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THE GURU NANAK MISSION MEDICAL AND EDUCATIONAL TRUST:
AN EXPLORATION OF DIASPORA-HOMELAND LINKAGES IN A VOLUNTARY
ORGANIZATION

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Abstract

This study looks at how an Indian voluntary organization, the Punjab-based Guru Nanak Trust, is influenced by its supporters in the Sikh Diaspora. Guiding arguments from studies on Diaspora-Homeland relations were used to examine whether the Trust's linkages with the globally dispersed Punjabi community are getting stronger or weaker and what further opportunities there are for the Trust to internationalize. The study was based on interviews and observational data collected during a two-week period onsite at the Trust in rural Nawanshar and on interviews conducted in Vancouver, Canada. The presentation of the results emphasized the Guru Nanak Trust as a site for exchange between the Sikh Diaspora and Homeland and explored how the nature of this exchange will continue to evolve in light of changing dynamics between the two.

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FORWARD

I would like to take the opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the Guru Nanak Mission Medical and Educational Trust for welcoming me to conduct fieldwork onsite at Dhahan-Kaleran. In particular I would like to thank Mr. Budh Singh Dhahan who did everything he could to make sure that my study ran smoothly and that I had everything I needed to have a comfortable and productive stay at the Trust. I would also like to acknowledge and thank Mr. Barj Dhahan who on behalf of the Canada India Education Society coordinated the logistical aspects of my visit to the Trust and provided me with the inspiration to take up this study in the first place. This project was greatly enriched by the material and ideas I received while attending the Punjab Studies Summer School in Chandigarh under the support and guidance of Professor Gurinder Singh Mann and Professor Shinder Thandi. I would also like to recognize the contribution of Professor Chandrasheker Bhat who granted me access to a wealth of literature relevant to this study during my visit to the Center for the Study of the Indian Diaspora in Hyderabad. Most of all I wish to acknowledge and thank my Supervisor, Dr. Sidsel Hansson for patiently providing constructive guidance throughout the course of this project.

I. INTRODUCTION

Founder and President Budh Singh Dhahan, started the Guru Nanak Mission Medical and Educational Trust (GNT) in his home region of Nawanshar, Punjab with specific objectives in mind. He wanted to improve the health of the local population by providing a hospital with professional doctors, nurses and equipment; increase villagers' access to quality education by establishing a senior secondary school; and uplift the status of both nurses and women by starting a nursing college wherein girls from the neighboring villages could study for Nursing Diplomas and Bachelor of Science Degrees in nursing. Although Budh Singh's vision was local his way of achieving it was undoubtedly global. By soliciting the support of his Punjabi network overseas to aid in the development of the Trust, Budh's organization become a collaborative project where Punjabis living in Punjab and Punjabis living overseas could work together for the betterment of their shared "Homeland." Changes in the relationship between "Diaspora" and "Homeland" however, have led the Guru Nanak Trust to evolve from a place of simple cooperation between local and overseas Punjabis to a site where the complex linkages between the two are constantly being renegotiated.

II. BACKGROUND

The first wave of Sikh migrants came to Canada between 1904 and 1908. The majority, an estimated 4,000, migrated to the province of British Columbia making Vancouver and its surrounding area the first major destination for Sikh migrants to Canada (Jain 1993:43). The majority of these migrants were men who came from Punjab, India's Sikh-dominated province. They usually intended to work in Canada for only a short period and seeing their migration as temporary, kept strong ties to their Indian Homeland. Their main incentive for going abroad was to earn a salary that was relatively higher than what they could earn at home. The extra money could then be used to contribute to family and village life through remittances sent to India (Johnston 2004:1076).

Racism as well as language and cultural barriers faced by Sikhs in Canada encouraged their isolation and strengthened the community's reliance on India for cultural, spiritual and political support. In general, Sikhs remained outside of Canadian affairs, and instead

kept highly involved in India's political, social and economic developments (Lall 2001: 36). Although Sikhs are much more integrated into mainstream Canadian society today than they were in the early 20th century, the Sikh community has maintained strong ties to India, and particularly to India's Punjab province.

A tradition of sending remittances from Canada to India's Punjab has continued up to the present day, despite the fact that many Sikh migrants no longer intend to return to the Punjab. Strong cultural commitments towards family, and an awareness of the large economic disparities that exist between Canada and the Punjab, have helped the custom to continue. As Johanna Lessinger has suggested, "the cultural motivations which have impelled Indian immigrants to remain so involved with India are complex," and involve economic motives as well as the desire to be close to kin (2003: 174-175). Not only has the flow of money into Punjab continued, it has become increasingly substantial. La Brack has contended that as a result of the large flow of money into the Punjab the province has more banks per capita than any other state in India (1989: 284). It is, of course, difficult to monitor exactly what these monetary flows consist of and where they go, but some scholars have estimated total remittances sit at hundreds of millions of rupees per annum (Hellweg 1989: 308). While some donations flow directly from individual to individual or family to family, Sikh philanthropic activity extends to the building of hospitals, schools, and other humanitarian institutions throughout the Punjab.

This study examines the specific case of one Canadian Sikh who took the initiative to help his people "back home." Like many other Punjab-born Indo-Canadians, Vancouver resident Budh Singh Dhahan had dreams of contributing to his home community in Punjab. In 1981 he took the first step by starting the Guru Nanak Trust. Dhahan's goal was to build a hospital, senior secondary school and women's nursing college close to his village, Dhahan, about one hour outside of Jalandhar. Dhahan was motivated by a belief that Sikhs wanted to contribute to their Punjab homeland and hoped that by taking initiative, he could ensure that their efforts to help were collaborative and targeted towards meeting specific goals. More than twenty years later, Dhahan is watching more and more of his dreams come into fruition. The three key institutions: the hospital, the

senior secondary school, and the nursing college have been built and are running smoothly. A drug and alcohol de-addiction center has also been introduced. More than two hundred people Budh Singh told me are employed at the Trust and the number continues to grow as each institution is expanded. Dhahan, eighty-one years old, still hopes to add a Trauma Center and Medical College to the site in the next few years. As it is now, the project, I was told, is already the biggest and most ambitious of its kind in all of Punjab. Few humanitarian organizations have attempted to create such a large-scale development in a rural area. Dhahan attributes his success primarily to the ongoing support he receives from the Diaspora, and particularly Canada, where his family and close friends still live.

The present study looks at the global and local dimensions of Budh Singh's Guru Nanak Trust and examines Diaspora-Homeland linkages as they are negotiated in the Trust's transnational context.

III. AIM AND ANALYTICAL APPROACH

1. Purpose

The purpose is to contribute to the understanding of how the Diaspora has influenced Indian voluntary organizations, through a study of the operations and achievements of the Punjab-based Guru Nanak Trust. Guiding arguments from studies on the Diaspora and Homeland linkages will be used to examine how the Diaspora and international support are influencing the Trust's activities, and the way in which the Trust's linkage to the Sikh Diaspora may be in the process of becoming stronger or weaker. In doing so, the study emphasizes the importance of significant "in-between persons" who act as links between different cultures and societies, and draws attention to systems that sit neither in the Diaspora or the Homeland but somewhere between the two.

