

Sikh Soc

**Queen Mary,
University of London**



**Annual Report
2011-2012**

The Queen Mary University Sikh Society promotes activities that appreciate the culture, history and ideology of the Sikh way of life.

OUR VISION

QMSS aims to educate and create awareness of Sikhism to all its followers studying within this university. This was done by weekly sessions, collaborative events, charity work and by creating a friendly and comfortable environment. It is open to all students regardless of their faith or background.

OUR VALUES

We treat everyone equally and do not judge other people's beliefs.

OUR AIMS

- To promote the teachings of Sikhism
- To provide comprehensive and easily accessible information about Sikhism through various mediums
- To engage all Sikhs in Sikh Society activities regardless of the extent of their knowledge of Sikhism so that the requirements of all Sikhs are catered for
- To hold social events and activities whereby Sikhs can better network with one another
- To provide a friendly social support network
- Make a student's time at Queen Mary more enjoyable.

INTRODUCTION

The year commenced with a really ambitious team working together towards the common goal of improving the society based on the success of the previous year in order to continue it forward. During the summer we had planned a rough outline of how the first semester will be organised.

During the summer we also established a strong relationship with other university Sikh Societies across Greater London. This led to Queen Mary University of London joining a collaborative network under the umbrella name of 'Nishaan'. This meant all universities participating could host and share events on a bigger scale than ever before thus widening the sangat. Additionally, it also improved the quality of our events.



At the Freshers Fair, we tried to draw in people with the literature we had available and engaging with them to get any feedback about what they would like to see from the society itself in the year. This year we did have a Barts Representative, who drew in people from the Medical and Dental school. As Barts are not allowed to have any affiliation with religious societies, we were not able to include Barts in our society name. Many of the students at Barts did not know that the society even existed previous to this year. This is one of the biggest points we would like to improve upon next year.

The meet and greet also known as 'Soda and Samosa Party' was our first event. Even though it did not run as smoothly as planned, we managed to correct all our mistakes before the next big event which was Queen Mary's turn to host the Kirtan Jam the following month.

During our weekly sessions every Thursdays we focused on a different topic or debate each week. We used a rotation system which allowed every member of the committee to take lead on a topic or theme which reflected the diversity of our team. At the beginning of the year we allocated a topic and a person to each week, so everyone in the committee knew when they had to prepare for a weekly session by so they could plan their time around their studies which was very useful. We did



change this around during the year, however it did help with the initial planning stage.

By the second semester our committee diminished to half the number of original sevadars due to those having other commitments. Therefore, the remainder grouped together and made the best out of the situation as they could. This did not hinder the quality of the remaining events and weekly sessions we organised.

MEMBERSHIP & OFFICERS

SELECTION PROCESS

In March 2011 society members were asked to show interest if they wanted to be part of the upcoming committee of 2011-2012. The President and Co-president at the time appointed us to positions they thought we would be most suited for. Due to the small nature of our society we did not have a wide selection of members showing interest and we did struggle to fill extra roles. We can improve on this next year by getting freshers involved in the committee at the beginning of the year, so they can see the work that goes into the Sikh society behind the scenes.

An extra role was added this year which was the Barts Representative who tried making students on the Whitechapel campus aware of the QMSS and Nishaan events happening around London.



SOCIETY OFFICERS

Preeti Kaur Dulay – Co-President
Amandip Kaur Kandola – Co-President
Kulraj Singh Bhangra – Vice President
Sukhdit Singh Bansal – Treasurer
Sukhmit Singh Chaggar – Marketing Officer
Inderveer Singh Khaira – External Affairs Officer
Jaspreet Kaur Bahra – Barts-Representative
Dalvir Singh Soor – Events Co-ordinator
Randeep Singh Samra – Football Co-ordinator

SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

Number of paid members: 31

Average attendance for weekly sessions: 8-12

Average attendance for a general event: 8-10

Data collected through membership: 130

Cost of membership: £5.00

ACADEMIC STUDIES

The Sikh Studies Course offered by Naujawani.com was accessible to students for a second year running. This was a big accomplishment for our society as we had an excellent response because the class was consistently attended by approximately 8 – 10 people over a 14 week period. For Sikh Studies 'Year 1', Gurdhit Singh, Kiran Kaur Bhogal, Amardeep Singh Malhi and Param Singh Lotay were four students who achieved 100% attendance which doubled on the success of the previous year where we had two students achieve 100% attendance.

