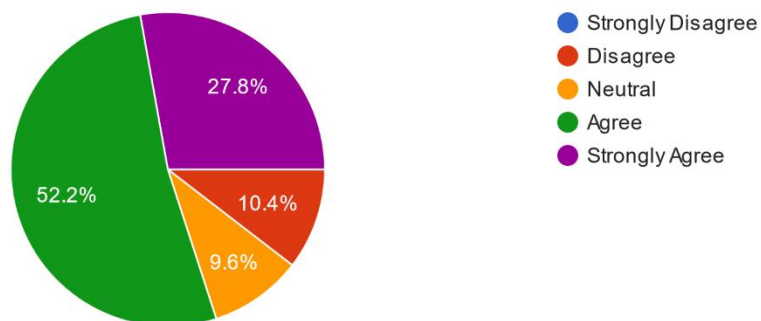
16. Visiting the Gurudwara is a part of my daily routine.

115 responses



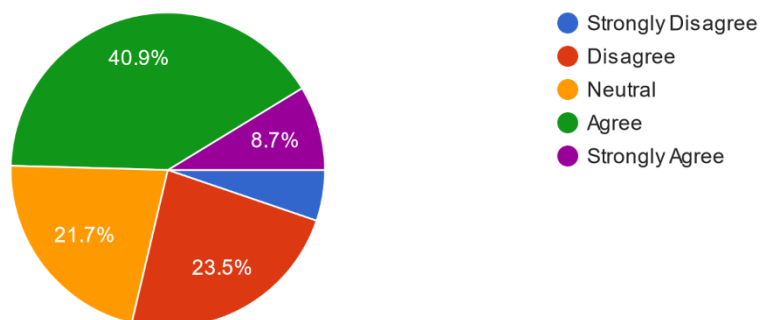
17. Gurudwaras are important places for developing community relations.

115 responses



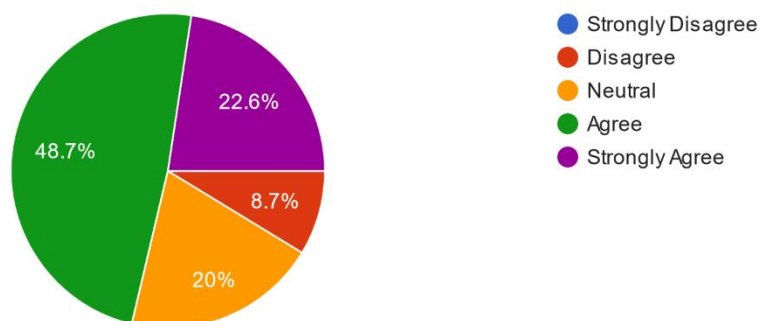
18. Sermons and lectures at the Gurudwara help me in forming a clear understanding of Sikhism.

115 responses



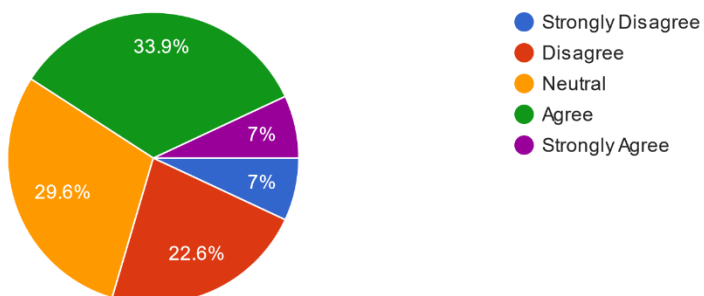
19. Sikh faith is understood to be a very liberal faith.

115 responses



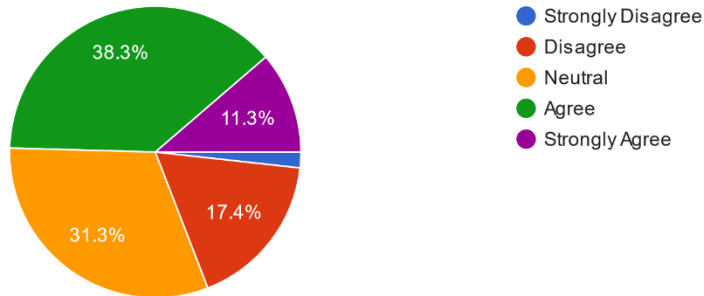
20. Matters pertaining to faith and related developments in India form a regular part of our everyday conversations.

115 responses



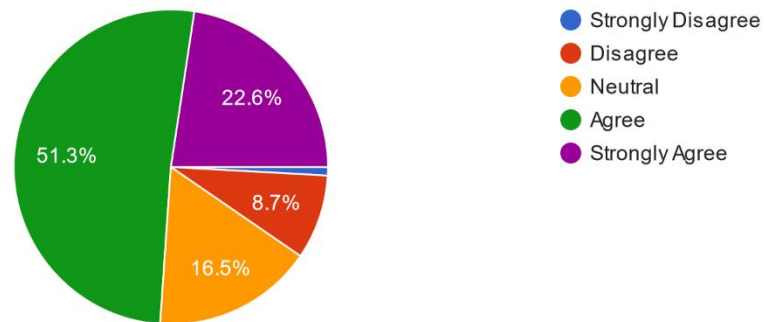
21. Positions of authority in the Gurudwaras are a means to building clout and serve as channels to political eminence.

115 responses



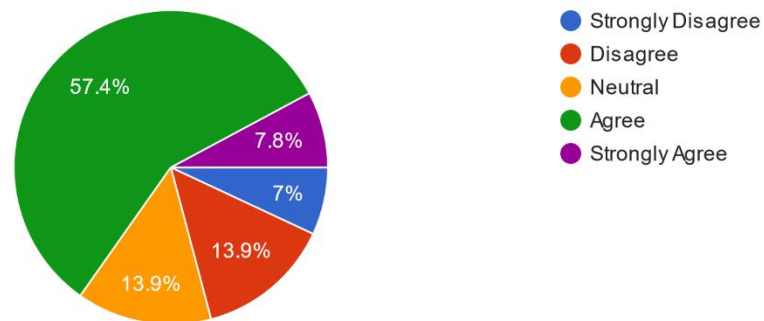
22. Funds generated in the Gurudwaras often lead to conflicts among various factions.

115 responses



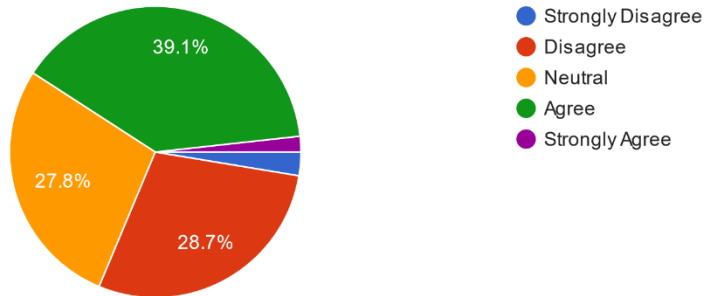
23. Caste distinctions are still an important element of the Sikh faith.

115 responses



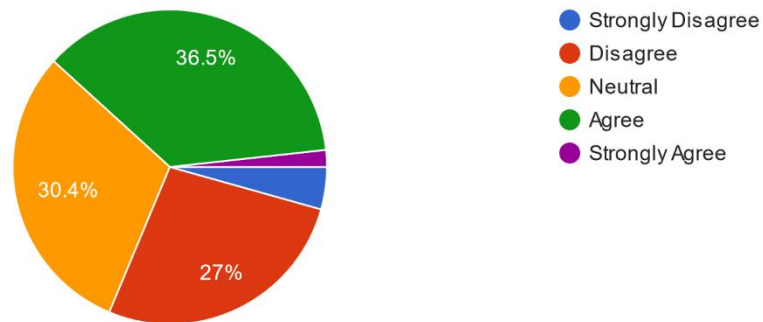
24. Marriages of the youth from Sikh families happen strictly according to the prescribed Sikh rituals.

115 responses



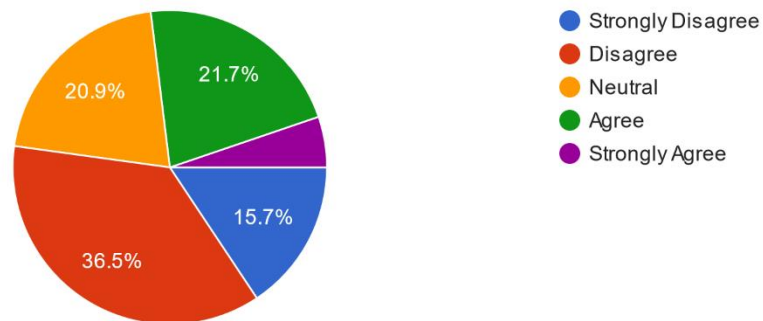
25. The elders in the family impose, their choice of religion of marital partners, on the youngsters.

115 responses



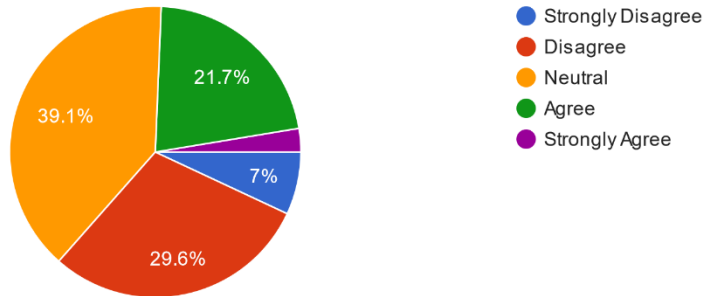
26. In marriage, partners belonging to India are preferred over foreigners from the UK.

115 responses



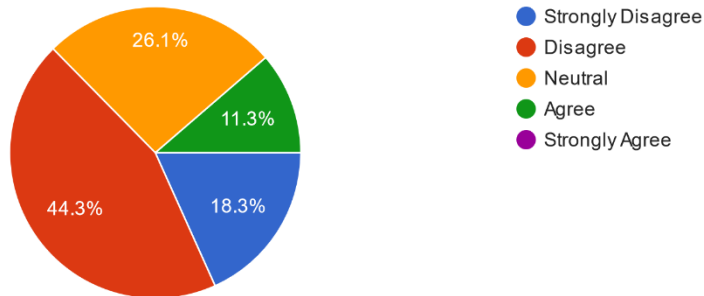
27. Inter-caste marriages, within different castes of the Sikh community, entail condemnation and exclusion.

115 responses



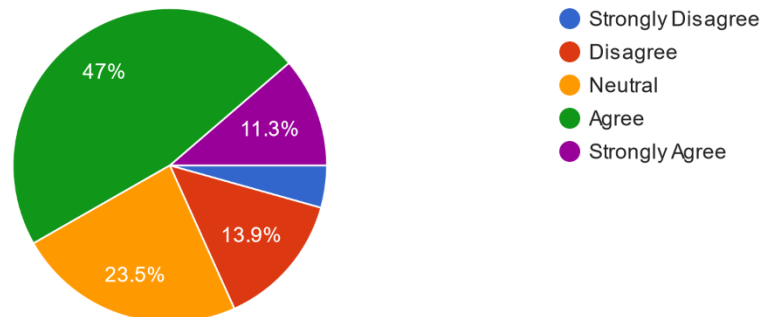
28. Even honour killings are taking place in the cases of Sikh youth marrying youth from other castes.

115 responses



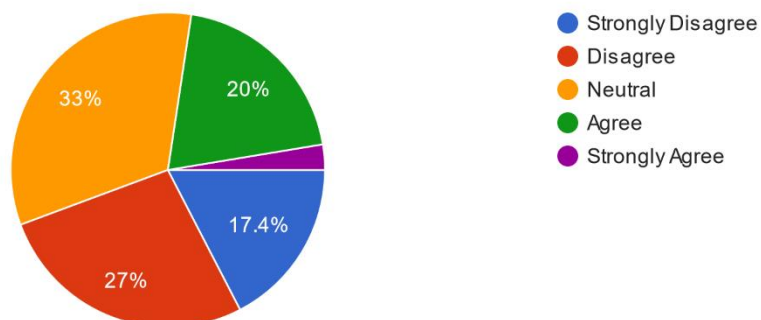
29. Adequate help is available, to victims of forced marriages, in case they rebel against those.

115 responses



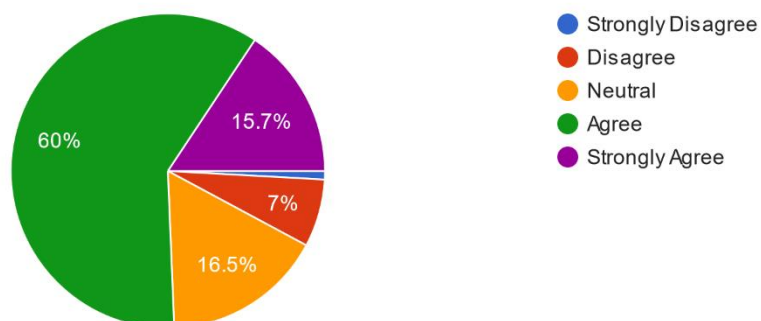
30. The State is taking adequate measures to promote the native tongue Punjabi.

115 responses



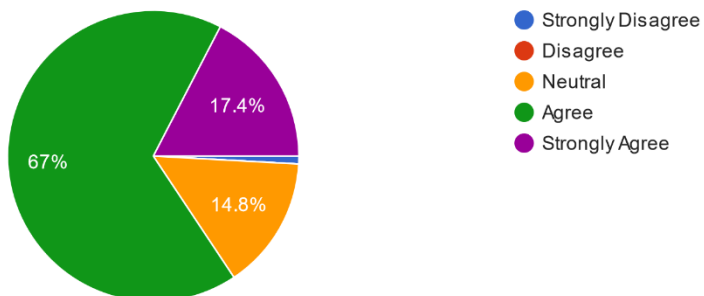
31. The youngsters are speaking a hybridized version of Punjabi.

115 responses



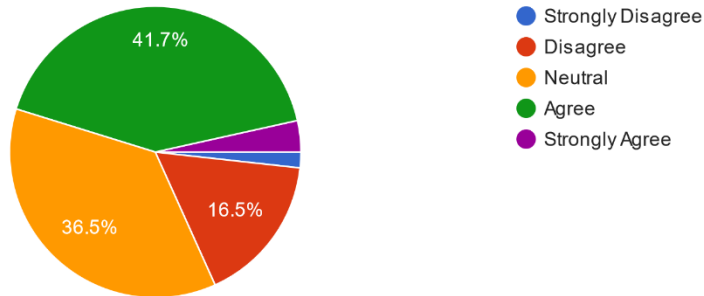
32. New forms of Bhangra and Punjabi music are examples of that hybridization and mixing-up of cultures.

115 responses



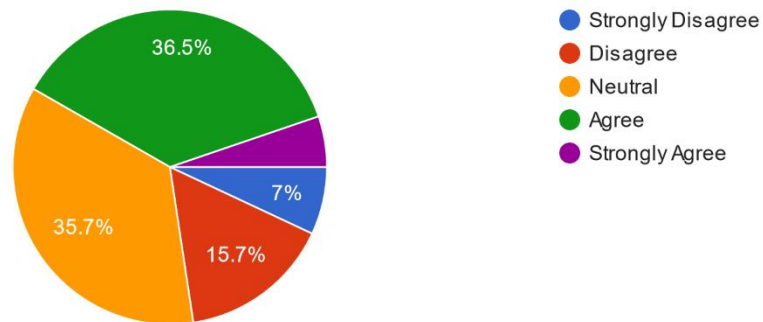
33. Other faiths and cultures prevalent in the UK have a major impact on the religious identities of the Sikh youth.

115 responses



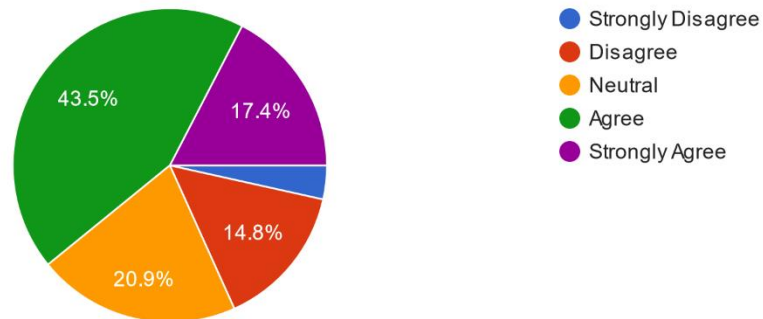
34. The multicultural policies of the Government of UK have been successful.

115 responses



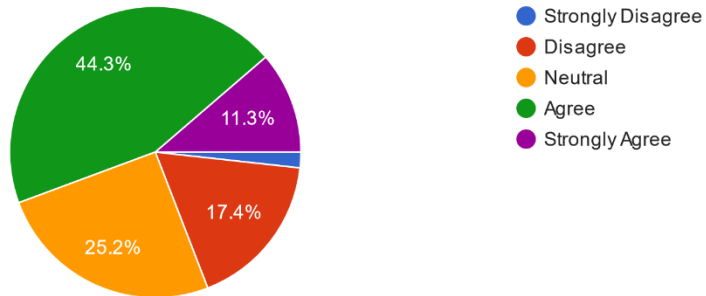
35. Sikhism was originally a multicultural religion.

115 responses



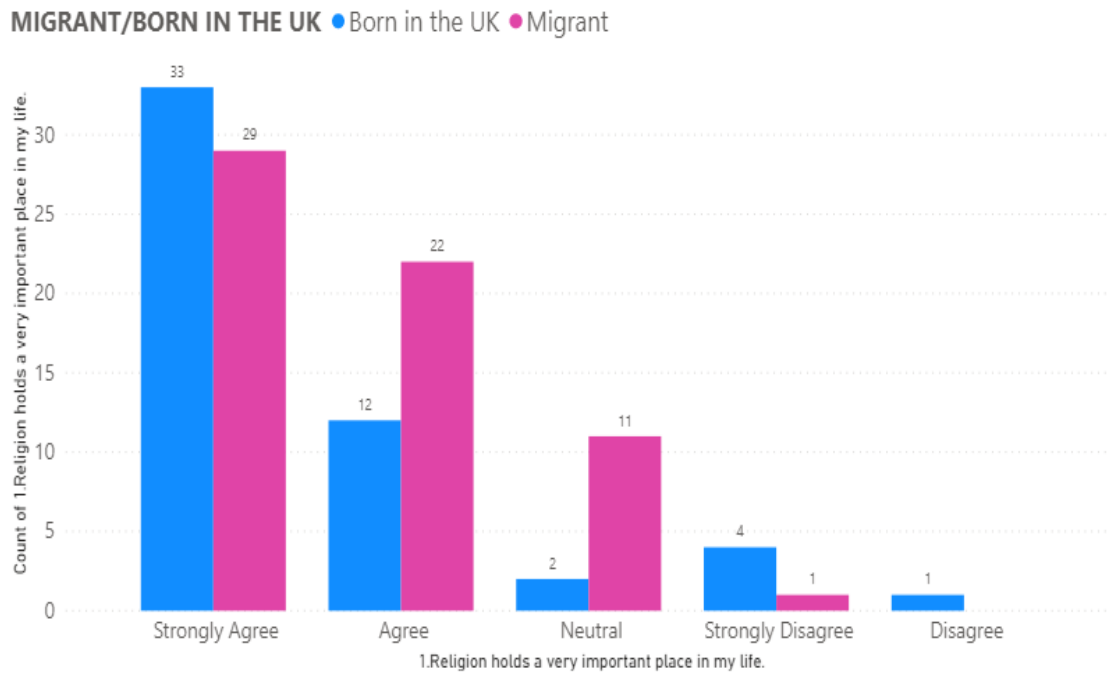
36. Sikhism is going to be well-preserved and truly adhered to by the future generations of Sikhs in the UK.

115 responses

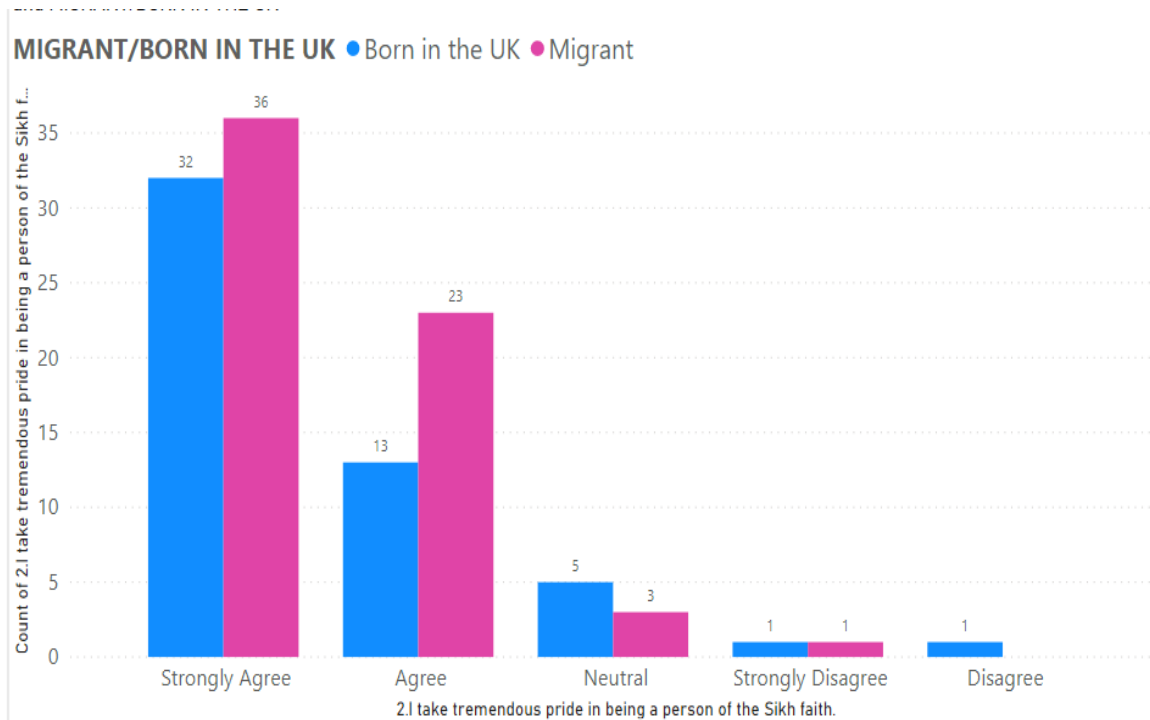


ANNEXURE II

Q.1 Religion holds a very important place in my life.