2. Research Questions

The study especially considers how values and ideas of Canadian and Indian Society respectively have influenced the Trust's formal and informal operations. In addressing the global, local and transnational dimensions of the Guru Nanak Trust, the study

questions how the Trust has responded to challenges and opportunities to internationalize and, in light of major trends such as globalization and changing Diaspora-Homeland dynamics, considers the likelihood of the organization to operate effectively in an international context.

3.Theoretical Framework

Academic discourse on the topic of globalization is abundant and has become an increasingly popular focus in literature relating to the Indian Diaspora. Scholars working on the Sikh Diaspora have begun writing with great optimism about the potential of new communication and transportation technologies to unite Sikhs around the world, making it increasingly possible for the globally dispersed community to mobilize capital, resources and expertise for political, social and religious causes. Of particular interest to many is how these global advancements have raised the potential for overseas Sikhs to contribute to philanthropic development efforts in their Punjab homeland (Bhat and Sahoo, 2004, Brah, 2003). As Brah has pointed out, technological advancements have increased the “possibilities for greater awareness of global inequalities leading to transnational modes of cooperation in the development of strategies to combat such inequalities.” (1996:195) With so many Punjabis earning high incomes overseas, some have identified Punjab as one of the areas most likely to benefit from an overall increase in Diaspora to Homeland philanthropic giving (Harvard University Global Initiative, 2003).

If one follows these arguments it is possible to assume that organizations like the Guru Nanak Trust, which already benefit greatly from overseas Sikh philanthropy, will only strengthen their pre-existing links to the Diaspora. Other studies (see Nayar, 2004), emphasize how assimilation to Canadian society has led some Sikhs to take on values and cultural traits that differ greatly from those of their Punjab-based relatives thereby making the gap between home and host societies larger with each generation. Language and communication barriers have, for example, emerged as well as differences in religion and lifestyle. Third generation Sikhs, Kamala Elizabeth Nayar argues, become critical of spirituality, hierarchy and custom, all of which are highly valued by their more traditional

family members, especially those living in Punjab (2004: 136-155). Similarly, Chaudry Siddique's primarily quantitative study of immigrant families living in Canada suggests that amongst overseas Indians and Pakistanis there is a relationship between length of time in the new country (and thus the degree of exposure to the new value set) and the willingness of immigrants to adopt the new country's values (2004:78-102). Emerging differences in culture and worldview, these scholars suggest, has caused many Sikhs to become less oriented towards India or their so-called "homeland" something that, over the long term, could lead to a serious decline in philanthropic giving from the Diaspora to Punjab and consequently lessen international support for organizations like Guru Nanak Trust.

Of particular relevance to this study are the cultural and structural differences between western and Indian organizations and how these may affect the ability of Indian organizations like the Guru Nanak Trust to gain support from the Diaspora. According to John Harriss, Indian organizations emphasize personal networks and hierarchy while western organizations emphasize more contractual agreements and cooperation. Fundamental differences such as these pose "a problem of /.../ management in India in the context of economic globalization". As Indian organizations strive to accommodate their overseas investors by making changes to their institutional behaviour, they encounter numerous socio-cultural barriers. Appealing to foreign investors while remaining Indian enough to sustain the support of the local people is a challenge for many Indian organizations with transnational dimensions (2003:769). How the Guru Nanak Trust has dealt with this and other factors contributing to a growing gap between the Diaspora and Homeland is of great interest to this study.

One doesn't have to view transnational organizations in such definitive terms, however. There are some Indians who are located neither totally in the West nor totally in India, and play a particularly valuable role in organizations operating in a transnational context. A number of studies have focused on the "in-between" status of some Diaspora Indians and the role they can take in bridging gaps between the Homeland and the Diaspora (Helweg, 1999:311, Aurora, 2004: 66-77). With their insider knowledge of both Punjab

and the various parts of the Punjabi Diaspora these people have an ability to understand the values and customs of both home and host societies. Such concepts are significant to an investigation of the Guru Nanak Trust where the key leader, Budh Singh, seems to play an important role in bringing the Sikh Diaspora and the Homeland together for his cause.

In light of these challenges and opportunities to balance the “global” and the “local” aspects of Indian organizations one may try and pinpoint exactly how and in what ways the Diaspora-Homeland relationships can best be utilized for philanthropic causes. When speculating on the topic of future relations between the Diaspora and the Homeland, economist Shinder Thandi suggests “It is possible that the flow [of aid from the Diaspora] may continue in a steady upward direction if linkages become more durable and are built on networks of social capital and trust... However what is important above all, in successfully mobilizing the Diaspora is the need to build transparency, accountability and trust in Diaspora-homeland relations.” (Thandi 2004: 12-13). Thandi highlights the challenge at hand for Indian organizations like GNT: how can traditional and modern, Indian and western aspects of organizations best be combined and executed for the benefit of Punjab’s development?

The present study uses these guiding arguments as a framework as it explores the local and global influences on the Guru Nanak Trust and considers the organization’s ability to sustain it’s transnational dimensions over the long term.

4. Analytical Terminology

Some of the terminology used in this study is controversial or often misunderstood and should therefore be clarified. Firstly, the technical definition of *Diaspora* refers to a group of people that have been dispersed or exiled from their homeland on the basis of prejudice. Today the term is popularly used, even in academic literature, to describe any group that has significant populations living outside of its original place of origin regardless of whether or not they have faced oppression in that place (Shuval 2000:42). For the purposes of this study, the popular definition will be used and no allusion to

political conflict made. Secondly, the use of “Host” and “Home” lands is used to describe the areas to which Sikhs have settled and the area from which they or their ancestors have originally come (which in this case generally refers to Punjab). There is no prejudice, or racial exclusion intended by the use of the terms and they do not carry political connotations or allude to the Sikh fight for an independent Khalistan as they do in some works (See Cohen, 1999). The terms are simply useful as reference points for tracing the flow of people out of the Punjab.

IV. METHOD AND SELECTION

1.Method

This project was carried out using qualitative methods, which gave me the best opportunity to explore the complex nature of social behaviour within the Trust. Using quantitative approaches would limit my ability to explore different aspects of a single organization and the overlap between them. I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews because while there were specific topics I wanted to know about, I wanted to retain the opportunity to spontaneously explore new concepts when interesting topics were raised. On average each interview was one hour long; with this timeframe I was able to discuss various concepts in-depth with each interviewee. I began by interviewing the President of the Canada-India Education Society, in Vancouver, Canada in June, 2005. The majority of data for this project however was collected while living onsite at the Guru Nanak Trust for a two-week period during October 2005. Physically being at the Trust gave me the opportunity to observe the organization first hand and to conduct interviews at any time of the day.

