

# Report on study Related to Outreach to the Sikh Community



Submitted to



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## **Section 1: Introduction and Preliminary Data**

### **1.1 Introduction and Historical Context**

The Sikh community, with its rich cultural, spiritual, and historical heritage, has long been recognized as a vital component of India's socio-political fabric and has extended its influence on a global scale. Over time, since joining the nation in 1947, Sikhs have played a significant role in various movements—ranging from the fight against oppressive regimes in medieval India to active participation in India's independence struggle—thereby solidifying their reputation as defenders of justice and upholders of humanitarian values.

Originating in the 15th century under the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, Sikhism emphasizes equality, service (seva), and devotion to a singular divine power. The subsequent Gurus further codified these principles, culminating in the formation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh Ji in 1699, which strengthened the collective identity and fostered a spirit of courage, resilience, and social justice. At the heart of Sikh identity and governance is Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the eternal Guru of the Sikh community. Compiled by Guru Arjan Dev Ji in 1604 and later finalized by Guru Gobind Singh Ji in 1708, it is the ultimate spiritual guide for Sikhs. Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji contains hymns from 35 contributors—Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim—reflecting its inclusive nature. These teachings emphasize devotion to the Divine, social justice, and selfless service—values that continue to shape Sikh engagement in society today. Thus, preserving Sikh institutions and religious leadership from external interference is critical to ensuring that Sikh governance remains rooted in these foundational principles. Of prime importance, too, is Gurmukhi, the script that preserves Sikh scriptures and literature. Recognizing and respecting these core aspects is essential in any discourse on Sikh issues, as they shape the community's values, collective memory, and vision for the future.

However, the Sikh community's experiences have been shaped by a series of unending historical and socio-political challenges. Events such as the partition of Punjab in 1947 led to widespread displacement, reshaping demographic and economic patterns. In the decades following independence, the community faced new hurdles, including regional autonomy debates and economic restructuring, which intersected with issues of agrarian distress and shifting political alliances. Tensions in the late 20th century, including Operation Blue Star and terrorism, further contributed to a sense of alienation in the community. Today, these historical grievances and socio-political complexities continue to inform the Sikh perspective and underline the need for deeper engagement and understanding.

This study aims to explore these issues through data-driven analysis, drawing from surveys and historical context, to provide insights into fostering pride in Sikh identity, recognizing their distinct contributions, and highlighting their role within the broader framework of nation-building and global engagement. The regional diversity of Punjab—encompassing

Doaba, Majha, and Malwa—serves as an essential backdrop, offering a lens into the varying socio-economic conditions and cultural nuances that shape Sikh life in these subregions. Beyond Punjab, the study also considers the status of Sikh communities in minority states like Haryana, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, and Delhi, alongside smaller but significant Sikh populations in regions such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh. Furthermore, it acknowledges the global influence of Sikh diaspora communities, which have established themselves in countries including Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Malaysia, and Italy, among others.

Challenges in Punjab are often viewed as localized issues, yet they are deeply intertwined with broader historical, socio-political, and systemic factors. Internal challenges—such as agrarian distress, shifting cultural priorities, and the interplay of religion and politics—are compounded by external influences, including economic neglect, historical injustices, and policy gaps. This study aspires to move beyond a purely historical or anecdotal understanding of the Sikh experience by drawing on robust, data-driven insights that underscore both the community's enduring strengths and the multifaceted challenges it confronts. By examining on-ground contexts, the research seeks to illuminate pathways for policy interventions, grassroots engagement, and cultural preservation. In doing so, it emphasizes the importance of recognizing the Sikh community's distinct contributions to India's socio-political fabric and the global arena. It also upholds the historic and long lasting unity between Sikhs and Hindus, which has been compromised by various elements, alienating once composite communities and identities such as Sehajdari Sikhs. Ultimately, a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of Sikh concerns, aspirations, and achievements can foster dialogue, bridge existing gaps, and inspire collaborative solutions that honor the community's legacy while ensuring its continued growth and vitality.

## **1.2 The Sikh Community in India**

### **Sikh Population in India**

According to the 2011 Census of India, the Sikh population was approximately 20.8 million, constituting about 1.72% of India's total population, though current data shows the population at approximately 24 million, out of a global population of 30 million Sikhs worldwide. The majority of Sikhs reside in Punjab, where they account for approximately 58% of the state's population (as of 2011, though current data reflects approximately 77%). Punjab remains the cultural, spiritual, and political heartland of Sikhism, housing major religious sites like the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

## **Distribution of Sikhs in India**

- **Punjab:**

Punjab remains the cradle of Sikhism, home to over 16 million Sikhs and countless historical landmarks. This region not only nurtured the development of the Sikh faith but also hosts some of its most iconic sites, such as the Golden Temple in Amritsar. This sacred shrine is a symbol of equality, resilience, and spiritual harmony, drawing millions of devotees every year. Beyond its religious sites, Punjab is known for its rich cultural traditions, vibrant festivals, and a deep-rooted sense of community that has been passed down through generations.

- **Haryana:**

In Haryana, Sikhs constitute approximately 4.9% of the population. Owing to its close proximity to Punjab, the state has naturally developed a strong cultural and social connection with Sikh traditions. Many districts along the border serve as dynamic centers where traditional practices, community celebrations, and local gurdwaras provide spiritual support and cultural identity. This close-knit community has significantly contributed to the state's development, merging their rich heritage with modern socio-economic pursuits.

- **Delhi:**

Delhi, with a Sikh population of approximately 3.4%, is a melting pot of cultures. Historical Sikh neighborhoods like Tilak Nagar, Rajouri Garden, and Lajpat Nagar not only offer vibrant marketplaces but also serve as hubs for religious and cultural festivities. These areas reflect the city's layered history, where centuries-old traditions coexist with rapid urban development. The active participation of the Sikh community in social and political spheres further enriches Delhi's diverse tapestry.

- **Rajasthan:**

Rajasthan's Sikh community, accounting for approximately 1.27% of the state's population, has a unique historical background. Many Sikhs settled in regions such as Ganganagar and Hanumangarh during the post-Partition era, contributing to the state's demographic mosaic. In these towns, numerous gurdwaras and cultural centers stand as testament to the community's resilience. Local festivals and regular religious observances highlight the Sikh community's ongoing commitment to preserving their distinct traditions amid a diverse cultural landscape.

- **Maharashtra:**

In Maharashtra, although Sikhs represent approximately 0.2% of the total population, their cultural imprint is unmistakable. Major cities like Mumbai and Pune feature bustling Sikh neighborhoods where traditional values meet modern lifestyles. Of particular note is Nanded, a city of immense spiritual importance due to the revered

Hazur Sahib Gurdwara. This shrine is a major pilgrimage destination and plays a central role in the annual spiritual calendar, symbolizing the deep historical and spiritual connections that bind the Sikh community across the country.

- **Uttar Pradesh:**

Uttar Pradesh hosts a historically significant Sikh community in areas like Pilibhit, Lakhimpur Kheri, and Saharanpur. The migration and resettlement following the 1947 Partition have left lasting marks on the region's cultural fabric. The establishment of community centers and gurdwaras in these districts has helped preserve Sikh traditions while fostering integration with the broader local culture. The ongoing cultural exchanges and community events reinforce the Sikh commitment to their heritage and values in this vast state.

- **Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh:**

Though smaller in number, the Sikh communities in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh have carved out notable spaces for themselves, particularly in cities such as Indore, Bhopal, and Raipur. Initially driven by opportunities in employment and trade, these communities have evolved into vibrant cultural hubs. Local gurdwaras, community halls, and educational institutions play a critical role in maintaining Sikh traditions, attempting to ensure that the community's rich history and spiritual values continue to influence regional development.

- **Bihar & West Bengal:**

In Bihar, the Sikh community is prominently centered in Patna, which is home to the Takht Sri Patna Sahib. Recognized as one of the five Takhts in Sikhism, this historic site attracts thousands of pilgrims annually, underscoring the region's profound religious significance. Similarly, in West Bengal—especially in Kolkata—although the Sikh population is relatively small, they contribute actively to the city's multicultural life. The establishment of local gurdwaras and community events ensures that Sikh traditions remain an integral part of the social landscape.

- **Gujarat:**

Sikhs in Gujarat have established themselves in bustling urban centers such as Ahmedabad, Surat, and the region of Kutch. Often involved in commerce, transport, and entrepreneurial ventures, the community has effectively merged its rich cultural traditions with the state's dynamic economic environment. Local Sikh organizations and gurdwaras help foster community ties and preserve religious practices, highlighting the adaptability and resourcefulness of the Sikh diaspora in Gujarat.

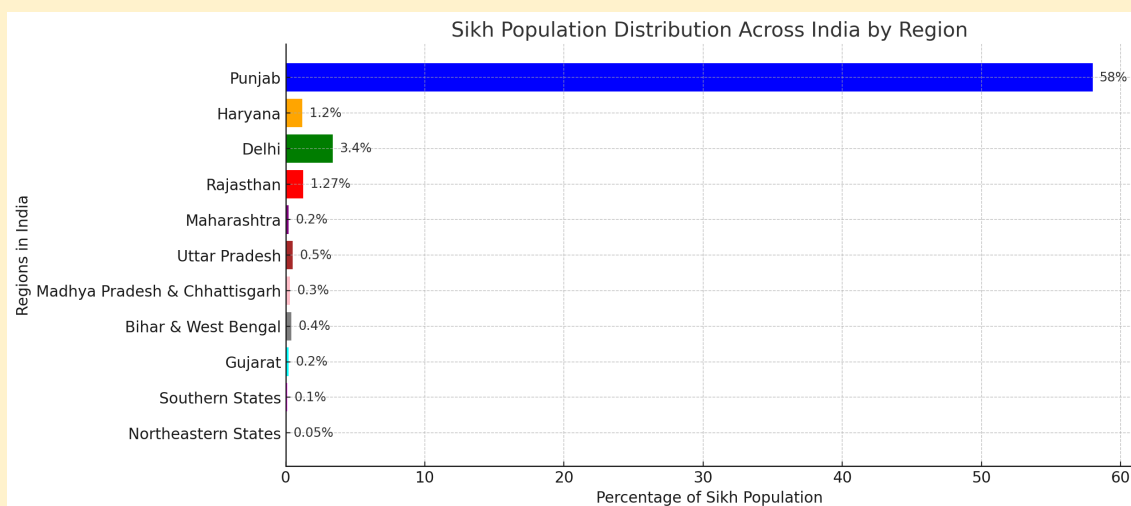
- **Southern States (Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala):**

In the southern states, Sikh communities, though smaller, have made significant

strides in integrating with local societies. In metropolitan areas like Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, and other regional cities, Sikhs have established vibrant enclaves that celebrate their faith through regular worship, cultural festivities, and community outreach programs. These centers not only serve as places for religious observance but also as platforms for social support and cultural exchange, reflecting the community's commitment to service and resilience far from their traditional homeland.

