

# Sikhs and Their Destiny

- A Blue Print -

By

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Abstract:

A proposal is presented to help Sikhs advance their destiny by properly channeling their intellectual and financial assets. It is suggested to categorize each asset under a theme, and to promote participation of known persons under each theme thru National Conferences. As it matures, more people of Sikh origin will be drawn into each theme by inspiration as well as through a desire to share their experiences, and hence will contribute to the advancement of the Sikh destiny in many ways.

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Sikhs have great intellectual and financial resources/assets. Most of these are often spent on large cultural events, receptions, and Gurudwara politics. Most of our get togethers and interactions take place during these high pitched, noisy events that often focus on trivial matters. With the number of these events ever on the increase, we remain preoccupied with ourselves and are, unfortunately, losing the vision to think beyond our immediate selves.

ਜਿੱਥੇ ਸਭਿਆਚਾਰਕ ਮੇਲਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਭਰਮਾਰ ਹੈ,

ਉਥੇ ਵਿੱਦਿਆਚਾਰਕ ਮੇਲਾ ਕਿਤੇ ਵੀ ਨਜ਼ਰੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਆਂਦਾ।

In addition to their cultural events, Sikhs should involve themselves in highly profiled fields to be visible and be recognized at national and international levels. If properly channeled, Sikhs can shine and can acquire a position of “influence and power,” given their collective and individual resources and assets. For example, when a Sikh is at the cutting edge of areas such as economics, engineering, medicine, management, sports, he/she can be more visible and bring recognition to our community. That would be possible by a pursuit of excellence in these fields. How do we achieve all of these? One of the premises of this paper is to make Gurudwara politics, where tons of our financial resources are wasted, irrelevant. Secondly, to provide exposure to hitherto ignored talents of Sikhs in the above noted areas, especially for those Sikhs who shy away from those lavishly arranged celebrations characterized by trashy songs and free-flowing alcohol, but do not find any other platform for exposure of their ideas, talents, and achievements. And thirdly, to bring out role models among us to inspire our younger generation. That is where lies the future of Sikhs and their destiny. All these three are explained below:

We must first select important themes to organize our talents and resources. The themes are shown below:

|                   |               |                       |                       |                        |          |                        |
|-------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------|------------------------|
| Sikh<br>education | Sikh<br>Youth | Sikh<br>Professionals | Sikh<br>Entrepreneurs | Civic<br>Participation | Outreach | Gurdwara<br>Management |
|-------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------|------------------------|

- . status
- . future plans
- . tasks

Notice that Gurdwara politics/management is only one of the themes and hence not that relevant to the core strength of our community. Also notice that under each **theme** possible agenda as an example under Sikh Education are shown. We can thus make platforms available for various assets/talents of Sikhs who are at present turned off or not able to advance the image of our community.

Then collect contact information of individuals belonging to each of these themes. That is going to be a tedious and time consuming task, no doubt. This should be followed by sending invitation letters to these individuals stating that we have come to know of your work/achievements and we wish to invite you to come and share your experience at a National Level Conference. Recall how Gujarati Association in the USA has, over the years, been able to hold annual conventions on grand scales in convention centers. Granted that we hold huge and successful religious celebrations. But, our focus must expand to other fields. Under the suggested themes, we must hold our National Conference/Convention in a highly organized, articulate, and polished manner in a prestigious University or convention center. This should be a land mark conference with significant participation by younger generations and internationally recognizes Sikhs from the above mentioned fields.

At this conference, each person from a given theme can present ideas identifying potential opportunities in these themes and recommending action items. Their progress report can be presented at the next conference. This process when continued can hopefully bring out the best in our community, and our destiny will start taking a wonderful shape. In due course of time (sooner or later), we must plan to present awards to recognize outstanding achievements.

For Sikh youth, educational scholarships can be instituted to promote excellence in education. If Sikhs desire greater understanding and influence, Sikhs need to rally around strengthening the educational base of our community. By adopting the pursuit of academic excellence as a core community value, Sikhs will achieve extraordinary economic, political and social success. Consider for example the story of the Jewish people. Why are they so powerful? Simply by making excellence in education a priority. At present, Jewish people are 30% of the US Supreme Court, 30% in Congress, 10% in Senate and 30% in senior government jobs. They control media and banks. They also have the largest number of Nobel Prizes (over 110). We have, for long, been neglecting the importance of education, especially higher education in science, technology, and medicine. In recent years, we celebrated the centennial of the Gaddar Movement, highlighting Gaddar Baba's pioneering contribution in starting the Gaddar Movement. In fact, there were no Babas at the founding of the movement. They were young, well-educated persons. Teja Singh (35 years of age) was educated in London, Columbia, and Harvard Universities. Kartar Singh Sarabha (19 years of age) studied chemistry at UC Berkeley. Jawala Singh (36 years of age) bought an apartment complex only a few blocks from UC Berkeley campus for Sikh students to live free and study at Berkeley. Sohan Singh Bakhna (42 years of age) became the first secretary/president of the movement. In Vancouver, Canada,

when our population was about 20,000 (?) during 1912 - 20(?), about 100 students were studying at the University of British Columbia (UBC). Now, when our population is well over 250,000, barely 200 students are at UBC. The average knowledge base of our community is lower than that of others in Canada or in the US.

The thrust of the main idea here is to bring about all the talents to bear upon the major fronts (themes) to advance the destiny of our community. This process would not only take our attention away from wasteful celebrations but also from the undesirable role-models represented by trashy-song singers and cheap actors. This would especially be beneficial to our younger generations who have been falling victims to these, including drugs, for want of nothing else to turn to.

The above mentioned ideas/suggestions are more readily applicable for Sikhs in the diaspora living in the USA, Canada, and the UK. As the process will mature, "Think Tanks" can emerge. These think tanks can then provide advice and directions for the development of Punjab, as well.

In Punjab, the political climate can interfere in the formation of such themes. However, with determination and persistence, well-meaning persons can accomplish these goals and can also set up coordination with diaspora Sikhs for the development of Punjab. For example, they can together help identify Punjab's natural resources and help set up compatible industries thereby providing an employment base for youths. Think Tanks on economic development can provide directions/advice on such issues. But, this is a long shot for Punjab. At present, diaspora Sikhs, particularly in **USA & Canada**, should experiment with this proposal and fine tune it to its maturity.