In addition to conducting interviews, I obtained data through my own observations. As a guest of the Trust I was invited to attend local functions that the Trust was either running or participating in including those surrounding the holy time of Diwali. The longer I spent at the Trust, the more I was able to bond with the staff and residents there making it possible for me to participate in their daily activities including television watching, cooking and casual conversation. I remained an outsider to the Sikh community and the

Guru Nanak Trust throughout my time at the Trust, however and my observations are therefore based more on passive than active participation.

The project investigates the case of a single organization, the Guru Nanak Trust. I felt it was appropriate to choose the case study approach because this single organization serves as a central node through which many different dimensions of the Sikh Diaspora-Homeland relationship can be explored. By not adopting a previously established hypothesis the study is essentially inductive, a choice which allowed me greater flexibility as I collected data and investigated various aspects of the Trust's international and local activities.

2.Selection

Over the course of this study, I conducted interviews with fifteen individuals including the President of the Canada-India Education Society, five Guru Nanak Trust members/administrators, the Principal of the Nursing College, three nursing instructors, three nursing students and two visiting Nursing faculty members from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. I chose to take my interviews primarily from the Trust's official governing body and the Trust's Nursing College because during my initial intake of the organization I found the Diaspora-Homeland connections to be the strongest in these two parts of the Trust. Interviewees from the Trust's administration were selected on the basis of their role. Key Trust members including the President, Secretary and Accounts Manager were directly targeted for their extensive involvement in and knowledge of Trust operations. The other two Trust members were selected on the basis of their availability to have an interview. This study puts a particular emphasis on the values, ideas and decisions of Budh Singh Dhahan, Trust founder and President. For this reason, three follow-up interviews were made with the President and one follow-up interview made with his Secretary as a means of obtaining more in-depth information on the Trust and its activities. Within the nursing college, key persons were also targeted including the Principal, senior staff members and the two visiting faculty members from UBC. These individuals were all in a position to offer a specialized and in-depth perspective on Diaspora-Homeland ties as they pertained to the Trust. Nursing students,

however, were randomly approached and asked to participate in an interview. Attention was given to variety however, and representatives from the first year, fourth year and UBC exchange program classes were selected.

3. Reliability and validity of data

The study deals with sensitive material insofar as it strives to get an intimate look at the social relationships and operations within an organization. The Sikh community in Punjab is facing a number of religious and political issues that have caused tension in its relations with other communities both in India and abroad. For this reason it was sometimes difficult to ask questions about religion and politics and to get honest, straightforward answers on how they have affected the organization's outlook and operation. Finally, linguistic and cultural differences between interviewer and interviewee sometimes made it difficult to effectively communicate. All interviewees spoke English but with varying levels of fluency making it possible that interviewee responses were simplified due to language difficulties. All material from interviews was transcribed in full original form as a means of preserving nuances that could prove significant to later analysis.

The study is representative of one organization, the Guru Nanak Trust and is somewhat illustrative of Indian voluntary organizations in general. The data collected for this study appears to be consistent with other studies of Indian voluntary organizations such as those presented by Alliband (1983). The use of key sources from the field of Diaspora Studies also adds credibility to the arguments made.

4. Limitations

The study was conducted within a limited timeframe making it difficult to gather an extensive amount of data. It would have been ideal, for example, to interview more members of the Sikh Diaspora and particularly the Canadian Sikh community but time and geographic constraints made this impossible.

5. Ethical Considerations within the Study

Care has been taken to protect the confidentiality of interviewee identities. Interviewee names have been changed where necessary. The names and identities of public figures, however, have been retained. Public persons have given full consent over the release of ideas and opinions expressed during interviews and have given the author permission to quote their words. Some of the material touched on in this study is highly sensitive due to its political implications. The occasional request has thus been made to keep some responses “off the record”. This study respects these appeals and does not include any material without interviewee consent.

V. THE STUDY

The presentation of the study begins by describing the key characteristics of the Guru Nanak Trust: its history, objectives, achievements, location, and organizational structure. It then goes on to outline in greater detail the specific influences the Diaspora and Homeland respectively have had on the organization, emphasizing the different organizational accommodations made for each. This is subsequently followed by an exploration into those persons and systems that sit neither entirely in the Diaspora or the Homeland, but somewhere “in-between”. Finally, Trust perceptions on the future sustainability of the organization given the perceived growing “rift” between itself and its support base in the Diaspora are presented and discussed. The presentation of the study will conclude with a brief summary of the main points raised throughout the paper.

1. The Guru Nanak Mission Medical and Educational Trust

Since its establishment in 1981 The Guru Nanak Trust has grown into a large organization occupying thirty-six acres dotted with several major institutions. Its achievements, which have already been introduced, include the establishment of several educational and healthcare facilities in a rural area of India that, according to the Trust, has traditionally lacked access to such services.

During my initial tour and introduction to the Trust I learned that the organization is governed by four key administrators: President and Founder Budh Singh who spends much of his time abroad fundraising; Vice President/Secretary, who is responsible for handling the Trust in Budh Singh's absence and providing him with a great deal of personal assistance; Financial Manager, who handles accounting matters but also a number of other administrative tasks; and Public Relations Manager, who greets guests to the Trust and coordinates the organization's publication materials. Overall, however, roles in the Trust seem quite fluid and the staff that were interviewed emphasized the importance of teamwork in the administration. The key staff members exhibit a very close-knit relationship; the Finance Manager, Public Relations Manager and Budh Singh, share a flat and take all meals together.

The key, fulltime staff members I was informed, are supported by twenty-four trustees who assist them with the organization of various Trust affairs and provide input into decision-making. Although Budh Singh holds the final authority on all decisions, the Trust strives to come to consensus on each decision and if that fails, a vote will often be taken to settle discrepancies. According to the Trust's Secretary, the Trust meets and passes resolutions on all matters relating to the organization, making it the key governing body that oversees and determines what happens at the Trust.

Operating in cooperation with but somewhat independently from the Trust are the heads of the various institutions: the Nursing College has a Principal, the School a Director, and the Hospital a Superintendent. Budh Singh said that he likes to give each leader jurisdiction over their own part of the project rather than giving the administration and the Trustees full control. This he said, is largely because the administration and the Trustees lack knowledge specific to education and health and therefore it is better to let people with more expertise in these areas handle relevant decisions and management.

