

UC SANTA BARBARA

# *THE* **Current**

December 3, 1998

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## **Preserving the Past, Comprehending the Present EMINENT SIKH STUDIES SCHOLAR APPOINTED TO KAPANY CHAIR**

Gurinder Singh Mann, an eminent historian and textual scholar of Sikhism, has been named the first recipient of the Kundan Kaur Kapany Chair in Sikh Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. The Kapany Chair is the first endowed chair in Sikh Studies in the UC system.

An expert on the canonical scriptures in the Sikh tradition, Mann has been described as "the outstanding Sikh scholar of his generation".

Mann's scholarship is considered groundbreaking for the precision with which he has traced the manuscript development of the Sikh scriptures, viewing canon formation as integral to the social formation of the Sikhs as an emerging community, according to UCSB sociologist Mark Juergensmeyer, a leading scholar of Sikh nationalism and director of UCSB's Global and International Studies Program.

Mann will join the UCSB faculty next year and will hold a joint appointment in Global and International Studies and the Department of Religious Studies in the College of Letters and Science. He is currently an associate professor in the Religion Department at Columbia University.

"With this new appointment in Sikh Studies and the recent conference at UCSB charting new directions in the field, UCSB is demonstrating that it is one of the major centers of the study of South Asia religion in the United States," said Juergensmeyer.

A prolific author, Mann has written numerous articles and books on Sikhism. As a result of his important contributions to the history, society, and culture of the Sikhs, he is widely considered a leader in the overall development of the field.

At UCSB, Mann said he plans to introduce teaching of Sikhism, representing the tradition as a bridge between the monotheistic traditions of the Near East and the Indic religions. He will also teach courses on the Sikhs in the diaspora by placing them in the larger context of the history of Asian communities in the United States.

"We have all the ingredients present at UCSB to effectively build a major program in Sikh Studies," said Mann.

"UCSB has large offerings in ethnic, religious, and South Asian studies which will provide a firm context to the new degree program in Global Studies.

My hope is that soon we will be on the map as the leading center for research and public information on the Sikhs in the Western world."

An innovative new undergraduate major at UCSB in global studies will provide an interdisciplinary program of study in both cultural and socioeconomic aspects of globalization.

"The appointment of Professor Gurinder Singh Mann will continue a long tradition in the Department of Religious Studies of exploring religion in its global context," said David Marshall, dean of the college's division of humanities and fine arts.

"He is the kind of scholar who can build bridges between the academic community and the increasingly important Sikh community in California."

The Kundan Kaur Kapany Chair was established by Dr. and Mrs. Narinder S. Kapany, of Palo Alto, and the Sikh Foundation.

The chair is named in memory of Narinder Kapany's mother.

"I am proud to acknowledge the generosity and vision of Narinder and Satinder Kapany and the Sikh Foundation for the establishment of the Kundan Kaur Kapany

Chair," said UCSB Chancellor Henry Yang at a recent event celebrating the creation of the endowed chair.

"It will be an integral part of our new major emphasizing the globalization of cultures and the diaspora of communities of the world.

Sikh Studies encompasses the history, literature, language, religion, politics, society, and economics of the Sikh people, an ethnic and religious community that originated in the Punjab region of North India in the 16th century. Influenced by both Hinduism and Islam, but distinctly its own tradition, the Sikh community flourished under the leadership of a lineage of 10 gurus. In the 18th and 19th centuries, their social and political power was challenged by Moghul rulers and then by British colonial rule.

Today, Sikhs are the dominant community in the Indian state of Punjab. There are presently more than 18 million Sikhs throughout India and around the world, with a disproportionately large number in England and California, where they constitute sizable and influential communities. The field of Sikh Studies includes scholarship related to the texts and literature of the tradition, its history and social organization, and its dispersion throughout the world.

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## **About UC Santa Barbara**

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.