- **Northeastern States:**

The Sikh presence in the Northeastern states may be modest in numbers, but their contributions to regional diversity are profound. In states such as Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Meghalaya, Sikh communities have long been involved in agriculture, trade, and local businesses, enriching the socio-economic fabric of the region. A highlight in this area is the **Dongmar Gurdwara** in Sikkim. Steeped in legend and revered history, this gurdwara is associated with the visit of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of Sikhism, marking an important chapter in the spread of Sikh spiritual teachings. The Dongmar Sahib not only stands as a sacred pilgrimage site but also symbolizes the far-reaching influence of Sikhism, bridging cultural divides between the northeastern regions and the heartland of Sikh tradition. Local Sikh organizations continue to celebrate festivals and conduct community events, ensuring that their spiritual legacy and cultural heritage endure in these vibrant states.



### 1.3 Minority Sikh Communities: Historical Insights, Socio-Economic Status and Demographic Breakdown

Sikhism has always embraced people from diverse backgrounds, leading to the emergence of several minority Sikh communities. Many of these groups have distinct historical roles but continue to face social, economic, and political challenges. Below is a detailed breakdown of their history, current socio-economic conditions, and where they are primarily found in India.

## 1. Mazhabi Sikhs

Mazhabi Sikhs historically belonged to marginalised backgrounds and converted to Sikhism as a means of escaping social discrimination. They played an essential role in Sikh military history, particularly during the time of Guru Hargobind Singh Ji and Guru Gobind Singh Ji, when they were among the earliest groups to join the Sikh armies. Their courage and martial skills were recognized by the British, who later recruited them into the Sikh regiments of the British Indian Army, where they continued to uphold their legacy as warriors. Despite their service and contributions, they have historically faced discrimination even within Sikh society.

**Demographic Breakdown:** Mainly found in Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi. Many Mazhabi Sikhs have migrated to urban centers such as Delhi, Ludhiana, and Amritsar, where they primarily work in industrial labor and security services.

**Socio-Economic Status:** Mazhabi Sikhs traditionally had little to no land ownership and were often dependent on agricultural labor or daily wage work for survival. A significant number have sought employment in police forces, private security jobs, and the Indian Army, where they have continued their historical association with military service. However, despite their presence in these sectors, they remain economically and socially vulnerable, with many living in low-income housing and facing barriers to upward mobility.

## 2. Ramdasi Sikhs

Ramdasi Sikhs were followers of Guru Ravidas Singh Ji but maintained a strong Sikh identity, particularly after the rise of Sikh reform movements. Historically, they were engaged in artisanal work, including leatherwork and trade, which provided them with economic independence. Many also served in Sikh armies, particularly during conflicts with the Mughal Empire, showcasing their commitment to Sikh principles.

**Demographic Breakdown:** Mainly found in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Delhi, with a significant diaspora in the UK, Canada, and the USA.

**Socio-Economic Status:** Compared to Mazhabi Sikhs, Ramdasi Sikhs have achieved better educational and business presence. Many have transitioned from traditional trades to small businesses and professional jobs. However, despite their economic progress, they continue to face social barriers, particularly in rural Punjab, which affects their access to leadership positions within Sikh religious and political institutions.

## 3. Ravidassia Sikhs

Ravidassia Sikhs are followers of Guru Ravidas and were historically included in mainstream Sikhism. However, after the 2009 assassination of Sant Ramanand Dass, a leader of the Ravidassia community, a section of this group began identifying separately from Sikhism.

Traditionally, many Ravidasias worked as agricultural laborers, carpenters, and artisans, playing a crucial role in the rural economy of Punjab and Haryana.

**Demographic Breakdown:** Mainly found in Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, and Uttar Pradesh, with a strong diaspora in the UK, Canada, and Australia.

**Socio-Economic Status:** Many Ravidasia Sikhs have moved into business, overseas employment, and politics, seeking greater social mobility. Politically active, they have been advocating for representation of marginalised Sikh and reservation benefits, as identity-based discrimination continues to affect their access to opportunities.

#### 4. Nihang Sikhs

Nihang Sikhs were formed as Guru Gobind Singh Ji's warrior order and have historically served as the most elite fighters in Sikh military traditions. Known for their distinctive blue robes, weapons, and martial arts expertise, Nihangs fought against the Mughals, Afghans, and the British to protect Sikh sovereignty. They have preserved traditional Sikh martial arts (Gatka) and continue to practice a disciplined lifestyle dedicated to the defense of Sikhism.

**Demographic Breakdown:** Mainly found in Punjab, particularly in Baba Bakala, Talwandi Sabo, Anandpur Sahib, Amritsar, Patiala, and Bathinda. Smaller groups also exist in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana.

**Socio-Economic Status:** Nihangs are mostly self-sufficient, relying on land grants, community donations, and their roles as caretakers of historical Sikh Gurdwaras. Some engage in farming and Gatka training, preserving their warrior traditions. However, due to the decline of their traditional military role, many struggle with economic mobility outside their religious and martial commitments.

#### 5. Sehajdhari Sikhs

Sehajdhari Sikhs are those who follow Sikh teachings and philosophy but do not maintain uncut hair or wear turbans. Historically, they played an important role in Sikh religious and political matters and were actively involved in Sikh institutions. However, in 2003, they were barred from voting in SGPC (Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee) elections, which significantly reduced their influence within Sikh governance structures. Despite this, they continue to identify with Sikhism and contribute to Sikh society in various ways.

**Demographic Breakdown:** Sehajdhari Sikhs are widespread across India, including Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra, and Delhi. They also have a significant presence in the USA, Canada, the UK, and Australia, where many have settled as part of the Sikh diaspora.

**Socio-Economic Status:** Many Sehajdhari Sikhs have attained success in fields such as business, education, and politics. However, their exclusion from formal Sikh governance bodies has created challenges for their full recognition within Sikh institutions. The lack of representation in key decision-making organizations often leads to debates regarding their role in Sikh religious and community affairs.

## 6. Banjara Sikhs

Banjara Sikhs, originally from the nomadic Banjara trading community, converted to Sikhism under Guru Nanak Dev Ji and Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Historically, the Banjaras were traders who transported goods across India, playing an essential role in commerce and cultural exchange. Many later adopted Sikhism, becoming staunch followers of Sikh teachings and warriors during times of conflict. Their role in spreading Sikhism to central and southern India remains significant.

**Demographic Breakdown:** Banjara Sikhs are mainly found in Maharashtra, Telangana, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka, with some communities settled in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. Due to their nomadic heritage, many continue to live in dispersed settlements across these states.

**Socio-Economic Status:** Banjara Sikhs face high levels of poverty, low literacy rates, and a lack of stable employment. Many work in agriculture, transport, and seasonal trade. Their economic struggles are compounded by limited access to education and government welfare programs. While some have moved into urban areas for better job opportunities, many still face social and economic marginalization.

## 7. Namdhari Sikhs

Namdhari Sikhs are a reformist sect within Sikhism, founded in the 19th century under the leadership of Satguru Ram Singh. They are known for their distinct religious practices, including wearing white turbans, practicing strict vegetarianism, and maintaining a high level of discipline in their spiritual lives. Namdharis were among the earliest groups to resist British rule in India, leading non-cooperation movements and boycotting British goods. Their spiritual beliefs include a continuing line of Gurus beyond Guru Gobind Singh Ji, which sets them apart from mainstream Sikhism.

**Demographic Breakdown:** Namdhari Sikhs are primarily concentrated in Punjab and Haryana, with a significant presence in the Sikh diaspora, particularly in the UK, Canada, and Australia.

**Socio-Economic Status:** Namdhari Sikhs have generally achieved economic stability, excelling in agriculture, business, and trade. Many of them own successful enterprises and maintain a strong presence in community leadership. Despite their prosperity, their distinct

religious beliefs sometimes create tensions with mainstream Sikh institutions, and their recognition as Sikhs within major Sikh organizations remains a topic of debate.

## 8. Udasi Sikhs

Udasi Sikhs are members of a monastic sect founded by Sri Chand, the son of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. Unlike mainstream Sikhs, Udasis focus on asceticism, meditation, and spiritual wisdom. Historically, they played a significant role as caretakers of Sikh Gurdwaras before the formation of the SGPC (Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee) in the 20th century, which took over the management of Sikh religious institutions. The Udasis' emphasis on renunciation and their interactions with Hindu traditions led to differences between them and mainstream Sikhs, but they remain an important part of Sikh heritage.

**Demographic Breakdown:** Udasi Sikhs are mainly found in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar. They also have spiritual centers in major pilgrimage cities such as Varanasi and Haridwar.

**Socio-Economic Status:** Many Udasi Sikhs live in monastic communities, relying on donations and temple grants for sustenance. Some have transitioned into modern professions, including business and education. However, their traditional role as religious custodians has diminished due to the increasing influence of mainstream Sikh institutions.

## 9. Bhatra Sikhs

Bhatra Sikhs are historically a trading and spiritual community that migrated from Punjab to various parts of India and later settled in the UK and other Western nations. Historically, they engaged in business and trade while also serving as preachers who helped spread Sikhism beyond Punjab. Over time, many Bhatra Sikhs have integrated into the global Sikh diaspora and continue to maintain their religious and cultural practices.

**Demographic Breakdown:** Bhatra Sikhs are primarily found in Punjab, Jammu, and Himachal Pradesh. However, their largest communities exist in the UK, with smaller populations in Canada and the United States.

**Socio-Economic Status:** Bhatra Sikhs have become one of the more prosperous Sikh groups in the diaspora, excelling in business, retail, and property ownership. Many have successfully established themselves in the commercial and real estate sectors. Despite this success, they sometimes face social barriers within Sikh society due to their distinct cultural identity.

## 10. Sansi Sikhs

Sansi Sikhs were originally a nomadic community that converted to Sikhism during Guru Gobind Singh Ji's time. Historically, they were known for their skills in trading, animal

husbandry, and security services. However, under British colonial rule, they were labeled as a "criminal tribe," which led to widespread social exclusion and economic hardships that persist to this day.

**Demographic Breakdown:** Sansi Sikhs are mainly found in Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Delhi, and Uttar Pradesh. Some have migrated to urban areas for better job opportunities, though they remain largely concentrated in rural settlements.

