

Sikh Soc

University College London

**Annual Report
2011-2012**

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

OUR VISION

Our vision is to create an accessible society for all students, both Sikh and Non-Sikh, to experience Sikhism through spiritual, sports, educational and social activity.

OUR VALUES

Our key value is to appreciate Sikh values, culture and ideology, whilst still being an accessible society. In order to achieve this accessibility we have the following values: a friendly community; being student orientated; understanding what our members want from the society and an empowering nature to learning.

OUR AIMS

Our Aim was to implement the values mentioned above and combine it into our vision for the year to create what we see as an ideal society. Our more specific aims were to improve interfaith relations within the local community and hopefully on a greater scale through a different focus on our Langar event. As well as this we aimed to play a strong role in bringing forward the collaborative efforts of the London Sikh Societies through the platform of Nishaan. As well as this we aimed to strengthen UCL's Sikh population in terms of their knowledge and understanding of Sikhism and challenge doubts and bring their minds from any darkness towards light using a variety of different methods which we employed all year round.

Introduction

We were in a Special year for our Sikh Society. It had been 100 years since the first Sikh Student in the country enrolled at University College London, and so with that in mind we aimed to make this year a truly monumental year!

We had ambitious aims right from the outset and we strived hard to complete them not only through some dedicated performances from society members but also from the Nishaan collaborative made-up from other committed students from around London who all deserve praise for the commendable efforts!

Whilst I have only been in the Society for two years now and I've heard stories of success from past presidents and past members, I can safely say that the society has developed massively from its small beginnings and in the last two years took huge steps into becoming something else which the future generations I hope will only bring even further forward.

I can go on about how well some events went and how they really brought along in essence the aims we wished to achieve this year but I will go through them later in a greater breakdown of detail.

But for now all I can say is this year has year has been great fun not only for myself but for all the members as seen from their own testimonies, and everyone who has attended any of the events be it the weekly simrans or the greater events such as Guru Ka Langar or even Sewa day, have all taken something away that they have said will stay with them forever.

If that is not the ultimate aim and goal to bring Gurus Nanak message to every personality and character that has attended through the variety of mediums and provide enjoyment and friendships and relationships that will last the toll of time then what is? Because that is what I feel our society has done a great job encompassing all these aspects this year!

SELECTION PROCESS

The 2011/2012 committee was formed at the society's AGM in March 2011. Candidates whom felt they would like a particular "committee role" would submit themselves. In case of multiple applicants for a given role (very often the case), a vote would take place. The vote took the following format. The candidate is given 2-3 minutes to explain why they felt they should be voted in. Then a secret ballot would take place. I feel as a society we pride ourselves on including all members, thus a "role" is found for everybody.

SOCIETY OFFICERS

We came to the common understanding that although specific roles perform specific work, a committee member should be committed to engage beyond his/her role. Individuals who later wanted to be involved in organising events and weren't in the committee, would be added to the committee.

Presidents – Joht Singh & Resham Singh

Treasurer – Gagandeep Singh

Social Secretaries – Arun Singh & Amandip Kaur

Secretary – Pavan Kaur

SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

41 Fully Paid Members, costing £3 per Member.

General Attendance figure would vary, summarised below:

Weekly Simran – Range from lowest at 10 to the highest at 50;

Social Events – Some events such as End of Term Dinner and Cha and Samosa achieved high attendance numbers, other socials average at around 15-20

Guru Ka Langar – 800+ attendants. (figures for this vary from 800-2500 but It would be sensible to say the lowest figure and I

seriously feel the thought of 2500-3000 people in the years before were greatly exaggerated figures)

UCLU Kirtan Darbar – 70+ attendants.

(All figures are approximate)

ACADEMIC STUDIES

The Sikh Studies Course offered by Naujawani.com was accessible to students at UCL for the first time which proved to be a big hit, and would've arguably been more of a hit had it been based at UCL but due to logistics and room bookings it was difficult to do this and so it was based at LSE and City University which were still local locations.

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. However only one student attended but I am not disheartened by this as I feel many more will attend the year 2 weekly studies in the future.

Santheya classes were also available to students during the year at Kings, our attendance was low but at least consistent and those who were able to attend commented how useful they were.



Nishaan Sahib Building

As well as these, at weekly simrans we constantly held discussions and tried to keep them very relevant to the time of the year and any sikh events that were being held at the time and tried to educate all the students drawing from experiences everyone was able to share.