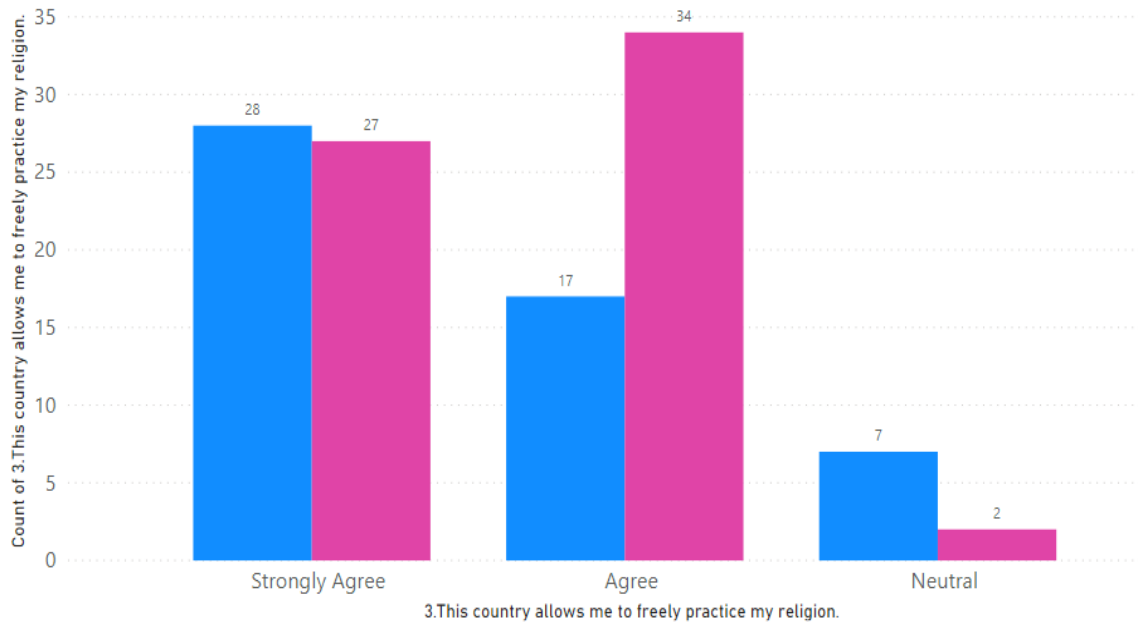


Q.2 I take tremendous pride in being a person of the Sikh faith.



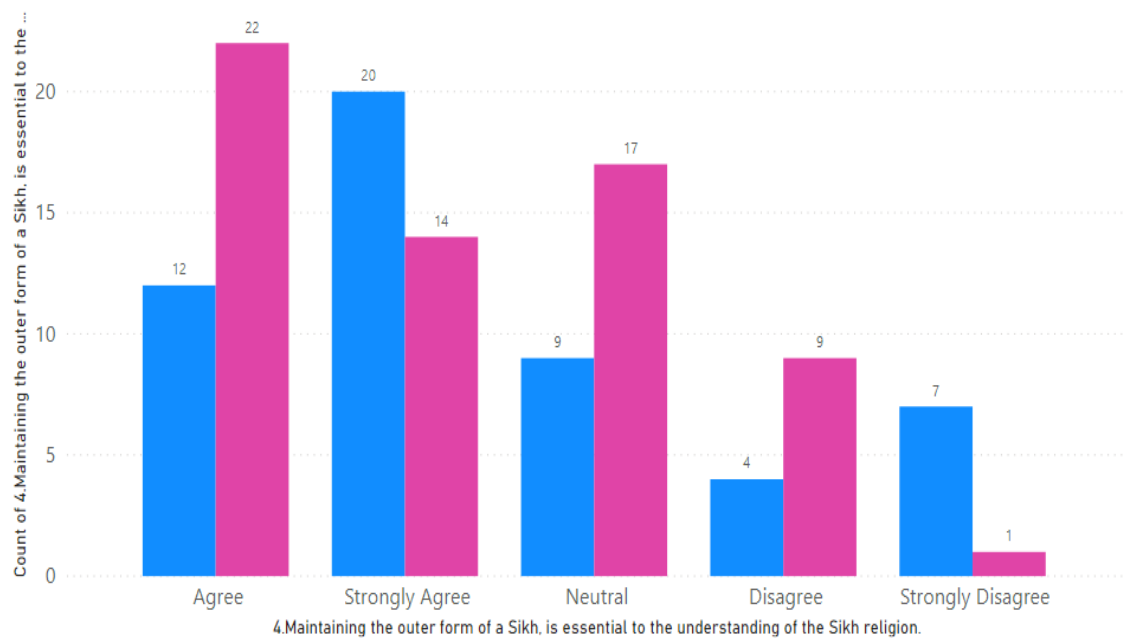
Q.3. This country allows me to freely practice my religion.

MIGRANT/BORN IN THE UK ● Born in the UK ● Migrant

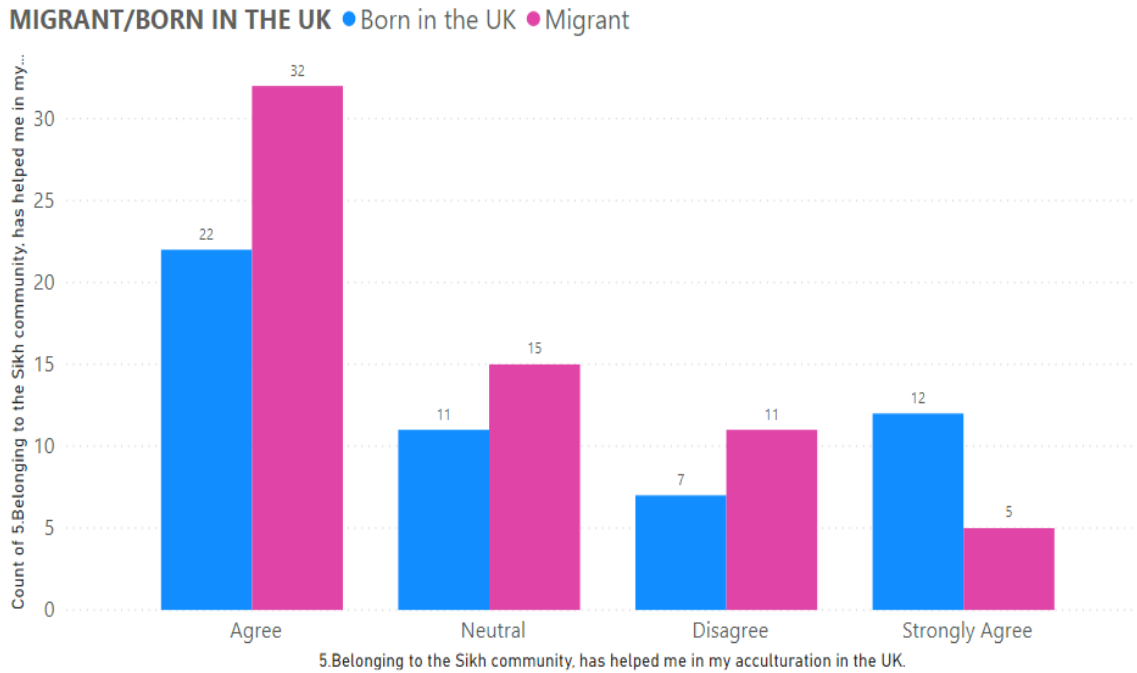


Q.4. Maintaining the outer form of a Sikh, is essential to the understanding of the Sikh religion.

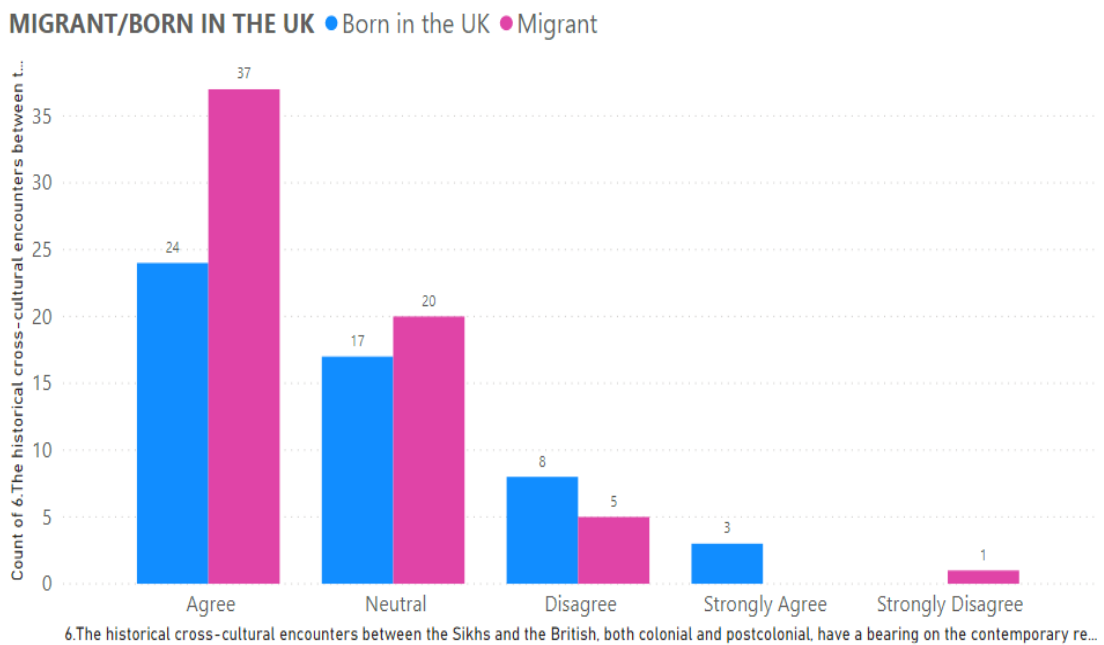
MIGRANT/BORN IN THE UK ● Born in the UK ● Migrant



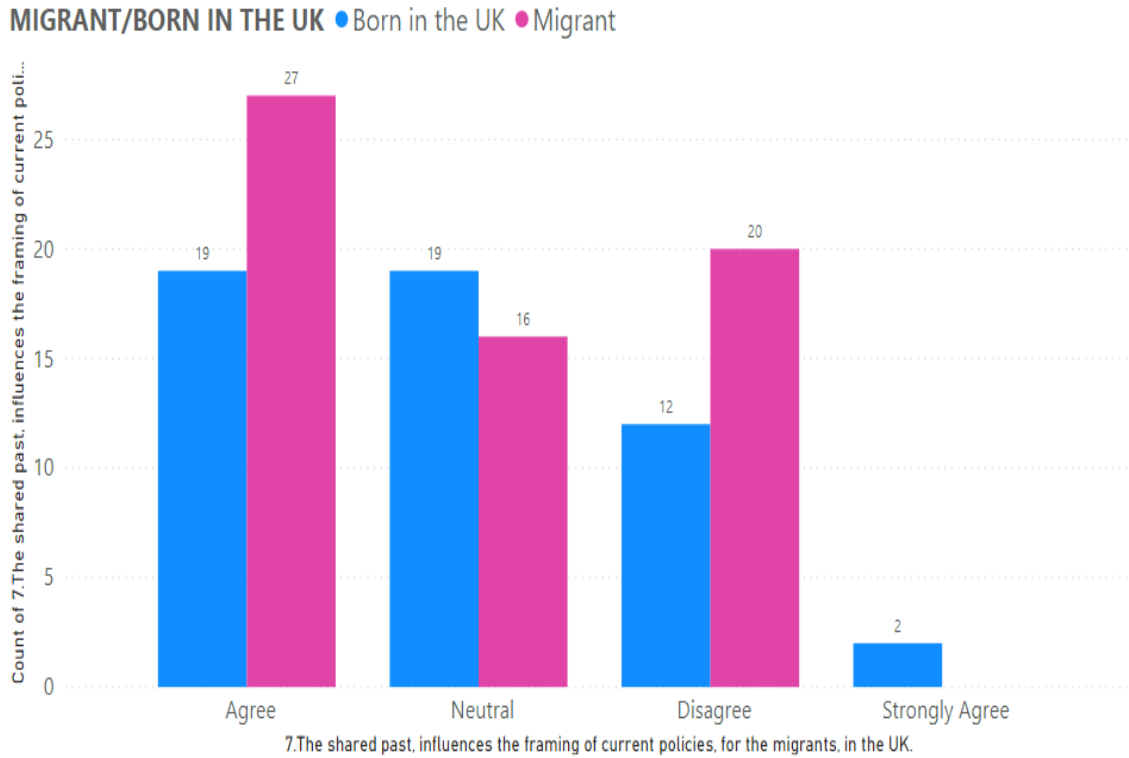
Q.5. Belonging to the Sikh community, has helped me in my acculturation in the UK.



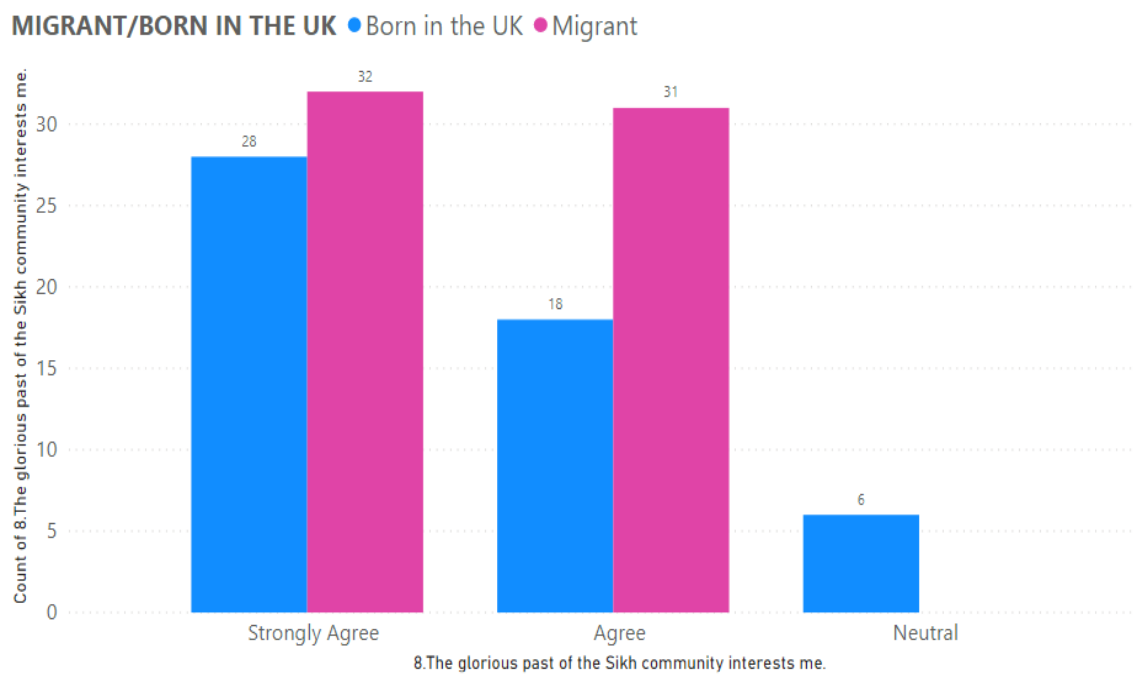
Q.6. The historical cross-cultural encounters between the Sikhs and the British, both colonial and postcolonial, have a bearing on the contemporary relations between them in the UK.



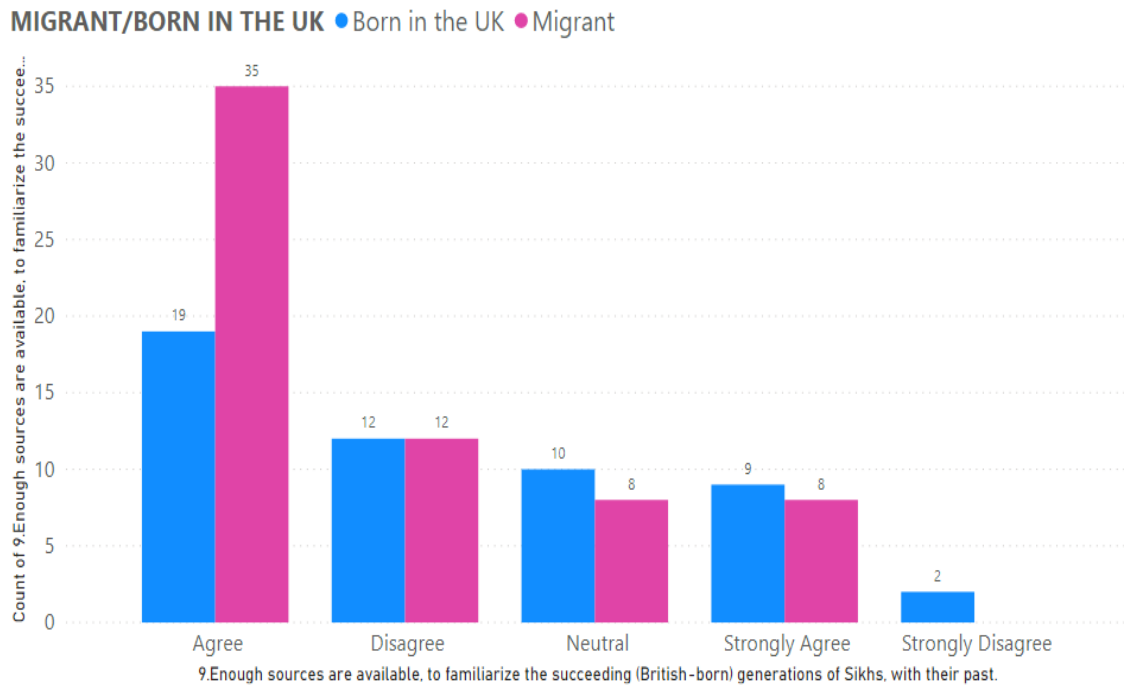
Q.7. The shared past, influences the framing of current policies, for the migrants, in the UK.



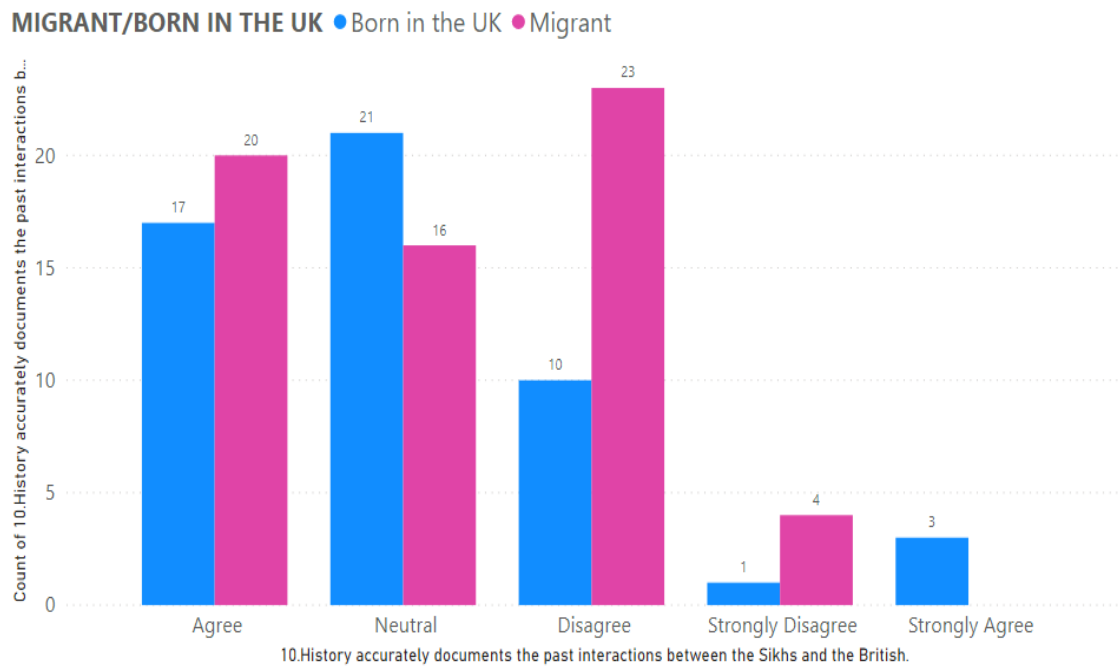
Q.8.The glorious past of the Sikh community interests me.



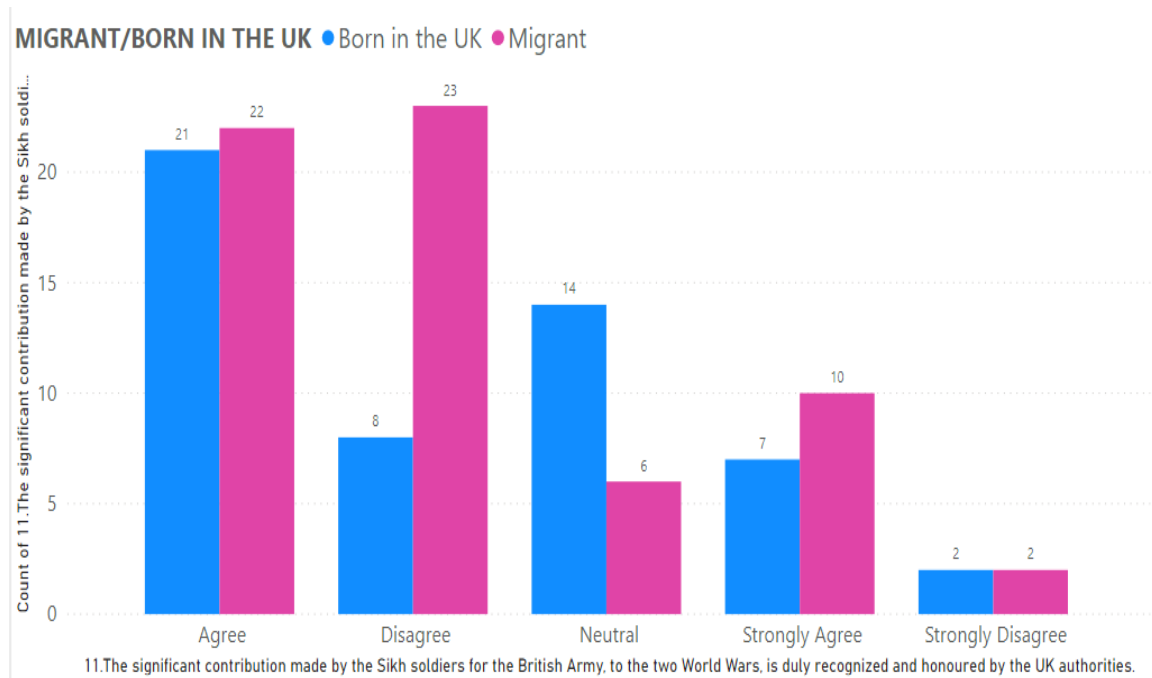
Q.9. Enough sources are available, to familiarize the succeeding (British-born) generations of Sikhs, with their past.



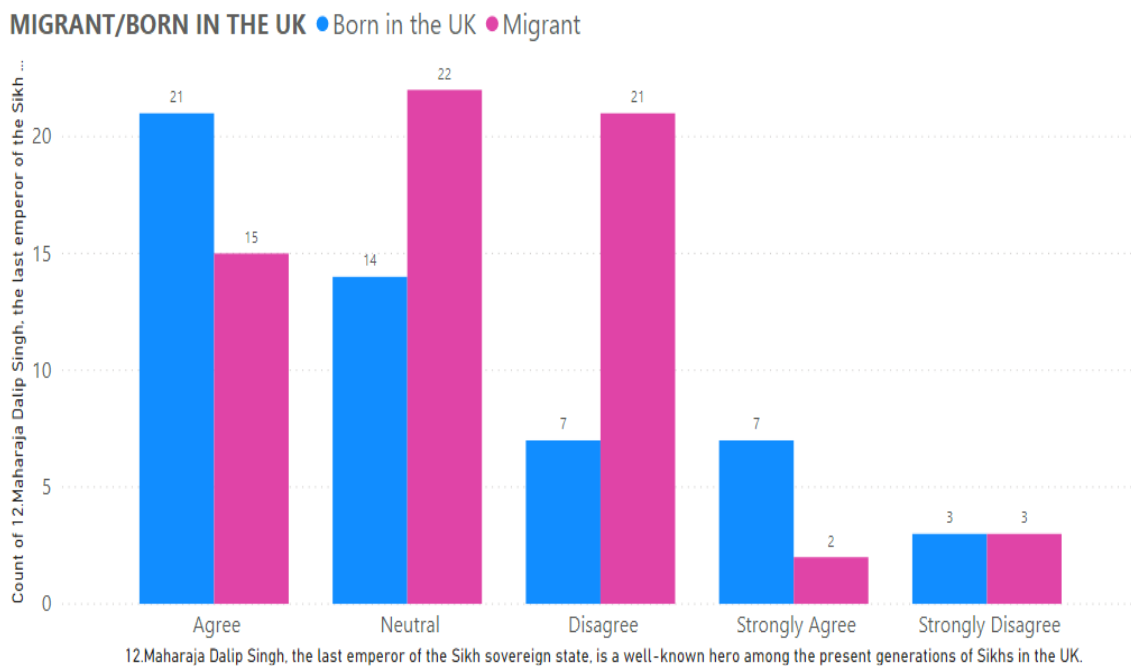
Q.10. History accurately documents the past interactions between the Sikhs and the British.