**Socio-Economic Status:** Sansi Sikhs are among the most socio-economically disadvantaged Sikh communities. They have low literacy rates, high levels of poverty, and limited access to economic resources. Many work as agricultural laborers, construction workers, and in other low-paying jobs. Social stigma continues to be a barrier to their integration into mainstream Sikh society.

## 11. Dakhni Sikhs

Dakhni Sikhs are descendants of Sikh warriors, traders, and settlers who migrated to South India during the Mughal and Deccan Sultanate periods. Some were part of Guru Nanak Dev Ji's travels to the South, while others arrived later due to the expansion of the Sikh Empire and employment opportunities under the British. Dakhni Sikhs played a crucial role in protecting Gurdwaras in regions such as Karnataka, Telangana, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh, where they have maintained a distinct Sikh identity despite being geographically distant from Punjab.

**Demographic Breakdown:** Dakhni Sikhs are primarily found in Karnataka (Bidar, Gulbarga), Maharashtra (Nanded), Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu. Smaller communities exist in cities like Hyderabad and Mumbai. The community also has a small diaspora presence in the UK, Canada, and the Middle East.

**Socio-Economic Status:** Many Dakhni Sikhs are involved in trading, agriculture, and small businesses. Some have risen to prominent positions in commerce and government services. However, due to their geographical isolation from Punjab, they sometimes struggle with maintaining strong ties to mainstream Sikh institutions and preserving their religious identity.

## 12. Sindhi Sikhs

Sindhi Sikhs trace their lineage to Guru Nanak Dev Ji's visits to Sindh, where many Sindhi Hindus embraced Sikh teachings. Before the Partition of 1947, Sindhi Sikhs were concentrated in present-day Pakistan. However, after Partition, many migrated to India and other countries, losing their ancestral homes and businesses in Sindh. Despite this displacement, they have successfully re-established themselves, particularly in trade and business sectors.

**Demographic Breakdown:** Sindhi Sikhs are mainly found in Maharashtra (Mumbai, Pune), Delhi, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat. A significant diaspora exists in the UK, USA, UAE, and Canada.

**Socio-Economic Status:** Many Sindhi Sikhs are involved in business and trading, particularly in textiles, retail, and international commerce. Despite their economic success, maintaining cultural and religious identity outside Punjab has been a challenge, as many Sindhi Sikhs have become more assimilated into mainstream Hindu Sindhi communities.

### 13. Assamese Sikhs

Assamese Sikhs are descendants of Sikhs who accompanied Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji's to Assam in the 17th century and later settled there. Many were recruited into the military forces of the Ahom kingdom and served as soldiers. Over time, they integrated into Assamese society while maintaining their Sikh identity. Despite being a small community, Assamese Sikhs have played an important role in the cultural and social landscape of Assam.

**Demographic Breakdown:** Assamese Sikhs are mainly found in Assam (Nagaon, Tezpur, Guwahati), Arunachal Pradesh, and Meghalaya.

**Socio-Economic Status:** Most Assamese Sikhs work in security services, agriculture, and small businesses. Due to their geographical isolation from Punjab, they face challenges in accessing Sikh religious institutions and higher education opportunities. Many younger members of the community migrate to urban centers for better economic prospects.

### 14. Bengali Sikhs

Bengali Sikhs have historical roots in Bengal, where some Sikhs settled during the Mughal period. Many were traders, soldiers, or administrators under Sikh and Mughal rule. After Partition, a significant number of Bengali Sikhs migrated from East Bengal (now Bangladesh) to India, integrating into local economies while maintaining their Sikh identity.

**Demographic Breakdown:** Bengali Sikhs are mainly found in West Bengal (Kolkata, Howrah), Assam, and Tripura.

**Socio-Economic Status:** Bengali Sikhs are engaged in business, agriculture, and military service. Many have assimilated into Bengali culture, leading to a gradual weakening of Sikh religious identity. While some have found success in trade and government jobs, others struggle with limited access to Sikh community resources.

## 15. Nepalese Sikhs (Gurkha Sikhs)

Nepalese Sikhs, often referred to as Gurkha Sikhs, are a small community of Nepali Gurkhas who converted to Sikhism due to their interactions with Sikh traders, soldiers, and religious leaders. Many served in the British and Indian armed forces, adopting Sikh values of bravery and discipline while continuing their martial traditions.

**Demographic Breakdown:** Nepalese Sikhs are primarily found in Nepal, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and West Bengal (Darjeeling). Some have migrated to major Indian cities for better opportunities.

**Socio-Economic Status:** Many Gurkha Sikhs serve in the military, security forces, and law enforcement. Others work in agriculture and small businesses. Due to the lack of Sikh institutions in Nepal, maintaining Sikh religious practices and access to Sikh educational resources has been a challenge for the community.

## 16. Sikligar Sikhs

Sikligar Sikhs were historically blacksmiths and weapons makers who supplied arms to Sikh warriors during Guru Hargobind Singh Ji and Guru Gobind Singh's time. After the British imposed strict disarmament policies, their traditional occupation became obsolete, leading to widespread economic hardship. Many Sikligars turned to metalworking and craftsmanship, moving across India in search of work.

**Demographic Breakdown:** Sikligar Sikhs are mainly found in Madhya Pradesh (Indore, Bhopal, Jabalpur), Maharashtra (Nagpur, Mumbai, Pune), Rajasthan (Jaipur, Jodhpur), Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, and Tamil Nadu.

**Socio-Economic Status:** Sikligar Sikhs remain one of the most socio-economically marginalized Sikh groups. Many live in slums and makeshift settlements, working as scrap metal workers, blacksmiths, welders, and daily wage laborers. Low literacy rates and poor access to education have kept much of the community in poverty.

## 17. Vanjaara Sikhs

Vanjaara Sikhs, also known as Banjara Sikhs, were traditionally nomadic traders who transported salt, grains, and textiles across India. Many converted to Sikhism during Guru Nanak Dev Ji's travels and later under Guru Gobind Singh Ji, who admired their courage and loyalty. Vanjaaras played an important role in spreading Sikhism to central and southern India.

**Demographic Breakdown:** Vanjaara Sikhs are primarily found in Maharashtra (Nagpur, Amravati, Nanded), Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Gujarat.

**Socio-Economic Status:** Historically wealthy due to their trade networks, Vanjaara Sikhs suffered economic setbacks under British rule when restrictions on nomadic communities limited their movement and business activities. Today, many work in agriculture, small businesses, and transport services, though they continue to face economic challenges and limited representation in mainstream Sikh institutions.

## 18. Lobana Sikhs

Lobana Sikhs were historically merchants and transporters who played a crucial role in Sikh history. They were responsible for preserving and transporting Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji after Guru Gobind Singh Ji's passing. Many Lobanas served in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's army and later in British Sikh regiments, helping to expand Sikh influence beyond Punjab.

**Demographic Breakdown:** Lobana Sikhs are mainly found in Punjab (Amritsar, Hoshiarpur, Kapurthala, Ludhiana, Patiala), Haryana (Ambala, Yamunanagar), Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh.

**Socio-Economic Status:** Over time, many Lobanas have moved into the middle class, with significant representation in business, politics, and government jobs. However, some in rural areas continue to struggle with social mobility and economic disparities. Lobana Sikhs have a significant diaspora presence in Canada, the UK, and the USA.

**Concluding Insights:** The diverse Sikh communities across India and beyond have played crucial historical roles but continue to face varied socio-economic challenges. Some, like Namdhari and Sindhi Sikhs, have prospered in business, while others, like Mazhabi and Sansi Sikhs, remain economically disadvantaged. Dakhni, Assamese, and Bengali Sikhs struggle with geographical isolation from Sikh institutions, affecting their cultural preservation.

### Key Observations:

1. **Geographical Disparities** – Sikh communities outside Punjab often struggle to maintain religious identity and political representation.
2. **Identity and Class Divides** – Certain Sikh communities (e.g., Mazhabi, Ramdasi, Ravidasia) continue to face discrimination despite Sikhism's egalitarian principles.
3. **Economic Mobility** – Some groups (e.g., Bhatra Sikhs, Sindhi Sikhs) have achieved economic success, while others (e.g., Sansi, Banjara Sikhs) remain socially and economically marginalized.
4. **Lack of Representation** – Many of these minority Sikh groups are underrepresented in SGPC, political bodies, and Gurdwara committees.

Understanding these historical contributions and socio-economic challenges is essential for ensuring inclusive growth and representation for all Sikh communities.

## Developmental Indices

- **Urban vs. Rural Population:** The majority of Sikhs still reside in rural areas, particularly in Punjab, where agriculture remains a primary occupation. However, there is a growing urban Sikh population in cities like Chandigarh, Delhi, Amritsar, and Mumbai, reflecting shifts toward business, professional careers, and education.
- **Literacy Rates:**
  - In 2011, the literacy rate among Sikhs was 75.4%, slightly higher than the national average of 74.04%.
  - Data from minority schemes, such as the Maulana Azad Education Foundation, indicate disparities in educational benefits received by Sikh individuals.
- **Workforce Participation & Economic Trends:**
  - The national workforce participation rate is 40%, while that of the Sikh community is 36.3%, indicating a need for greater employment opportunities.
  - The self-employment rate among Sikhs is lower than the national average, reflecting fewer business ventures started by Sikh individuals compared to other communities.
- **Total Fertility Rate (TFR):**
  - The TFR of Sikhs is 1.5, compared to the national average of 2.01, highlighting demographic shifts within the community.