Weekly Simran session

WORKSHOPS

We had weekly Tanti Saaj Classes based at UCL. We were lucky to have a very committed student who was able to start and run these classes for the benefit of all students who were able to attend. All of the students took away something special from this class after having such a fantastic teacher who was able to not only enhance their skills at tanti saaj but also some gurbani vichar

As well as these workshops, on two occasions through Nishaan, we had some of our members attend the classes that were put on by Harinder Singh from the Sikh Research Institute. The first of which focussed on the pogroms of 1984 and opened many of our students eyes and the second was 'Exploring your potential' which was hosted by a nearby university LSE, which a few of us attended. In all honesty I was disappointed by our turnout for this event as I felt we could've produced a greater turnout, as the talk was incredibly thoughtful and interesting. He also offered a few more weekly workshops that we sadly were not able to send many members to as they were on the weekends, but those who attended gave positive reviews.

ASSISTANCE

We were sponsored by Riverside Banqueting Suite, however, the sponsorship was very strange, the member who had took it upon themselves to handle the situation and get hold of the £500 that was promised to us fell through and we never saw the money but with support from Nishaan and Alumni we were able to get through most of the events without too much difficulty. As a whole the majority of assistance we received came from students which is what we were hoping for.



Cha and Samosa Party

ACTIVITIES

SPORT

In terms of Sport, we offered a five a side football team organised by our sports co-ordinator who played weekly matches and performed very well in the UCLU football tournament. As well as this we also entered this team into the inter Sikh soc tournament where we did very well. Football as always was very successful, and we should continue to provide it for the coming years.

Alongside football we had two new endeavours, with the first being a weekly Netball team organised with LSE, with the ultimate aim producing enough members to play against other Uni societies. We were well backed by the union to encourage this team and got support in terms of equipment for this team.

As well as this we also had a Kabaddi team shared with Hindu Soc organised by one of our members who again had a greater aim in mind which was to compete in tournaments the following year but this year provided a grounding and gain support.

As always at the end of the year we also entered our Universities Dodgeball tournament where we did well and came runners up.

ARTS

During Simrans we encouraged the Academic aspect of Sikhi and encouraged a book club and looking in the libraries for the vast resources we had, but this is an idea that didn't take off well this year but we aim to improve it next year. Apart from this our contribution to the Arts was quite poor this year which is something we should improve in the future.

We also put on our Annual Kirtan Darbar, at the Chaplaincy which as usual was a very big success with 70+ attendance.



Kirtan Darbar

SOCIAL LIFE

FRESHERS WEEK

The first contact we get with our Freshers is at our Fresher Fayre, where the Sikh Society has a stall to welcome our freshers, tell them about the society, what events are coming up and take down contact details. Most importantly, we wanted to have a conversation with every fresher because we wanted him or her to go away from the Fayre knowing one Sikh society member already. The next event is the following week, our Cha and Somasa event whereby we noticed that many students from the fayre attended. This year we shared the venue for the event with Hindu Society which was controversial but actually worked out really well because we represented Sikh society in a fantastic light and gained a lot of support and encouragement.

After this we had our first Simran where we had really good fun making Nishaan Sahibs out of Newspaper (a last minute Icebreaker that worked out really well!) This was a great way to make good friendships within our society and encouraged many of the freshers to go to the next events being Paintballing and Sewa day.

CELEBRATIONS

At UCL, we feel the need for celebration each and every week. Simrans are almost always followed by a trip to our local Nandos and a trip to the cinema or bowling alley is a regular occurrence. We also tried to encourage the celebration of members birthday at the weekly simrans which made it a more family environment and we wanted to organise a secret santa which is something we forgot to do this year but it worked very well the previous year.

At the end of the Term we do an even more special dinner at a very nice restaurant or usually Punjab restaurant in Covent garden. Our end of term dinner is always a well-attended event!

EXCURSIONS

As a society we organised trips to the cinema, bowling etc as social events. We were also extremely well represented at other Sikh Societies events, such as at Collaborations; we were among the best-represented universities. This was the case for most events; we felt the importance of making our members aware of what was going on at all London Universities and all the Nishaan events that went on during the year. We also went Ice Skating this year which was a nice change.



Ice Skating

CAMPAIGNS & EVENTS

MAJOR EVENT

2011/2012 brought about UCL's 5th annual Guru Ka Langar. Guru Ka Langar is an event whereby we literally set up a Langar Hall within the University and give the whole of the University the opportunity to experience every aspect of this great tradition. This year we served approximately 1000 individuals and made us question in the past how many people attended and we felt the previous approximations were grossly exaggerated which was a point to bear in mind for future organisation.