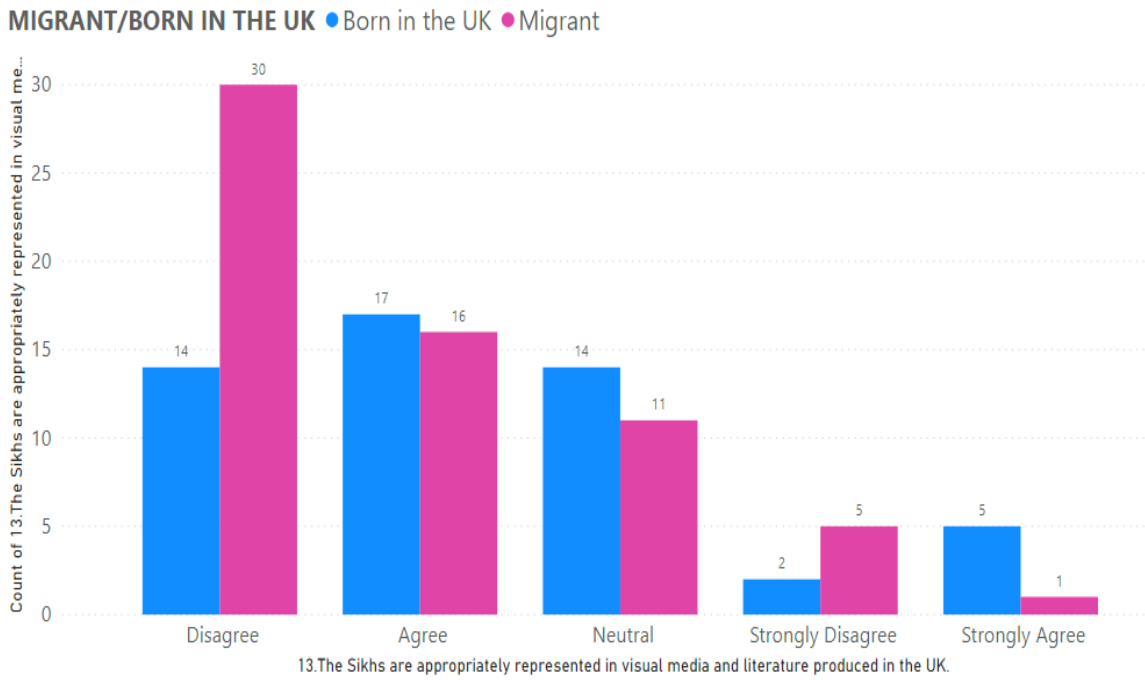
Q.11. The significant contribution made by the Sikh soldiers for the British Army, to the two World Wars, is duly recognized and honoured by the UK authorities.



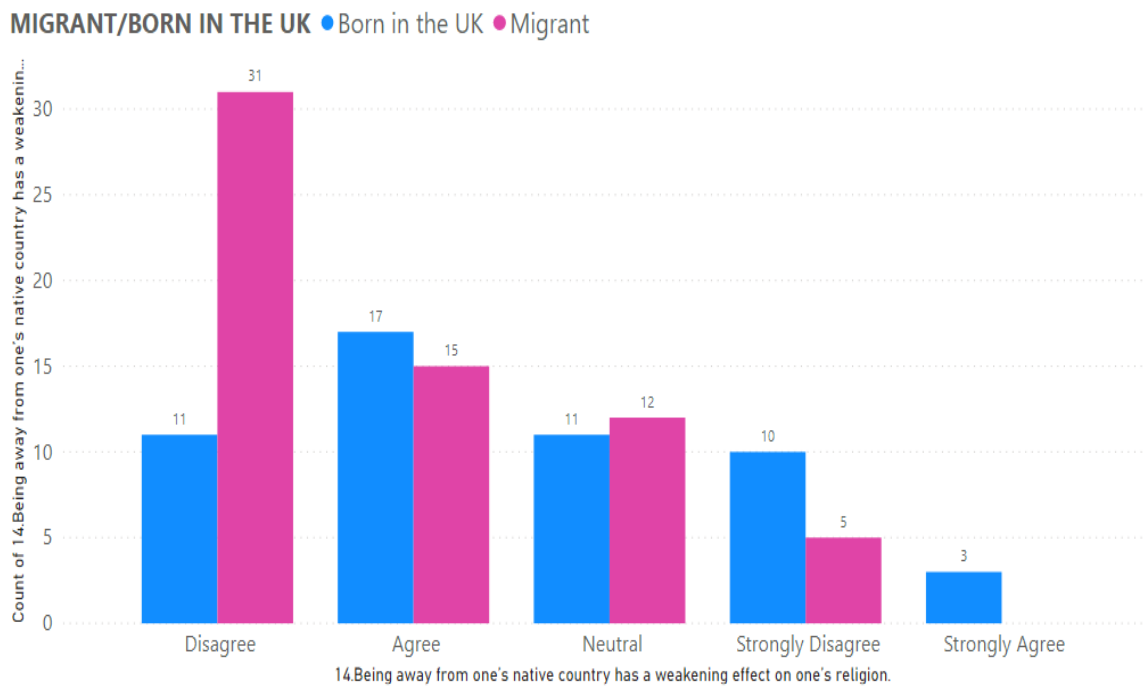
Q.12. Maharaja Dalip Singh, the last emperor of the Sikh sovereign state, is a well-known hero among the present generations of Sikhs in the UK.



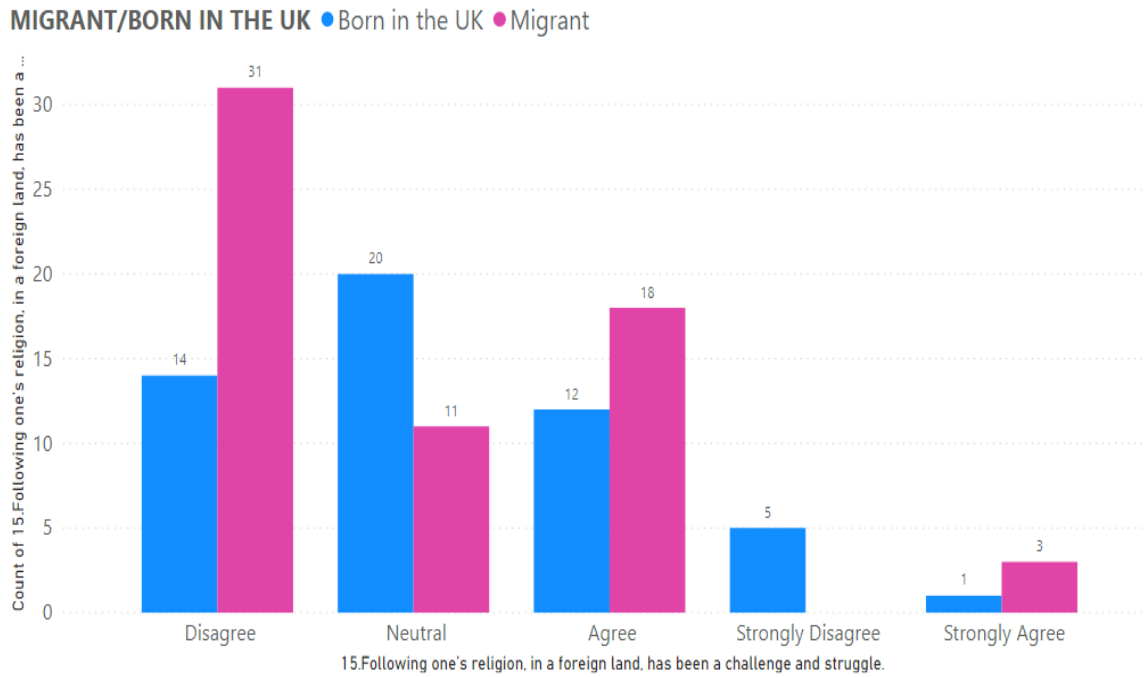
Q.13 The Sikhs are appropriately represented in visual media and literature produced in the UK.



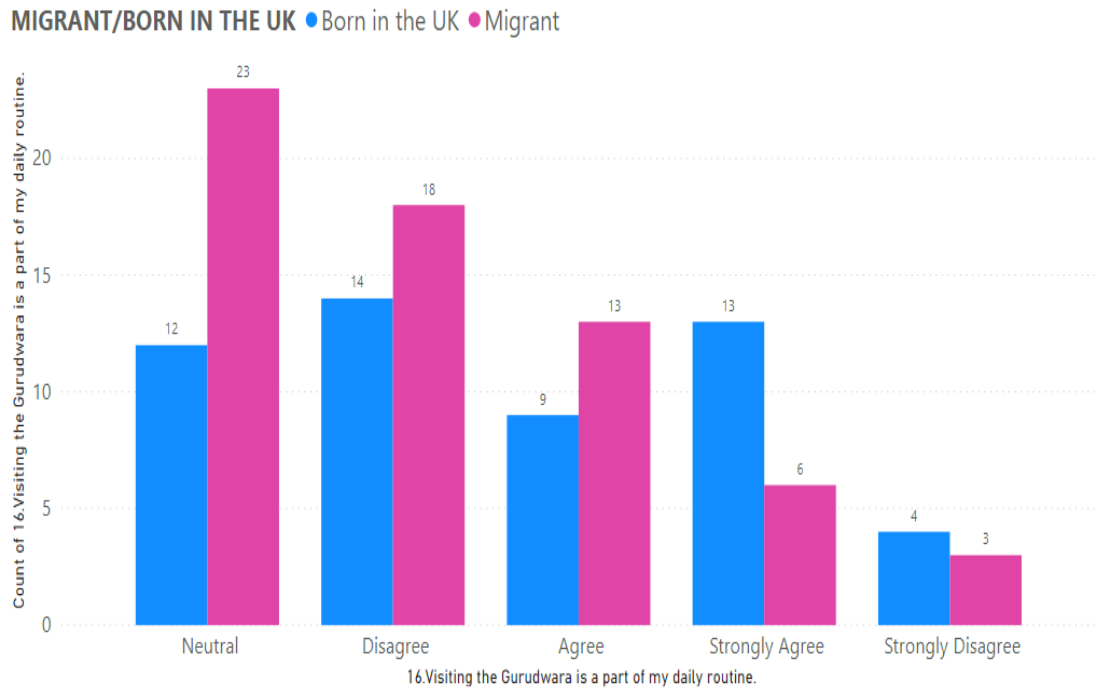
Q.14. Being away from one's native country has a weakening effect on one's religion.



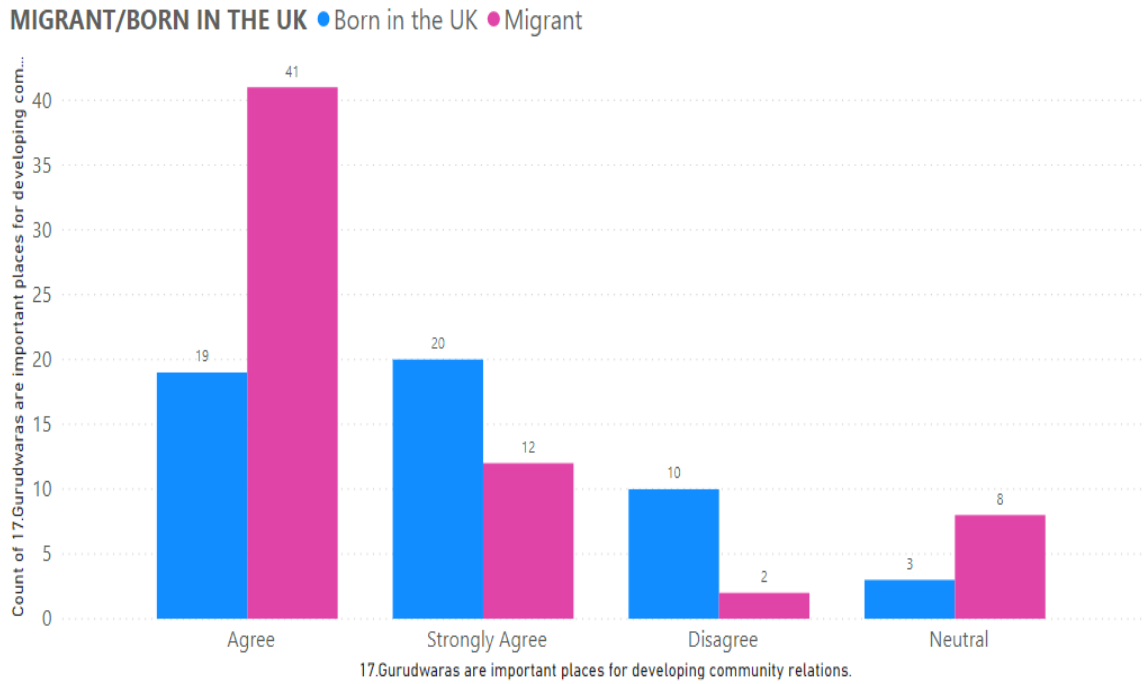
Q.15. Following one's religion, in a foreign land, has been a challenge and struggle.



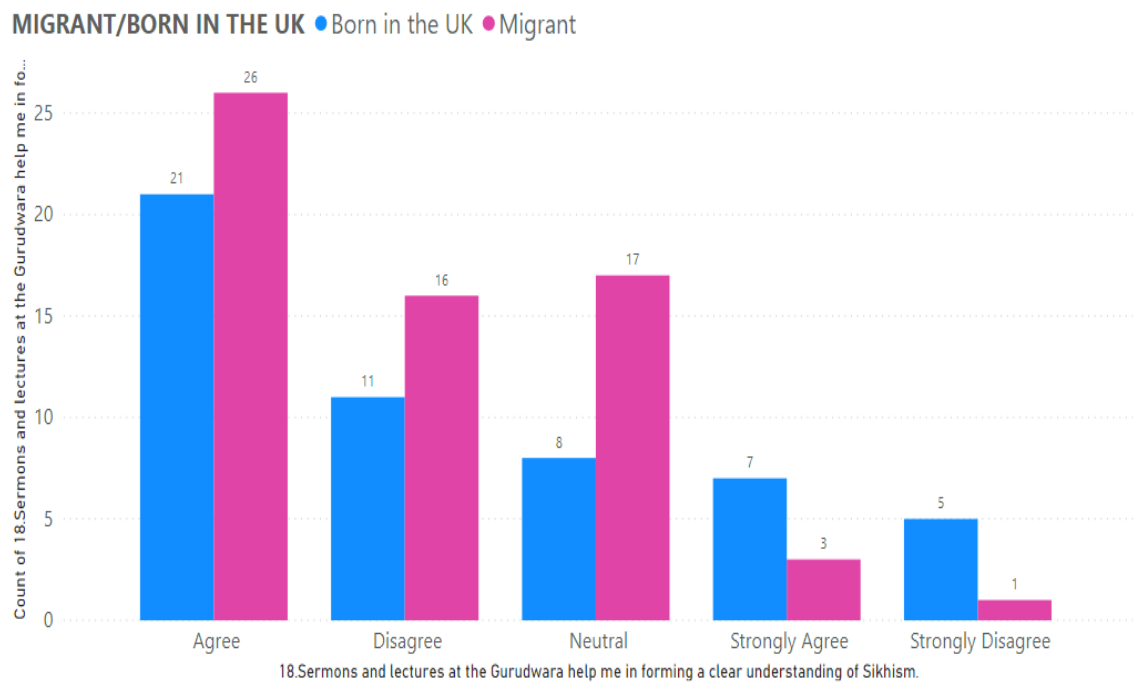
Q.16. Visiting the Gurudwara is a part of my daily routine.



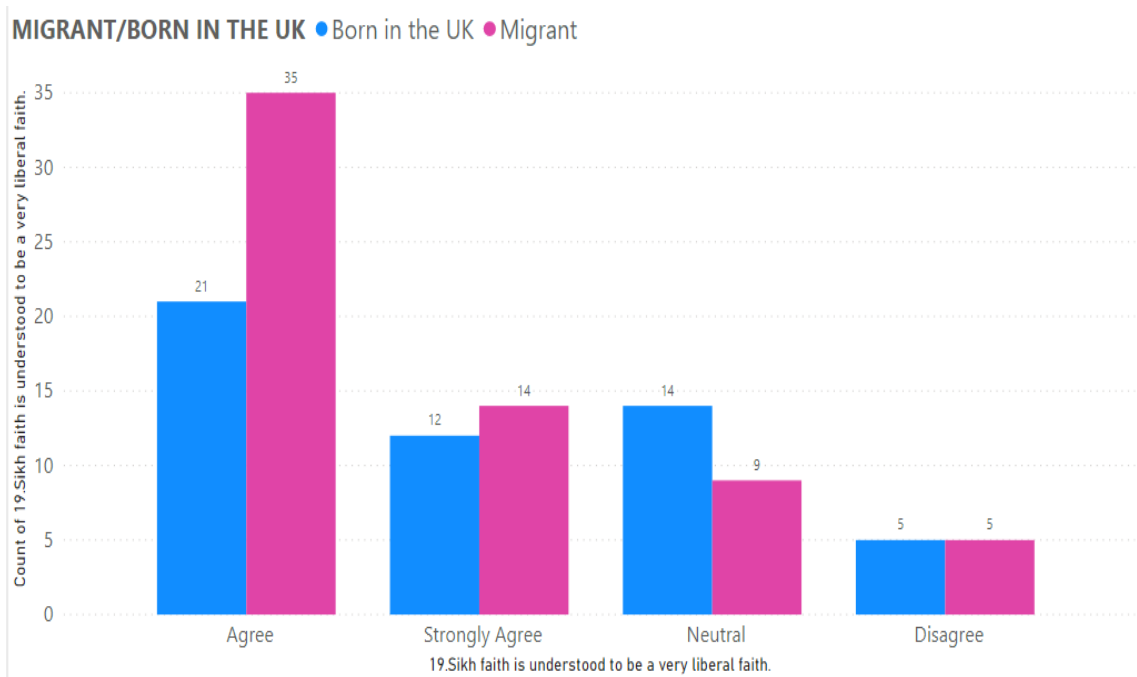
Q.17.Gurudwaras are important places for developing community relations.



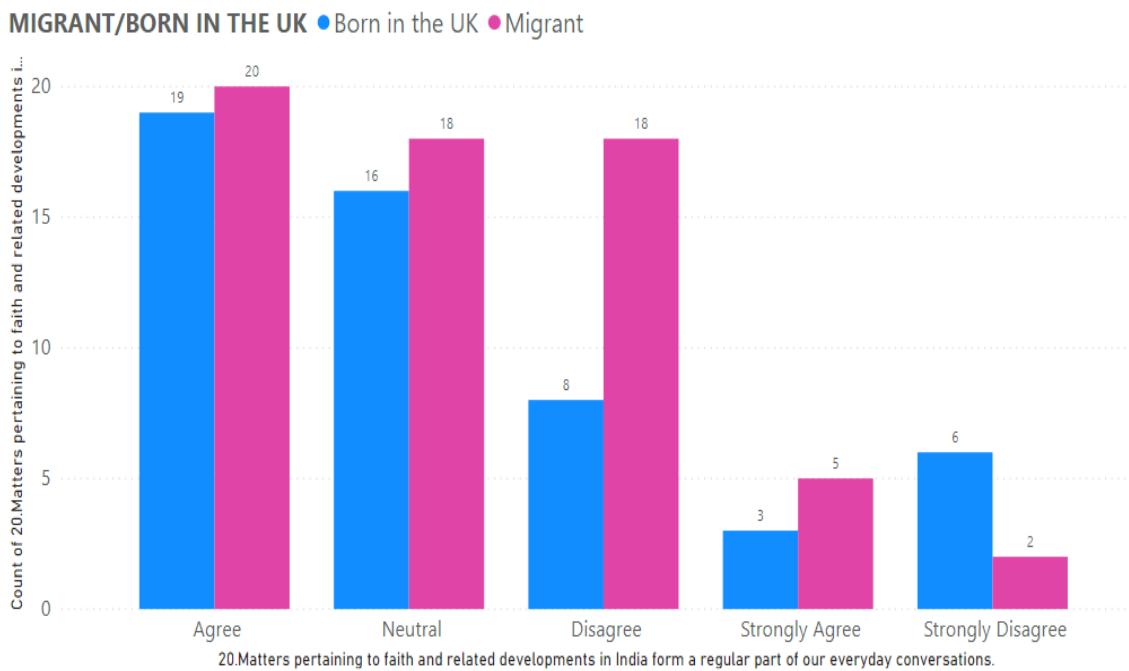
Q.18.Sermons and lectures at the Gurudwara help me in forming a clear understanding of Sikhism.



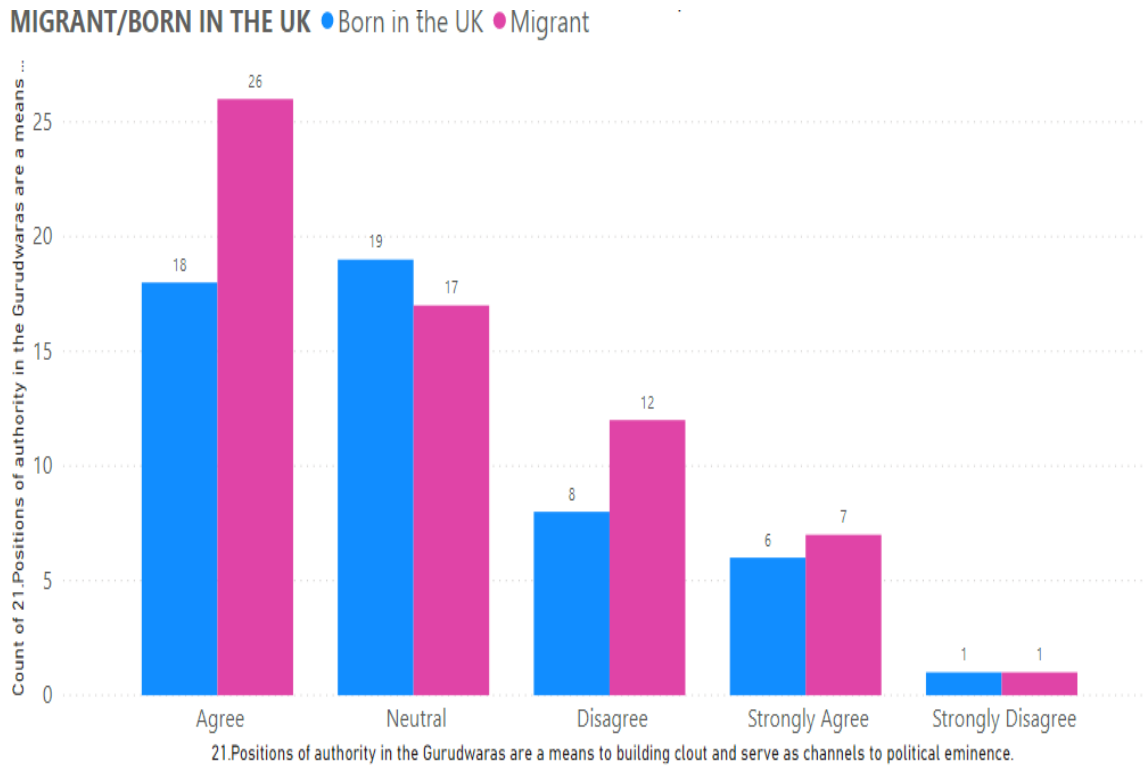
Q.19.Sikh faith is understood to be a very liberal faith.



