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Gurbani Sangit Parampara: Sustaining Indigenous Knowledge Systems

This paper will discuss the Gurbani Sangit Parampara as an Indigenous Sikh knowledge system whose practices, pedagogies, and patterns have been passed down orally over centuries. Since it takes only one generation for intangible heritage to be forgotten, it will look at the ways in which its pedagogy and practice have been remembered, shared, embodied, and safeguarded to survive through socio-political turmoil, colonization, upheaval from homeland, religio-cultural marginalization, minoritization, and erasure. Through interviews with Sikh musician memory bearers, I will argue that the Gurbani Sangit Parampara trains responsible custodians to sustain “uncolonized” streams of Indigenous knowledge. As a scholar-practitioner, I explore the processes of remembering, recovering, and regenerating Sikh ecologies of knowledge, to understand the ways in which their spiritual-aesthetic symbiosis informs adaptation and sustainability of Sikh music, knowledge, and identity over time.

Bhai Baldeep Singh

The Anād Foundation, New Delhi, India

**The Indigenous Perspective: Bhai Baldeep Singh Speaks of his Pioneering
Work of Research and Revival of the Gurbani Sangit Parampara**

A direct descendant of Bhai Sadharan, who a disciple of the founder of the Sikh faith, Bhai Baldeep Singh is the scion of a long lineage of GurSikh masters of the Gurbani Sangit Parampara. Bhai Baldeep Singh’s repertoire includes musical masterpieces as they were first sung by the Sikh Gurus and Bhagats, and he is the prime exponent (khalifa or pagri nashin) of the Sultanpur Lodhi-Amritsari Baj, the oldest school of classical percussion in Punjab. In the early 80s, a young Bhai Baldeep Singh realized that the civilizational essence of the GurSikh tradition was in real danger of extinction. He traveled across the Indian subcontinent, including pre-Partition Punjab, and beyond to connect with the last living bearers of GurSikh excellence and assimilated their oral narratives and musical knowledge into a panoramic vantage and performative élan unmatched in recent decades. An institution unto himself, Bhai Baldeep Singh’s herculean efforts to salvage GurSikh tangible and intangible heritage are responsible for the survival into the twenty-first century of the original musical masterpieces in which scripture was revealed to the GurSikh Gurus, the musical instruments and playing systems of their endowment, and the pedagogical processes through which rising generations of custodians are being minted. In the 2000s, his