2.The Guru Nanak Trust Leader: Budh Singh Dhahan

The founder and President of the Organization, Budh Singh Dhahan has, since the Trust's beginning played a central role in all Trust affairs. All publications and written materials

introducing the Trust include a glimpse into Budh's personal life story that also explains how the Trust was started. Budh was born in Punjab, immigrated to Canada and then later returned to Punjab. Before immigrating to Canada he was involved in the Indian independence movement and was jailed nine times for his political activity. He also had a reputation for helping people to go abroad by assisting them with the filling out of immigration application forms. Sometimes, he told me, he even supplied people with the funds to go overseas. There was little work in Punjab and as he saw it, helping Punjabis to go abroad was a contribution to the region's development. Once in Canada, Budh Singh started a construction company and continued to help his friends and family in Punjab migrate by sponsoring them to join him in Canada. While in Canada he also became very involved in promoting Punjabi culture. He opened four Punjabi language schools for children of Punjabi parents and helped to build Gurdwaras all on a voluntary basis. Through these activities, both in Punjab and later in Canada, Budh Singh built up a network of Punjabi people who respected him and believed in his capability to achieve big goals in the interests of their community. Today Budh, told me, he uses his support network around the world to mobilize capital and solicit support for his most ambitious initiative: the Guru Nanak Mission Medical and Educational Trust.

3. The Study Area

The Guru Nanak Trust is located between two villages: Dhahan (the village of Budh's birth) and Kaleran in Nawanshahr District in the Doab region of Punjab. The area is very rural: it takes 15 minutes by bus or car to reach the nearest small town, Banga. The Trust's establishment occupies a very prominent place on the side of the main road leading to Jalandhar city. To enter the compound one has to pass a security check at the front gate. Immediately ahead of the main gate, occupying a central location is the compound's Gurdwara. From this entrance area, it is possible to walk or drive over the well-kept grounds to reach the key institutions: the Nursing College the School, the 250 bed Hospital and the 22 two bed drug and alcohol de-addiction center. The Senior Secondary School is accessed through another gate. On the main compound there is a variety of housing for staff and students, including a special building called UBC Canada

House. This modern, two story complex accommodates visiting NRIs, scholars, volunteers and other guests from abroad, including myself.

VI.RESULTS

Accommodating the Diaspora

The first section of my investigation assesses the extent to which the Guru Nanak Trust maintains international linkages with the Sikh Diaspora abroad and identifies some of the specific ways in which connections between the two have influenced the Trust's activities.

My interviews revealed that many staff and others involved at the Guru Nanak Trust view the organization as an achievement of the Sikh Diaspora, and particularly the Sikh community in Canada. Without donations from Sikhs living overseas most of them felt Budh Singh probably wouldn't have found the resources to build the Trust on the same scale. According to an estimate published by the Trust in their *Jeevan Sewa* magazine, 80% of the funding for the organization comes through Budh's fundraising trips overseas. While it is easy to see how money from the Sikh Diaspora, has "built up" the Trust, it is more complex to examine how values and ideas from the Diaspora have influenced the organization and determined how things at the Trust actually operate. The Diaspora has had a major impact on the Trust's vision, objectives, fundraising strategy and approach to organization, making the Guru Nanak Trust an outward looking association with extensive global dimensions.

President and Founder of the Trust, Budh Singh was and continues to be, a Canadian citizen. He was still living in Canada when he got the idea to start the Trust, and it seems that Canadian society itself served as a baseboard for his project. Since Canada's multicultural policy was introduced in the 1970s, ethnic minority groups have been encouraged and even given financial support to maintain their cultural traditions (Nayar 2004: 203). Budh Singh used this to his advantage and noted it as a reason for his initial success. "The government of Canada, government of BC are giving so much help to the other cultures to keep them alive in that country. This is advantage there," he said. While

living in Canada he also noticed how other groups such as the Jews were organizing themselves and were working together to contribute to the communities they left behind. Budh told me this inspired him and he felt the Canadian Sikh community could do the same. He set to work trying to solicit funds from the Sikh Diaspora for his project. His efforts were rewarded and the necessary funds attained. He decided to continue soliciting support from the Sikh Diaspora and up to the present, goes abroad for an extended period almost every year, collecting funds door to door from the globally dispersed Sikh community.

However, involving the Diaspora, said Budh, is not just about money. "...Money's very important; if you do not have money you can't do anything. But other things are more important than the money, to get lots of ideas, new things." Budh told me that he and his supporters in the Diaspora were very impressed by the services available in the West and wanted to bring these to the Punjabi countryside. In particular they went about importing hi-tech medical equipment and supplies. Budh told me that as he saw it, the West has technology and facilities that India lacks and that services are generally better because people have more training and support. Part of his mission was to bring these attributes of the West to his institutions at Dhahan-Kaleran.

Particularly interesting is the Trust's ongoing emphasis on girls' education. Although Sikhism supports a belief in equality between men and women, traditional cultural practices in Punjab greatly favour men. Compared to other states in India, Punjab has one of the highest female infanticide rates (Das Gupta, 1987:88). Dowry expectations also remain unfavorably high and female status within the traditional family structure low (Walton-Roberts, 2004: 365). One might argue thus that the Trust's interest in offering educational opportunities specifically targeted at rural girls, may be heavily fueled by western conceptions of gender equality and equal opportunity. If we follow the arguments made by scholars like Siddique, these are values that may be adopted by Sikhs who have moved to the Diaspora and lived their for some time (2004:82-83) and now wish to see western norms implemented in their Punjab homeland.

The influence of western values and ideas within the Trust is from my perspective most evident in the organization's emphasis on nursing. Many of the staff and students at the Trust told stories about how nursing was once, and to some extent continues to be, an occupation that is looked down upon. In India, nurses are traditionally thought to be poorly trained, very subordinate to doctors, and as they are usually women, the fact that they serve and look after men other than their husbands or close family members is frequently criticized (Granstrom, 2000:7-9). As one nursing student reflected:

I have listened my parents that in old time nurses are not of good reputation. People use to look upon nurse as girl, and she is serving another male person, and everybody used to look down on that lady and girls feared to enter that profession...

Budh told me that because of the social stigma attached to nursing, the Doctor-Nurse ratio in rural India, including Punjab has been extremely poor. The large shortage of nurses in Punjab is a great concern and was one of the reasons Budh Singh felt motivated to start the Nursing College. He believed he could raise the status of nursing by ensuring that girls received proper training, and eventually Bachelor of Science in nursing degrees as he observed nurses doing in Canada where their status is traditionally much higher. It would seem that Budh's efforts have paid off. As one student commented, "now you will see that in our class, many girls are from very well reputed families, very well reputed, very highly stable families..." The status of nursing seems to be going up in Punjab as education requirements for the occupation are increased.

Significantly, when asked about their reasons for actually choosing the Nursing Program, many girls cited their families in the Diaspora as the main influence behind the decision. "My relatives over there [in Canada] like the profession and said if she will get the chance, please don't miss it." Another student had a similar story:

My grandpa living over in Canada, in Vancouver, heard about this institution here and told my parents about it. I hadn't considered going into nursing but after looking through the curriculum I thought it looks good and went for it.