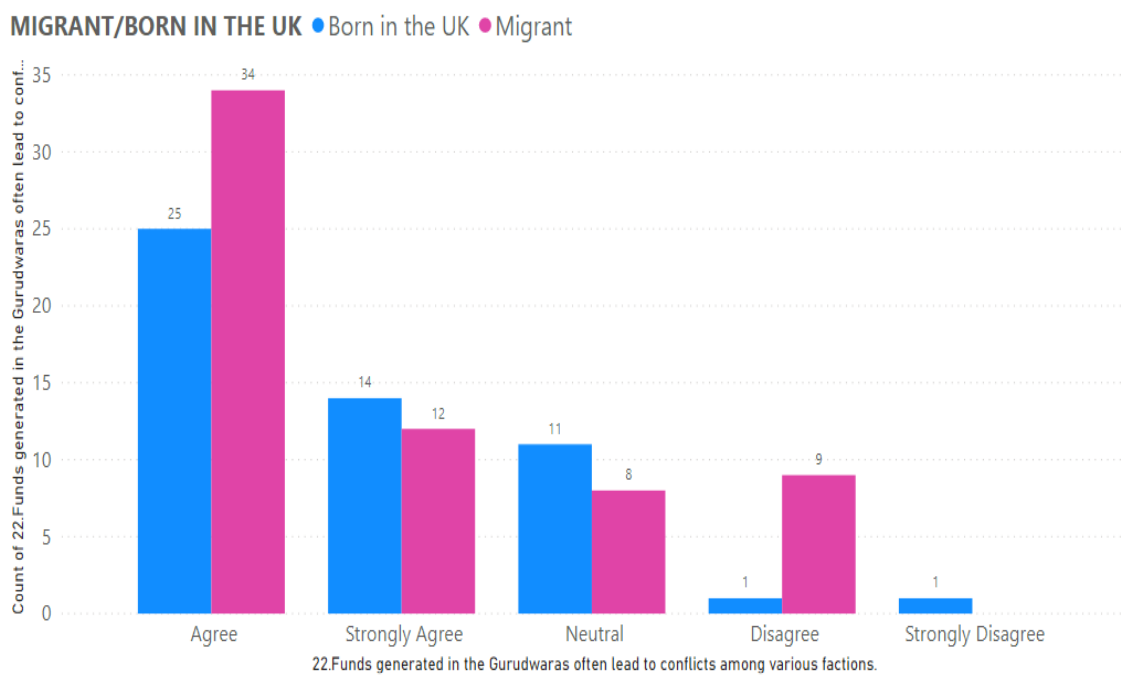
Q.20.Matters pertaining to faith and related developments in India form a regular part of our everyday conversations.



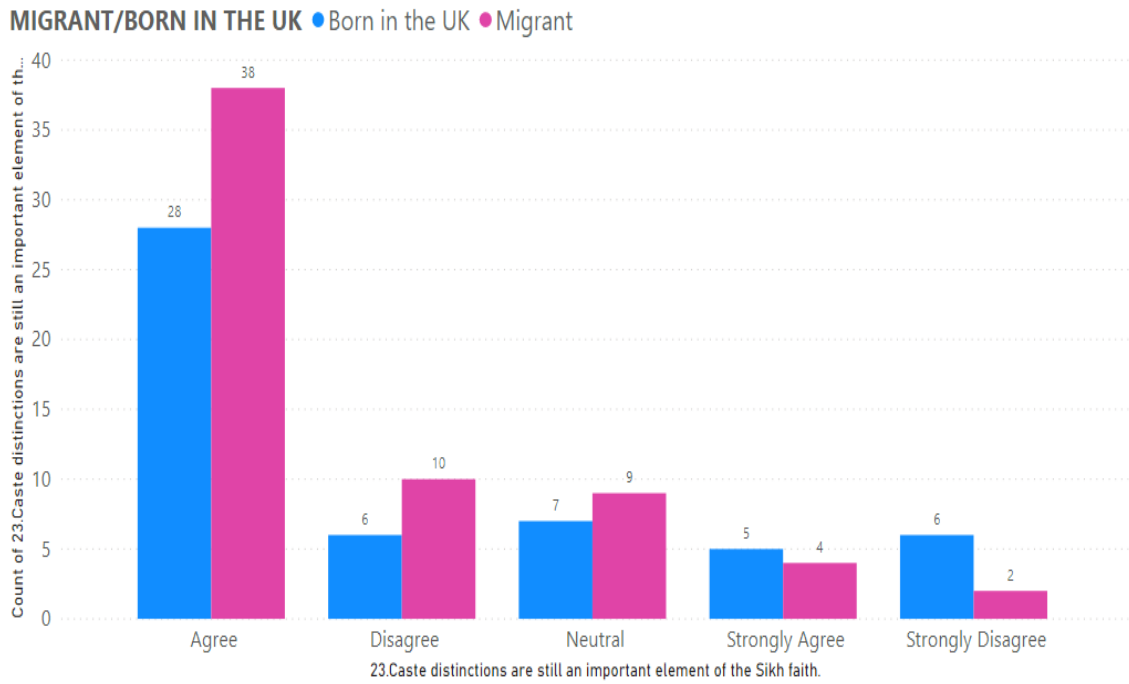
Q.21.Positions of authority in the Gurudwaras are a means to building clout and serve as channels to political eminence.



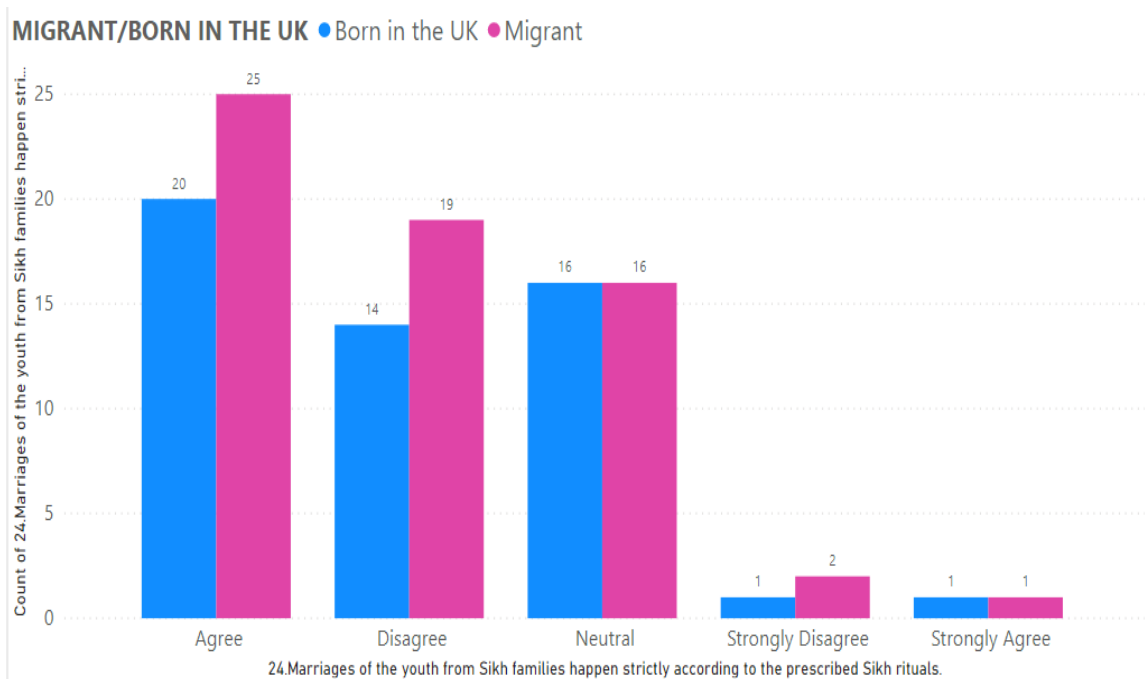
Q.22.Funds generated in the Gurudwaras often lead to conflicts among various factions.



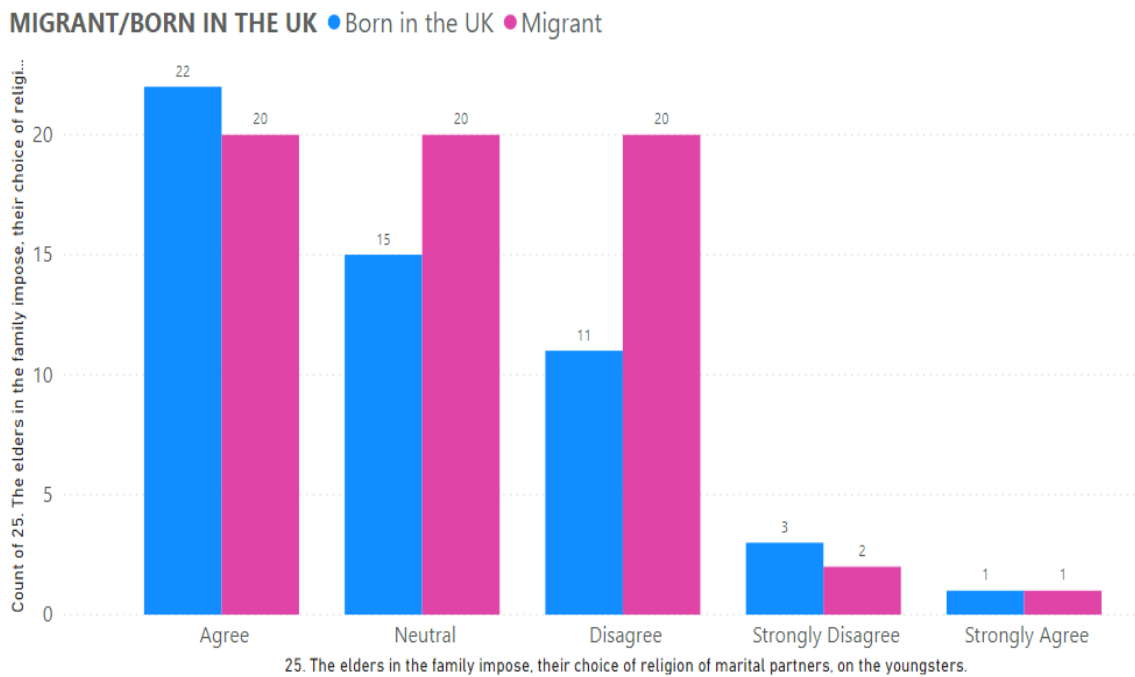
Q.23.Caste distinctions are still an important element of the Sikh faith.



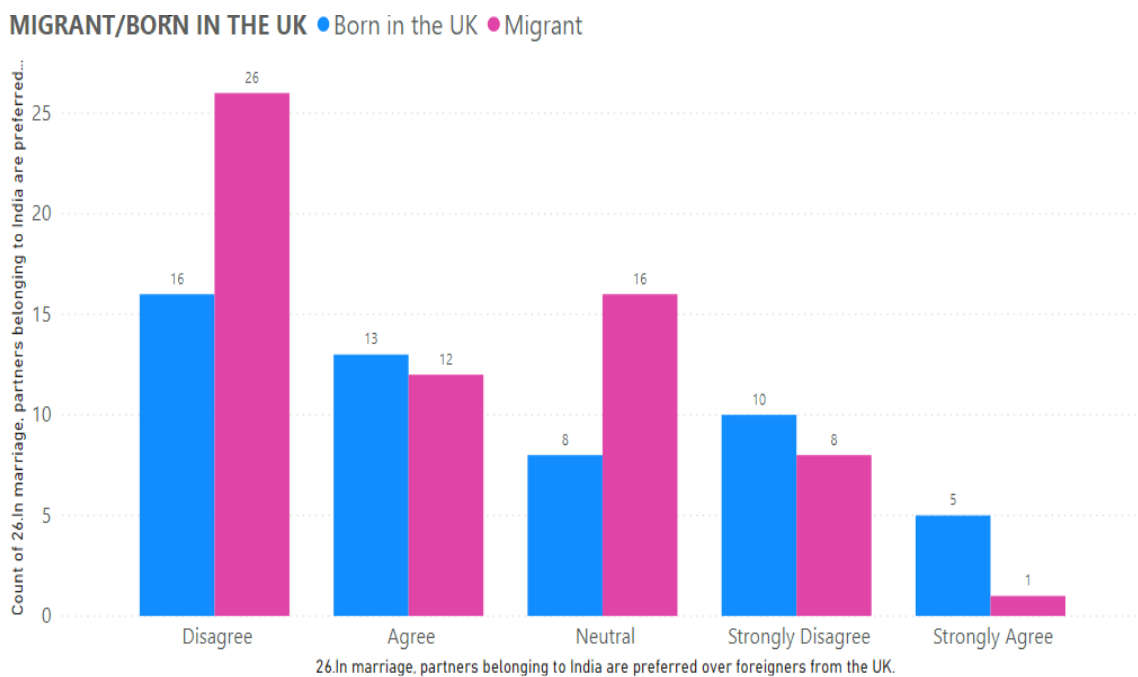
Q.24.Marriages of the youth from Sikh families happen strictly according to the prescribed Sikh rituals.



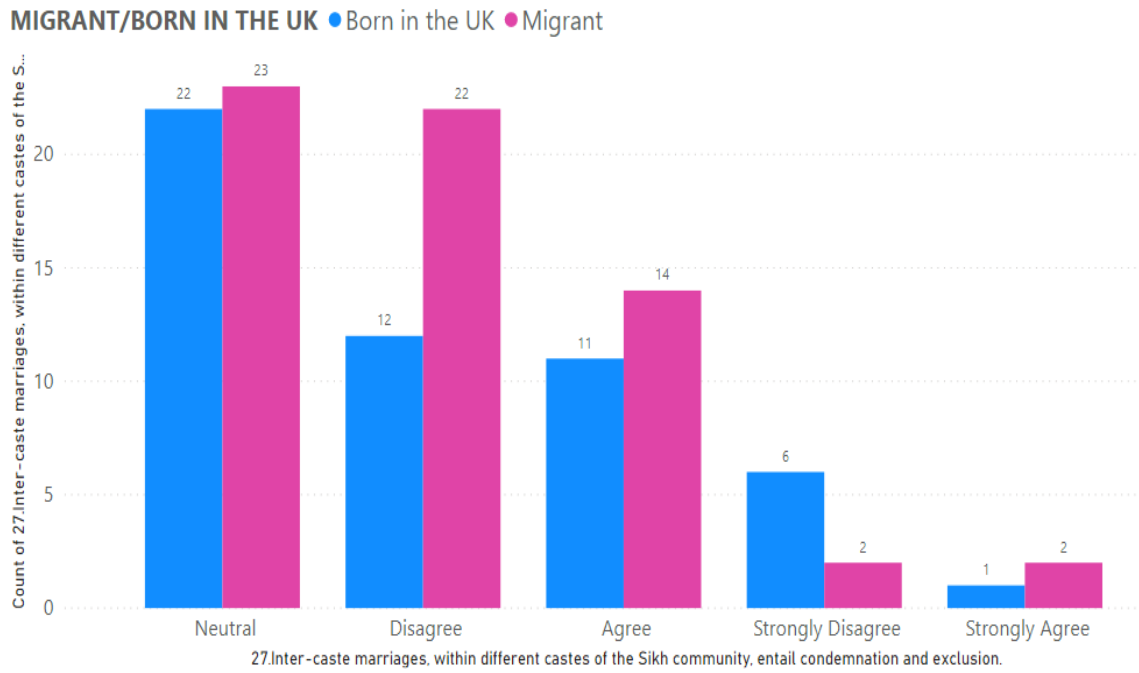
Q.25. The elders in the family impose, their choice of religion of marital partners, on the youngsters.



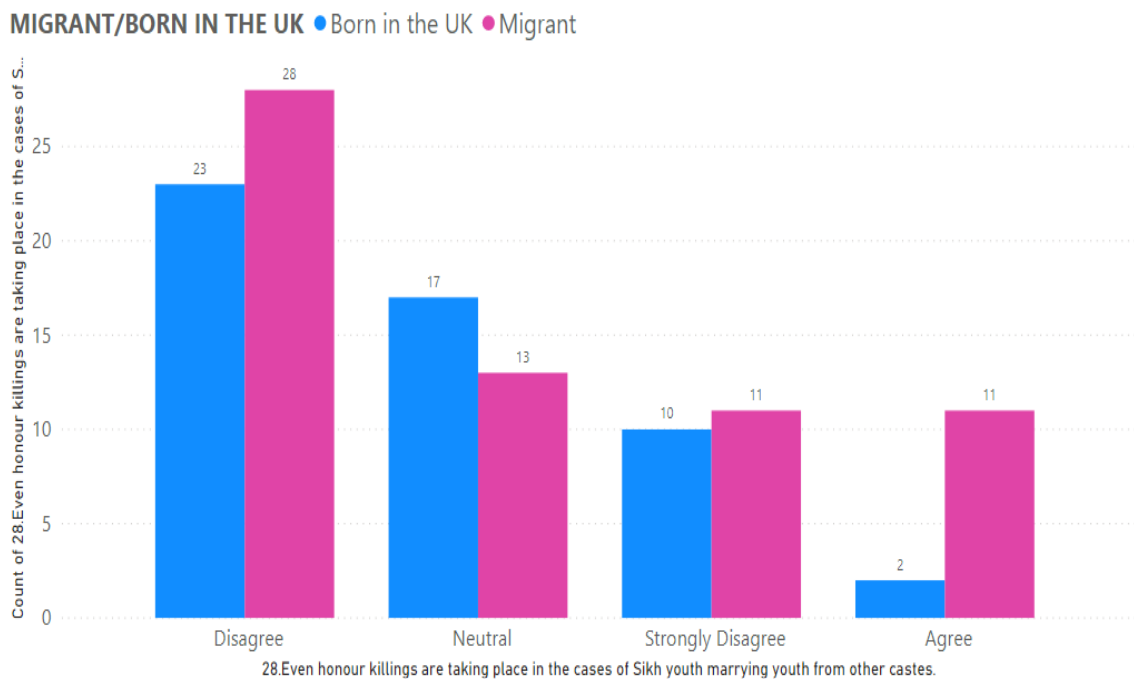
Q.26. In marriage, partners belonging to India are preferred over foreigners from the UK.



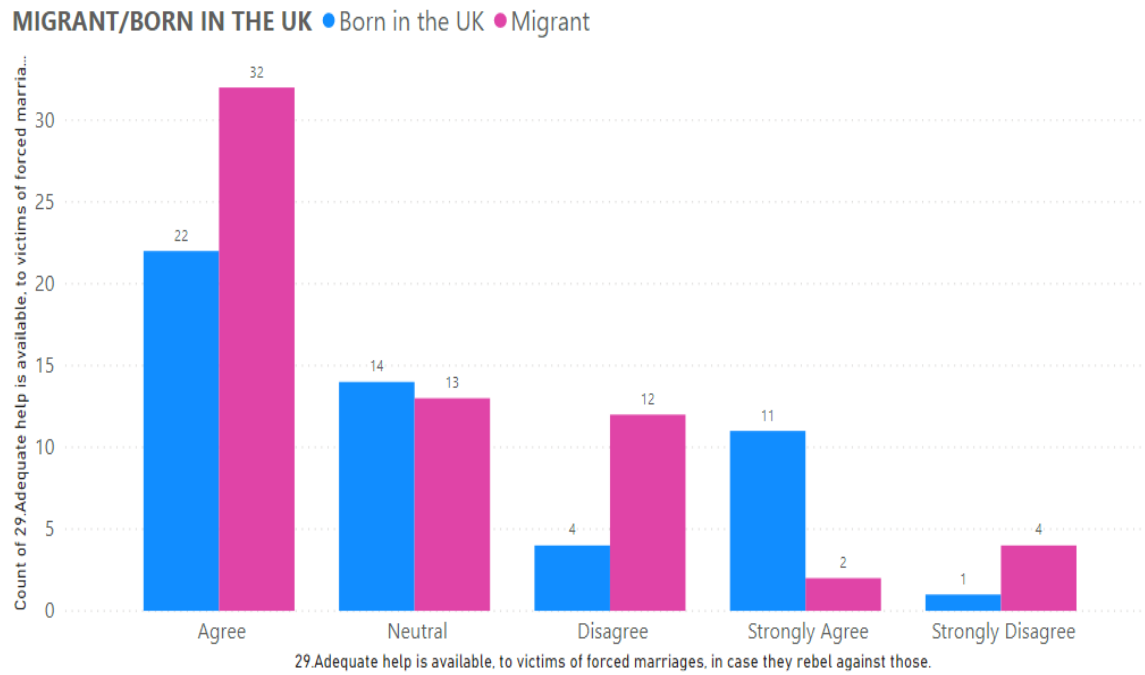
Q.27. Inter-caste marriages, within different castes of the Sikh community, entail condemnation and exclusion.



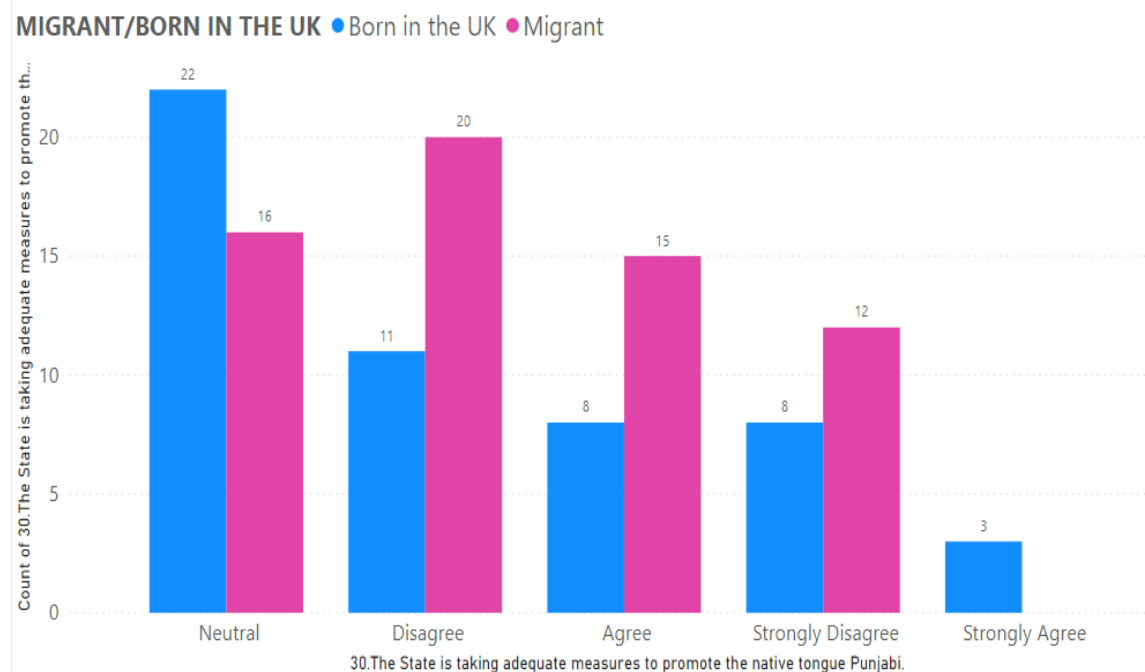
Q.28. Even honour killings are taking place in the cases of Sikh youth marrying other castes.