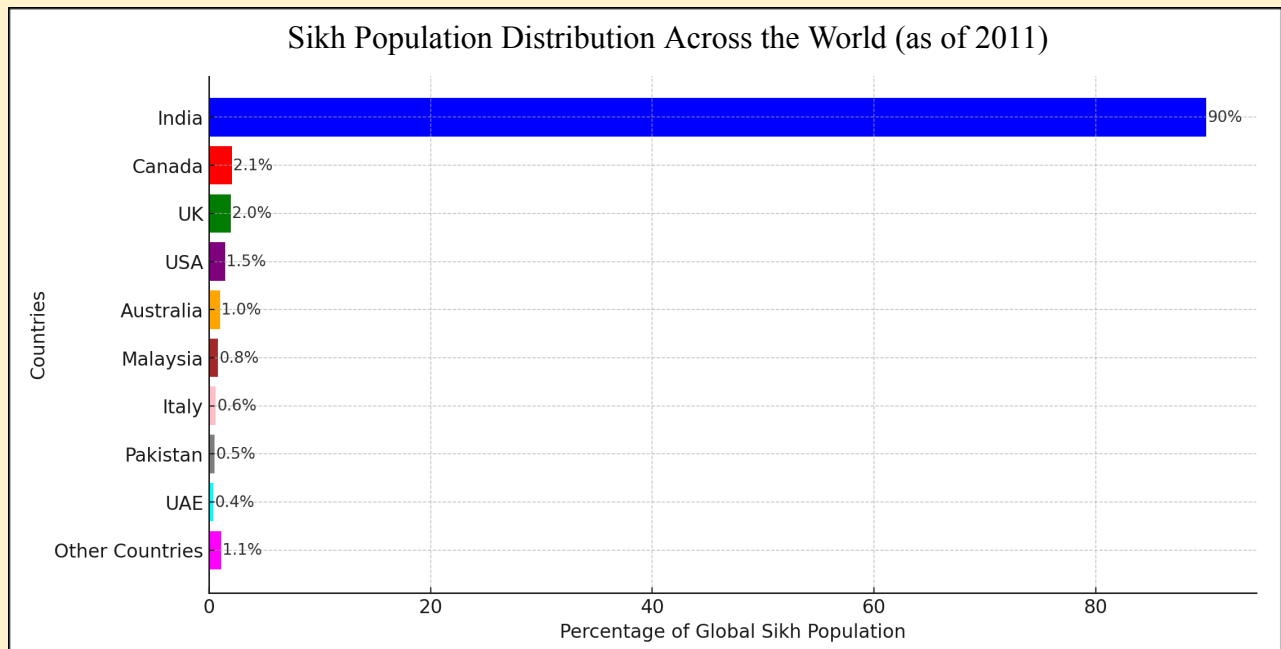
## 1.4 Sikh Diaspora Communities

The Sikh diaspora is particularly influential in politics, business, and community development, often serving as a bridge between their host countries and India.

**Key Sikh Diaspora Populations:** The data on Sikh populations across various countries is sourced from multiple databases and reports, including the 2011 Census of India, the 2021 Canadian Census, the 2021 Census for England and Wales, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and estimates from organizations such as the World Population Review and Statista:

- **Canada:** Approximately 770,000 Sikhs (about 2.1% of the total Canadian population), with major concentrations in British Columbia, Ontario, and Alberta.
- **United Kingdom:** Around 520,000 Sikhs (0.9% of the UK's population), primarily in cities like London, Birmingham, and Leicester.
- **United States:** Estimates range between 500,000 and 700,000, with significant populations in California, New York, and Texas.
- **Australia:** Around 210,000 Sikhs, forming one of the fastest-growing religious communities in the country.

- **Italy:** Home to around 200,000 Sikhs, mainly engaged in agriculture, particularly in northern Italy (Lombardy and Emilia-Romagna).
- **Malaysia & Singapore:** Malaysia has 125,000 Sikhs, while Singapore has 13,000, both communities having historical ties to British colonial rule.



## 1.5 Purpose Statement

The primary objectives of this report are multifaceted:

- **Analyze and Document:**  
To capture the comprehensive socio-economic, political, cultural, and psychological challenges faced by the Sikh community today. This involves a detailed examination of factors such as unemployment, perceived alienation, inadequate access to education, systemic issues, and cultural dilution.
- **Historical Contextualization:**  
To integrate the community's historical experiences—from the transformative teachings of Guru Nanak Dev Ji and the martial traditions of the Khalsa, to the traumatic events of Partition and the 1984 riots—into the analysis of contemporary challenges. Understanding this historical context is essential for appreciating the deep-rooted issues affecting political trust and cultural identity.
- **Evaluate Government Initiatives:**  
To assess the on-ground impact of contemporary government policies and initiatives, including NEP 2020, Skill India, and Startup India, on educational quality, employment opportunities, and cultural preservation. This evaluation helps to identify gaps between policy intent and on-ground realities.
- **Provide Suggestions:**  
To develop data-driven, actionable suggestions that aim to improve economic

opportunities, revitalize cultural and vocational education, strengthen political representation, and address psychological distress.

- **Promote Cultural and Economic Empowerment:**

To emphasize the importance of culturally sensitive and inclusive policies that preserve the Sikh heritage while fostering sustainable economic development. This dual focus is essential to ensure that the community not only survives but thrives in the modern era.

## **1.6 Stakeholder Consultants:**

A successful intervention requires the engagement and collaboration of multiple stakeholder groups, each playing a critical role in addressing the challenges faced by the Sikh community:

- **Sikh Community Members:**

This diverse group includes youth, farmers, small business owners, women, and students, all of whom are directly impacted by the socio-economic and cultural issues outlined in this report. Their lived experiences, expressed through survey responses and focus group discussions, provide a crucial foundation for the analysis.

- **Educational Institutions:**

Schools, vocational training centers, and universities (such as Punjabi University, Patiala) are central to the transmission of Sikh culture and the development of human capital. The quality and focus of education, particularly the extent to which it includes Punjabi-medium instruction and Sikh history, are vital for preserving cultural identity.

- **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community Organizations:**

NGOs and grassroots organizations play a crucial role in addressing gaps left by government initiatives, particularly in education, cultural preservation, and social welfare. Many work to sustain Punjabi language education, promote Gurmukhi literacy, and organize heritage programs that reconnect youth with Sikh traditions. Women's self-help groups (SHGs) provide financial independence through skill training and entrepreneurship, while also acting as safe spaces for addressing issues like domestic violence and gender discrimination.

In tackling substance abuse and mental health challenges, NGOs run de-addiction programs, provide counseling, and organize peer support groups to help reintegrate recovering addicts. Many also address labor rights, supporting farmers, transport workers, and daily-wage laborers through legal aid, financial literacy programs, and economic cooperatives. With rising migration rates, NGOs assist families left behind, offering educational support for children, financial guidance for women, and resources to maintain cultural ties among migrants.

- **Diaspora Family Communities:**

For families left behind, migration brings both economic relief and emotional strain. Remittances from Sikh migrants sustain households, fund children's education, and support family-owned farms or businesses. However, the absence of working-age family members often disrupts traditional family structures, leaving elderly parents and spouses to manage responsibilities alone. Children growing up without one or both parents face psychological and social challenges, including weakened cultural ties and a sense of detachment from their immediate family.

While financial support helps maintain stability, social isolation and dependency on remittances create long-term vulnerabilities. Many families rely on diaspora networks for guidance and support, participating in virtual religious gatherings and community initiatives to stay connected. However, without strong local economic opportunities, migration continues to feel like the only viable path, deepening the cycle of family separation and cultural disconnect. Addressing this requires community-based support systems, such as women-led self-help groups, mentorship programs, and locally driven economic initiatives, ensuring families left behind are empowered rather than dependent.

**Extended Stakeholder Engagement:**

Over the course of this research, extensive feedback was gathered from all these groups through surveys, focus groups, and interviews. This engagement ensures that the report reflects a holistic understanding of the challenges and that the recommendations are practical and grounded in real-world experiences.

## **1.7 A Secondary Research Approach**

The Sikh community has long played a transformative role in the socio-political, cultural, and military arenas of India. From its inception in the fifteenth century, Sikhism was born out of a radical vision that challenged entrenched social hierarchies and religious orthodoxies. Over centuries, the Sikhs have experienced a series of promises—by both colonial and post-colonial state actors, as well as community leaders—that were intended to secure political autonomy, cultural preservation, economic prosperity, and fair treatment in the military. Yet many of these promises remain unfulfilled, contributing to persistent feelings of alienation and systemic discrimination. This research compiles historical records, government reports, and academic analyses to offer a nuanced understanding of the evolution of Sikh identity, the failure of key state assurances, and the impact of military discrimination on the Sikh experience.

## Origins and Evolution of Sikh Identity

This section provides a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted journey of Sikh identity—from its spiritual inception in fifteenth-century Punjab to its transformation into a dynamic community marked by both spiritual depth and martial valor. At its core lies the revolutionary message of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, whose teachings of universal brotherhood, equality, and devotion to one God challenged prevailing religious norms and laid the groundwork for a distinct Sikh ethos. Over time, this early spiritual foundation gave rise to diverse interpretations and practices, reflecting a fluid and evolving identity that absorbed influences from various traditions.

As Sikhism matured, critical milestones such as the formation of the Khalsa under Guru Gobind Singh Ji and the establishment of a powerful Sikh Empire under Maharaja Ranjit Singh redefined its character—integrating spiritual ideals with a robust sense of community defense and political ambition. The traumatic events of the Partition of 1947 further reshaped Sikh identity, embedding experiences of displacement, loss, and resilience into the community's collective memory. Together, these transformative epochs not only highlight the enduring legacy of Sikh thought and practice but also underscore the continuous negotiation of cultural, religious, and political aspirations that have come to define Sikh identity over the centuries.

### 1.7.1 Early Foundations and the Birth of Sikhism

Sikhism originated in the Punjab region in the fifteenth century under the spiritual guidance of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. Rejecting the ritualistic practices that characterized the dominant religious traditions of the time, Guru Nanak Dev Ji propagated a message of universal brotherhood, equality, and devotion to one God. His revolutionary ideas were encapsulated in hymns and teachings that called for a radical rethinking of social hierarchies.

The early Sikh tradition accommodated diverse interpretations and practices, giving rise to sects such as the **Udasis** (ascetic scholars who engaged with Hindu and Sufi traditions) and the **Nirmalas** (learned theologians who studied Sanskrit and classical Hindu texts). These groups played a key role in the dissemination of Sikh teachings, yet they also reflected the fluidity of Sikh identity before its militarization under later Gurus.

### 1.7.2 The Emergence of the Khalsa

The pivotal moment in Sikh history came in 1699 when Guru Gobind Singh Ji formally established the Khalsa at Anandpur Sahib. This marked the transformation of the Sikh community into a distinct, militarized brotherhood committed to upholding righteousness and resisting oppression. The formation of the Khalsa was a direct response to the religious persecution faced by Sikhs and Hindus under Mughal rule.

During the Vaisakhi congregation of 1699, Guru Gobind Singh Ji called upon his followers and initiated five Sikhs—later known as the Panj Pyare (Five Beloved Ones)—through the Amrit ceremony, symbolizing complete dedication to the Sikh faith. Every Khalsa initiate was required to follow strict codes of conduct, including maintaining the Five Ks (Kesh, Kara, Kanga, Kachera, Kirpan), embodying both spiritual devotion and martial discipline. The Khalsa was expected to fight against tyranny and injustice, emphasizing self-sacrifice, egalitarianism, and service to humanity.