Almost all of the nursing students and graduates I interviewed were told by their Diaspora-based relatives that in countries like Canada, nursing is a respectable occupation with plenty of “scope”. Family members encourage Punjabi girls to enter the profession as it may yield them a good salary, thereby providing them with independence and perhaps, given the large demand for nurses globally, even secure them employment abroad. One student commented on the bigger picture:

NRI [Non-Resident Indian] culture is coming over here. Relatives of girls here are encouraging the parents to put their daughters into this profession. You can feel really good about it and always have a job... The NRIs are breaking down the conservatism of this area... there’s been big changes.

While Dahan-Kaleran may have offered one of the first facilities for nursing training, I was told that many more have since sprung up in the area. It would appear that a positive cycle has emerged: as Diaspora Indians encourage their girl relatives to enter the nursing profession, nursing schools come into being, thereby increasing the opportunities for more and more girls to enter the profession.

The Diaspora has affected the Trust on the level of administration as well. Some Punjabis living abroad have acquired new standards of how an organization should be run. In an interview with Barj Dhahan, President Dhahan’s Canada-based son, Barj emphasized that the lack of credibility typically associated with Indian organizations can be a deterrent to potential donors in the Diaspora. According to Barj, Diaspora Punjabis have come to expect organizations to be open and reliable, as they perceive businesses and governments in the West to be. According to John Harriss, while Indian organizations emphasize social networks, hierarchy and agreements based on trust, western organizations, tend to strive for things like management accountability, formalization and agreements built on legal frameworks (2003: 758-759). In an attempt to reach the Indo-Canadian community in a more “Canadian” way, Barj and some of colleagues in the Vancouver Sikh Diaspora started a new organization, The Canada India Education Society, which advises the Guru Nanak Trust on organizational matters and in that role, encourages the organization to follow western as opposed to Indian operating norms. Significantly, the organization is also able to collect funds directly from donors

whereupon it can issue tax exemptions and receipts as per Canadian regulations, providing a level of credibility that the Guru Nanak Trust could not.

The Guru Nanak Trust has undoubtedly been influenced not only by the money but also by the newly acquired culture of its donors living in the Punjabi Diaspora. It may be that an attachment to Punjabi history and culture draws Diaspora Sikhs to assist in the development of the Trust. Nevertheless, the emphasis placed on girls education, nursing, and western organizational procedures within the Trust suggest that the new values and ideals that they have adopted from their experience of living abroad have played a significant role in how they approach development assistance to the Homeland.

Accommodating the Homeland

In the following I will identify those elements of the organization that are “traditional” or “indigenous” to Punjabi society as a way of determining how the Trust has conformed to local conventions to achieve its goals. While many of these aspects were quite evident through observation, others were exposed through interview questions relating to the personal values of those involved in the running of the Trust. While the Guru Nanak Trust may be seen as a global organization benefiting from a significant international network, it is also very much a community-driven organization and many aspects of its structure maintain traditional foundations.

Religion, and particularly Sikhism, plays a fundamental role in the organization’s activities and the way these activities are approached. The Gurdwara onsite hosts many functions and everyone I interviewed professed to attend them regularly. I was told on a number of occasions that religious education is in fact mandatory for students in the Nursing College who at a minimum must attend weekly sessions in the temple. When I asked my interviewees what is taught in the Nursing College aside from nursing one student said excitedly:

Ah we more and more gain knowledge about our traditions and religion. Every Friday we have a Darbar sahib in Gurdwara saib and Baba-Ji used to tell us about our Sikhism and the many sacrifices made by our older peoples and sacrifices and

they used to teach us about religion, it was very good and I have learned a lot there because I was not aware of that knowledge.

Inside the Trust's buildings and residences, pictures of the Golden Temple and the Sikh Gurus hold a visible place in every room. Religious literature sits on the bookshelves of all offices and almost every time I entered Budh Singh's flat, the television was set to a channel showing either kirtan or a religious ceremony in the Gurdwara.

The Trust itself seems to be a religious concept, a claim substantiated by the Trust's decision to name the Trust after the founder of Sikhism, "Guru Nanak". All of the organization's trustees are, according to the Trust's Secretary, members of the Sikh community and see a religious dimension to the Trust's "mission". As one trustee proudly told me:

We all Trustees pray to God you know, we are religious people, our thinking is religion based. All trust in God, so all believe in God, pray to God for our progress and our expansion and to reach our goals. We always pray to God, we got Gurdwara in this complex so we just go and pray to God once or twice a week. We got functions there.

The other administrators I interviewed suggested that religion was the basis for all other activities carried out at each of the Trust's institutions. When asked why it is important to promote education, for example, Budh Singh responded, "If you are educated, you go to the Sikh Temple, go to the Hindu temple, you go to the Masjid, and get religious knowledge also." Developing one's spiritual side, he seemed to imply, might be seen as a goal unto itself or perhaps even the main goal of his mission.

Anheier and Daly's idea that a strong link often exists between "Religious teachings" and practices that shape "philanthropy and charity," (Anheier and Daly 2005:160) is exemplified by Budh's fundraising strategy. Even on the global level, Budh appeals to religion to gain support. He told me that when he goes door to door soliciting funds from the Sikh community, he takes religious material with him and once even brought a Sikh Sant (Saint) along with him to help solicit more funds. Not too surprisingly, most of the Trust's donors are also Sikh and respond favorably to Budh's religiosity. While the Trust

likes to emphasize that its donor base comes from all of India's major religious communities, a quick glance at the list of donor names in the Trust's *Jeevan Sewa* magazine shows that almost all funds come from Singhs and Kaur. During my stay in Dhahan-Kaleran I was invited to follow Budh Singh on some of his fundraising trips. He attended religious functions, including a Sikh funeral, and spoke to his donors (and potential donors) about the religious dimensions of the Trust's efforts. Every speech was closed with a tribute to the Khalsa, the Sikh holy book. The success of Budh's use of religion to attain support is exemplified by the public acknowledgement of his achievements by numerous Sikh organizations. I noticed a large collection of trophies bearing the names of these organizations sitting on his desk. When I asked him about it he commented how "Very long time ago they [the Government] recognized my services. But after that, Government never done it. But these kind of people who are religious, they giving me so much." It is unclear which came first: Budh Singh's conscious effort to reach the religious community or the religious community's positive response to Budh Singh's work.

Social hierarchy: the use of age, gender and other variables to confer status, is another deeply rooted aspect of Punjabi society (Nayar, 2004: 50-51) and is clearly adhered to within the Trust. I observed how each institution has a head official who oversees his respective department with full authority. Those holding upper positions in the Trust and prestigious guests are treated with a greater level of respect than all others involved in the organization. I personally observed how, during the Diwali festival, a public presentation was made wherein those in the highest positions were given gifts while others were not. Seniority, too, plays an important role in the Trust. Even among nursing school students a social hierarchy has been established. When I asked the first year students why, for example, they kept their heads covered with a dupatta while the other students did not, they said it was their own idea, nobody had forced it upon them, but they wanted in some way to show their subordinate status to their seniors. Although the organization prioritizes gender equality and even female advancement, to my observation, all Trustees and almost all senior staff members are, ironically, male. There is only one female who is given a great deal of respect and in the position of Public Relations Manager, her main

duty is to be hospitable and welcoming to guests, a responsibility traditionally belonging to women.