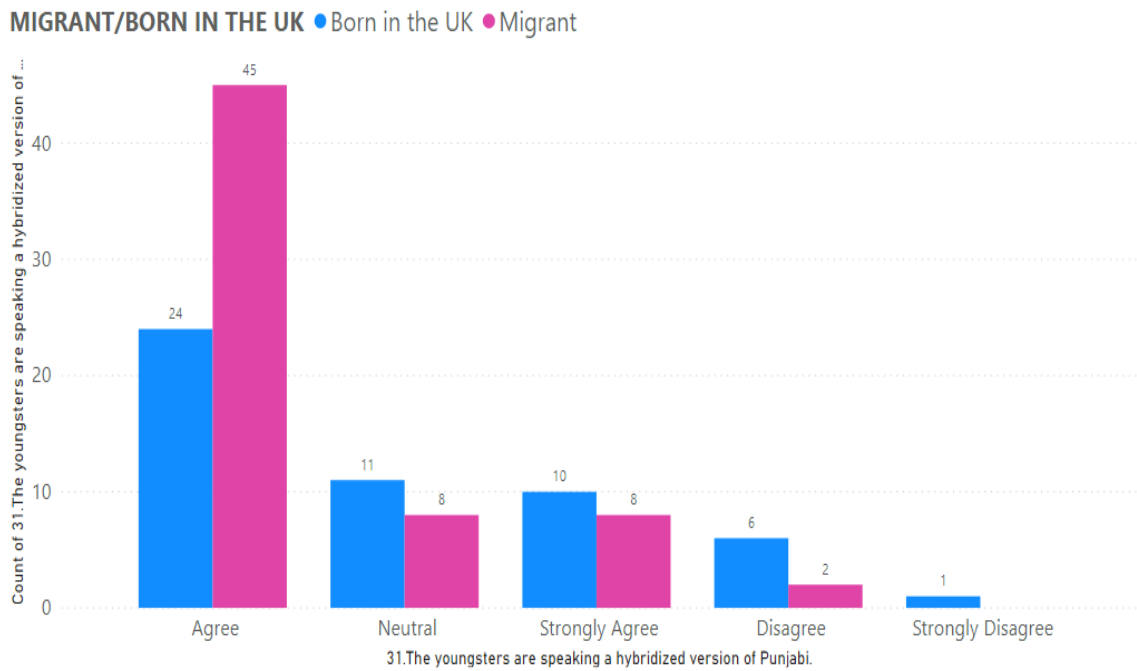
Q.29. Adequate help is available, to victims of forced marriages, in case they rebel against those



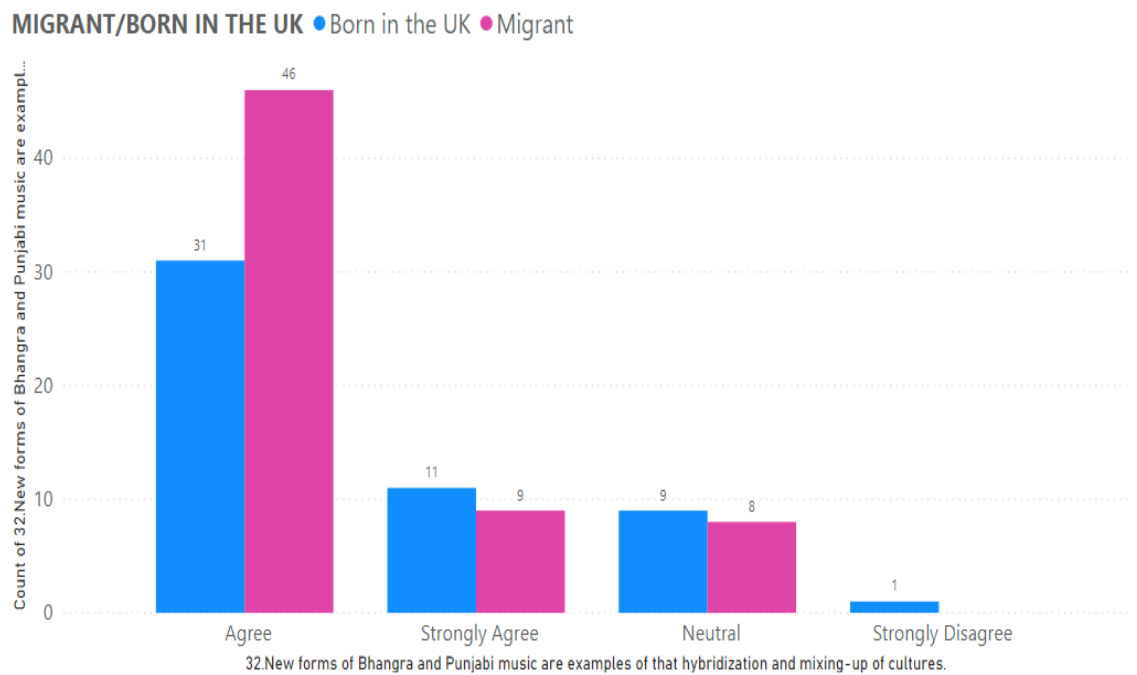
Q.30. The State is taking adequate measures to promote the native tongue Punjabi.



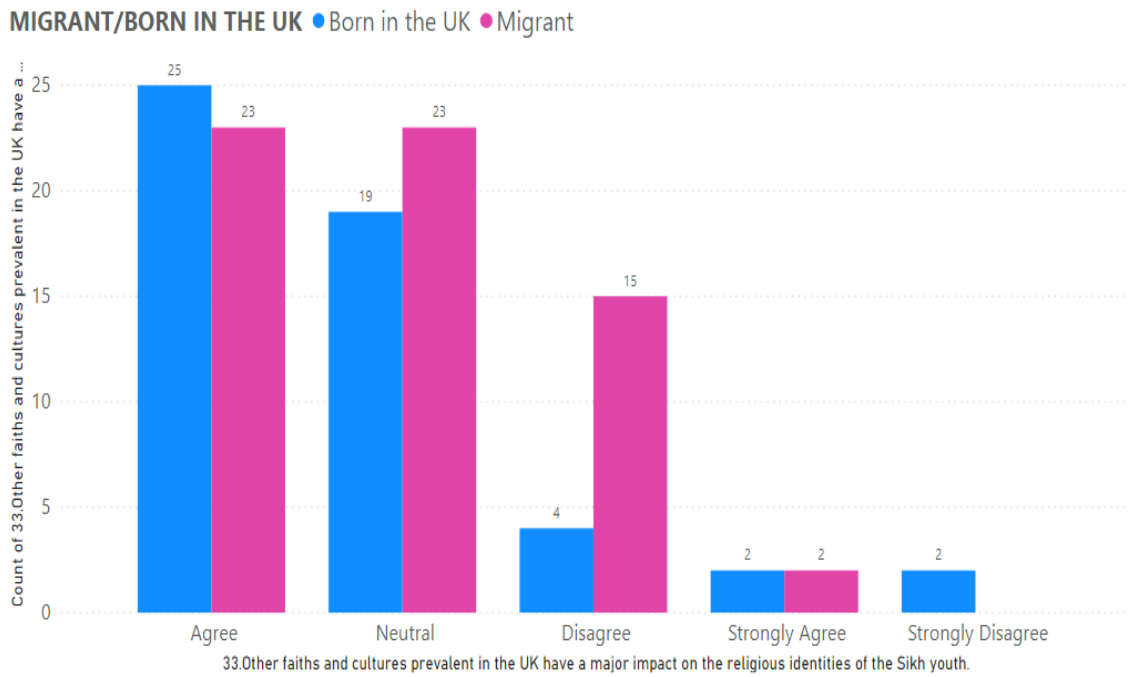
Q.31. The youngsters are speaking a hybridized version of Punjabi.



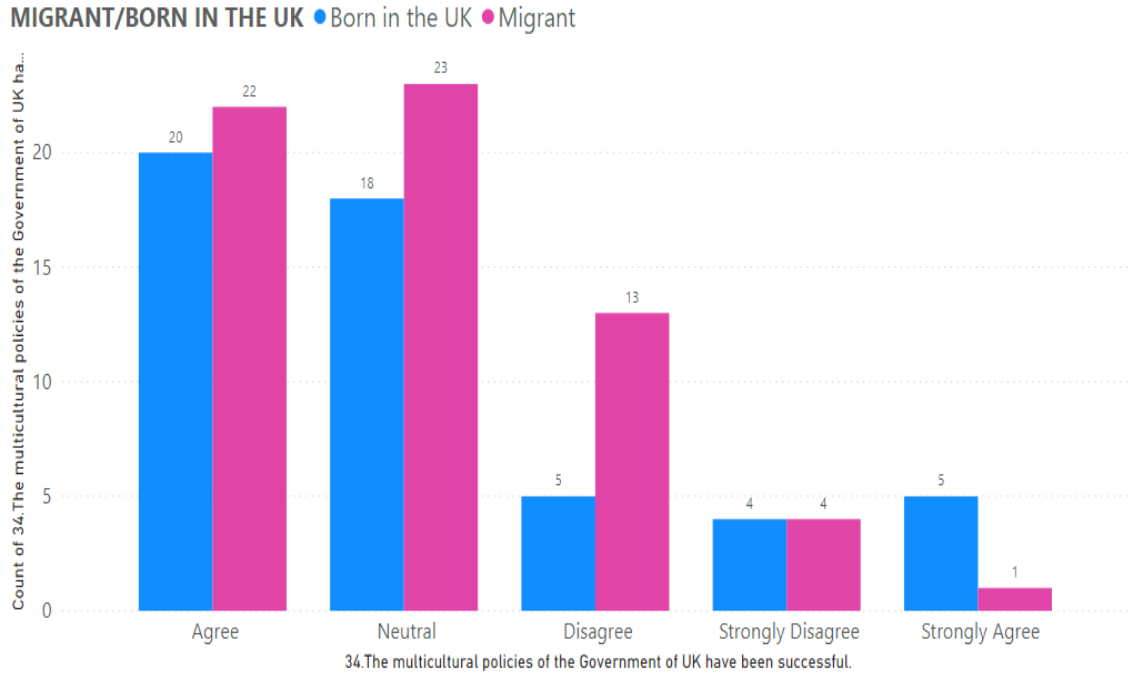
Q.32. New forms of Bhangra and Punjabi music are examples of that hybridization and mixing-up of cultures.



Q.33. Other faiths and cultures prevalent in the UK have a major impact on the religious identities of the Sikh youth.

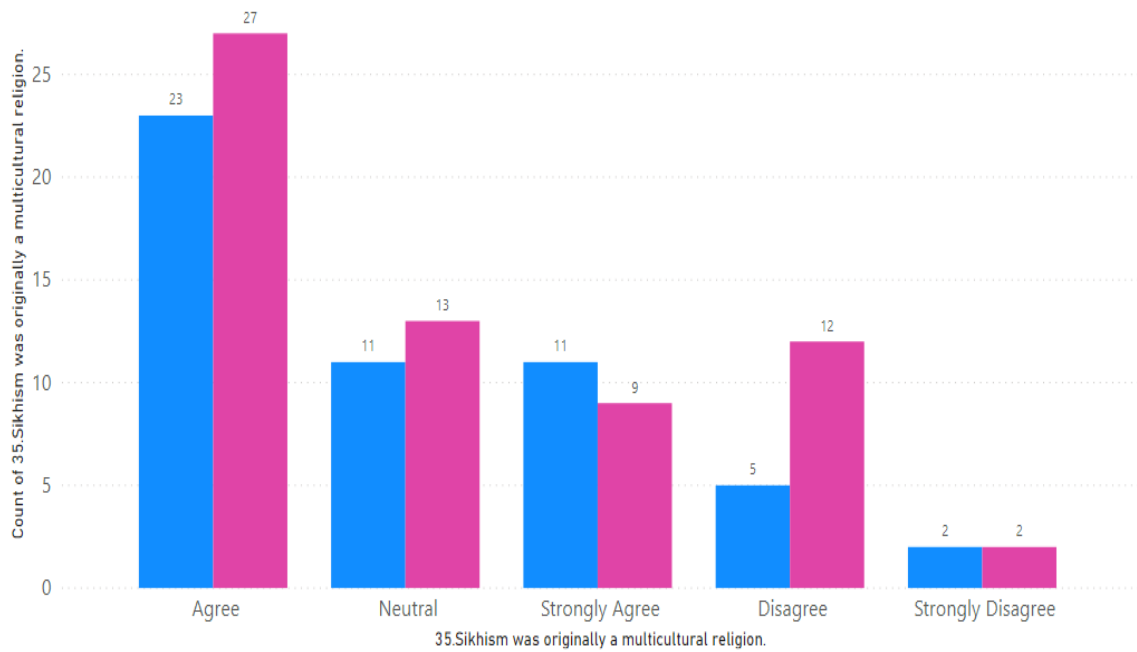


Q.34. The multicultural policies of the Government of UK have been successful.



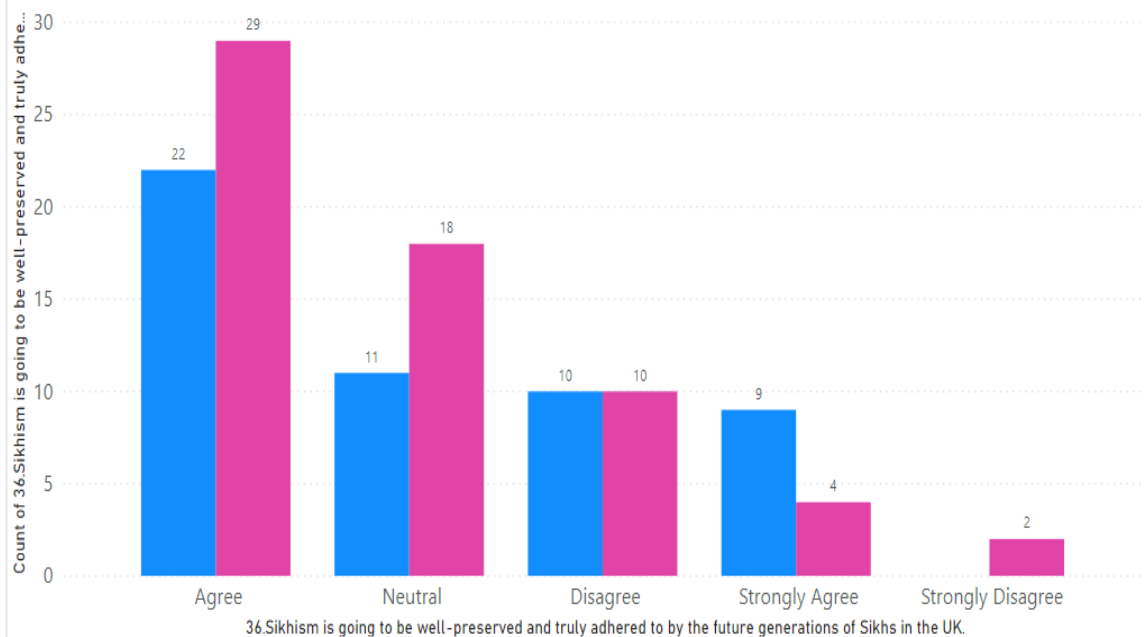
Q.35.Sikhism was originally a multicultural religion.

MIGRANT/BORN IN THE UK ● Born in the UK ● Migrant



Q.36. Sikhism is going to be well-preserved and truly adhered to by the future generations of Sikhs in the UK.

MIGRANT/BORN IN THE UK ● Born in the UK ● Migrant



**GENERATIONAL CONFLICT IN THE TRANSMISSION OF SIKH IDENTITY:
A CRITICAL STUDY OF SELECT PUNJABI DIASPORIC WRITING IN BRITAIN**

A THESIS

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CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: “*MANN PARDESI JE THEEYE, SAB JAGAT PARAYA*”; NOT A ‘RACE OF ANGELS’

6.1 Stages in the Intellectual Evolution of Sikh Youth

What Frantz Fanon says of the native intellectuals in Africa during colonialism and then compares them to the Negroes, who live in the United States and in Central or Latin America, in his essay “On National Culture” in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) is also applicable to the second and third generations of Sikh migrants, which this research has focused on. In the colonial context, he talks of three phases in their intellectual development namely the first in which they completely assimilate the culture of the colonisers and inferiorise their own, the second in which they get disturbed and attempt to realize who they really are, and the third in which they try to immerse themselves entirely in their own cultural matrix but remain foreign to it because what is available to them are “mummified fragments” (224) of a culture that has “deteriorated into custom” (224). This race of “individuals without an anchor, without a horizon, colorless, stateless, rootless” is what he calls “a race of angels” (215). The British-born Sikh youngsters too, undergo similar phases of initially being infatuated with the culture of their birthplace, finding their own homes “*unheimlich*” (51) to use Freud’s phrase from *The Uncanny*, but meeting alienation and consequent disruption instead, venture on a quest for their real identity and their roots, a desire to belong, what Avtar Brah names “the homing desire” (16). Rather, being repelled by the frozen and lapidified version of their past and traditions, and not being able to find a strong anchor, they run the risk of turning into rootless angels as they face the multiple demands on their unsteady identities, as quoted by Stuart Hall and mentioned in Chapter 3.

Alberto Melucci (2015) too, says that since the same pattern of acting and thinking cannot be transferred from one sphere to another, uncertainty and ambivalence become staple components of the lives of these floating individuals and they are in search of some “firm foundation” or “permanent anchor”. This persisting anxiety and fickleness is evident in the lives of most of the second and third generation Sikhs delineated in the fictional texts and represented through the memoirs. The interesting

observation is, that whether it is the first generation migrant writers expressing themselves in their native tongue Punjabi or the second generation writers, born and educated in the West, and sharing their experiences in English, the views about the disquietude and incertitude prevalent among the Sikh youngsters in Britain, remain similar.

6.2 Reports Published by Sikh Organizations in Britain

The **British Sikh Report** is an extensive document published jointly by various Sikh organizations in Britain, such as the City Sikhs, Sikh Assembly etc., about the lives of the Sikhs living in England. It has been annually published since 2013 and is based on a survey of Sikhs living there, gathering information about views on their faith, and on topical British issues – political, economic, social and cultural. Its eighth volume was published in 2020 and deals with “topics such as organ donations, disability, loneliness, marriage and weddings, relationships and sex education in schools, Sikh faith schools, the arts, connections with Punjab and India, drug abuse in Punjab, and voting preferences in the December 2019 General Election” (BSR 2). Responses to a question asked in the survey questionnaire about the feeling of loneliness among the Sikhs, corroborate that it is the youngest among the Sikhs who are experiencing loneliness and a sense of alienation more than the elders, “The age group that felt lacking in companionship “Often” most, were those aged 19 or less, at just over 16 per cent” (BSR 43). Even “the percentage of respondents feeling left out often or some of the time, decreased with age, while those feeling hardly ever left out increased with age” (BSR 44). The elders or the first generation of migrants, having made peace with their secluded existence within their community cocoon at the periphery of the mainstream society, do not feel any kind of isolation. The lives of the younger generations, on the other hand, are led in the everyday of that performative multicultural space, in which intermingling and hierarchizing of diverse races, faiths, and cultures incessantly takes place. Unmistakably then, it is the successive generations of Sikhs, which are finding themselves at precarious crossroads of choices which often, for want of proper guidance, turn out to be wrong as we witnessed in the various texts. If they attempt to assimilate with the English natives by internalizing their values, they earn the derisive epithet of ‘coconuts’ who are white inside and brown outside, from their fellow community members. When they are not able to integrate fully due to pressures by their parents and community, they are referred to as

British-Born Desis estranged from both the White English natives, as well as the freshly arrived Indian natives in England, along with their relatives back-home in Punjab, who too, treat them as foreigners. The field of choices and the quick transition from one to the other identity, becomes a very complex and tormenting issue for them, affecting them socially, psychologically, collectively and even professionally.

6.3 Findings of the Online Survey conducted in Britain as part of the Research

I conducted an Online Survey through Snowball Sampling method, of Sikhs based in Britain. 115 respondents, out of which 54.8% were first-generation migrants and 45.2% were second and third generation Sikhs born in Britain, took part in the survey. Gender-wise representation was also well-balanced with 47.8% respondents being males and 51.3% females. 0.9% preferred not to mention their sex. The questionnaire contained 36 questions based on Sikh past, its evolution, its contemporary positionality in Britain, and its perception among the different generations of diaspora Sikhs. The Online link to the Questionnaire and the list of questions is included in the Annexure I. The collected data from the responses, was then divided and analysed on the basis of the variation in responses of the different generations. The detailed graphic representation of the data, in the form of comparative Pie Charts and analytical Bar graphs, is attached in Annexure- II. The following information was gathered on the basis of the survey:

- Out of the respondents 86.6% Sikhs born in Britain agree that religion is a very important facet of their lives and they take tremendous pride in belonging to the Sikh religion as compared to 80.9% migrants expressing the same feeling.
- Among the migrants 93.6% feel that the host country allows them to freely practice their religion whereas the percentage is 86.4% for the ones born in Britain.
- On the topic of the significance of the maintenance of the external Sikh form, the ones born in Britain attach more importance to it at 61.6% than the migrants at 57%.

- 52% of the respondents born in Britain agree that historical cross-cultural encounters between the British and the Sikhs, shape the present relations between the two races as compared to 58.7% of the migrants feeling so.
- 100% of the migrant respondents are interested in the glorious past of the Sikhs whereas this interest has come down to 88.4% for the ones born in Britain.
- Only 53.8% Sikhs born there observe, that enough sources are available to familiarize the succeeding generations of Sikh with their past and the for the migrants the percentage is 68.3%.
- On the subject of the significant contribution made by the Sikh soldiers for the British army to the two World Wars being duly recognized and honoured by the British authorities, only 31.7% of the migrants and only 38.5% of the Britain-born Sikhs, express agreement.
- On being asked if the Sikhs are being appropriately represented in visual media and literature produced in Britain, only 27% of the migrants and 42.3% of the Sikhs born there, agree.
- Following one's religion in a foreign land as a challenge, and its weakening due to moving away from the land of origin, is felt by 33.4% of the migrants and only 25% of the Britain-born Sikhs.
- 84% migrants and 75% Britain-born Sikhs agree that Gurdwaras are important places for building community-relations but only 46% migrants and 53.9% Britain-born Sikhs agree that the sermons and lectures delivered there help them in forming a clear understanding of Sikhism.
- That the positions of authority in the Gurdwaras are means to building clout and serve as channels to political eminence, is agreed to by 52.4% of the migrants and 46% of the Britain-born but at the same time a significant 73% migrants and 75% Britain-born Sikhs agree that funds generated in the Gurdwaras often lead to conflicts among various factions.
- Sikh religion is accepted as a liberal faith by 63.5% of the Britain-born Sikhs and 77.8% of the migrants, although 66.6% of migrants and 63.4% born there agree that caste distinctions are still an important element of the Sikh faith.