In addition to strengthening Sikh identity, Guru Gobind Singh Ji abolished the concept of hereditary religious leadership by decreeing that after his passing, authority would rest in the Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji—the sacred Sikh scripture—rather than a living guru. This shift reinforced the community's collective spiritual and political autonomy, setting the foundation for Sikh resistance movements in the 18th century.

### 1.7.3 The Misl Period (1708–1783 AD)

The execution of Banda Singh Bahadur in 1716 marked a period of intense persecution for the Sikh community, as Mughal authorities sought to eliminate Sikh resistance. In response, Sikhs retreated to the jungles and hills of Punjab, organizing themselves into loosely structured military bands known as Misls. These Misls, twelve in number, functioned as independent sovereign states, each led by a chief or sardar. They were bound by the overarching authority of the Sarbat Khalsa, a governing body that convened at Amritsar to make collective decisions.

Throughout the 18th century, the Misls engaged in continuous guerrilla warfare against Mughal and Afghan forces, particularly against repeated invasions by Ahmad Shah Abdali, the ruler of Afghanistan. Despite suffering severe losses, Sikh forces managed to reclaim key territories, including Lahore in 1765, effectively ending Mughal dominance in Punjab. By the late 18th century, the Misls controlled vast regions of Punjab, with some expanding into parts of present-day Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and western Pakistan.

However, while the Misls played a crucial role in resisting external oppression, they also engaged in internal rivalries that prevented unified governance. It was not until Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the leader of the Sukerchakia Misl, rose to prominence that Sikh rule was consolidated. By 1799, Ranjit Singh captured Lahore, setting the stage for the formation of the Sikh Empire.

### 1.7.4 The Sikh Empire

Under **Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780–1839)**, the Sikh Empire emerged as a dominant power in northern India. His reign marked a golden age of Sikh rule, characterized by military expansion, religious pluralism, and economic prosperity. Ranjit Singh implemented a highly disciplined and modernized military, incorporating European officers and advanced artillery

techniques. His forces successfully repelled Afghan incursions and expanded Sikh rule to include **Punjab, Kashmir, Peshawar, Multan, and parts of present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan**.

One of Ranjit Singh's most notable achievements was his policy of **religious tolerance**. Unlike previous rulers, he appointed Hindus and Muslims to key administrative positions, ensuring a stable and inclusive governance model. He also oversaw major renovations of Sikh religious sites, including the **Golden Temple in Amritsar**, which he covered with gold.

Following Ranjit Singh's death in **1839**, the empire suffered from internal divisions and power struggles. Successive rulers failed to maintain stability, leading to increasing British interference. The **Anglo-Sikh Wars (1845–1846, 1848–1849)** ultimately resulted in the **annexation of Punjab by the British East India Company** in 1849.

Despite losing political independence, the Sikh community retained a strong martial tradition. Sikh regiments became a significant part of the British Indian Army, playing key roles in **both World Wars and various colonial campaigns**. Economically, British policies led to **agrarian reforms** that positioned Sikhs as major landowners in Punjab. However, these policies also made them dependent on colonial rule, setting the stage for future socio-political movements, including the Ghadar Movement and the fight for Indian independence.

#### **1.7.5 Colonial Responses to Sikh Agitation (1920–1925)**

During the early twentieth century, growing demands for religious reform and political representation among Sikhs led to a widespread mobilization that came to be known as the Akali movement. Sikh communities, particularly the peasantry, had long maintained a reputation for their martial traditions—a legacy that colonial recruitment policies had actively reinforced. This collective mobilization, however, challenged the colonial state's hold over Punjab. In response, British authorities embarked on a delicate balancing act, simultaneously introducing reforms and repressive measures to assuage Sikh discontent and secure their loyalty.

In his seminal work *Assuaging the Sikhs: Government Responses to the Akali Movement, 1920–1925*, Tai Yong Tan examined how the colonial government sought to mitigate the potential threat posed by the Akali agitation. Tan observed that the Sikh community's deep-seated martial traditions—nurtured by both religious doctrines and cultural practices—had been integral to the British strategy of recruitment, with one in every fourteen adult male Sikhs in Punjab serving in the colonial army by 1920. As Tan noted:

*“The Sikh community's martial traditions, fostered by their religious doctrines and culture, had been kept alive during British rule by the recruitment policies of the Indian Army... This meant that the abiding allegiance of the Sikh community to the Raj was a matter of considerable importance, and their estrangement—especially that of the Jat Sikh*

*peasantry—would adversely affect the Sikh regiments of the Indian Army. It also meant that if the community as a whole was provoked into open rebellion, British hold on the Punjab could well prove untenable.”*

**– Tan, Tai Yong, “Assuaging the Sikhs: Government Responses to the Akali Movement, 1920–1925” (Modern Asian Studies, Vol. 29, Issue 3, 1995), p.655**

The colonial administration was thus compelled to both recognize Sikh grievances and adopt strategies aimed at restoring confidence among the community. Measures included negotiating for greater political concessions in local governance and public services while also employing law enforcement to curb more radical elements. These policies not only underscored the strategic importance of Sikh loyalty to the British Raj but also set the stage for future political reconfigurations in Punjab—an evolution that would later influence the community’s responses during the tumultuous period of Partition in 1947.

A crucial aspect of British colonial strategy in Punjab was the deliberate division between Hindus and Sikhs. The British recognized that Sikh identity had historically been intertwined with Hindu traditions, with many families having members who identified with both faiths, having their elder sons adopt Sikhism. However, as elements of Sikh political consciousness grew, particularly during the early 20th-century reform movements, British administrators sought to institutionalize religious distinctions to prevent a united front against colonial rule.

One key method was the promotion of separate political identities. The British encouraged Sikhs to view themselves as distinct from Hindus by advocating for separate electorates and ensuring Sikh representation as an independent community in legislative councils. By legitimizing these distinctions in law and governance, the British effectively deepened the divide between the two communities.

Tai Yong Tan highlights this British strategy, stating:

*“There was in fact little to differentiate the Sahajdhari Sikhs from the Hindus; the distinction between them had 'always been more of a philosophical belief than visible difference'. However, even within the Khalsa community, the links with Hinduism had not been totally severed, for many Keshdhari Sikhs continued, by tradition, to observe Hindu practices and caste observations. Even at the height of Khalsa power in the Punjab, Sikh rulers continued to observe Hindu rituals and traditions in addition to Sikh religious practices. A British observer of the Sikh religion recorded in 1845 that Keshdhari Sikhs worshipped the Granth Sahib [the Sikhs' holy book] with ceremonies akin to the ritualistic worship of Hindu gods and goddesses, observed pollution inhibitions towards converts from the outcastes of Hindu hierarchy, and consulted astrologers and the mystics. Therefore, despite the constitution of the Khalsa, the differentiation between Sikhism and Hinduism remained blurred, and there was little to separate purely Sikh practices from those of the Hindus.”*

– Tan, Tai Yong, “Assuaging the Sikhs: Government Responses to the Akali Movement, 1920–1925” (*Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 29, Issue 3, 1995), pp.658-659.

Another major tactic was reinforcing Sikh identity through military recruitment. The British classified Sikhs as a “martial race” and disproportionately recruited them into the Indian Army, particularly from the Jat Sikh peasantry. This policy not only reinforced Sikh pride in their distinctiveness but also ensured their continued alignment with British interests. By cultivating Sikh loyalty through preferential recruitment while simultaneously discouraging unity with Hindus, the British effectively mitigated the risk of a broader nationalist uprising in Punjab.

These colonial strategies had far-reaching consequences. They not only shaped Sikh political and religious self-perception but also contributed to increasing communal divisions that played a significant role during Partition in 1947, when Punjab saw some of the most violent sectarian conflicts in the subcontinent’s history.

#### **1.7.6 Transformations in Sikh Religious Identity**

The formation of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) in 1920 and the rise of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) in 1920 were pivotal in shaping modern Sikh religious and political life. Initially conceived as a movement to free gurdwaras from corrupt mahants and British influence, the Akali movement quickly became a broader assertion of Sikh identity and autonomy.

The SGPC, empowered by the Sikh Gurdwaras Act of 1925, became the supreme religious body responsible for managing Sikh gurdwaras, including the Golden Temple in Amritsar. However, its influence extended beyond religious administration. Given the historical intertwining of Sikh religion and politics, SGPC leaders frequently engaged in political discourse, advocating for Sikh rights, representation, and autonomy.

The Akali Dal, formed to support the gurdwara reform movement, evolved into the primary political voice for Sikhs, advocating for religious protections and regional self-governance. While it maintained a distinct identity from the Congress-led nationalist movement, the Akali Dal occasionally aligned with Congress on common interests, particularly against British rule. However, tensions arose as the Akalis sought greater political concessions specifically for the Sikh community, rather than subsuming their demands within broader Indian nationalism.

The British colonial administration responded strategically to Sikh political assertions. By granting legal recognition to the SGPC, the British sought to channel Sikh activism into religious institutions rather than political rebellion. Simultaneously, they deepened the divide between Sikhs and Hindus, reinforcing separate identities through reserved Sikh electorates

and military recruitment policies. This deliberate segmentation ensured Sikh allegiance to British rule while minimizing broader nationalist unity in Punjab. The rise of Arya Samaj, with its emphasis on Vedic revivalism and its conflicts with Sikh institutions over conversions and religious identity, further accelerated the alienation of earlier composite Hindu-Sikh identities. The earlier tradition of elder sons adopting Sikhism also was influenced due to historical and political reasons. Thus, what was once a fluid cultural and religious coexistence gradually transformed into hardened, distinct identities, leading to mistrust and communal polarization.

As Partition approached in 1947, the SGPC and Akali Dal faced new challenges. Sikh leaders were caught between aligning with the Indian National Congress or demanding an independent Sikh state, fearing marginalization in a Hindu-majority India or persecution in a Muslim-majority Pakistan. Despite their significant contributions to India's independence struggle, Sikhs found themselves politically sidelined post-Partition, setting the stage for later political movements advocating for Punjabi Suba (a Punjabi-speaking Sikh-majority state) and greater regional autonomy.

The SGPC and Akali Dal's early history demonstrates how Sikh religious identity was both reinforced and politically leveraged during the colonial period. Their evolution from reformist organizations to powerful institutions navigating the complex relationship between religion and politics laid the groundwork for post-independence Sikh political struggles.

### **1.7.7 Partition of 1947 and its Aftermath**

The Partition of India in 1947 was a defining moment in Sikh history, bringing both unprecedented upheaval and long-lasting consequences for the community. Punjab, the historic homeland of the Sikhs, was divided between India and Pakistan, forcing millions to migrate across newly drawn borders. This division led to one of the largest and most violent human displacements in history, with widespread communal riots, massacres, and the forced exodus of Sikhs and Hindus from West Punjab (now in Pakistan) and Muslims from East Punjab (now in India). The loss of ancestral homes, agricultural lands, and centuries-old gurdwaras inflicted deep scars on Sikh identity and memory.

