

Foreword: A Foundation to Rest Upon

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“Of the many foundations upon which humans rest, words are probably the most solid.”

- Nikki Giovanni, *Acolytes* (p. 26)

This issue celebrates the work being done to lay foundations while offering a resting place to sit and contemplate the horizons we can imagine next. As one paper in this issue argues, these two practices of foundation-laying and imagining are inseparable. At the end of our two-year tenure as co-editors, we are encouraged to see work that captures the nuanced and collective spaces for Sikh healing, community-building, and knowledge-production that are rapidly organizing and building upon foundations laid by generations prior. Through this intergenerational knowledge-building, scholars reflect on old foundations as partial explanations for productive growth and challenge these partialities to imagine otherwise.

What is more typical in the academic profession is the prioritization of the self as the sole knower and expert, where partiality is seen as an imperfection to target and defeat. The alternative approach, modeled by many authors published during our tenure, relies on a combination of trust, faith, compassion, and humility – values that ground academic and community work alike.

In the first article, “Culturally Responsive Mental Health Support: Insights from a Sikh and Punjabi Community Helpline in the United Kingdom,” Melody Mann and Gobinderjit Kaur share findings from their study of *Sikh Your Mind’s* mental health services. While limitations exist due to the nature of a primarily volunteer-run non-profit structure, the immense benefits of grounding mental health services and therapeutic conversations in Sikhi are evident across contexts. Their article demonstrates the need, both within and outside the community, to offer greater support to these burgeoning programs.

Next, “Sikhi and Queerness”, a summary of collected testimonials developed by Sher Vancouver LGBTQ Friends Society staff Karn Singh Sahota and Puneet Kaur, offers rich and unique insight into the intersectional experiences of queer and trans Sikhs. Through brief narrative encounters, readers are invited to think deeper about how Sikhi manifests in the lives of queer Sikhs, how they may experience comfort in Sikhi but alienation from Sikhs, and how intentional community care can bridge these gaps.

“Gender Abolition, Limits of Sikh Feminism and Critique” by manmit singh builds upon these narratives by interrogating the elusive horizon of gender equality in Sikh spaces. Singh critiques how the existing canon on Sikh feminisms remains caught in a framework of *dubidhaa* [doubt] regarding whether Gurmat’s [Guru’s guidance] so-called gender equality can be realized. Drawing on gender abolitionist thinking, they propose moving beyond gender as a “problem space” to be solved and instead toward developing a relationship with Guru Sahib that is not stuck in such a frame.

Finally, “To Sikh or not to Sikh: In Defense of the Sikh Shawl” by Frank Ames offers a historiography of Kashmiri shawl design transformations during and after the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Building on his previously published work, Ames argues for recognizing a distinct “Sikh shawl” tradition, highlighting the uniquely Sikh cultural tropes and motifs. This essay will be of particular interest to any scholars who explore the era of Ranjit Singh’s rule and its cultural impact, as well as those interested in the long-standing textile production of Punjab.

The issue also includes a book review by Sohini Saha of the important text *Sikh Nationalism: From a Dominant Minority to an Ethno-Religious Diaspora* by Gurharpal Singh and Giorgio Shani. Saha’s review highlights the important “contextual historical understanding of nationalism rather than an essentialist one” that the book provides, while also encouraging academic explorations of Sikh nationalisms that engage the critical role Sikh women have played in these movements. A recent publication by Baljinder Singh Kotbhara, *Kaurnama* (2024), offers such an intervention, underscoring once again how foundations and horizons are always unfolding together.

We are thrilled to pass on the stewardship of *Sikh Research Journal* to incoming Editor-in-Chief Rajbir Judge and extend our deepest gratitude to former Managing Editor Sonia Dhami, whose vision and care have shepherded this journal into a new era of open access publishing in Sikh and Panjabi studies.

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References

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