

Sikh Soc

Imperial College London

**Annual Report
2011-2012**

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

OUR VISION

- We have continued efforts previously made to bring together the Sikh and Punjabi societies. This is because there is an overlap in the values and aims of both societies; the benefit of this aim is to broaden our social network and also share special occasions in our common heritage.

OUR VALUES

- Imperial College London Sikh society is based on building friendships with Sikh students in the university and also creating networks with students in other London Sikh Societies, giving the opportunity for students to support each other both spiritually and academically.
- Another core value of our society is to integrate with other faith societies through Imperial Interfaith by attending other events and inviting people of different faiths to Sikh society events.

OUR AIMS

- Imperial College Sikh Society aims to provide a relaxing environment where members have a chance to reflect and escape the pressures that come with university life.
- The society aims to further members' knowledge of Sikhi through interactive talks at weekly 'Simran' sessions delivered by various visiting speakers, social events and online social networking.
- We aim to serve the needs of society members. This can be achieved through setting up regular music classes, language classes and classes to develop understanding of the 'Guru Granth Sahib Ji'. Further to this we aim to extend our support to our members with careers advice and academic support.

INTRODUCTION

At Imperial College, the Sikh society has always been a relatively small society, which is partially due to the smaller number of Sikhs at Imperial than the other London universities. However, we always asked why we attracted only a small proportion of the already small number of Sikhs attending the university. Aside from students wanting to devote their time entirely to their studies, the main response was that our society didn't provide activities that were varied enough to appeal to the general Sikh student population. We had our weekly simran sessions, attended by the same small number of familiar faces, and aside from that we didn't really offer much else. So this year, we experimented with different things to do for our weekly sessions in efforts to attract more students. Debate sessions, presentations, movies/documentaries were the different mediums used to both educate and discuss various issues in our community. Another major change this year was Imperial's involvement in Nishaan – a newly formed collective organisation of all the London university Sikh societies run by the students themselves.

Jasdeep Singh
Joint President

MEMBERSHIP & OFFICERS

SELECTION PROCESS

An Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held where people wishing to run for a committee position had the opportunity to do a speech. The audience then voted for the strongest candidate on ballot papers and the newly chosen elected committee was announced. In addition, for those who could not attend the AGM, people could vote by emailing Sikh Society in response to the manifestos submitted by people running for the positions.

SOCIETY OFFICERS

Presidents - Amritpal Singh and Jasdeep Singh
Vice-presidents – Pam Uppal and Bharpoor Singh
Secretary – Hashvinder Rai
Treasurer – Simran Sada

STUDENT SERVICES

ACADEMIC STUDIES

There were Sikh Studies classes were run by an external organisation called 'Naujawani.com', who provide support for Sikh societies across the UK. The classes covered a wide topic area, which included Sikh history, philosophy and present day Sikhism. The classes required the attendees to get involved by essay writing on the discussion topics, which were submitted for competitions. Students were committed to the classes and were grateful for the one hour lesson a week, which enabled them to learn systematically about Sikh history.

ASSISTANCE

The Imperial College London Chaplaincy provided support if students needed it. There were rooms available where students could go to relax or take a break from university commitments. Naujawani.com provided us with help, support and advice throughout the year.

ACTIVITIES

Although the number of attendees to certain events was high, generally we found it difficult to sustain a regular number of attendees to our weekly events. This was despite our efforts to provide a greater variety of group activities. Since many people did not want the weekly simran sessions replaced entirely, we decided on a timetable whereby 20 mins of simran would be incorporated followed by a different activity each week – either discussion of the hukamnama, a documentary, debating, an educational presentation etc. This was preferred by the attendees, however it still failed to draw in the number of freshers that the society usually attracts each year. There was general discontent with Collaborations not being hosted solely by Imperial, despite the good intentions with which Nishaan were contributing. There was great difference in opinion even amongst the committee itself in terms of how the society should be run in terms of both weekly events and major events like collaborations.

SOCIAL LIFE

FRESHERS WEEK

The year was started off with the freshers fair, where we had a stall with freshers packs provided by Naujawani.com and BOSS. We aimed to attract as many freshers as possible and inform them of what the society could offer them in terms of events. This was then followed by the cha and samosa party where the freshers were given a chance to meet the existing committee and socialise with one another too. They were at this point informed of Nishaan, the London collective of Sikh societies. There were also flyers printed informing students of Nishaan events for the freshers, however there was generally a lot of discontent with Nishaan, with it being seen as an external organisation with ulterior motives as opposed to something Imperial was a part of itself.

CELEBRATIONS

The following month of December was host to Collaborations, which was organised collectively by Nishaan in efforts to bring more unity and interaction between the different Sikh societies. Although the event was historically hosted by Imperial, we wanted the event to tie in more closely with its purpose which could not be better fulfilled than by the societies collaboratively hosting it. This Collaborations was different in the sense that it was not solely a sit-down dinner, but was given the theme of a Sikh variety show, where different young and talented Sikhs were given a platform to perform.

CAMPAIGNS & EVENTS

MAJOR EVENT

The Sikh society collaborated with the British Sikh Doctors Organisation to host the first UK screening of the movie 'Ocean of Pearls'. This attracted the largest number of people the society has ever had at any event aside from Collaborations. The movie was about a Sikh doctor working in the western world, and since the university specialises in medicine and science, our society was a good match for the hosting.

In the same month, we hosted a special event remembering 1984 in which the movie 'Amu' was shown following a presentation done on the events surrounding 1984 delivered by the presidents. This was the most well-attended session of our weekly meet-ups we had, and use of video in educating was really effective.

We also hosted a Nishaan event in March called 'Drugs in Punjab'. This was an informative talk delivered by Ranjeet Singh Shahi surrounding the problem of drugs amongst youth in Punjab, the causes as well as the possible solutions.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

SUMMARY

Unavailable

THE FUTURE

A question which we must ask ourselves, as our previous presidents have done, is what do the students want from this society? Most students at an academically intense institution like Imperial College will attend a society if it provides something that contributes to their university experience OR provides something that they cannot get elsewhere. Whilst Imperial College Sikh Society does provide a social setting in which to meet other people from similar backgrounds, this alone is not sufficient to satisfy the needs of the student population. The most effective thing our society did in this vein was to offer the Sikh Studies classes run by Naujawani.com. These provided students with an avenue to learn about the Sikh religion in a systematic way specifically catered to those studying at higher education level. This was something many of these Sikh students could not get from elsewhere in their home lives, and proved to be the most popular thing we offered. If these were to be continued and the other weekly events built upon to provide students with a good social/educational/spiritual experience, the society can only get better.