Beyond the immediate human tragedy, the Partition had significant political and cultural ramifications. Many sacred Sikh historical sites, including Nankana Sahib (the birthplace of Guru Nanak Dev Ji) and Panja Sahib, were left in Pakistan, making access difficult for the Sikh community in India. Despite their substantial contributions to India's independence struggle and the sacrifices they made during the violent upheaval, the Sikhs found themselves without an autonomous homeland—an unfulfilled aspiration that fueled later political movements. The trauma of displacement and the perceived marginalization in the newly independent India laid the foundation for demands for greater political representation, economic security, and cultural preservation.

The Partition not only reshaped the demographic and social fabric of Punjab but also played a crucial role in shaping Sikh political consciousness. In the decades that followed, the community sought to rebuild its identity while navigating the challenges of national integration, economic rehabilitation, and cultural resurgence. The sense of loss and longing for historical sites in Pakistan continues to influence Sikh narratives, inspiring ongoing efforts and landmark measures for cross-border religious access and the preservation of Sikh heritage beyond India's borders.

### 1.7.8 Post-Independence Political Struggles

In the decades following independence, the Sikh community embarked on a sustained campaign to secure greater political and cultural autonomy within a newly independent India. Central to this struggle was the Punjabi Suba movement, which spanned from the 1950s to 1966. Sikh leaders and activists argued that the Punjabi language and Sikh cultural identity deserved recognition through a restructured state. Their demands eventually culminated in the reorganization of Punjab in 1966, creating a Punjabi-speaking state.

However, several pivotal issues remained unresolved. For example, the future of Chandigarh—a city symbolically significant to both Punjab and Haryana—remained a point of contention. Additionally, issues related to river water distribution, particularly the management of the Bhakra Beas system and the Ravi-Beas river dispute, have led to dissatisfaction in Punjab. The centralized control over water allocation has often been viewed as unfair, with concerns that Punjab's agricultural and economic interests are not adequately represented in decision-making.

These disputes were rooted in earlier territorial reorganizations, including the formation of the Patiala and East Punjab States Union (PEPSU) in 1948. PEPSU was created by merging several princely states with significant Sikh populations, serving as a temporary political unit before its dissolution in 1956 when it was integrated into Punjab. While PEPSU offered a brief period of Sikh-majority governance, its merger into a larger Punjab state reinforced Sikh anxieties about political marginalization. The subsequent push for Punjabi Suba was, in part, a reaction to these developments, as Sikh leaders sought a distinct political and cultural space within the Indian union.

The call for greater autonomy took on additional dimensions with the formulation of the **Anandpur Sahib Resolution** in 1973. This comprehensive document, crafted by the Akali Dal, went beyond mere linguistic and cultural demands. It outlined a vision for deeper devolution of power from the central government, calling for enhanced regional autonomy and tailored socio-economic reforms that would address the unique needs of the Sikh community. By articulating both political and economic aspirations, the resolution highlighted the complexities of minority-state relations and underscored a persistent desire for self-determination.

Despite efforts at negotiation and reform, tensions escalated dramatically in the 1980s. The unresolved issues and rising frustrations culminated in Operation Blue Star in 1984. The Indian Army's assault on the Golden Temple—Sikhism's holiest shrine—ended up causing significant damage to the sacred site and considerable loss of life. This operation not only intensified Sikh grievances but also left deep emotional and political scars, reinforcing a perception of injustice and marginalization.

The period between 1982 and 1993 was marked by widespread militancy, leading to immense loss of life, mass displacements, and a prolonged atmosphere of fear and violence in Punjab. The conflict saw the rise of armed groups, heavy-handed counterinsurgency measures, and deepening divisions between the Sikh community and the Indian state. In his book *My Country, My Life*, L.K. Advani reflects on the political missteps of that era, acknowledging the BJP's virtual surrender before Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and his private army in the early 1980s. "Between 1981 and 2001," he states, "a total of 21,608 people, including 11,776 civilians and 1,748 security personnel, were killed in the fight against militancy in the state. (p. 421)." His account highlights the state's inconsistent and, at times, reactive approach to handling Punjab's crisis, which ultimately allowed militancy to escalate.

In the aftermath of Operation Blue Star, the tragic 1984 anti-Sikh riots unfolded in nine states, marked by widespread violence and targeted attacks against innocent Sikhs. This violent episode further deepened the community's sense of betrayal and intensified their demands for justice and political recognition. The legacy of these events has continued to influence debates on federalism, minority rights, and the equitable distribution of power between central and regional governments in India.

### **1.7.9 The Rajiv-Longowal Accord (1985)**

In 1985, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Akali leader Harchand Singh Longowal signed the Punjab Accord in an effort to address Sikh grievances and bring stability to the region. The agreement aimed to grant Punjab greater autonomy, settle long-standing river water disputes, and provide compensation to victims of the violence that had plagued the state. It also included provisions for the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab and addressing concerns related to the status of Punjabi-speaking areas.

However, the accord faced significant challenges. Its implementation remained partial, with key promises—such as the transfer of Chandigarh—delayed or unfulfilled. Longowal's assassination shortly after signing the agreement further weakened its impact, as political instability and mistrust persisted. Many Sikhs viewed the accord as inadequate, while opposition from other groups in Punjab and neighboring states further complicated its execution. As a result, rather than fully resolving tensions, the Punjab Accord became another chapter in the region's ongoing struggle for political and economic justice.

Decades later, the aspirations of Punjab's Sikh community remain a subject of debate. The struggle for greater autonomy, cultural preservation, and economic empowerment continues to shape discourse on Sikh identity and self-determination. In this context, Jawaharlal Nehru's words from 1944 still resonate:

*"The brave Sikhs of the Punjab are entitled to special consideration. I see nothing wrong in an area and a set-up in the North where the Sikhs may also experience the glow of freedom."*

His statement reflects a historical recognition of Sikh aspirations, yet the question remains: to what extent have these aspirations been realized? The ongoing quest for justice, rights, and recognition underscores the need for meaningful dialogue, sincere policy implementation, and a commitment to addressing the concerns of Punjab's Sikh population. Without concrete action, the echoes of the past will continue to shape the challenges of the future.

## 1.8 Migration and the Global Sikh Diaspora

Economic and political challenges have driven large-scale Sikh migration, particularly to **Canada, the UK, the US, and Australia**. The diaspora has played a significant role in economic remittances and political advocacy, contributing to both their host countries and their places of origin. Financial support from Sikh migrants has helped sustain families, improve infrastructure, and fund community initiatives in Punjab and other regions of India. Additionally, the diaspora has been actively involved in promoting Sikh interests globally, advocating for policies related to human rights, religious freedoms, and immigration reforms.

However, challenges persist, including brain drain, as skilled professionals and educated youth increasingly seek opportunities abroad, leading to concerns about talent loss in India. While migration provides economic stability for individuals and their families, it can also create gaps in the local workforce, particularly in key sectors such as healthcare, education, and technology.

### Causes of Sikh Migration

Sikh migration has been shaped by a combination of **economic, political, and social factors** over different historical periods. The movement of Sikhs beyond Punjab—both within India and globally—has been driven by opportunities abroad as well as challenges at home.

#### a) Colonial-Era Migration (Late 19th–Early 20th Century)

During British rule, Sikhs migrated to different parts of the British Empire, primarily for economic opportunities and military service.

- **Agricultural Work:** The British encouraged Sikh migration to countries like **Malaysia, Burma (Myanmar), and East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania)** for labor-intensive work on plantations, railways, and infrastructure projects.
- **Military and Police Service:** Sikhs were recruited into the British Army and deployed in distant colonies, leading to settlements in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Fiji.
- **North America and Early Immigration Restrictions:** By the early 1900s, Sikhs began migrating to **Canada and the United States**, primarily working in **lumber mills, railway construction, and farms**. However, restrictive immigration laws like the **Continuous Journey Regulation (1908) in Canada** and the **Asiatic Exclusion Act (1924) in the U.S.** limited Sikh immigration for decades.

#### **b) Partition and Post-Independence Displacement (1947–1950s)**

The **Partition of India in 1947** caused massive displacement, as millions of Sikhs were forced to flee their ancestral homes in **West Punjab (now in Pakistan)** due to communal violence.

- Many resettled in **East Punjab (India)**, while others moved to cities like **Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata** in search of livelihood.
- The trauma of Partition reinforced a sense of insecurity, with some Sikhs looking for stability through migration to the **UK, Canada, and the U.S.** during the 1950s and 1960s.

#### **c) Economic Migration (1950s–1980s)**

After independence, many Sikhs sought better economic opportunities abroad due to:

- **Agricultural Stagnation in Punjab:** Despite the **Green Revolution (1960s–70s)** improving agricultural output, **land fragmentation, declining water resources, and mechanization** limited job opportunities for small farmers.
- **Overseas Labor Demand:** Sikh workers, especially from rural Punjab, migrated to **West Asia (Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar)** during the oil boom of the 1970s for jobs in construction and infrastructure.
- **Post-War Britain and Canada:** With labor shortages after **World War II**, countries like **the UK and Canada** actively recruited Punjabi workers for industries, leading to large Sikh communities in cities like London, Birmingham, and Vancouver.

#### **d) Political Turmoil and Forced Migration (1980s–1990s)**

- **Operation Blue Star (1984) and the Anti-Sikh Riots (1984):** The Indian Army's attack on the **Golden Temple** and the subsequent **anti-Sikh pogroms** in Delhi and other cities led to widespread fear, persecution, and economic loss.

- Many Sikhs, especially professionals and activists, **sought asylum** in countries like **Canada, the US, the UK, and Germany**, fueling Sikh political activism abroad.
- **Militarization of Punjab (1980s–1990s)**: The rise of militancy and counter-insurgency operations in Punjab created an atmosphere of instability, forcing many to migrate to escape police crackdowns and violence.

#### e) Recent Migration Trends (2000s–Present)

- **Economic Migration to Western Countries**: With better education and skills, Sikhs have continued to migrate to **Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the US** for high-skilled jobs in IT, healthcare, and finance.
- **Student Migration Boom**: Canada, in particular, has seen a **surge in Punjabi international students**, drawn by easier immigration policies and work opportunities.
- **Declining Agricultural Viability in Punjab**: Economic distress, rising debt among farmers, and **water crises** have pushed more Sikh youth to seek futures abroad.
- **Increase in Political Asylum Cases**: A growing number of Sikhs, particularly youth, have sought political asylum in Western countries, citing concerns over political persecution, restrictions on religious freedoms, or fear of unfair legal action.