President Budh Singh's position within the organization appears to be one of great reverence. Frequently people touched the man's feet upon meeting him, an act demonstrative of their self-alleged inferiority. Almost everybody referred to him as "Baba," or "Grandfather" which, in the Punjabi context suggests closeness but also a great deal of respect; in Punjabi family structure, the Grandfather is at the top of the hierarchy. Furthermore, whether referred to as President, Budh Singh or Baba, "ji" was invariably attached to the title, adding the meaning of "honoured" or "revered" one. Budh Singh's status within the Trust even carries a spiritual dimension. Despite not being a professional religion teacher, he provides religious education at the Gurdwara weekly to all of the Nursing College students. When it comes to the Trust's administration, the respect and love shown towards the man is, according to my interviewees, unrivaled. The Secretary of the Trust informed me "All the ideas [for running the Trust] come from Budh Singh, we second it." The respect shown to Budh Singh is evident by the presence of his photo on nearly every office wall in the Trust's administrative building.

For the Trust, fundraising ventures are approached by way of religious and community ties. Budh Singh has relied on an extensive network of friends, acquaintances and contacts, both within the local and overseas Punjabi community for support. As Budh sees it, he built much of his personal network helping people to establish themselves abroad. Now many of these people are socially secure and financially successful in the Diaspora and are willing to give back to him in return for his help. He stated this as the main tool by which he has been able to collect funds for the Trust. "Actually, you can collect the money from whom you know. Otherwise it's hard," he told me. Using networks of trust and mutual support is, according to John Harriss, characteristic of many Indian organizations and is something that, if used in the right context, can make some individuals very successful (2003:768). Budh has carefully employed this traditional strategy to further his cause.

Within the Trust, the notions of community and history appear to be highly valued. According to Nayar, Punjabi culture emphasizes a “collectivity orientation” whereupon one’s role and participation in the group is of significance (2004:46). Constant reinforcement of the beliefs and values of the Trust seem to be a significant feature of the organization’s local, as opposed to its Diaspora, context. From observing social gatherings and watching people from within the Trust interact I got the sense that establishing a feeling of local pride and community is as important to the Trust as is developing its international reputation. By coming together for celebrations and meetings, and listening to the Trustees speak about the Trust’s past accomplishments and future goals, for example, staff and students were reminded of their role at the Trust and were encouraged to take pride in the organization and work for its future development. No matter how global the organization’s support base may be, it does have a local context that has a very rich and unique history behind it. The fact that, for example, when the Trust first started the village panchayats of both Dhahan and Kaleran donated land to the project is significant, and is a contribution that is undeniably local. As an outsider to the community, it is difficult to grasp the true value of having an organization like the Guru Nanak Trust nearby, but it is possible to observe that the Trust is greatly treasured and is a source of pride for both the people native to the area and those who have come to work and study on the premises.

As illustrated above, the Guru Nanak Trust is in many ways a traditional Indian, and particularly Punjabi, organization. It’s non-questioning application of Sikh religion to all aspects of organizational activities including its daily operations and fundraising strategies are not characteristic of a modern western approach where the “mix of spiritual and business” is not common and is even discouraged (Hay 1996:35). Furthermore, the organization’s emphasis on other traditional Punjabi values such as hierarchy and community bring to light its adherence to local customs and patterns of behaviour.

By adopting the “Homeland” “Host Land” dichotomy as a basis for analysis this paper risks categorizing Diaspora Indians as collectively “modern” and Punjabi Indians as collectively “traditional”. It should be acknowledged that in reality the situation is much

more complex than that. Aurora's study on Indians in Britain suggests the presence of two groups, "accommodationists," who adapt to the new country insofar as they can cope financially and physically with it, and "integrationists," who actually take on the new society's values and cultural traits (Aurora 2004: 66-67). To take it one step further, it could be argued that Punjabis of many different levels of adaptation to the host land live under the shared label of "Sikh Diaspora," making it difficult to generalize what constitutes the values and ideals of that particular group. It should also be noted that the Canadian Sikh community in particular has been identified as having a large number of religiously and culturally conservative members (see Tatla, 1999: 171-172) making it possible that the Diaspora has itself actually reinforced rather than broken down the traditional elements of the Guru Nanak Trust. Furthermore, as Ballard has noted, even the Sikh community within Punjab is highly divided along the lines of custom and belief (1994:90). A difference in political, religious and cultural perspectives throughout the Sikh community both within India and abroad has perhaps created complex choices for the Trust when deciding which parts of the community to appeal to and how.

The Diaspora-Homeland Linkage as a Site

Thus far this paper has treated the Punjabi "Homeland" and "Diaspora" as two separate and distinct entities. The following explores Guru Nanak Trust as a site for "systems" that are rooted neither solely in the Diaspora or the Homeland, but somewhere between the two. Although these systems have not yet been theoretically or analytically investigated, their acknowledgment provides another perspective on how Diaspora-Homeland linkages through the Trust actually work and what implications this may have for the Trust's sustainability.

A. "In-Between Persons" Facilitating the Linkage

While it may be that technological advancements in communication and transportation technology have, as argued by several scholars increased the opportunities for the Diaspora to rekindle ties with its Homeland (Patel, 2000; Shurmer-Smith, 2000), some interviewees informed me that communication between the Guru Nanak Trust and its donors in the Diaspora remains problematic because of the Trust's high preference for in-

person meetings. One of the major issues raised was that Canadians and other westerners are, for example, much more likely to use the internet to connect with people overseas than their Punjabi counterparts. Westerners expect to be able to use websites to obtain information, and to use email to communicate ideas and make plans. In the Punjab, internet is not yet a mainstream communication tool and although internet access is available onsite at the Trust, people there are not used to using it. When reflecting on her experience with the Trust one Canadian Nursing consultant commented that:

maybe there's a cultural different in that we would tend to use email a lot... so there wasn't much communication ongoing throughout the year; our communication has been mostly around visits...

Face-to-face interaction, however, is difficult to obtain. New advancements in transportation technology may have made travel between the Homeland and the Diaspora easier than ever before (Patel, 2000), but inequalities in access to these technologies mean that it is still impossible for most Diaspora Indians to make use of them. Financial limitations and visa restrictions still prevent many Indians from going overseas.