- 44.2% Sikhs born in Britain admit that the elders in the family impose their choice of religion of marital partners on the youngsters whereas only 33% of the migrant Sikhs think so.
- At least 25% Sikh migrants and 23% Britain-born Sikhs feel that inter-caste marriages, within different castes of the Sikh community, entail condemnation and exclusion and 3.8% Britain-born Sikhs and 17.5% migrant Sikh respondents conceded that even honour killings are taking place in the cases of Sikh youth, marrying youth from other Sikh castes.
- That the State is taking adequate measures to promote the native tongue Punjabi, is accepted only by 21.2% of the Britain-born respondents and 23.8% of the migrants. 80.2% born in Britain and 87.3% migrant Sikhs agree that the youngsters are speaking a hybridized version of Punjabi and that new forms of Bhangra Pop and Punjabi music are examples of that hybridization and mixing-up of cultures.
- That the other faiths and cultures prevalent in Britain have a major impact on the religious identities of the Sikh youth is accepted by 51% of the Britain-born respondents as compared to 39.7% of the migrants.
- 65.4% of the respondents born in Britain and 57.2% of the migrants concur that Sikhism was originally a multicultural religion, while only 36.5% migrant Sikhs and 48% of the Britain-born ones, consider that the multicultural policies of the Government of Britain have been successful.
- About the future of Sikhism as a way of life and as a world-religion, 59.6% of the Sikhs born in Britain and 52.3% of the migrant Sikhs there predict that Sikhism is going to be well-preserved and truly adhered to by the future generations of Sikhs in Britain.

6.4 Summative Analysis of the Collected Data

It is amply evident from the gathered information that Sikhs from both the groups or generations, whether first- generation migrants or second and third generation Britain-born citizens agree that religion is a very substantial aspect of their globalised lives and they take tremendous pride in their religion. The general observation is that the host country which is the birthplace of the younger generations, allows reasonable freedom to them, to practice their religion. A noteworthy point is that more youngsters than the older migrants attach significance to the maintenance of the

external form of a Sikh, prescribed by the Sikh edicts. The historical cross-cultural encounters between the British and the Sikhs do influence the present relations between the two races and all the Sikhs there, are interested in familiarizing themselves with the glorious past evolution of Sikh religion although they regret that the supreme contributions made by the Sikh soldiers to the two World Wars, have only recently been acknowledged and that sufficient sources are not available to make the Sikhs fully conversant with their past. Preserving one's religious devotion after moving to an alien land or in the midst of other cultural and religious influences, is viewed as a challenge more by the youth than the earlier migrants. Gurdwaras are viewed as places for community-strengthening and creating political clout through positions of authority, but few accepted the role of Gurdwaras and the sermons delivered there, in clarifying the basic concepts of Sikhism to them. The conflicts between various factions of Sikhs over funds generated in the Gurdwaras have also been commonly admitted. Sikhism is perceived as a liberal faith by a good number but at the same time they accept that caste distinctions are still an important element in it. A very pertinent point, from the point of view of this research is that forced marriages arranged by the parents are a reality and even honour killings, in case the youngsters refuse to comply, have been admitted to. The multicultural initiatives by the government, it emerges, have been deemed ineffective and there may be some insights to be gained from Sikhism, which was established as a multicultural faith. The respondents have also observed that the British authorities have not been undertaking adequate efforts to promote Punjabi, the native tongue of the Sikhs and it has led to a kind of creolization of the linguistic inheritance and a hybridization of the traditions of Bhangra and Punjabi music. On a positive note, the Sikhs born in Britain are more optimistic about the future of Sikh religion and its preservation there, than the first-generation migrants.

6.5 Application to the Issue

The basic focus of this research is the inter-generational conflict between or among the various generations of Sikhs in Britain in the context of religious identity. As brought forth in the above survey, the British Sikh Reports (2013-20) and on the basis of the detailed critical analysis of the literary texts pertaining to Sikh characters and their negotiation of their identities, it can be veritably concluded that the first-generation migrants had covered those extensive distances and moved to alien shores

with the impetus of giving a better life to their successive generations. The odds had been really against them with the hurdles of linguistic, racial and economic challenges to be overcome. The experiences of the colonial past and the cross-cultural encounters with the British were also carried along as memorabilia, making their assimilation or integration in the adopted country, neither desirable, nor comfortable. They confined themselves to a segregated existence on the margins, making their faith and community, their only *métiers*. They stayed insulated from and almost unaffected by the racially hierarchized multicultural locale that Britain offered, and continued to toil in the direction of shaping a better future for their progeny.

The newer generations of Sikhs born in that country on the other hand, receive education in the Westernized system and tend to internalize those very liberal values, do not have much familiarity with the past in the name of memory, are more exposed to the influences of other cultures and have to face and deal with those in the everyday goings-on of the multicultural scenario. The parent-generation, in an attempt to prevent the conceptual and psychic migration of their children away from their own culture and religion, exerts itself to control the youth in the name of tradition and religious practices, often misinterpreting those, leading to a very rigid and an erroneous transmission of Sikhism and its related system of beliefs. These youngsters raised in a value-system that attaches tremendous significance to individual happiness and satisfaction, along with a rational outlook towards all aspects of life, including religion, tend to question the restrictions imposed on them, and in the absence of some proper elucidation tend to drift towards other cultures and religions that are readily and abundantly available. When it comes to the question of identity, their selves remain fragmented as they switch between multiple and fluid identities and take recourse to strategies like hybridization and hyphenated identities in an effort towards acculturation. But being socially and psychologically affected by these processes, the end result is a feeling of alienation and rootlessness. The proposition made here is that the transmission of a properly interpreted Sikh religion, which is a liberal and a latitudinarian faith right from its origin, and an identity formed on the basis of its teachings and principles, which were multicultural in tenor, shall certainly provide that rootedness and stability, earnestly required by these wandering angels.

6.6 True Religion as a Strong Anchor in the Multicultural Sea

In his book *The Intimate Enemy*, when Ashish Nandy compares how Rudyard Kipling and Aurobindo Ghose, two individuals who faced the turmoil of living through these interstices of cultural conflict in terms of the “psychopathology of colonialism” (85), he gives the credit to Ghose’s being steeped in the Indian spirituality that sustained him through the crisis. Similarly, if I can employ the term ‘psychopathology of migration’ to the situation of the Sikh youth, it may be suggested that a deeper understanding of the Sikh religion, its founding principles, its struggles and evolution through history, its brush with colonialism and the resultant impact, and its reinvention in terms of its augmented position as a globally spread religion can well provide that strong anchor to these drifting, rudderless ships in the tempestuous sea of multiculturalism, with all its diverse currents.

The policy of Multiculturalism that has been theoretically adopted by most of the nations of the world, especially the Western countries and its impact on the migrants can be gauged from the selected texts. Earlier these countries had been popularizing the homogenizing notion of “assimilationism” inherent in the idea of West as a melting pot, but that entailed the view of urban society as a racial hierarchy, giving only the option of conformity to the so-called inferiors and outsiders. This idea had been well-established and widely documented till the 1970s. Since then, various countries had been proposing ways and policies to accommodate ethnic diversity in a liberal atmosphere and projecting themselves as truly multicultural nations. As Will Kymlicka puts it in his report titled “Multiculturalism: Success, Failure and Future” compiled under an initiative of the Migration Policy Institute, Europe, “multiculturalism was characterized as a feel-good celebration of ethnocultural diversity, encouraging citizens to acknowledge and embrace the panoply of customs, traditions, music and cuisine that exist in a multiethnic society” (Migration Policy Institute, Europe 72). This multiculturalist model, which was touted as a decided progress over the melting-pot philosophy, was expected to allow various ethnic groups the freedom to preserve their cultural markers and retain their native identities in a mutually respectful atmosphere. For the European Union generally and Britain specifically, it appears that the transition from the Empire in which the sun never set to an accommodating multicultural nation sensitive to the individual needs of its diverse ethnic minorities, is a gradual and arduous journey. In spite of its ostensible

claims of providing religious freedom and respect to the ethnic customs and practices of the minorities, multiculturalism seems to have moved only in the direction of a coercive national culture into which the immigrants are expected to integrate, more like the earlier hierarchical assimilation because it is the native culture that reigns supreme. Rather than being seen in the hype created by the government, it is in the everyday enunciative goings-on on the streets, that the reality of multiculturalism becomes visible. With the increased intermingling of diverse ethnicities in the globally connected world of today, the earlier stratified and ideological East-West confrontation of the 20th century has been taken over by a cultural self-awareness and with it an increased cognizance and commodification of the cultural differences.

The complete lack of social acceptance and a feeling of incapability at not being able to do anything about it, makes the individual interrogate his 'patchwork identity', to use Thomas Meyer's expression in *Identity Mania*. In order to be a socially responsible and acceptable being, a person needs to be clear about how he is perceived by the 'others' in terms of his behavior, belief system and ethnicity. Members of racial minorities appear to be in a state of confusion regarding who they really are and where they actually belong. Here, begins an individual's earnest quest for his true identity which according to Meyer is fueled by the politicization of cultural differences in a multicultural scenario where divergent identities are expected to be preserved. Rootedness in one's native identity and establishment of its supremacy over foreign cultures is viewed as empowering and attracts the fragmented psyche of the migrant individual. It requires that the individual possesses the requisite inner strength to deal with contradictory social demands, create an identity indomitable enough to handle divergent social pressures and not feel threatened or insecure. A truly multicultural society would be one that is conducive to the forging of such fearless identities and liberal enough to allow them to flourish simultaneously and collectively. As Will Kymlicka, the diehard advocate of multiculturalism, quotes from *The International Comparative Study of Ethnocultural Youth*:

Immigrants do best, both in terms of psychological well-being and socio-cultural outcomes, when they are able to combine their ethnic identity with a new national identity. Scholars often call this an "integration orientation," as opposed to either an "assimilation orientation" (in which the immigrants abandon

their ethnic identity to adopt a new national identity) or a “separation orientation” (in which immigrants renounce the new national identity to maintain their ethnic identity) . . . Members of immigrant minorities will be more likely to identify with a new national identity if they feel their ethnic identity is publically respected. (12)

So, whatever we are seeing happening the world around, in the recent Black Lives Matter movement in the US, or racial and religious alienation in Britain or even closer home in India in the form of enhanced communalism, needs to be addressed from this perspective. Therefore, rather than pronouncing multiculturalism dead, this research proposes that let us learn from the reasonably successful Canadian example and make efforts to revive it and sustain it in its true spirit of liberal and democratic multiplicity. The differences have to be retained, but neither commodified nor asserted.

Peter van der Veer underscores that the celebration of hybridity, multiculturalism and syncretism in Cultural Studies is a smugness of the elitist world of litterateurs, a world in which literary texts become the sites of “self-fashioning in modern bourgeois culture” (102). He criticizes the modern tendency to relegate religious expression to the private sphere and affirms that religious faith and other forms of cultural difference are not obliterated but transformed and comfortably accommodated by urban consumer capitalism. Pnina Werbner (2015) also reiterates that there are innovative and creative dimensions to religious discourses. “A truly comprehensive study of migrant culture would need, therefore, to go beyond migrant literary texts, such as those by Naipaul and Rushdie, to examine a wider range of textual interventions including those articulated by migrant-settlers in a religious idiom, as these are played out in the West” (104).

According to Brah (1996), multiculturalism in the United Kingdom has come with some trappings. Although it is alleged to have a discriminatory agenda and to be a rhetoric about the “ethnocultural other,” it was also seen by the migrants as a protective deterrent against hegemonic strategies. In Britain, multiculturalism has been called a failed experiment because of its deeply rooted racial inequality and didactic structures. However, there is much that multiculturalist policies can pick from the non-essentialist original precepts of Sikhism, which was created as a

genuinely intercultural faith. It is extremely troubling that in the instance of Sikh immigrants, the true character of Sikhism appears to have been lost on the Sikhs themselves, in the pursuit of their worldly goals. Rather than passing on the religion's true undogmatic ideology to future generations, the Sikh diaspora appears to be preoccupied with concerns about its form, such as turban or *kirpan* campaigns, or with the other anti-racist or relocation reforms, as iterated by Tatla (2006). Undoubtedly the first-generation migrants had to fight hard for survival in a society that was frigid in every aspect and they encountered challenges different from the subsequent generations, for whom the government's multicultural policies and Race Relations ministries apparently reduced racism issues superficially. Frustration and low self-esteem as well as the couples' deteriorating marital relationships and botched attempts to fit in with the new culture, led to their drinking and smoking habits, that the Sikhs consider sinful. It was a transition from extreme deprivation to complete materialism. Evidently then, most of the migrants from the initial waves have neither been effective precedents for their offspring nor taught them the true philosophy of religion, which is not merely constructing Gurdwaras and visiting them, but rather understanding the values on which the *Guru Granth Sahib* is premised and incorporating those into their lives.

As a result of their extreme discontent with their children's social depravity, these parents begin to fiercely resist their outside relationships, and the most alarming fact in England at the period is the regularity with which compelled weddings, elopements, and honour killings are taking place. As elucidated in this research, Sikh autobiographies and memoirs from the following generation like Satnam Sanghera's *Marriage Material*, *The Boy with the Topknot*, Jaswinder Sanghera's *Shame* and *Shame Travels*, and the Sikh character Hardjit in *Londonstani*, all discuss such generational problems. Eventually families that are losing authority, turn to force in the name of religious dogmatism and pressurize their children into marriage alliances that the latter completely detest, and in extreme cases ostracize or eliminate their own children, as in the novel *Southall*, Sadhu Singh does to his daughter Sukhi when she has an affair, or Pala Singh endeavours to do to his daughter Maninder. The complete abandonment of Jasvinder Sanghera by her family is also an instance of the same kind. They continue the highly patriarchal and patrilineal social setup, and the caste hierarchies of their native land under the garb of preserving tradition and religion.

Economic factors such as the struggle for survival in the cut-throat competition in the foreign land could also be playing a part in retaining the caste-divides. To realize, that followers of a religion founded by Guru Nanak on the principles of love and tolerance for all, with guidelines such as "*Janoh Jot na pucho Jaati, Aage jaat na hai*", Recognize the Lord's Light within all and do not consider social class or status; there are no classes or castes in the world hereafter (my trans.; *SGGS Ang 349*) and "*Eko pawan, maati sabh eka, sabh eka jot sabaiya*", There is only one breath; all are made of the same clay; the light within all is the same (my trans.; *SGGS Ang 96*), have degenerated to this level, is indeed abysmal. The absurdity is that some of these parents have low self-worth, maybe owing to the mental colonization and are open to recognizing their children's ties with the *Goras*, but they will not consider having their children married to *Tarkhan* or *Chamar* caste Sikhs, for the dread of creating a horrible image among their peers in the community. This results in a completely misconstrued interpretation and transmission of the Sikh religion to the successive generations.

6.7 British-born Sikhs: A Generation at Sea

These new and mostly uninitiated generations of Sikhs, growing up and living amidst foreign cultures, religions and their influences, need to be well-steeped in their own religion, which sadly has either been neglected or grossly misinterpreted by their preceding generations, allowing or rather encouraging them towards adoption of other faiths and cultural practices. This intercourse is inevitable in a multicultural scenario, specifically in a country such as Britain, which being economically advanced is a coveted destination of people belonging to several diverse religions and cultures. Singh and Tatla quote from Bali Rai's *(Un)arranged Marriage* (2001) the difficult predicament of its main character Manjit:

I've been reading up on it [Sikhism] lately and I've found that Sikhism preaches tolerance and equality towards everything... Men, woman, Black, White. All the same. The problem is that people like my old dad tie all these old traditions to the religion—arranged marriages, all the racist shit [against Blacks], the caste system stuff, things which have nothing to do with religion and more to do with culture and politics and social norms. (qtd. in Singh and Tatla: 198)

Sikh religion, rather than being a religion, is a *panth* (path) or a way of life. It was founded and recommended for all established religions then, to purge them of their unscrupulous and disreputable practices. It spurred Muslims to be better Muslims and the Brahmins to be better Brahmins and did not believe in proselytizing in any way. The fact that it was founded as a method to peacefully deal with the existing interstitial problems in a multicultural (owing to the tremendous linguistic and regional diversity in India and Punjab, especially due to frequent foreign invasions) and multi-religious space that our country constituted, makes it highly relevant in the contemporary global context. The word ‘Sikh’ literally means someone who is ready to always learn and a true Sikh was conceptualised as one who would be able to transcend the distinctions of caste, language, race, religion and follow the path shown by the *guru*.

For the Sikhs, as pronounced by the tenth and the last living Guru, Sri Gobind Singh, the role was thereafter to be played by *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, the sacred text, the ‘Word’ (*Shabad*) in which, was accorded the position of an incarnate *Guru*, after its completion in 1708. The cosmopolitan and latitudinarian character of this compilation is evident from the fact that it exhibits complete respect for the other prevalent religious traditions of that time, and even included the poetic teachings of thirteen Bhakti movement saint poets from the Hindu religion and two Sufi poets from the Muslim religion. The extensive teachings ensconced in this revered text have ubiquitous relevance that transcends time, religion, race, caste and other differences. The precepts prescribe a *Jugat* (method) which is applicable or accessible at two levels: one that leads to spiritual fulfilment and communion with God, and is a higher or other-worldly level, requiring a different kind of *Bhakti* (devotion) but the entry into this level is through the doors of the second, the worldly way of leading one’s life prescribed for every Sikh, which is the path of virtuous living as per the edicts of Sikhism. No devotion or any higher attainment is possible without the initial step as brought out in these lines from *Gurbani*: “*Vin gun keetay bhagat na hoi*” (*SGGS* Ang 4).

The successive generations of Sikhs need to be imparted comprehensive information about the circumstances under which the Sikh religion was founded, the struggles that it underwent during the historical clashes with Muslim rulers and later, the hot and cold relationship with the British colonisers. The important aspect that needs to be

understood by all the youngsters who take to excessive violence and adopt an extremely fundamentalist attitude, such as the one adopted by Ranjit, one of the hardcore and ruthless characters delineated by Satnam Sanghera in his *Marriage Material* or even exhibited by the merciless father Sucha Singh, who murders his own daughter for the sake of family honour, depicted by Harjit Atwal in his novel *Southall*, is that vehemence and radicalism were never the essential ingredients of original Sikhism. As elaborated in Chapter 1, it is evident from the evolution of Sikh religion in the past that Guru Nanak Dev recommended and employed passive but firm resistance to tackle Muslim oppression and freely disseminated his message of love, tolerance and benevolence to people of all religions and castes. In the case of later incarnations of Sikh Gurus again, the notable attribute is that the martial aspects of the race were strengthened majorly by the Sixth Guru Hargobind Singh in the 17th century, who talked of the two swords of ‘*miri*’ (worldly strength) and ‘*piri*’ (spiritual strength) and then by the Tenth Guru Gobind Singh in the later 17th and early 18th century, who introduced the concept of *Khalsa*. It is very significant to observe that these developments were preceded by crucial sacrifices of the fifth Guru Arjan Dev in 1606 and the Ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1675. The words of Guru Gobind Singh, who was himself assassinated along with the supreme sacrifice of his whole family in 1708, protesting against the forcible conversions to Muslim religion, by the then emperor Aurangzeb, convey very well the basic idea underlining the Sikh way of thinking drafted as the *Zafarnama (The Epistle of Victory 1705)*, “*Chu kar az hameh heel-te dar guzasht, halal ast burden b-shamshir dast* , All modes of redressing a wrong having failed, raising of sword is pious and just” (my trans.; Verse 22).

This is one of the most quoted verses from Guru Gobind Singh, while advocating the path of justice but its correct interpretation is pivotal. Lifting of the sword is to be resorted to, as the last effort and not the first one, as wrongly presumed by many. It is forbearance and sacrifice for the right cause, that is more in keeping with the essence of Sikhism. Later incidents in Sikh history such as the Anglo-Sikh wars, the violence at the time of the partition of India, Operation Blue Star or even the anti-Sikh riots of 1984, corroborate the fact that indulgence in unprovoked and unreasonable violence is not a Sikh characteristic.

The concept of *Khalsa* introduced by Guru Gobind Singh was a need of those times, to forge Sikhs who would be emboldened enough to face the Muslim onslaught.

Again it would be pertinent to remember that the Sikh Guru had not tested the martial skills in a contest to choose the first ever pure Sikhs (the *Panj Piaras*), but asked them to volunteer to lay down their lives for the sake of their principles. This notion is not different in any way from the attributes of a genuine Sikh enumerated by the founder, Guru Nanak Dev. The emphasis on the inner purity remains the same for both. The outer form of a Sikh, adorning the five Ks was also recommended to give the Sikhs a singular recognizable identity and infuse in them the sense of a *qaum* (a distinctive race) in those challenging times but the epithet *Khalsa* was reserved for the Sikhs who possessed qualities of both body and spirit and not just the external traits.

It is such qualities that were engendered in Banda Bahadur, a Saint-Soldier, a sort of model Sikh prepared by Guru Gobind Singh to counter the Mughal forces. The Sikhs of those times were then fashioned around those attributes and such virtues were considered desirable. But as brought forth in the first chapter, several Western and Indian historians have recorded a kind of neglect and degeneration of the saintly aspects of interior virtuosity to the escalation of the exterior aggressive and soldierly ones, in the period following the execution of Banda Bahadur which also brought about large scale badgering of the Sikhs and the temporary trouncing of the Sikh collective. The Sikhs did not turn to the 'Word' *Guru* in the form of the teachings of the *Guru Granth Sahib* but rather owing to a serious void of a capable living leader, disintegrated into small *Misls* ridden with internal squabbling and conspiracies. Ranjit Singh's authoritative and administrative control brought the sovereignty back to the Sikh *qaum*, but the resplendent phase was cut short by his early death in 1839, with no immediate heir in sight. The valiant Sikh armies, raised and trained by him, were left to fend for themselves in the face of another imminent foe, the British colonisers.