An additional class was added, a follow up to the first year was labelled, 'Sikh Studies Year 2' which allowed students who had undertaken the first year to further their knowledge by studying topics in more detail. Four students from QMSS participated in this which reflects on our society's commitment to improving their learning academically about Sikhism. This class will be offered in October in the next academic year for any students who were unable to make the Sikh Studies Weekend. We hope that in the future this class is still offered as we are sure that more QM students will sign up for this as it is very popular and the course is taught well.

WORKSHOPS

Santheya Classes and Tanti Saaj classes were offered to students through Nishaan which meant that King's College London and UCL hosted these weekly classes. Unfortunately, only one student attended these classes and we think it might have to do with the fact that students would rather have a class on their own campus rather than travel to another university each week. In addition, the Santheya classes clashed with our weekly Thursday sessions which meant that students had no option but to choose to attend one of these.

Students gathered at City University on the 22nd February 2012 for an audience led interactive discussion, called Equality Street. We saw by discussing issues that arise together how it could help each individual to see a different perspective and encourage them to think of advising themselves on what is best for them and how they can make a positive contribution in creating equality.



ASSISTANCE

Whenever we needed support we were able to contact Naujawani.com regarding any issues we had. The advice was always helpful and we are genuinely grateful for their counsel. We were also supported by other members of other University Sikh Societies which was a great comfort during turbulent times throughout the year.



ACTIVITIES

SPORT

The only sport we were involved in was football. We participated in the Queen Mary inter-society Football Tournament where we placed second overall in the league, just missing out on goal difference. We also submitted a team for the Kings Football Tournament but were not fortunate enough to retain our title as champions from last year.

We did have the opportunity to take part in a Netball tournament with other London universities but there was not enough interest to be able to create a team.

ARTS

An artistic endeavour we took part in was 'Collaborations – The Sikh Variety Show and Dinner' where students from all over the country came together and enjoyed a night full of incredible Sikh talent that included artists of all kinds such as the Canadian rapping sensation Mandeep Sethi, the talented artist Inkquisitive Illustrations as well as many other Sikh acts. A Queen Mary student that took part in the evening was Dunjhaise Singh who demonstrated his fantastic magician skills to the huge audience. It was a diverse night where students still talk about how fantastic the event was to date! We helped with other Universities across London to organise and put on this show which was a great achievement and we hope it is something the future committee get involved in because showcasing Sikh talent is very important.



WELL-BEING

In November we held our annual Kirtan Jam which allowed students to congregate together and relax in a calming and spiritual environment. We did not have Simran in our weekly sessions so this event was important in bringing the spiritual element to our society.



FRESHERS WEEK

Freshers Fair was a way to promote the society over two days to encourage students to join up to the Sikh Society. We had leaflets which had information of the type of activities we carried out and we tried to show our friendly personalities to freshers so that



they would feel welcome. We felt that this worked as we had 130 people of all faiths sign up for emails. We encouraged them to add the QMUL friend/group on Facebook so that they could also keep up to date from another medium of social networking. We gave out freshers packs courtesy of naujawani.com and the incentive of joining up to the society was that they would also receive a free exclusive drawstring bag and mug.

CELEBRATIONS

The annual 'Cha & Somosa' Party was rebranded as the 'Soda & Samosa' Party as the logistics of having tea in the location we were in was difficult. This would be our first event where it gave us the opportunity to mingle with the freshers and other students at Queen Mary who wish to come to Sikh Society events so it was important that we made an impact. We had a lot of problems securing the room we were in because the original location was under construction and could not be used. After weeks of rushing around and trying to negotiate with the SU we were finally given a room. However, we only had less than 24 hours to prepare for the event. This was very stressful because it left half the committee doing the majority of the tasks which was not ideal. Thankfully the event was successful as we had a turn out of 80 students. To improve on this next year, we hope the new committee gets hold of the SU by the end of August so that we have a room secured and do not leave everything to the last minute including buying drinks etc. Make sure there is a plan in place.

The Annual Sikh Society Dinner that happens at the end of each academic year was held at Punjab Restaurant in Convent Garden. The new committee for 2012-2013 was also officially announced.

Other events such as Bandi Chor, Gurupurabs and Vaisakhi were marked by talks during our weekly Thursday sessions.



EXCURSIONS

During the middle of the first semester we thought it would be fun to have a social before we split up for Reading Week. We decided to go Bowling and have dinner in the new Westfield in Stratford. This event was a success as we got both freshers and students in the second and third years involved which allowed everyone to mingle. Approximately 18 people attended.

Our last event of the term was Ice Skating and Dinner also held in Westfield, Stratford as it is an easy location to access from the University. Approximately 10 people attended this event.