By addressing the underlying causes of migration—whether economic distress or political concerns—Punjab can work towards **retaining its skilled workforce while ensuring that youth are not misled by extremist narratives abroad**.

## Section 2: Problem Statement and Challenges

### 2.1 Overview

Preliminary research and early field observations revealed that the Sikh community—despite its illustrious historical legacy and rich cultural heritage—is confronted with a range of complex, interrelated challenges. These challenges, which affect both rural and urban populations, encompass socio-economic, political, cultural, and psychological dimensions. The pre-survey exercise was undertaken to establish a baseline understanding of these issues by reviewing existing academic literature, analyzing secondary research, and synthesizing initial observations. This early analysis highlighted recurring themes including inadequate dissemination of information, inefficient allocation of government funding, erosion of cultural and educational practices, persistent economic marginalization, underrepresentation in political processes, psychological stress related to historical traumas, and elevated migration trends.

The pre-survey exercise revealed a complex network of interrelated challenges affecting the Sikh community:

- **Economic:**  
The combination of high unemployment, systemic issues, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and the impact of farmer protests has created a precarious economic environment that forces many to migrate in search of better opportunities.
- **Social:**  
Social cohesion is threatened by widespread drug addiction, growing gender disparities, and the fragmentation of traditional support networks. These challenges exacerbate community disillusionment and hinder collective well-being.
- **Political:**  
Historical traumas and systemic discrimination have led to a persistent sense of political underrepresentation and mistrust in state institutions, which undermines community engagement and policy influence.
- **Cultural and Religious:**  
The marked decline in Punjabi-medium education and traditional cultural practices poses an existential threat to Sikh identity. Policy shifts, urbanization, and inadequate institutional support are key drivers of this cultural erosion.
- **Psychological:**  
The cumulative burden of historical trauma, economic hardship, and cultural disintegration has resulted in widespread mental health challenges, reducing community cohesion and resilience.
- **Migration:**  
The high rate of migration—prompted by economic instability and a lack of local

opportunities—results in a significant brain drain, which further destabilizes the local economy and disrupts cultural continuity.

Further, secondary research indicates that Punjab is excluded from the 90 Minority Concentrated Districts (MCDs) because Sikhs form the majority in the state and are not classified as a minority there. The MCD classification primarily focuses on areas where national minority groups, such as Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, and Jains, face socio-economic disadvantages. As a result, Sikh-majority districts in Punjab do not benefit from targeted minority development programs under schemes like the Multi-sectoral Development Programme (MsDP). However, despite this exclusion, disparities persist within Sikh subgroups, highlighting the need for region-specific interventions to address the socio-economic challenges faced by marginalized Sikh communities and ensure inclusive development.

### **Conclusion:**

The integrated analysis of the pre-survey findings from secondary academic research underscores the urgent need for comprehensive, multi-dimensional policy interventions. The challenges of economic instability, social fragmentation, political disenfranchisement, cultural erosion, and psychological distress are interlinked and require holistic solutions that address the root causes. Without targeted efforts to improve communication, funding efficiency, political inclusion, and cultural preservation, the long-term resilience and identity of the Sikh community.

## **2.2 Existing Measures Taken for the Sikh Community**

Over the past decade, the Indian government has implemented several successful initiatives to support and uplift the Sikh community. These measures address long-standing religious, cultural, legal, and socio-economic concerns while strengthening Sikh heritage and identity. The following list outlines some key measures undertaken to support the Sikh community.

### **2.2.1 Religious and Cultural Initiatives**

- **Sri Kartarpur Sahib Corridor (2019):**
  - Established a direct corridor from Dera Baba Nanak (Punjab, India) to Gurdwara Sri Kartarpur Sahib (Pakistan), fulfilling a long-standing Sikh demand.
  - Allocated ₹120 crore for infrastructure development, ensuring smooth and modern facilities for over 15,000 pilgrims daily.
  - Overcame political tensions with Pakistan to facilitate Sikh religious travel.

- **FCRA Registration for Sri Harmandir Sahib (2020):**
  - Allowed Sri Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) to legally receive foreign contributions for religious and charitable activities.
  - Enabled global Sikh participation in “sewa” (selfless service) and donations.
  - Ensured compliance with the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010.
- **No Taxes on Langar (Community Kitchens) (2018):**
  - Waived Goods and Services Tax (GST) on food items used for Langar at Sikh Gurdwaras.
  - Introduced financial assistance under the ‘Seva Bhoj Yojana’, reimbursing central GST and IGST for Langar food.
  - Allocated ₹325 crore annually for this initiative, benefiting around 1 crore people daily.
- **Development of Sultanpur Lodhi (2019):**
  - Upgraded Sultanpur Lodhi, where Guru Nanak Dev Ji spent much of his life, into a heritage city.
  - Modernized the Sultanpur Lodhi railway station to improve pilgrim access.
- **Promoting Research on Sikh Teachings:**
  - Established the National Institute of Inter-Faith Studies at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, with ₹67 crore funding.
  - Set up academic chairs on Guru Nanak Dev Ji at universities in the UK and proposed another in Canada.
  - Sponsored seminars, workshops, and lectures to spread Sikh teachings globally.
- **Spreading Guru Nanak Dev Ji’s Teachings Worldwide:**
  - Organized an international seminar in New Delhi through the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).
  - Published Gurbani scriptures in multiple Indian languages to promote accessibility.
  - Initiated UNESCO’s translation of Guru Nanak Dev Ji’s writings into various foreign languages.
  - Indian embassies worldwide held commemorative events for the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji.
- **Grand Celebrations for Guru Gobind Singh Ji’s 350th Birth Anniversary (2017):**
  - Allocated ₹100 crore for large-scale celebrations, including ₹40 crore for railway-related facilities.

- Issued a commemorative ₹350 coin and a special postage stamp.
- Improved connectivity to major Sikh pilgrimage sites such as Sri Akal Takht Sahib, Sri Damdama Sahib, and Sri Hazur Sahib.
- Inaugurated a 750-bed hospital in Jamnagar in Guru Gobind Singh Ji's memory.
- Arranged a special flight from Amritsar to Nanded for Sikh pilgrims.

### **2.2.2 Heritage and Memorial Projects**

- Showcasing Sikh Heritage:
  - Approved development of the Sikh Heritage Circuit covering Anandpur Sahib, Fatehgarh Sahib, Chamkaur Sahib, Ferozpur, Amritsar, Khatkar Kalan, Kalanour, and Patiala under the Swadesh Darshan scheme.
  - Organized Multimedia Exhibitions at Sultanpur Lodhi and 12 other locations to commemorate Guru Nanak Dev Ji's 550th birth anniversary.
  - Launched special flight connectivity between Amritsar and Nanded to facilitate Sikh pilgrims.

### **Community Engagement and Representation**

- Recognition and Honor for Sikh Contributions:
  - PM Modi was awarded the Qaumi Seva Award by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) for his contributions to the Sikh community.
  - Regular engagements with Sikh delegations worldwide, including events in Canada, the US, the UK, and Iran.
  - Participation in Sikh religious and cultural events to showcase government support.

These measures collectively highlight an extensive effort to address religious, cultural, legal, economic, and social concerns of the Sikh community in India. The following sections focus on ground-level surveys and interviews, giving insight to the road forward to ensure continued unity, progress, and development as it concerns the Sikh population and India's growth.

## **2.3 Sikh Representation in National Politics**

Sikh representation in national politics is characterized by a strong presence in Punjab—the heartland of the community—but a noticeably limited voice in the broader national framework. Although Sikhs constitute roughly 1.7% of India's population, there are no Members of Parliament (MPs) from the Sikh community. Historically, Sikh representation in the Lok Sabha has been predominantly from Punjab's 13 constituencies, reflecting the community's strong regional presence. However, the current composition underscores a

significant underrepresentation of Sikhs in the national legislative framework. This regional concentration means that while local issues such as cultural preservation, educational reforms, and economic development are actively championed in Punjab, Sikh perspectives are less visible in national decision-making fora.

Over the years, Sikh leaders have held key positions in the central government, including **Giani Zail Singh**, India's first Sikh President, and **Buta Singh**, who served as Home Minister. However, despite this political presence, there has been no sustained institutional bridge between the Government of India and Sikhs living in Punjab. Engagement with Sikh leadership has often been limited to electoral cycles or crisis management rather than a continuous, structured dialogue to address long-standing concerns. Issues such as **agricultural distress and industrial stagnation** have frequently remained unresolved or inadequately addressed. This disconnect has contributed to a sense of political alienation among many Sikhs, particularly in rural Punjab, where economic hardships and regional aspirations intersect. A more structured engagement that goes beyond electoral politics and incorporates long-term policy solutions is essential for fostering trust and ensuring that Sikh voices are meaningfully integrated into national governance. Development of state-wise leadership of Sikhs would be greatly beneficial to the community and country as a whole.