One way the Trust has overcome this gap between the Punjab and the Diaspora, has been to rely extensively on “in between persons”: individuals with a thorough understanding of the culture and customs in both Punjab and the Diaspora that have the legal and financial capability to move freely between the two. Such individuals satisfy the Trust's preference for soliciting support and making decisions in person. As the primary point through which communication between the Trust and the Diaspora takes place, they hold a great deal of responsibility over the flow of money, people and ideas in and out of the Trust.

President Budh Singh has shown a profound capacity for bridging Homeland and Diaspora. His ability to use his Canadian passport is in itself significant. Almost everybody else directly involved with the Trust in Punjab, Budh told me, is an Indian Citizen and must apply for special permission every time they go abroad. Budh on the other hand, can move freely to anywhere he likes. The collection campaigns he runs abroad each year as already noted, are an imperative source of funding for the Trust. Budh's experience of living and working in both the Diaspora and the Homeland has

made going back and forth quite natural for him: he speaks both English and Punjabi fluently and said that he understands the underlying culture and customs of both the West and Punjab. Although Budh Singh said he feels sentimental towards the Punjab because it is the place of his birth, he also identifies with the West and in particular, with being Canadian.

If Budh Singh is Punjab's link to Canada and the West, his son, Barj Dhahan is Canada's link to Punjab. Barj, though born in Punjab, was raised mostly in Canada. Today he is a privileged businessman based in Vancouver. In an effort to contribute to his father's initiative, Barj used his insider knowledge of Canadian business practices and his network of contacts in the Vancouver region to create the afore mentioned Canada India Education Society (CIES). Aside from offering donors tax breaks and receipts, as discussed earlier, The Canada India Education Society has also tried to appeal to donors by deliberately keeping its vision and mission more "open" than that of the Guru Nanak Trust's. By remaining secular and emphasizing the link between Canada and India (as opposed to Punjab or the Sikh community in particular), the organization hopes to reach a wider more diverse support base for the Guru Nanak Trust. A few years ago Barj initiated a Nursing Exchange Program with the University of British Columbia in Vancouver (UBC), Canada, whereby nursing students from UBC and GNT visit each other's institutions, and staff from the UBC Nursing Faculty come periodically to the Trust as Nursing Education consultants. The establishment of this program represented the first significant move to involve people from outside of the Punjabi community in a Guru Nanak Trust project.

Ironically, one of the major contributions of CIES has been to discourage the Guru Nanak Trust from mirroring Canadian medical and educational practices, and instead develop a way of doing things that is suitable in a Punjabi context. A new emphasis, for example, has been placed on investing in primary preventative healthcare as opposed to the high tech medical equipment commonly found in hospitals in the West. As one UBC Nursing consultant put it:

What the Trust valued was the hi-tech hospital, they felt this is what was needed. Which is understandable if you don't have a good hospital care, as the developed world does, then you think that's what's important. It's harder to see the value in preventative activities. So I think the Canada India Education Society would have been the ones that really had to convince the Trust this was an important thing to do. I don't think that would have happened on the Punjab side.

Clearly Barj and his fellow CIES members have been more than a Canadian influence on an Indian organization; instead they have tried to aid the Trust by using resources at their disposal in Canada while simultaneously considering what's best for the organization from an Indian perspective.

While President Budh Singh and his son have done a remarkable job of using their "in-between" status to bridge the gap between the Sikh Diaspora and Homeland, one cannot help but think about what may happen to the organization after Budh Singh's death. The reality is that there is nobody else involved with the Trust that has the same kind of international network that Budh Singh has, and extremely few, if any, with a foreign passport that will allow them to travel to the extent that he does. There is one exception and that is, of course, his son Barj. When I asked Barj about it he said he feels considerable pressure to step up his involvement and fill his father's role. His own "in-between" status and his potential to make use of his father's international networks is unique and would be an asset to the Trust. He is not interested in assuming his father's role in the long term, however, and would prefer to see the organization take on a more sustainable and long-term approach to soliciting funding, a way that doesn't depend on him or his father's going back and forth between India and the West.

The Trust's future reliance on "in-between persons" is uncertain and it is possible that an alternative means of bridging the Diaspora-Homeland gap may be required. Nevertheless, it is interesting to explore how individual persons with the capacity to move between cultures and societies have come to play such a central role in facilitating communication between the Trust and the Punjabi Diaspora.

B. Migration “Systems”

It is possible that there may actually be many “in-between persons” to bridge the gap between the Trust and the Diaspora in the near future. The Trust’s key objectives are, or at least at the outset appear to be, focused on improving the health and education facilities in the Punjab. One of the most fascinating things I discovered during the course of my study, however, was that the activities conducted at the Trust with the financial and moral support of the Sikh Diaspora, actually tend to encourage more and more Punjabis to emigrate abroad.

The Senior Secondary School, for example, proudly offers students an education that will help them to gain admission to universities located overseas. Even more significantly, in the Nursing College, almost all of the students, according to the school’s principal, intend to and do go abroad after finishing their studies in Dhahan-Kaleran. The fact that many students leave Dhahan-Kaleran for the Diaspora after graduation gives the Guru Nanak Trust a new spin: it might be viewed not only as a conventional development project wherein the Diaspora donates money to the Homeland to improve the conditions in the Homeland, but rather, an open system wherein people and money actually flow back and forth between the two locales.

When considering all of the Trust’s institutions, the connections between the Nursing School and the Diaspora stand out as the most elaborate. Numerous pamphlets recruiting trained nurses to work overseas on the Nursing College billboard has made it clear that Nurses are, as mentioned earlier, in great demand in all three of the major parts of the Sikh Diaspora: Canada, the USA and the UK. This makes going abroad an excellent career choice for aspiring Punjabi emigrants, particularly those who may already have family based overseas. Wages paid to nurses are comparatively higher in the Diaspora and the chance to have a higher standard of living is, as my interviewees told me, a major draw for many.

In almost every interview I conducted, the discussion turned to the mass out-migration of nurses to the Diaspora. One nursing instructor explained:

Every year so many nurses finish their degree or diploma. But now the nurses, they don't want to stay over here. Because of the standards and because they can't upgrade their knowledge here they want to go to another country.

The nursing students and graduates I interviewed weren't shy to admit that they had chosen nursing for the chance to go abroad. When I asked one girl why she decided to enter the nursing college, for example, she responded:

Frankly speaking, my parents have just thought of Canada. Because my elder sister is married there. And my family is thinking of, well my sister has told us that there is a very wide scope for nursing. And my parents may want to go there-shift there, because she is going to sponsor us in the future.

The continued outflow of nurses and educated students from the Punjab to the Diaspora is happening at an unprecedented rate and the impacts are yet to be seen. Will "too much" outgoing migration affect the Trust? According to the Trustees I interviewed the Trust is already finding it difficult to secure nurses for the hospital and nursing instructors in the college, because so many Punjab-trained nurses do end up successfully going abroad after graduating. I raised this concern with the Trust's Financial Manager. He acknowledged the problem but remained positive, citing the continued migration to the Diaspora as part of the development process.