The British rulers despite much strategic planning in that direction, had not been able to overcome the Khalsa army and annex Punjab during Ranjit Singh's reign. They had been earlier employing the brave Maratha warriors in their armies but had almost exhausted that resource by that time. The death of Ranjit Singh provided them that opportunity and they started looking at Punjab, and especially the excellently groomed Sikh army, as another rich storehouse of valiant and intrepid human resource to exploit, to their advantage. The near-equal contests, despite the odds being against them, fought by the Sikhs during the Anglo-Sikh wars and the rare pluck displayed by them, was admired by all alike and the annals of history are piled high with those

accounts as brought out in Chapter 1. The Sikhs happened to establish a reputation as a martial race, a construct that was going to be abundantly capitalized on by the shrewd British authorities. Desirous of harnessing their characteristic resilient spirit (*chardi kala*, the hallmark of a *Khalsa*) and their battle-hardened skills, the rulers began to employ Punjabis and especially Sikhs in their armies in huge numbers, making them a predominant presence in those. The officers insisted on the employed Sikhs maintaining the proper Sikh form in the army, making it convenient for them to segregate between various religions and their respective practices. This however, encouraged the adoption of the external Sikh form and the soldierly attributes, for the sake of employability by many Sikhs who were not so conscious of the interior qualities needed to be imbibed by a true *Khalsa*. The ‘combative’ identity, that was enhanced and sharpened by repeated invasions on Punjab and sustained oppression of the Sikhs, was internalized by them. In due course the Sikh psyche turned towards a pride in warrior-like attributes at the detrimental cost of a dilution of the virtuous aspects of Sikhism. The colonial masters, projecting them as a martial race, made optimum use of this potential of the Sikhs, who fought and valiantly laid down their lives for the British army during the two world wars. The younger generations of both the Sikhs and the native English born in Britain, would do well to familiarize themselves with this tremendous contribution made by the Sikhs to the British history. It had not even been acknowledged properly, till recently in 2016, when a memorial was erected in Brighton, in the memory of those gallant martyrs. The young Sikhs born in Britain and besotted with the culture of their birthplace also need to be apprised of how despite these selfless sacrifices, the Sikhs on their return to India, were let down and completely disillusioned with the British regime, that ordered the Jalianwala Bagh massacre, imposed the Martial Law in Punjab and eventually partitioned Punjab, dealing a death blow to the Sikh sovereignty. Certainly there are valuable lessons to be learnt from the past that was lived by their preceding generations just like Gilroy says, “The imperial and colonial past continues to shape political life in the overdeveloped-but-no-longer imperial countries. (2004, 2)

Nevertheless, travelling to different parts of the world under the British army, gave the characteristically adventurous Sikhs, an exposure of the world and encouraged them to venture out. The partition of their home-state, also turned out to be a major push-factor in that direction. Thus, began the saga of large-scale diasporic movement

of the Sikhs to various parts of the world. As Stuart Hall says, identity is not a sense of security that places ourselves in eternity but the name given to the diverse “ways we are positioned by and we position ourselves, in the narratives of the past” (Hall 225). Conversancy with one’s past thus, becomes imperative for a comprehensive understanding of one’s positionality in the society. The Sikh past, very much like the colonial intercourse with the Muslims that Sardar mentions in *Balti Britain* (230), has been very conveniently forgotten by the erstwhile colonisers and their successive generations. Refurbishing the shared past and recognizing its obliterated glories will help, the younger generations of Sikhs develop, a sense of dignity in their faith and elevate its public perception in the eyes of the native residents of the Britain.

As brought out by various researchers Brah (2005), Shani (2008), Myrvold (2016), and in the Survey conducted by me, the younger generations of Sikhs are keen to learn about their history and religion, and cultivate in themselves a sense of pride about those. In the present times, as the Sikhs have spread to the remotest corners of the world and Sikhism is fast moving towards becoming a global religion, the need is to reinvent and transmit to the successive generations those aspects of the religion which are highly relevant to the negotiation of their identities in the current multicultural spaces. As Ziauddin Sardar iterates about liberalism not being the monopoly of the Western traditions and advocates the adoption of a progressive approach towards Islam, similarly the Sikh tradition that was originally founded in a multicultural context, proposed a system and a method of living, that can be reinterpreted and utilized effectively to furnish a strong anchor to the rootless and alienated youngsters inhabiting the foreign lands. Sardar cites concepts from Islam, such as *ijtihad* (reasoned innovation), *ijmii* (consensus) and *shiira* (consultation) (2009, XXI) which may be employed to make it more contemporarily relevant. Similarly, Sikh *Gurbani*, offers a *Jivan Jugat* (a way of life) that offers valuable insights into most of the aspects of life and it advances nonpartisan concepts to provide guidance to all seekers, irrespective of caste, race, class or religion and rather, teaches them to skillfully navigate through those differences in multifarious situations.

6.8 Ubiquitous Applicability of *Gurbani* Concepts

The trope of diaspora occurs at several levels in Sikh *Gurbani*. First, there is the fundamental premise, a general conception of all humankind being diaspora in this world, as we are all displaced from our eternal home, beyond this world. It is a unifying concept, bringing human beings together on a single platform and urging them to transcend their petty worldly attachments and lead their lives here, as a temporary guest. “*Aasaa mansa jallaye tu, hoe raho mehmaan*” (SGGS Ang 646). Secondly, as an extension of the same concept, *Gurbani* brings forth the notion of all humans being equated with women “*Is jag mein purakh ek hai, hor sagli naar sabai.*” (SGGS Ang 591), who are living in this world, which is their maternal home. The ultimate communion with God, based on love, will be their marriage ceremony, after which they will migrate to their marital home, like diaspora, where their virtues and what they have learnt during their lives is going to be evaluated in a sort of ‘final judgement’. This conception accentuates two significant aspects that are central to the Sikh ethos, that are the emphasis on inculcating the prescribed virtues and the equivalent, or rather more respected position accorded to women in *Gurbaani*. These virtues of tolerance, compassion, magnanimity, sincere effort and humility, contained in the teaching of “*Kirat karna te wand ke chakna*” are positioned in a very liberal framework, imposing no ritualistic, superstitious or methodological restrictions on the adherents of this permissive faith, which had in fact, been founded to purge the other prevalent faiths of such degenerative practices.

At the interior level too, Sikh religiosity underscores a control over the senses symbolized by the ‘*mann*’ or the mind which has to be grounded and rooted firmly for an inner equilibrium and equanimity. In the absence of this inner peace, which provides a strong anchor, the ‘*mann*’ keeps racing in ten different directions, “*Manua deh dis dhawda*” (SGGS Ang 565) leading to a fragmentation of the individual who becomes a stranger or a diaspora, to himself. Such an imploded being is not at home anywhere, as is well brought out in this line from *Gurbaani*, “*Mann pardesi je theeye, sab des praya*” (SGGS Ang 767). The homing desire and an urge to stabilize pulls strongly, at both the spiritual as well as the physical level and the importance of rootedness and a sustaining anchorage cannot be overstated, especially on alien shores. A deep cognizance of the concepts ensconced in *Gurbaani* and its proper exegesis as ‘Word’ the *Guru*, to guide through the challenging situations that the life

of diaspora entails, shall definitely facilitate their negotiation of their fugacious and swiftly changing identities in multicultural spaces. Alberto Mellucci in his book *Challenging Codes* posits the multiplicity of choices as the real challenge, that the present information-ridden society hurls at an individual, bringing about a kind of disintegration and fragmentation of the self. The burden to make choices and face their consequences adds to the struggle of everyday lived experience. In such a situation, an assuring method to find one's way through the maze of choices, a system that would facilitate and guide in the enunciation and representation of multiple identities, and help them understand the processes of identity formation, would be more than welcome, for such harried beings.

Gurbaani, being a timeless and fathomless resource of knowledge, about life in this world at the microcosmic and its connection with the other worldly system at the macrocosmic level, proffers cosmopolitan insights into many aspects of identity formation, comparable to some concepts emphasised by various theorists. Paul Gilroy, in his *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* projects the Atlantic Ocean or the sea to be representing that space of routes between various identities but at the same time, finds that the space is a problematic one as it fails to completely configure the mutations that occur in an individual's identity, due to the influences of migration. In Sikh *gurbaani* too, the trope of an ocean has been repeatedly used to represent the world through which the individual has to swim during his life-course and the ones who will take the trestle and board the ship of Guru's shelter will be ferried across safely. "*Bhavjal jagat na jayi tarna, jap har har paar utaari*" (*SGGS Ang 1198*). This ocean-like world is a place of uncertainties and apprehensions, to steer through the tempests of which, a strong ship with a well-founded anchor is imperative. It is in this tumultuous space, that the counterforces of ethnic fulfilment and transfiguration according to the demands of the host-society, create what Gilroy cites as an example of 'double-consciousness', elaborating on Du Bois' concept. This notion too is congruent with the idea of '*dubidha*' (duality) propounded in Sikh *gurbaani* at multiple levels. Just like double-consciousness, makes the diasporic individual constantly aware of and splintered between his twoness, making it a disagreeable space, *dubidha* in *Gurbaani* is an undesirable condition that dissuades the individual from the right path. "*Dubidha na padou, har bin hor na pujo, madhi masaan na jayi*" (*SGGS Ang 634*). At the very initial level, it refers to a sense of 'duality' as a consciousness of one's segregation from the Almighty which is alluded

to as the root of all worldly problems, the germination ground of the seed of '*Haume*' or ego (consciousness of self). This one is, of course, more pertinent to the ones aspiring for more profound goals in religion. There are several kinds of dualities manifesting at the worldly level, mentioned in *gurbaani* such as between good and evil, *Gurmukh* and *manmukh*, male and female, *sach te bharam* (truth and falsehood), *kathni* and *karni* (preaching and practice) etc. At a mundane level, this duality also occurs and bothers an individual while making the choice between the virtuous path of righteousness and morality, or the easy-going path of outright materialism. It is in this sense that it approximates more with double-consciousness. It is a dilemma which is congruous to the one experienced by diaspora while choosing between his two or multiple identities. It is like sailing in the turbulent sea, when the shore is not in sight.

Bhabha suggests 'hybridity' and 'liminality' as either the outcomes or strategies devised by the diaspora to come to terms with this duality. They internalize the western values and begin to judge themselves, along with their own culture and traditions, through the gaze of the other, usually inferiorizing the indigenous systems. These hybrids, inhabit the liminal zone and consider themselves, neither here nor there, rather living in a third space connecting the two, which he explains with the symbol of a stairwell in his *Location of Culture* (4). This notion of liminality appropriates to or can be better comprehended in terms of the idea of '*nirlepta*' or '*anjan mahi niranjan rahiye*' (*SGGS Ang* 332) put forward in Sikh *Gurbaani*. It teaches the Sikhs, the method or the *Jugat* to deal with the 'other' surrounding world. The key is to stay detached and unaffected, while staying connected to your roots and origins, and soundly anchored inwardly. *Gurbaani* does not advocate any isolation from, rejection or renunciation of the world. The trick lies in staying in its midst and yet, not allowing it to influence you. "*Hasandya, khelandya, painandian, khavandyan, wiche hove mukat*" (*SGGS Ang* 322). Hybridity, according to Bhabha, further involves 'mimicry' and 'mockery' to subvert the power of the dominant systems. He especially uses the term 'Sly Civility' (93), through which the natives evade the authority with a shrewd defence of their own theology. This idea corresponds very well with the concept of "*thatha baaga*" recommended to the devout Sikhs in *Gurbaani* to deal with the outside world. "*Mann saach naam mera laga, logan seon mera thatha baaga*" (*SGGS Ang* 384). Very similar to 'sly civility', it teaches the Sikhs to join in and superficially behave like the people from the materialistic world, maintaining a kind of outward working relationship with them, giving them an impression of

courtesy but inwardly being true to your values and virtues, and treading the path of rectitude. It is a mimicry lined with an inward mockery, which helps them adjust with and accommodate the 'others'. As mentioned in Chapter 2, when Nandy (1983) says that "one must be in the world but not of it" or quotes Coomaraswamy, who talks of "becoming the Spectator of all things of all times" (109), they are also bringing forth comparable notions. This method can be very effectively employed by the diaspora Sikh youngsters in their everyday enunciative and performative space that they share with the others in the multicultural setting. Being connected with their revitalizing faith which is going to be their anchor, will give them the strength to come to terms with the alienation that they experience in various spheres of their lives. So, rather than being termed 'coconuts' who are brown on the outside and white inside, as they have internalized the western values, if they follow the method suggested here instead, they can turn into some kind of 'apricots' (ostensibly, like the whites but brown on the interior) who are internally well-grounded in their indigenous values but externally integrate well with the native or host culture.

Gilroy, in his other book *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (2004) alludes to a general melancholia pervading among the natives in Europe, at having lost their ascendancy over their colonies and the whole world. In Britain especially, having to put up with the presence of immigrants who were once their subjects, is looked upon as an irksome intrusion leading to everyday complications. As an alternative to that acerbity, he envisions a 'conviviality' based on a planetary humanism that focuses more on the likenesses between human races than their differences and works with a belief that communication is possible with a recognition of mutual worth. This notion is analogous to the concept of '*sada vigaas*' (eternal bliss) in *Gurbaani* which exhorts the Sikhs to stay positive, optimistic and in high spirits despite the challenges and obstacles in their path. "*Nanak bhagtan sada vigaas*" (*SGGS Ang 2*). In fact, being deeply connected with the faith is believed to fill the person with a general sense of euphoria, turning one into a congenial and pleasant individual. Gilroy also talks of revisiting the horrors and atrocities unleashed by various races on each other, in the 20th century as it might reveal some insights on how to deal with contemporary global circumstance of living in close proximity to difference, in a harmonised and intrepid manner, without any trace of hostility. It is here that Sikhism, which was founded as a path in an actually multicultural and multi-

religious setting, has valuable propositions to make. As Avtar Brah (2005) iterates, multiculturalism, which was touted as a panacea in the earlier problematic contexts of hegemonic assimilation and integration, has its own set of problématiques. Being adopted both as a tactical option against coercive adaptation by the migrants and as a discriminatory initiative towards the cultural other, leading to the stereotypical commodification of difference by the natives, it is claimed to include both ends of the spectrum. In the survey conducted in Britain, only 36% of the Sikh respondents agreed that multicultural policies of the government are working well. It needs to be remembered that Sikh religion was founded as a revolutionary mode of life, at a time when corrupt practices had crept into most of the prevalent faiths. It was initiated as a cosmopolitan approach, that was essentially non-essential and highly pertinent to the multi-religious setting. Being ubiquitously applicable, it was open to diverse castes and credos and exhorted all to rise above their differences and tread a new, yet unchartered course of unbigoted and unbiased devotion, rid of any ritualistic or methodological restrictions. The kind of liberal and democratic space for diversity envisaged by that prototype, in which each faith is treated with dignity and given ample freedom to harmoniously reach its own acme, can be effectively incorporated into today's multiculturalism. Gilroy's expectation from multiculturalism (2000), of respectable citizenship and a quest for a space that would be autonomous in respect of occidental modernity, will be very well achievable in a multiculturalist model along these lines.

Again in *Challenging Codes* (1996), Alberto Melucci emphasises the significance of collective altruistic action as a conscious expression of one's efforts at reconnecting oneself to one's roots. Willfully engaging in such philanthropic action and expressing solidarity with like-minded people, according to him, is cathartic in the highly complex information-controlled societies of today that create exclusion, minoritization and alienation. The motivation for such positive action comes from lay or religious inspiration, he avers. In Sikh *Gurbaani* the concept of selfless service or 'sewa' has a pivotal position and has always been emphasised for an individual's moral and spiritual resuscitation. Jasvinder Sanghera, in her memoir, shares how her mother insisted on she and her sisters' doing *sewa* at the Gurudwara and even doing the household work with the same sentiment. But it was dictated more as a religious

order to the young girls rather than inculcated as a devotional feeling, with a specific purpose. In Sikhism this benevolent practice is recommended for fostering humility in and effacing one's self for inner contentment and maximum inclusion. In fact, the rich and unique tradition of serving 'langar', that was introduced by the founder Guru Nanak Dev, also had the same humbling, unifying and gratifying belief as its basis. Inclusion and compassion thus, remain the cornerstones of true Sikhism, and it is to these aspects of it, that the young Sikhs need to be drawn and motivated to participate.

6.9 Self-representation or Reinforcement of Stereotypes

The basic premise on which this research focused its exploration of the Sikh religious identity and its transmission among the different generations of Sikh diaspora in Britain, was pieces of literature. These are composed by Sikh writers who either migrated to or were born in Britain and have Sikh characters as protagonists in their works that include fictionalized writings or novels, and memoirs and autobiographies of Sikh authors, both men and women. Hall, in his books *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (2003), *Selected Writings on Race and Difference*, edited by Paul Gilroy (2021), *Modernity and its Futures: Questions of Cultural Identity* (1992) edited by Hall and Paul Du Gay, places a great value on the politics of representation, especially the representational practices and regimes in the context of representing 'others'. There are precise cultural and political procedures that have regulated, governed and normalized representational and discursive spaces in the English society, which is how, he elaborates, these representational strategies place others at the margins (2003, 253). To address these issues, a form of representation was needed that contested prevalent norms of representation—first in performance styles and later in literary, visual, and cinematic manifestations, as well as opposed and altered them, wherever possible (253). Referring specifically to the case of Blacks, he emphasises how the fetishized and stereotypical nature of their representation, seriously required to be disputed:

In these spaces blacks have typically been the objects, but rarely the subjects, of the practices of representation. The struggle to come into representation was predicated on a critique of the degree of fetishization, objectification and negative figuration which are so much a feature of the representation of the black subject. There was a

concern not simply with the absence or marginality of the black experience but with its simplification and its stereotypical character. (253)

A positive self-representation, iterates Hall, would work as a strategy to contest the subjectively objectified nature of representation by the native 'others' and would contribute towards transforming what he calls the "relations of representation" in the discursive space. (253) Thus, he assigns a constitutive and formative role to representation, rather than a merely reflexive one. Adding to this in his article "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" (1990), he dwells on how the "practices of representation always implicate the positions from which we speak or write—the positions of enunciation" (222). He brings out the notion that though we speak about ourselves in our own idiom, yet there is always a gap between the one who is speaking or writing and the subject who is written about. They are, according to him, "never identical, never exactly in the same place" (222). He refers to these as locations of intonation, the tone which we choose to express in.

In the Chapter 4 of his book *Representation*, which is titled "The Spectacle of the 'other'", Stuart Hall uses commercial advertisements, magazine illustrations, and even novels and movies to highlight the process of stereotyping of the blacks. He explains the difference between 'type' and 'stereotype'. Type, according to him, is how we make sense of diverse groups in terms of the roles performed by them and we assign them membership of different categories (personality types) by positioning them in various orders of typification. Stereotyping, on the other hand, is the process of reducing everything about the individual to those characteristics, popularizing and magnifying those and "fix them without change or development to eternity" (258). Fanon (1963) calls the same procedure fixing with a dye, in the context of Africans. So stereotyping, "essentializes, naturalizes and fixes 'difference'" (258). The second aspect of stereotyping, that Hall emphasises is, that it segregates the standard and appropriate, from the unusual and inappropriate and then "*excludes* or *expels* everything which does not fit, which is different" (258) thus symbolically fixing the limits and marginalizing or inferiorizing everything that does not conform. The third facet of the process brought forth by him is that stereotyping is facilitated by inequities of power and is usually targeted against the supposedly lower-ranking or

the dominated sections. He quotes Julia Kristeva who uses the word ‘abjected’ meaning ‘thrown out’ for them and Derrida who points out the “violent hierarchy” always prevalent in “binary oppositions” (266). He also cites the example of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* and says, “Orientalism was the discourse by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively” (267).

In the context of the cross-cultural encounters between the Sikhs and the British, the representation from the Western perspective was done majorly during the colonial times, when the visitors were making attempts to comprehend the local culture and various religions of their empire. As detailed in Chapter 1, the Western historians such as Major James Browne, George Foster, John Malcolm, Henry T. Prinsep, W.L. McGregor, Joseph Davey Cunningham and Lepal Griffin wrote copious accounts of the exploits of the Sikhs and contributed generously towards constructing, projecting and encouraging the development of a particular aspect of the Sikh identity which suited their own interests. Especially after the Anglo-Sikh wars, the martial-race theory was created, popularized and as Hall (2003) says ‘fixed till eternity’ about the Sikhs. It was exploited by the colonial rulers to their optimum advantage. Other notions, such as Sikhs being irrational, aggressive, impulsive and the Sikh religion being ridden with rituals, caste divisions and superstitions were expressed by Western historians who focused specifically on the study of religion such as W.H. McLeod, Roger Ballard and Ernest Trumpp. Ballard, for instance in his essay “*Panth, Kismet, Dharm te Qaum: Continuity and Change in four Dimensions of Punjabi Religion*”, included in the book *Punjabi Identity in a Global Context* (1999) quotes from Mark Juergensmeyer's work and elucidates the distinction which he makes between the *panthic*, *dharmic* and *qaumic* dimensions of religion. Ballard explains that the spiritual dimension of religious ideas and practice could be termed *panthic*, the this-worldly moral and/or social dimensions can be covered by the term *dharmic*, while the capability of the religious concepts and its affiliations to bring about ethno-political mobilization, can be named the *qaumic* dimension, which is more or less close to the original understanding of these terms. However, it is the fourth dimension added by Ballard to Juergensmeyer’s categories that turns out to be problematic. He calls it the *kismet* dimension and includes the superstitious aspects such as ‘*nazar*’ (evil eye), *jadu* (magic), *tuna* (black magic) etc. as part of the Sikh belief system. It is

such erroneous interpretations that lead to stereotyping and are detrimental to the faith. There is no evidence of these ‘*tantrik*’ concepts being valued in Sikhism. In fact, it was initiated to bring people out of these misconceptions, though it will have to be admitted that some Sikhs, especially women, under the influence of the remnants of ancient Brahmanical or Muslim systems, have still not been able to remove these fully, as represented in the literary texts by the successive generation writers, discussed in this research.

John Malcolm was among the few who explored genuine Sikh resources, gathered authentic information, and gave a more balanced and sympathetic account of Sikh religion and its history in his *Sketch of the Sikhs* (1812). However, the most accurate explanation of Sikhism by a Westerner came from Max Arthur Macauliffe in 1908 in his translation of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Such accounts by the Westerners provide a valuable and balanced outsider perspective on Sikhism. A detailed analysis of the views expressed by various Western historians on Sikhism is available in Darshan Singh’s *Western Perspective on the Sikh Religion* (1991). The stereotypes were thus created and perpetuated, since the colonial times and have become an indelible part of the racial memory of the erstwhile colonisers as well as been internalized and imbibed by the Sikhs themselves.

As far as representation of the Sikh diaspora in Britain in the present times, that is in the 21st century is concerned, there are factual accounts based on research by scholars such as Verne A. Dusenbery, N. Gerald Barrier, Eleanor Nesbitt, Knut A. Jacobsen and Kristina Myrvold, the last two primarily focusing on the Sikhs in Europe. But in the literary field, especially among fiction and prose writings, there is hardly any example of Sikh characters being delineated by any native English writer. Thus, for representation of the Sikh diaspora in literature and to understand the variation in their perspective on religion and its transmission, it was necessary to turn to the writings by the Sikh writers themselves. As seen from the selected texts, writings by different generations were picked up, to observe the comprehension of the Sikh religion and changes in the attitudes towards it, with the transition from one generation to the other.

This self-representation, according to Stuart Hall, can be an effective strategy to contest the existing stereotypical and fetishized representation by the others and work

towards transforming the “regime of representation” (2003), to use his words. However, in the context of writings by the Sikh diaspora in Britain, the observations have been quite contrary to this concept. The representation of the Sikhs and Sikhism by writers belonging to different generations of diaspora, has been more a corroboration of those stereotypical notions than a counterstatement to those.

As elaborated in Chapter 4 which deals with the writings of the first generation migrants, the representation of the Sikh characters and their perspective towards religion in their works, is more an endorsement of the established stereotypes about the Sikhs and the erroneous understanding of the religious precepts of Sikhism. Among the selected texts, Harjit Atwal’s novels are thankfully written in the native tongue Punjabi and are not accessible to the ‘others’ in Britain, unless they are translated. In his novel *Southall* for instance, the Sikh men are depicted as very hardworking and shrewd, with tremendous entrepreneurial skills and sharp business acumen, but at the same time they are shown to be alcoholics, womanizers, corrupt and frequently resorting to violence. Their gross misinterpretation of Sikh religion is evident in the sharp caste divides that still blight the community, despite having moved to Britain and are visible in the form of separate caste-specific Gurdwaras. Honour killings and honour-related abuse of youngsters, which form the central theme of this novel and carry on into its sequel *British Born Desi*, are glaring examples of Sikhism and its original tenets, being totally misconstrued or ignored by the earlier generations of migrants. Rather than making efforts towards understanding the foundational concepts of the tolerant religion themselves, and genuinely transmitting those to their progeny to facilitate their adaptation into their alienated birthplace, they employ an orthodox and inflexible interpretation of it to control them and prevent their perceptual migration into the Western culture. Their own religious perspective remains divided over the issue of diverse castes and their established hierarchy, within the Sikh community and the same is imposed in the name of religion, on the youngsters who wish to choose their marital partners from outside their respective caste, community or even race. The positive thing about Atwal’s novels however, is that some migrants of the first generation are shown to widen their mental horizons and reconcile to such developments, which are almost inevitable in the multicultural situation prevalent in Britain. Such an approach is more in keeping with the original

propositions of Sikhism. Otherwise, the stereotypes about Sikhs being aggressive and impulsive, and Sikh women being excessively superstitious, are strongly corroborated by the depiction of characters in the novels.

