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Foreword: Narrative, Narrativization, and Storytelling

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As the summer months career into hotter and more humid days, we continue to bear witness to narratives' potency. While some historical narratives were created and are no longer active, today we observe and notate how historical narrativization determines the rationale, logic, and decision-making guiding our world. Bombs, tanks, drones, and now AI, are funded according to the narratives of terror that have been constructed over decades, justifying and legitimizing the war-making machines that lurch forward against all odds (Kumar, 2020; Makaryan, 2023; Tilly, 1985). Technological advances are lauded despite their continued detriment to international disasters, like climate catastrophes. How one narrativizes is dictated by the prevailing status quo of control, order, and capital accumulation; without awareness and recognition that this is happening, we hurl towards imminent self-destruction. Historical narrativization limits our understanding of the present by presenting History as seemingly as fixed as Truth or God, while also undermining the particularities of embodiment and lived experience as "truthful" realities to consider (Kaur & kehal, 2024). Like the tempered glass surrounding a museum exhibit or the tiniest synthetic fibers woven together to create bulletproof Kevlar, to narrativize is to attempt to present (selected) stories of the past as unbreakable, solid fixtures - both created, both seemingly indestructible.

Out of necessity, we create moments of pause through writing and reflection. We feel called to retain and retrain our minds towards the possibilities of a world and ways of living more timeless - an opportunity to meditate beyond *the rulers of just a few days[1]*. In the pauses, we grapple with the present, seeking glimpses into other worlds beyond this one. By identifying that a process of narrativization is even occurring, one challenges the prevailing narrative. Is there a canon, or is there a narrative of standardizing a canon that serves as canon? By challenging these narratives, one unhooks the standardization of the canon from the power of storytelling.

In this issue, we meditate on the power of stories – plural, contradictory and messy - while considering the potency of the archive and history to ground such realities simultaneously. How can one grapple with the process of making Sikhi real as an ultimate Truth while also negotiating the particularities and stickiness of Sikhi in one's own life (Ahmed 2006)? In their own unique ways, the contributions in this issue offer unique insights into this question: the issue of narrative development and the interrogation of a standard representation of facts or reality.

The first article, "Betting on God", by Dr. Anil Matoo, analyzes the framework of Pascal's wager as a useful metaphor for contemplating the notion of "betting on" the prospect or process of attaining *Naam* (the divine name, spiritual truth), rather than investing in *Maya* (worldly illusion) during one's lifetime. Pascal's

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[1] As Bhagat Kabir Ji reveals in Bilaval, the worldly rulers last for four days (i.e., a short period of time), showing off their false power.

wager is a framework to consider the utility of belief in God as an investment of time and effort seeking salvation or denying such a possibility. Reworking such a framework through Gurbani (Sikh scriptures) and Sikh ethics, Matoo rethinks the possible overlaps between Pascal's methodology of the bet versus Gurmat's (Sikh teachings and philosophy) framing around the necessity to resist Maya and reorient towards Naam. Such an exercise offers a new way to consider how to engage with Western philosophical traditions while developing one's relationship with Sikhi and Sikh living.

In the second research article, "Women's Education in Colonial Punjab: Significance of Women Teachers and Training Institutions," Sarabjeet Bamrah provides a historical overview of the transformations in Punjabi education from pre-British Raj era into the period of British rule. In particular, her article highlights the gradual decentralization of women's teacher education and the emerging possibilities for women as educators, or key power holders in a Punjabi institutional and societal context. As the education system transitioned from Punjabi-created and -centered schooling systems to a standardized British English curriculum, Punjabi women, though highly educated, were no longer prioritized as possible instructors in a colonial context. The continuing impact of this, as Bamrah argues, is necessary to understand contemporary gender inequities or dynamics generally regarding women's education in Punjab.

Finally, a closing essay by Arvinder Goomer, titled "A Kaur's Story," demonstrates how storytelling can elucidate sticky points of narrativization within Sikh embodied experiences over the last few decades. Tracing a journey from a post-Partition India into the tumultuous and precarious 1980s of Delhi, and onward through a migration story of uncertain settling in the US Sikh diaspora, Goomer's personal essay reflects some of the themes of her recent book of the same name. Largely focusing on the tensions of reckoning a Sikh Punjabi women's immigrant identity in a *sangat* (community) that fell short of practicing a vision of true equality, her narrative demonstrates the empathy we gain for those who came before us as we step into shoes not so unlike the ones they wore. Furthermore, Goomer's self-reflection shows that, at any point of one's life, there exists the possibility to reject one's internalized patriarchy.

This issue concludes with a book review from Yousuf Saeed, an independent scholar and filmmaker based in New Delhi, of Radha Kapuria's 2023 book *Music in Colonial Punjab* published by Oxford University Press. Saeed offers another type of historical narrative or archive of music tradition in Punjab with which we can better contextualize the present.

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