Actually if they are going abroad, to England or Canada, they are increasing their standard of living. They are serving their families also. A girl who is living in a village, a rural area, after completing course, if she settle down in Canada, it's very good.

Perhaps he is right. Ongoing migration out of Punjab is not necessarily a bad thing, especially if remittances are sent to assist those left behind and more nurses are trained to work locally.

It is possible that ongoing migration from Punjab to the West, and particularly to Canada, may actually provide benefits to the Trust as well. It is reasonable to speculate that a continuous outflow of migrants may help keep traditional Punjab culture alive in specific places overseas thereby refurbishing linkages between Dhahan-Kaleran and the Diaspora. Furthermore, there is a chance that those Indians who have benefited from the Trust and later become successful abroad may donate money back to the mission, or become helpful cultural consultants through which the Trust can develop its international networks and/ or activities.

It is remarkable how quickly particularly the Nursing College at Dhahan-Kaleran has exhibited an international dimension. The linkages between this particular part of Punjab, the Doab, and its Diaspora in the West are already extremely strong and appear only likely to strengthen as more and more young Punjabis move through the “Guru Nanak system” from the Punjab to the Diaspora. Such “systems” support the notion that the Diaspora can, as Drzerjeckar and Halualani have put it, simultaneously be “articulated through fluidity and fixity” (2002: 344). While the Sikh Diaspora may be “based” in specific places the characteristics of its membership are dynamic and the relationship between the Punjab Diaspora and the Punjab Homeland is constantly changing as a result.

Trust Perceptions of Organization Sustainability

The Trust has been very successful at proceeding in a way that appeals to both its supporters in the Diaspora and the local community in which it is based. That said it faces a number of challenges that affect its ability to function smoothly in a transnational context leading some within the organization to question whether or not it will be possible to secure ongoing support from the Diaspora in the long term.

The proposition made by Nayar and others that the cultural rift between Punjabis living in the Homeland and Diaspora grows with every generation seemed to be widely supported by my interviewees. Many revealed concerns over whether or not future generations of Punjabis will be interested in contributing money to the Trust. One Trustee told me that as he saw it, in the Diaspora, the “first generation is very much interested in this region. Second generation... they got some different culture, they born there, grown up there, and they adopt western culture...” I asked Budh Singh what he thought about it and he seemed to suggest that philanthropic aid from the Diaspora was gradually going to fade away:

So many of those people are there who leave this country and migrate there. They love this country and want to develop this country, and second-generation care a little bit less about how this country develops and the third generation, it would be very hard to convince them.

The trustees I interviewed identified marked cultural differences and the increasing inability of third and fourth generation Punjabis to speak and write Punjabi to be the main causes of the growing divide between Homeland and Diaspora, and the main threats to the Trust’s future support base.

When I asked the administration of the Trust how they intended to respond to this perceived gap they saw emerging between themselves and Punjabis overseas, their responses were mixed. Financial Manager Raghbir Singh, remained optimistic:

It doesn’t seem that the next generation will involve here... but there’s no bar that next generation will not involve here. We have to find different ways for how we can involve them here... We have to organize these things in a different way so that it will suit them... Things like organization structure, the living standard, the activities where we can involve them...

Raghbir also told me that by his own initiative, he is trying to establish a “standardized communication system” emphasizing things like the internet through which it would be easier to communicate with people in the Diaspora. He also noted how, from his

perspective, more effort should be made to provide information on the Trust in English to help overcome the language barrier faced by second, third and fourth generation Punjabis overseas. Budh Singh's vision was entirely different. When I asked him what strategy was best for the Trust he said the organization should let its international focus go and adopt a more local approach in the future. Instead of going to international donors:

We should make arrange to collect the money from this Punjab over here. Then it would be much easier to run these kinds of things... If I can keep alive ten or fifteen more years, we can collect lots of money to put in the fund. Nobody can take from the endowment fund. So if we have 50 Crowe rupees then it would be plenty enough to run these institutions.

His Secretary agreed suggesting that while international donors had built the Trust up, now it was time for the organization to suffice on savings and local support.

For the Guru Nanak Trust, negotiating how to approach the local and the global dimensions of the organization to best ensure its future sustainability remains an ongoing challenge. As it looks right now, the Trust has acknowledged that it may have to change its strategy in response to weakening Diaspora support. However it has not decided yet how to proceed. It is possible that furthering its accommodation of the Diaspora by adopting a more concerted application of communication technology and increasing the use of the English language within the Trust, for example, may help the organization to sustain or even strengthen its international linkages. Taking advantage of these opportunities, however, may require intensive restructuring and cultural adaptation, something the administration and Trustees of the organization may or may not see as worthwhile.

VI.CONCLUSION

This paper has provided an overview of the Guru Nanak Trust, a Punjab-based organization that has grown and prospered on donations from the Sikh Diaspora. It has discussed how the Trust manages its operating mandates and procedures in a way that appeals to its supporters in the Diaspora while simultaneously maintaining many of the customs and values of rural Punjab. The paper briefly explored how the Trust and the

Diaspora may be linked through “systems” that occupy a space between geographically and culturally divergent realms. It proposed that those with the ability to function in and move between both Punjabi and Diaspora societies may serve as “in-between persons” facilitating communication and transactions between the two. Although ongoing out-migration from Punjab may be seen as problematic from one perspective, it was suggested that such processes also have the potential to create more people with the capacity to move back and forth between the Diaspora and the Homeland, thereby contributing to the long-term sustainability of the organization’s transnational dimensions.

The paper has touched on sustainability issues throughout, and in the final section, outlined how the Trust members perceive a growing cultural and linguistic “rift” between themselves and future generations of Punjabis living overseas. The notion that third and fourth generation Punjabis may not take an interest in the Trust the way their parents and grandparents have presents a number of challenges for the organization as it decides whether or not to change its approach to internationalization in the future. Like many other voluntary organizations, The Guru Nanak Trust is caught between meeting “the demands of those supplying development and aid resources and those needing the resources” (Alliband, 1983). However, in the case of the Trust, the ones “supplying” the assistance are not governments or formal aid banks but people linked to themselves on the basis of a shared ethnicity and a common history in the Punjab. The complex linkages already bringing the divergent Punjabi community together will perhaps evolve to present new opportunities for continued ethnic solidarity and the maintenance of the transnational dimensions of the Guru Nanak Trust despite the growing cultural gap. It is also possible, however, that differences between the Trust and the Diaspora will, over the long run, become too difficult to bridge and the Trust will carry on, as Budh Singh suggested, as an organization relying instead on local support. In any case, this study represents a preliminary investigation into how linkages between Diaspora and Homeland can be forged, sustained and adapted to accommodate new dynamics in the Diaspora-Homeland relationship through presentation of the case of the Guru Nanak Mission Medical and Educational Trust.

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