Sikh religion forms an environmental setting to the lives of various characters, though not playing a very significant role in their lives. It becomes more of a ritualistic dissembling for them. Their devotion is limited to just occasionally visiting the Gurdwara, participating in the processions taken out on *Gurpurabs*, joining the protest marches against the turban-ban or compulsory helmet wearing etc. and bequeathing a very superficial understanding of the religious notions, that focuses on its caste-ridden and ceremonial aspects, to their successive generations. The Gurdwaras, which are segregated on the basis of specific castes, are depicted as seats of political rivalry and a means to earn recognition in the local political scenario for personal benefits. Disputes among various factions over the funds generated in the Gurdwaras are portrayed as regular features. The elders in the novels are themselves given to smoking and alcoholism, leading debauched lives of extra-marital relations resulting in illegitimate children, have strained and broken marriages, but are trying to use religion and cultural conventions as a defence to take charge of the lives of their children making the novel a critique of patriarchy. This is also their way of proving their allegiance to their respective castes within the community, which is probably sociologically strengthening in a foreign land and economically rewarding in the highly competitive scenario of limited employment. On failing to do that, they take recourse to extreme violence. Ultimately, the characters who indulged in or attempted honour-killings in the novels are shown to lead regretful lives of repentance. The writings conclude on an optimistic note advocating acceptance of circumstances, and consequent change in attitude and religious perception, for the proper transmission and sustenance of Sikh religion among the young diaspora Sikhs.

Among the writings by the first generation migrants, the autobiography of Kailash Puri, which she wrote in collaboration with Eleanor Nesbitt stands out for her comparatively better appreciation of religious concepts. She preferred to write it in English, despite having been a writer in Punjabi all her life and that is an indication of her inner tranquility and plain-sailing assimilation into the adopted culture of a foreign land. The title *Pool of Life* reflects the notion of *Bhavjal* or the world being

compared to a sea that has to be navigated through, from Sikh *Gurbani*. It is her story that can be counted in the category of representation that Stuart Hall recommends, as it does shatter some of the stereotypes about Sikh men and women. Her life is not a smoothly navigated voyage, but she faces the tempests strappingly and gives the credit for that to her abiding faith which had been instilled in her right from childhood by her religiously oriented and devout family.

Since her story is not the stereotypical trauma narrative that is usually expected from Asian women, it does become a sort of counter-narrative to the dominant discourse about Sikh women in particular. Being well-anchored in her faith, she is at home wherever she goes and adapts effortlessly. Despite not being educated beyond class 5 and being married to a complete stranger at the tender age of fifteen, with her husband's encouragement she goes on to become not only a self-assured and popular author but also finds herself capable of offering advice liberally to others in their personal matters as an 'agony aunt'. She understands what it means to be a Sikh, the literal meaning of which is a 'learner throughout life', and continues to learn languages, home-keeping, gardening, cooking and various other skills and even goes on to teach those to other learners. She is well-steeped in the religious values and implements those as a way of her life, though her thinking too, is not completely rid of superstitions. She takes, the 'Word' form of Guru that is the *Guru Granth Sahib* along, to all her abodes and seeks guidance from it constantly. Differences with her children and arguments about their Westernized attitude rattle her life too, but she is able to give them a patient and understanding hearing, becoming the kind of parent that Sikh *gurbani* recommends. Her children, in due course beginning to comprehend and assimilate the religious concepts elucidated by her, lead their lives according to those and go on to become academic achievers with stable relationships. She is broad-minded enough to be cognizant of the fact that cultural inheritance or religious precepts cannot be simply imposed on the Sikh youngsters born and brought up in the multiethnic and liberal atmosphere of Britain. She advises parents to catch them early and tolerantly inculcate in them, respect for and a clearer understanding of their religion.

Chapter 5 was a critical engagement with the conflictedness of identity experienced by the writers of the successive generations, their perspectives on their parents' interpretation of religion and their representation of those in their writings. As

mentioned earlier, Ashis Nandy (2009) in his essay “The Psychology of Colonialism” cites how under the influence of the Western psychology, which preferred hyper-masculinity and competitiveness to feminism and innocence, certain elitist Indian writers had internalized the Western values and had sought to redefine the Indian culture and mythology to suit those values, psychologically becoming what the colonisers wanted them to become. Something analogous to this is evident in the writings by the younger British-born writers of the Sikh diaspora in Britain. These are youth in their thirties, who in the absence of a proper and intelligible initiation into their religion and its foundational concepts at the right age, have under the influence of their liberal and ostensibly more rational Western education, come to perceive their own religion (or at least their parents’ interpretation of it) and religious practices with undue skepticism and sometimes disparagement.

Unlike the writers from the first generation, who found writing in their native tongue Punjabi, cathartic, these younger authors have chosen to express themselves in English, the language of their birthplace. Hall writes in the Introduction to his book *Representaion*, “language is central to meaning and culture and has always been regarded as the key repository of cultural values and meanings” (1). By selecting to express themselves in English, these Sikh writers indicate a shift in the values and meanings, and reveal the gaze through which their own religion and culture are going to be viewed. A self-representation from this perspective is more likely to reiterate the dominant discourse and its stereotypes, rather than disrupting or countering it. The restrictive and coercive attitude of the parents, influences them negatively and in extreme cases has violent outcome in the form of honour-related abuse and killings, a fact revealed in most of the writings.

Jasvinder Sanghera’s trilogy of memoirs for instance is a typical example of trauma-narratives, that narrates the horrendous experiences that she herself suffered and heard from other victims of similar abuse, who took help from the NGO Karma Nirvana that she started after her sister’s death due to a forced marriage. Being the boldest out of her seven siblings, who had been dominatingly controlled by her authoritative and rigid mother, who with her gender bias was especially stringent with her daughters, Jasvinder refused to accept her directions about her marriage. She preferred to elope with a Sikh *Chamar* boy instead, who again was not approved of, by her conservative *Jat* Sikh family which is considered higher in the orthodox caste-hierarchy of Sikh

castes, but has no significance as per the dictates of original Sikhism, a religion initiated as a way of life contrary to such practices in other religions. Her father had been busy earning his living and religion did not have much consequence in his life. The mother on the other hand was outwardly very religious, but was bogged down by a complete misunderstanding of the Sikh religion. Prone to superstitions and baseless rituals, she used her position as a mother to impose her notions on her children and steer their lives accordingly. This self-representation which reeks of rebellion against and absolute disapproval of the ideas of the parent generation, thus ends up reinforcing the stereotypes about Sikhs being superstitious, inclined towards ritualistic worship, and caste-divisions and *izzat* (family honour) still being given a prominent place in their philosophy. The older generation, which is keen on preserving and disseminating its religious and cultural inheritance, is doing more disservice to the cause, as in the long run it drives the successive generations away with its inflexibility of religious concepts.

Avtar Brah (2005) iterates that a “homing desire” is a natural corollary to migration and deterritorialization. The youngsters for whom their parents’ adopted country is the homeland, desperately yearn for a home in that alien environment. As explained in Chapter 5, these youngsters are sufferers of a triple alienation. Outside their homes, they face the racially hierarchized marginalization at the hands of the natives who have mindsets riveted with colonial stereotypes. At their parents’ distant homeland, that some of them have never even visited, they are always accorded the status of foreigners and are not able to feel at home. The third and no less significant facet of their psychological and emotional isolation comes from their real homes, which should have been their safe harbors, but which rather become the most ‘unheimlich’ places for them, due to the obdurate attitude of their parents who continue to live in the past carrying the baggage of colonial memories and impose their interpretation of the cultural and religious inheritance on the succeeding generations with the objective of preserving it and guarding their progeny against the extraneous influences of the multicultural scenario, including its Westernized education. Such an approach to religion and its forced exaction in this manner cannot be farther from the precepts of Sikhism, which advocate tolerance and a broad-minded acceptance on the part of parents who should first understand the basic premises of religion themselves and then, gently guide their children on to that path.

In the memoirs and the fictional world of the other Sanghera, that is Satnam Sanghera too, the impression created about the first generation migrants or his parents remains one that substantiates the stereotypes of superstitiousness, irrationality, Sikh women being self-sacrificing, and highlights the gap between precepts and practice in Sikh religion. He contemplates them and in case of the fictional account titled *Marriage Material* etches them with the rational and liberal Westernized gaze, typical of his birthplace and its education. As a youngster belonging to that British-born confused generation with fragmented selves and fluid identities, he genuinely narrates that dilemma experienced by the Sikh youth when they cannot decide as to where they actually belong. They initially consider themselves British and attempt to assimilate with complete external transformation but realize that however much they wish to, they will never be truly accepted by the natives despite their grand promises of multiculturalism. With a keen urge to belong and appreciate their own culture, to be cognizant of their roots, they look towards the preceding generations for direction. But having moved away from their homeland nearly centuries ago, the parent generation has carried only a frozen version of culture (Du Bois, qtd. by Gilroy, 1993) and offer a merely ritualistic observance of religion to be transmitted to the successive generations. Being completely put off by the parents' relentless and restrictive version of religion which they find illogical, the youngsters are more likely to adopt a rebellious and reproachful attitude towards it.

Maintaining the '*kes*' (unshorn hair) for instance is one of the intractable dictates of Sikhism for maintaining the *Khalsa* form initiated by the tenth Guru. Nicola Mooney says in her article "The Impossible Hybridity of Hair: Kesh, Gender and the Third Space" (2016) that keeping the hair long is an aspect of Sikh identity in which there is no scope for hybridity. It will not be acceptable to the Sikh *Rehatnama* (Code of Conduct) under any circumstances and the ones who do not abide by this code, shall not be included among the Sikhs. Among the diaspora Sikh youngsters, as gathered from the memoirs, getting their hair cut is a liberating act of defiance against the stringent rules about their behaviour in general and Sikh religion in particular, enforced by their parents. That kind of control cannot be sustained by the parents beyond the children's teenage. Whereas Jasvinder Sanghera does it only for pleasure and with the motive of assimilating with her White friends, Satnam Sanghera cites several reasons such as being ridiculed by his friends for his topknot, his freedom

being curtailed as he was dependent on his mother for tying his hair, along with no logical explanation being given to him for keeping it long. The parents need to be cognizant of the fact that they had themselves chosen to move to a foreign culture, where the appearance of Sikh children, especially boys, will make them stand out in a crowd and exacerbate the racial alienation that they had to inevitably face there. It is imperative therefore that the issue is dealt with, with utmost patience and the significance of this religious practice is elucidated to them from as early an age as possible. Any deviance in the matter too, needs to be viewed empathetically. An oft quoted line, which though has not been uttered by any of the Sikh Gurus, yet when understood in the context of *Gurbani* is relevant here. “*Rehat Pyari Mujhko Sikh Pyara Nahi* (Sikh philosophy) which, when translated means what is within, is more important than what is on the outside. It is more important to inculcate the right virtues recommended by Sikh religion, than to just assume the outer form of a Sikh. Rather than just compelling the Sikh children to adhere to the prescriptions of religion, the parents need to initiate them into its basic postulates, familiarize them with its process of creation, its past evolution, its struggles and challenges. It is indispensable that the schism between the Western liberal values with their emphasis on individual satisfaction and the Eastern notions of community based on *dharma* and *sewa*, be elucidated to them. Just shepherding them to the *Gurdwara*, playing the Sikh prayers around the home and compulsorily sending them to Punjabi classes, which most of the parents seem to be religiously doing, is not enough. The religion which is originally liberal and accommodating in its basic tenor, can be reinvented and contemporized, in keeping with the changed circumstances, especially for the diaspora Sikhs, just as Ziauddin Sardar recommends for Islam in the Introduction to *The Britannica Guide to The Islamic World: Religion, History and the Future*.

6.10 True Sikh Stream of Life, Drying up in the Diasporic Desert

The genuine Sikh *panth* or way of life then, has been gravely misinterpreted and fallaciously transmitted by majority of the parent generation of migrants to the youngsters born and brought up in Britain. The impression created on the minds of these vulnerable and disgruntled youth, especially girls, is that of Sikhism being a very restrictive, stringent and orthodox religion which is still ridden with caste distinctions and meaningless rituals, and in which *izzat* or honour is valued above, even life. Another misconstrued aspect of Sikh identity which has become an

indelible part of the Sikh psyche and has been adopted by many youngsters, especially males, is the notion of Sikhs being an inherently martial race. These youth don a perpetually aggressive demeanor and consider it their foremost duty to resort to violently remedying any injustice happening around them, turning into self-styled henchmen and custodians of religion. Characters such as Ranjit in *Marriage Material*, Pala Singh in *Southall* and Hardjit in *Londonstani* illustrate this very category. The Sikh writers from the British-born generation, whose works were selected for this research, have represented and critiqued Sikhism for this very erroneous interpretation and have reinforced the stereotypes about Sikhs, created since colonial times.

It is such Sikhs with belligerent and radicalized mindsets who usually take to the fundamentalist path and have been demanding a limited territorial space for the Sikhs in the form of PunjabiSuba/ Khalistan and were believed to be misguidedly instrumental in the violence-ridden phase of terrorism, which irreversibly damaged Punjab and the Sikhs' image in the world. In this context, I would agree with Verne A. Dusenbery (2008) who, in his article "A Sikh Diaspora? Contested Identities and Constructed Realities", citing Guru Nanak's travels to various parts of the world in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, emphasises the naturally expansive and universal nature of the messages of the founder of Sikhism, rendering it suitable to be a world religion:

The founder of Sikhism in effect circumambulates—and thus metonymically and metaphorically incorporates—the known world. The effect is intentionally outward looking and inclusionary. Far from delimiting a territorial boundary to the Sikh world, the Guru's travels suggest a boundless and boundaryless world of Sikh sacred space which carries itself into the very heart of Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim lands. (99)

Guru Nanak's message was inherently ubiquitous and could not be limited to the confines of any territorial boundaries. Thus, as brought out in Chapter 4 from Atwal's novel *Southall*, majority of the diaspora Sikhs disapproved of the idea of Khalistan. Despite being away from their natal background, they are never really distanced from their religion. This aspect of Sikhism, is very relevant from the point of view of the diaspora, as it is well-illustrated in *Gurbani* that any space can be lent sanctity by the

presence of the Guru, whose authority is now vested in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. “*Jithe jaaye bahe mera Satguru, so thaan suhava Ram raje*” Wherever my True Guru goes, that place is beautiful, O Lord King (my trans.; *SGGS Ang 450*). As pronounced by Guru Gobind Singh about the Sikh *Sangat*, wherever five Sikhs assemble in the presence of the Sacred scripture, the Eternal Guru shall grace the place. So, the rhetoric of a territorially specified Sikh space goes against this disposition of Sikh ethos.

In the eyes of the younger generation, religion has been reduced to a ‘hollow halo.’ This perspicacious, responsive and interactive next generation of Sikh diaspora needs to be conducted into the religion right from childhood and better acquainted with its emergence, conflicts, and advancement. They must be properly explained the importance of *Khalsa* in Sikhism. They must understand that a true and pure Sikh is not just someone who takes on the form of a *Khalsa* but along with that, lives up to the prescriptive virtues of the Sikh faith. When they recognize the right way to live, parents will not have to complain about their children marrying outside their caste, because they will be raising Sikhism to a higher level, permeating caste boundaries and creating more Sikhism enthusiasts and adherents around the world. Guru Nanak founded a revolutionary path in which he advocated the attainment of the *Sehaja avastha* (a state of equipoise), in which the individual is in harmony with the universe. It is a transcendental state which helps the individual rise above the various distinctions and hierarchies, through self-realization. Gurbhagat Singh, in his book *Sikhism and Postmodern Thought* (2016), compares this state to postmodernism as it is beyond the binary oppositions and posits the “necessity to organize social and cultural network in contra-distinction with the ways of the ruling class” (53). It was the original method of passive resistance, later practiced by Mahatama Gandhi during the struggle for India’s independence and appreciated by Ashis Nandy (2009), which he terms something that was difficult to comprehend for the invaders. Guru Nanak’s was a decolonizing vision that destroyed the subjugating power metaphors of the Mughal rulers, the Brahmanical Gods and their constructed social stratifications. Respect for basic human rights was a natural corollary of this method that created liberated individuals and envisaged the possibility of a new world-order or *weltanschauung*.

Atwal too, in his writings shows the virtues ensconced in Sikhism eventually winning, as the heroic father Sucha Singh, who killed his daughter, returns after the jail term and laments the devastation of his family and the father Paala Singh who contemplated murdering his daughter Maninder and disowning his sons Mohan and Amar for inter-caste marriages, in due course reconciling to the circumstances. The affirmative and encouraging observation that emerges from this research is the keenness displayed by the Sikh youth to fully grasp their religion and mould their lives according to its directions. Jasvinder Sanghera, for instance, in spite of the unspeakable treatment meted out to her by her parents and family ostensibly on the basis of religion, travels to India and visits the Golden Temple with the purpose of holding a discussion with a learned Sikh there to clarify her doubts about Sikh religion and its practices. Similarly, Satnam Sanghera, despite committing the sacrilegious act of getting his topknot which had been very painstakingly maintained by his mother during her very challenging circumstances, cut against the edicts of Sikhism, says that given a choice, he would always choose to adopt the same religion. The transition from his Westernized gaze towards his own past to a deeper understanding of his native culture is discernible in his subsequent work *Empireland* (2021) which is a book about how “imperialism has shaped modern Britain” (Book cover). It is a work that in fact corroborates the central point made by this research that the shared past has a significant bearing on the current inter-cultural relations between the English and the Sikhs in Britain. In the chapter “The Origins of our Racism”, Sanghera has very boldly criticized and openly blamed the British for the persistent racism, gazing at them as a descendant of colonialism, indicating a definite departure from his earlier perspective. In his support he quotes the Jamaican British poet Linton Kwesi Johnson who has said, “I’ll be crucified for saying this but I believe that racism is very much part of the cultural DNA of this country, and probably has been since imperial times” (138). Even in the survey conducted by me in Britain, the British-born respondents have revealed a deep desire to acquaint themselves better with the origins of the religion and its historical evolution for a better grasp over its basic tenets.

Alberto Melucci (1996) mentions altruistic action at the individual and community level as an example of consciously reattaching oneself to one’s roots. Such action in which the individuals willingly participate, is inspired by uninitiated or religious

inspiration and is an expression of allegiance with a particular community, according to him. In Sikhism, such deeds with philanthropic spirit are accorded a central status as *sewa* (selfless service) and the tradition of *langar* (common community kitchen), and have been an inseparable part of its original philosophy. It is very heartening to learn that young Sikhs have well imbibed this value of indiscriminate service towards society, as evidenced from the commendable ameliorative work done by Jasvinder Sanghera for the victims of honour-related abuse, or the Sikh youth actively contributing to the cause of organ-donation and other health issues during the testing times of COVID 19, as learnt from the British Sikh Report 2020. The characteristic intrepidity of the Sikh youth, both men and women is being better channelized by their augmented selection and ready enlistment into the British Army as seen in the BBC documentary *Remembrance: The Sikh Story* (2010). A good number of the members of the successive generations of Sikhs are thus faring well as far as engaging in the activities recommended by their religion is concerned. These will be effective in redeeming the religious dignity of the otherwise successful diaspora Sikhs in the multicultural scenario of Britain. True Sikhism however, would be better preserved and its teachings better transmitted if the youth are able to grapple with the meaning of its non-essentialized core that is liberal and latitudinarian and not restrictive in the least. They have to aspire to reach that state of equanimity which comes from having a firm anchor for stability. As *Gurbani* emphasises here, “*Kya padhiye, kya guniye, kya ved puranan suniye; padhe sune kya hoyi, je sehaj no milyo soi*, that acquisition of all knowledge and deliberations upon it, are futile if they do not naturally lead to inner peace” (my trans.; *SGGS Ang* 655).

Again, to conclude with late Albert Melucci’s observation that in the contemporary information societies, where the erstwhile individual dimensions such as the brain structure and biological development too are susceptible to manipulation and the basic meanings are vulnerable to interference and reconstruction, the real power lies in the hands of the agencies that have the capability to inform. Generating and disseminating the right information to counter the hegemonic palimpsest by the regimes of representation, thus becomes indispensable for any religious community. As early as 2007, Preminder Singh Sandhewalia, in his fictional book *Beyond Identity*, passionately searches for an idea to ensure that the true identity of the Sikhs continues to prevail. His characters are Sikhs who are doing exceptionally well in Britain

commercially, but they do not want to lose their history, culture, language and religion in the era of globalization, conformism and mass-culture. As a diasporic minority, they want to be accepted as equal players in the future world market-place. The protagonist Ranjit suggests a method of solving this quandary with the employment of the latest technology to create information repositories, websites and apps, where the seekers, desirous of in-depth knowledge about religion and clarification of any related skeptic queries, can have easy access to the answers. Learned scholars from all over the world need to be involved, to deliberate in detail upon the religious concepts with the Guru's word in the form of the sacred scripture being the final authority. Now in 2021, many such sites and apps already exist such as *Dhur Ki Bani*, *Sikhnet*, *Sikhiwiki*, *Amritsarovar.com* and many more which carry translations of *Gurbani* into other languages, elucidation of the lines in multiple languages, information about the Sikh history and the evolution of Sikhism. Such sources, if chosen discreetly (as there are several encouraging the fundamentalist and radical sentiments), can serve efficaciously not only to impart the correct information and preserve religion in its pristine form for the successive generations, but also to weave together the diverse threads of Sikhs spread all over the world into a single fabric, enveloping all distinctions of castes and forms. It is Sikhs enlightened by such authentic knowledge of Truth who will aspire for that state of equipoise known as '*sehaj*', will be able to rise above the distinctions in a postmodern and post-material way, and by impressing and inspiring others take Sikhism to the pinnacle of a world-religion.

The concluding chapter has thus, revisited the ideas and observations made in the preceding chapters, in the direction of crystallizing the notion of Sikh identity in terms of the processes of its negotiation by Sikhs of different generations and arrived at the point of how it is perceived and represented by the contemporary Sikh writers in Britain. The conclusions drawn on the basis of the exploration of the written texts, along with the real evidence gathered on the basis of relevant documentaries, the British Sikh Reports and the Questionnaire for the Sikh citizens of Britain is expository in nature and has revealed the diverse interpretations of various facets of the Sikh faith in particular, and the veracity of multiculturalism and its related policies in Britain in general. The current inclinations in Sikhism there and its level of assimilation into the other cultures through negotiation of challenges faced by the diaspora Sikhs, has been fathomed to a certain extent. The research has also offered

some suggestions towards a better integrated and firmly anchored Sikh *qaum*, steeped in the true philosophy of Sikhism, especially to the successive generations, which seem to be more in sync with the basic tenets of this liberal faith and are already working towards a sort of religious revival. This research was limited to the study of the Sikh migrants to Britain but offers several points of entry for future research in the areas of Sikhism in the other countries and could also be further extended to other races and ethnicities among diaspora.