CAMPAIGNS & EVENTS

MAJOR EVENT

Kirtan Jam was the next major event following the 'Soda and Samosa' Party. For this event the whole committee pulled together and we had dramatically improved our organisation skills and had the Chapel booked in advanced. We worked well as a team to delegate roles and prepare for the event. We had the option of spending money on outside caterers so we opted for Satt Caterers based in Ilford. This made the event more stress free knowing we did not have to worry about the making or delivery of food. The event ran very smoothly and we had an attendance of 90 people throughout the evening. We were very lucky to have student kirtanees from different London universities participating which allowed the evening to become very successful.

An improvement that could be made next year is to make the langar ourselves. This could be the initial Seva Day where everyone can get together and help to make the langar during the morning and in the evening it could then be served.

ACTIVISM

On Wednesday 19th October 2011 Nishaan embarked on a second major event called 'SEVA DAY'. From all over Greater London, around 75 students throughout the day arrived at Shepherd's Bush Gurdwara to get involved in making sandwiches for the homeless and creating cards for sick children in hospitals. In the evening, many students stayed behind to help us with the homeless run. The event was fantastic and very rewarding as we made contacts on how to better organise future events like this. Hopefully, we can carry out more seva similar to this next year.



COMMUNICATING WITH STUDENTS

MODES

We did not print any posters throughout the year because it was a lot of hassle. The process was time consuming and consisted of us having to get the fliers and posters printed, stamped and approved by the SU. Furthermore, we were only permitted to put up posters in approved places by the SU which was very limiting.

To counter this we used Facebook and emails as our main form of communication. We used information collected by members from the Freshers Fair to reach students.

In our weekly emails we listed the events coming up each week and used Facebook as reminders of weekly sessions, Sikh Studies classes, Nishaan events as well as many other announcements throughout the year.

Moreover, we sent out text message reminders of events, locations, times and where to meet for every major event which kept people in the loop especially when visiting another location outside of our university.

PARTNERSHIPS

WITHIN Queen Mary, University of London

Unfortunately, this year we did not have strong relationships with other societies as much as we did in previous years. We were approached by the Hindu Society to do collaborative events. However, we told them we would only get involved if other faith societies were permitted to join in so that it would not look like we were affiliated with one society. They did not comply, so we did not get involved in their events.

NATIONAL BODY

We did not request any help from any National Body.

EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

Naujawani.com was a strong support that helped us with our Freshers Fair. They also arranged and taught the Sikh Studies Course and assisted us with other advice. We are truly grateful for all their support throughout the year as they helped improve our society at Queen Mary.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

SUMMARY

We were in a very fortunate position financially this year as we received a large amount from the Students Union. We managed to increase revenue by getting a large amount of paid memberships. Additionally, we gained money from donations from members at the events we held. We increased membership by offering more incentives to join our society through discounts on events such as 'Collaborations'.

When we initially did the budgets for the coming year, we over estimated on certain categories and were therefore not allowed to use the money as the SU stated we could only use the remainder of the grant money on certain things. Therefore we could not spend money we had originally allocated for items such as equipment on other parts of the society. We did overspend on Cultural food, as we hired Satt Caterers for the Kirtan Jam. However, the grant covered the majority of the invoice. We would have liked to have more money to be able to spend on the weekly sessions in order to add variety and make each session a little bit more different.



On a positive note, the Society's personal bank balance is secure as we earned money through membership fees and donations throughout the year. Therefore, the next committee have a back up source for events next year if the SU do not provide a sufficient grant to the society due to University cuts.

ACCOUNTS

Information on accounts is not available at the moment.

THE FUTURE

This year we increased the number of events and activities we had for our members by teaming up with other London University Sikh Societies to hold additional classes and events we never would have been able to have done before without Nishaan.

We encountered problems during September when we had trouble booking a room for our Meet and Greet. We overcame this by finding a different location within the university to host the event.

One event we did want to do this year was have a Seva Day at Bow Gurdwara as it is only 5 minutes away from the University. Unfortunately, due to time constraints it was not feasible to carry this out. Hopefully the new committee will decide to take on this event next year and build our relations with Bow Gurdwara. It will also make students aware that there is a Gurdwara located nearby as many freshers did not seem to know this.

Our concluding advice for the new committee is to plan well in advanced for weekly sessions and events so that it does not conflict with other course commitments because your education is more important. Furthermore, it is essential that you communicate well with each other and delegate all tasks so that one person is not burdened with more responsibilities than they can handle.

We wish the new committee all the best and success for the future and hope they will learn from our shortcomings over the year.