We had a massive change this year because we thought about the Langar and thought what do people actually benefit from it, apart from free food. So this year we changed the focus to have more of an Interfaith focus and encouraged great bridges between all the societies. We started the proceedings with a Candle lighting from all faiths and each of them had a prayer from their own faith and we also had a slideshow in the Langar hall demonstrating all faiths views and values so people could learn whilst eating. As well as this we also tied turbans on all attendees which was really interesting and worked well along from the other general Langar activities that went on.

Often voted as UCL's event of the year, and within the Top 10 events to attend while at UCL. The event has become better and better, year on year. Guru Ka Langar gives the opportunity for Non-Sikhs to become aware of who Sikhs are, what Guru Ka Langar is and most of all the opportunity to experience Langar. Guru Ka Langar is something of normality to Sikhs, but when the wider community have the same experience, they are completely in awe of such a tradition. Each and every attendee comes away with a huge smile on their face and the message of equality in their minds. As a Sikh I feel we need to promote who we are to the world, and Guru Ka Langar at UCL has successfully done this yet again.



Bringing Guru Ka Langar to UCL is a complex challenge and is only possible with the wider Sikh Community – Gurdwaras, Local Businesses and Local people. One could write pages and pages on the details of how to organise such a large-scale event. From shoe racks to keeping food warm took one huge effort from all those connected to the society. For the first time I saw all of our members pitching together to make sure the event was a success. Over the weeks of organisation I witnessed many new friendships being made and the Sikh Society at its strongest. Guru Ka Langar is an event whereby everyone comes away feeling they have been part of something extra special. We really showed the whole of UCL that the Sikh Society is still well and truly on the map.

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 personal 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.

As well as this we encouraged many people to spread events by word of mouth as well, as this proved most effective.

WITHIN UCL

For the first time in recent history we had a very strong relationship with other societies especially faith societies which was not only fantastic for us but for the whole UCL community. This was most evident at the Langar event which became a purely interfaith event and we received huge amounts of support from every faith background at UCL and was strengthened when we all lit candles together in symbolisation of the interfaith bond. We shared several events with other societies, such as our Cha and Samosa which seemed controversial prior to the event but then it worked out as a huge success. Through personal relationships we also developed a strong bond with Catholic and Ahlul- Bayts Society.

As well as this our relationship with the SU was very good this year and we rectified any problems encountered in the years before with sincere apologies and a few boxes of chocolates here and there and then they supported us 100% through everything for the rest of the year, and even included giving us permission for Gatka in the Quad which was a fantastic achievement!

NATIONAL BODY

We did not associate with any National organisations

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.

Nishaan was the main organisation we were involved in, but due to the nature of it, we weren't associated with it, we were inherently a part of it. Through Nishaan we organised and contributed to a great deal of events which supported all of our students.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

ACCOUNTS

A detailed account is difficult to provide, due to a lack of official record keeping which is one thing that needs improvement for next year. I can only list the basic income and expenditure for the moment and not a detailed breakdown.

Income:

£150 Cash- Alumni donation from previous year

£200-UCL grant fund

£150-Non grant fund UCL

£50-Alumni donation

Expenditure:

Ucl Kirtan event- Langar £150

Guru Ka Langar- £450

THE FUTURE

As a year as a whole this year was quite successful. We provided numerous events, more than any previous year and they had a great range and scope. Many people enjoyed at least some aspect of the year and definitely had fun at points which appealed to them.

In terms of advice, keep the events of a very diverse nature to draw in lots of different kinds of people. Once you start off keep the ball rolling and don't take the steam off even if the going gets tough because the minute you do that it is almost impossible to recover. This is true of the transition from term 1 to term 2. Term 1 is the big term as you always have more people attending events then because of exams etc in term 2 so don't be disheartened by a lower turnout but still produce good events in term 2 and do what you can to keep turnout good.

One idea I still feel may be applicable and useful next year is to do the AGM at the end of a successful Term 1 and don't let the next years committees take over yet but just shadow their equivalent in the year above just to encourage them to stick with Sikh Soc in the next term.

As well as this keep a better record of accounts and make the treasurer work hard! In Our year our treasurer had other commitments so I had to do all the work too which meant it wasn't a fantastic job as I had to deal with the overall running of the society too.

Keep dedication to Nishaan as well because without that collaborative effort it would've proved far more difficult! Most importantly for next year's committee: Focus on your uni work as well! Don't be hesitant to admit if Sikh Soc is burdening on your degree and there will be people around to support you so don't be scared to ask!

Good Luck and have loads of fun! You will have some of the best experiences of you life and make some of the best friends for life!!