

*University of Hertfordshire*

# Sikh Society

**Annual Report  
2010-2011**

**The Hertfordshire Sikh Society promotes activities that appreciate the culture, history and ideology of the Sikh way of life.**

## **OUR VISION**

Our vision was to increase awareness of the Sikh society among students of the University of Hertfordshire, heightening their understanding of Sikhism as well as strengthening and bringing our community closer together.

## **OUR VALUES**

At the heart of our society were the values of equality, freedom and tolerance. Through our teachings, we emphasised that all beings are equal, and gender, religion, colour and caste do not increase or decrease one's status. Both Sikhs and non-Sikhs attended our events, and were never pushed to practice or follow Sikh beliefs, but rather encouraged to live a virtuous life. In terms of tolerance, we advocate that we must respect those whose views differ from our own. Seva, simran and honesty were highlighted throughout the year also.

## **OUR AIMS**

As the university lifestyle is bursting with distractions, our vision was simply to keep the Sikh community in touch with their roots, potentially aid their development in terms of Sikhi, and also promote the understanding of Sikh values to those who were new to the religion.

Students want to enjoy their time at university, and so we made sure the events we held would be fun and enjoyable as well as educational and Sikhi-related, rather than just lecturing people on the Sikh beliefs. We began by welcoming people to become involved in fun activities, and then initiated Gurdwara visits and Sikhi-related talks and discussions. We tried to alternate 'fun' events and 'Sikhi' events to ensure that our members were offered the chance to socialise and relax as well as to develop their understanding of Sikhi. We aimed to bring in more speakers to give talks, begin kirtan events as well as introduce Sikh studies classes.

## INTRODUCTION

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This year I was given the opportunity to be part of a great, loving team 'The Sikh Society of Hertfordshire University'. I was involved from the end of 1<sup>st</sup> year and was still quite new to the society, so I spoke to some of my elders who explained to me how Sikh societies were run at their time at university. From these discussions, I gathered a few innovative ideas which proved to help with the development of the society.

After attending my first 'Cha and Samosa' party with some friends who weren't as interested in Sikhism as much as I, we discussed what we thought of the event. They appeared uncertain and seemed to have not enjoyed the event. I then asked them what they would want from such an event, what would make them want to come again and what would push them to become more involved. Their answers made it clear to me that I had taken for granted all that my family had taught me in terms of Sikhi.

I realised that the committee needed to make the Sikh society more approachable and open to those who are less involved, and less knowledgeable in terms of Sikhi because it was these people who were not attending the events – the people who would potentially benefit the most from them. The committee was made up of Sikhs who already had basic knowledge and understanding of Sikhi, stepping stones that not all others had been given. By providing these for others, I believed it would help them relate more to Sikhi and our society, as well as increasing the footfall to our events. Everyone lacks knowledge in certain areas so by bringing together more people, the potential for learning is much greater.

I believe that you cannot and should not force anyone to do anything in terms of religion, but encouraging others to congregate together (sangat) is key to developing greater understanding and knowledge of Sikhi, and further develop belief. Spending time with sadh sangat gives one peace, eliminates fear, and aids spiritual development.

## MEMBERSHIP & OFFICERS

### **SELECTION PROCESS**

We kept on those from last year's committee who wanted to continue this year, as well as gaining new students over this year to make up next year's committee.

### **SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP**

We had 42 paid members this year, the highest of all the university's societies. Around 30 were dedicated members who came to the majority of our events. The cost of membership at the University of Hertfordshire is £10 to join your first society, and if you're already a member of another, the cost is £5 to join your next. Those who became members were offered the society hoodie for £15, rather than the £20 for non-members (the additional £5 going towards financing the society).

### **ACADEMIC STUDIES**

On the anniversaries of key events in Sikh history, talks were given.

### **ASSISTANCE**

A family business helped us buy paintballing tickets, which will be used at the beginning of the new academic year!

### **SPORT**

Throughout the year, sport activities were freely available for Sikh society members at a local gym – this was very successful until exam time came around! Gatka classes are currently being organised and will hopefully be taking place once every 2 weeks next year.

SOCIAL LIFE

## **FRESHERS WEEK**

In Fresher's week, we promoted the society to potential members, offered them freebies, informed them of upcoming events and developed a list of contacts. We also kept laptops with us to help new members sign up!

## **EXCURSIONS**

We organised a very successful trip to a few Gurdwaras in Southall, and also attended the London Sikh societies' Collaborations event in London.

## COMMUNICATING WITH STUDENTS

### **MODES**

We used various ways of communicating with students at Hertfordshire and local surrounding areas...we used flyers, texts, university papers, email, Facebook, blackberry messenger group. The most effective way of making people aware of events was getting members and close friends to change their Facebook profile picture to the event poster! Other students and friends were tagged in these photos to maximise the number of people who would see the poster. We also had a committee phone on which students could contact committee members if they had any problems, particularly around the time of events. We tried to involve people from differing friendship circles at the university with the hope that our society would reach out to a greater number of people.

PARTNERSHIPS

## **EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

We had talks with Khalsa Aid, who will come to the university and give a talk explaining what exactly they do, and this coming year we will hopefully be conducting some charity events to raise money for them.

Naujawani.com was a great help in providing literature and making links between other universities.

## FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

### **SUMMARY**

Hoodies were ordered from Pronta Print, working out at £15 each. We first ordered 10 of each size, and after selling them all we ordered the necessary numbers. We sold just under 50 Sikh Society hoodies over the year.

Paintballing tickets were bought using a personal budget and will be used in the beginning of the coming academic year.

Refreshments for events were purchased willingly by committee members rather than use the society budget.

### **THE FUTURE**

After a year of experience as part of the Sikh society committee, we have a much better idea of what to do. We will begin at Fresher's Fair offering cha to those who become members (and those who show enough interest in us!), a raffle will be held for a track day and upcoming events (such as paintballing) will be well-promoted. We will then hold a 'Cha and Samosa' party...perhaps with an element of surprise!

We will then start football every week for members, as well as Gatka classes which are currently being organised. This year we thought we, the committee, would give a talk ('Bhandhi Chor Divas'), which due to being too lengthy was not one of our best events! From this we learnt that next time we hold our own talk, we should speak about the topic and then hold a 'question and answer' segment, then probe discussion amongst students to give their views about the subject. This year, one of our members is running the university's 'Raise And Give' team, which will help us arrange many charity events with the university.

Sikh studies classes were meant to be held at the university, but due to being in Hertfordshire, it was difficult to source a talker, although Harvy from Naujawani.com did make much effort to do so. Hopefully these classes can be arranged and initiated at the beginning of the new academic year! If any societies would be interested in collaborating with us on a trip to Thorpe Park and/or Paintballing, please contact us through Herts Sikh Soc's Facebook account!