### **Key Issues for Sikh Leaders in National Politics**

Sikh political leaders often engage with issues such as:

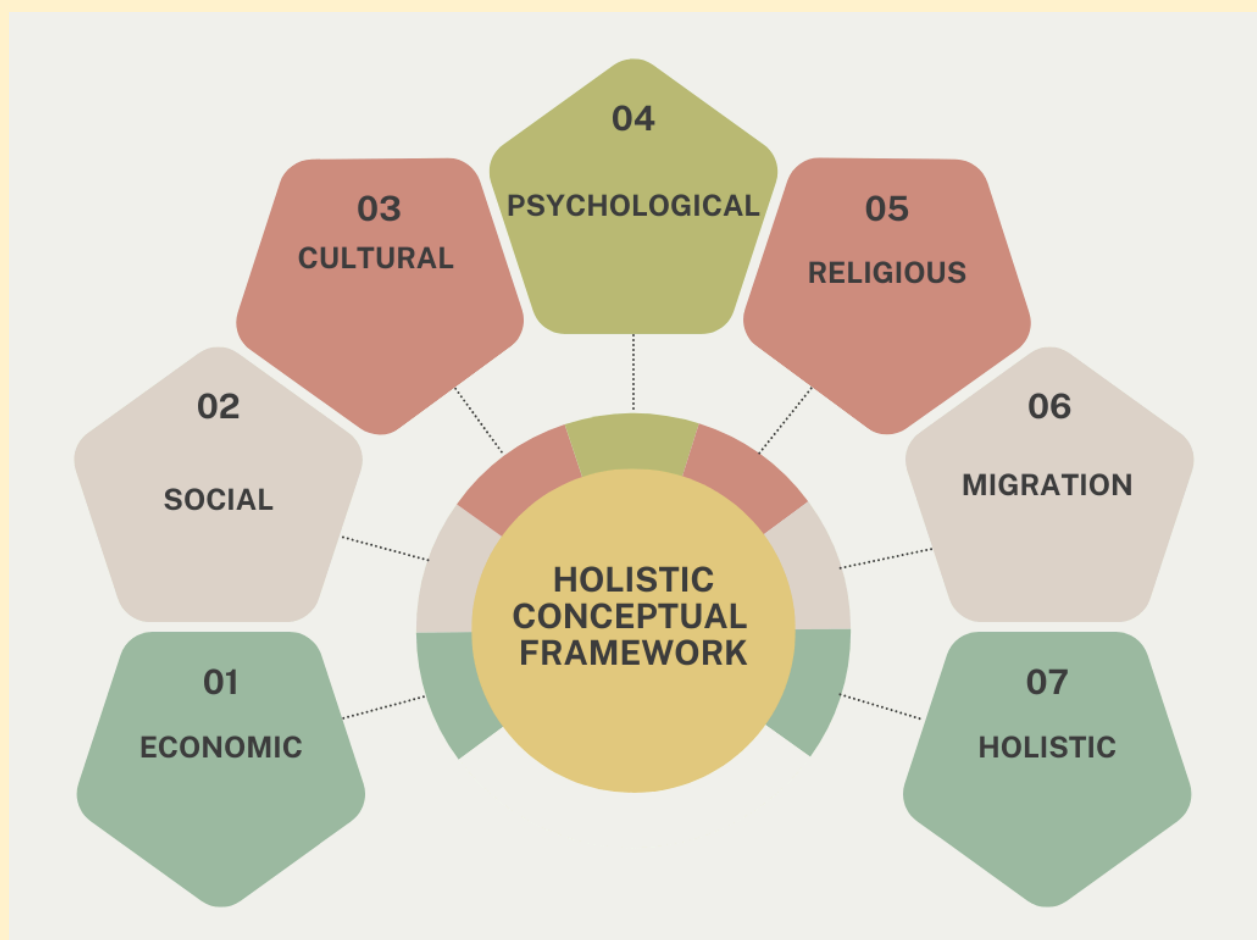
- **Punjab's Economic Development** – Addressing agricultural concerns, industrial growth, and employment generation.
- **Minority Rights and Representation** – Advocating for Sikh concerns at the national level, including justice for past grievances like the 1984 anti-Sikh riots.
- **Religious and Cultural Preservation** – Ensuring access to Sikh historical sites in Pakistan and addressing community-specific concerns on education and language policies.

## **Section 3: Ground Study**

### **Methodology and Findings**

### 3.1 Research Approach Overview

To capture the full complexity of the challenges faced by the Sikh community, we employed a robust mixed-methods research design. This design integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches to ensure that the data reflect both numerical trends and the rich, lived experiences of community members. Our research was conducted over a three-month period and involved multiple data collection methods across several key regions. The team consisted of skilled field investigators and surveyors, who covered rural and urban perspectives from all walks of life. The integration of these methods allows for a triangulated analysis that enhances the validity and depth of our findings.



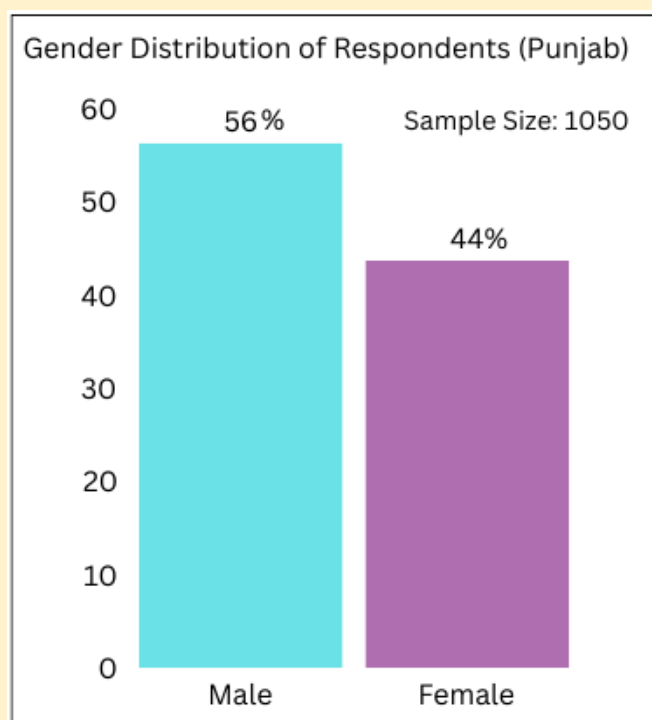
### 3.2 Quantitative Surveys

The quantitative surveys aimed to systematically gather data across key thematic areas affecting the Sikh community. Designed to capture a broad spectrum of economic, social, political, cultural, psychological, and migration-related concerns, the surveys provided a structured approach to understanding community perspectives.

### 3.2.1 Survey Instrument Design

The quantitative surveys were meticulously designed to cover multiple thematic areas, including economic, social, political, cultural, psychological, and migration-based issues. The survey questionnaire comprised both closed-ended and open-ended questions to capture:

- **Demographic Information:** Age, gender, region, occupation, and educational background.
- **Economic Indicators:** Employment status, satisfaction with government initiatives (e.g., Skill India, Startup India), and perceptions of local job opportunities.
- **Social Dynamics:** Perceptions regarding drug addiction, community cohesion, and gender disparities.
- **Political Engagement:** Views on political representation and trust in state institutions.
- **Cultural and Educational Aspects:** Access to Punjabi-medium education, proficiency in Gurmukhi, and cultural participation.
- **Psychological Well-being:** Levels of trust, feelings of alienation, and perceived social support.
- **Migration Trends:** Intentions to migrate, factors influencing migration decisions, and the impact of migration on community structure.



Questions were developed in both English and Punjabi to ensure clarity and accessibility, and the survey was pilot-tested with a small group before full deployment.

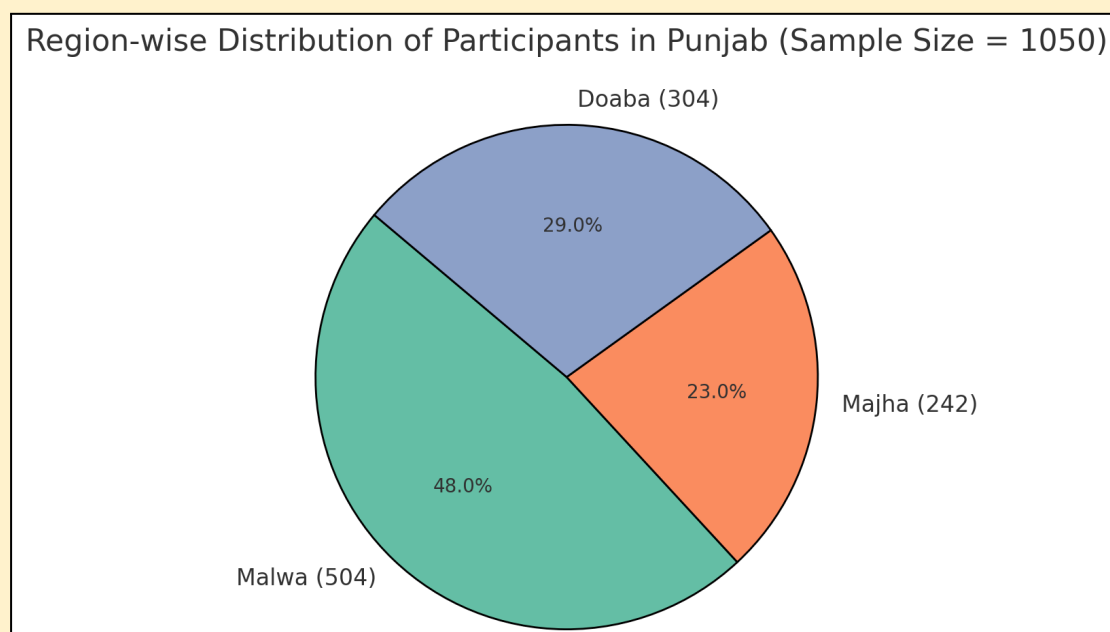
### 3.2.2 Sampling and Data Collection

The survey was distributed using a stratified random sampling method to ensure representation across diverse regions:

- **Punjab:** Data were collected from both rural and urban areas across multiple districts, ensuring comprehensive regional representation. The districts covered

include Moga, Ludhiana, Amritsar, Patiala, Nawanshahr, Tarn Taran, Rupnagar, Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Barnala, Ferozepur, Bathinda, and Muktsar. These districts span across the three main geographical and cultural regions of Punjab—Malwa, Majha, and Doaba.

Malwa, the largest region, includes districts such as Bathinda, Moga, Barnala, Ferozepur, and Ludhiana. It is known for its vast agricultural land, significant rural population, and industrial hubs like Ludhiana. Majha, historically significant as the heartland of Sikh heritage, includes districts such as Amritsar, Tarn Taran, and Gurdaspur, featuring important religious and historical sites. Doaba, the region between the Beas and Sutlej rivers, covers districts like Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Kapurthala, and Nawanshahr, known for its high rate of migration and educational institutions.



The data collection effort aimed to capture the diversity of Punjab's socio-economic landscape, incorporating perspectives from villages such as Chanuwala, Rajiana, and Kasiana in Malwa; Kalas, Rattoke, and Sarhali in Majha; and Gura, Majri, and Patto in Doaba. Additionally, key cities including Jalandhar, Amritsar, Ludhiana, Patiala, and Bathinda were included to reflect the urban dimension of the region. This extensive dataset ensures an in-depth understanding of regional variations and socio-economic dynamics across Punjab.

The sampling strategy employed a **proportional allocation method** to ensure balanced representation across Punjab's three major regions: Malwa, Majha, and Doaba, reflecting the relative population distribution. A stratified approach was used, segmenting the population based on regional divisions, ensuring both rural and urban representation. Random selection methods were applied within each stratum to minimize bias and enhance generalizability. The sample size was determined to capture **diverse socio-economic and demographic characteristics**, enabling a comprehensive analysis of regional variations.

*Note: The Puadhi region, which includes districts like Rupnagar and Fatehgarh Sahib, lies at the intersection of Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh. While it has distinct cultural and linguistic influences, its socio-economic conditions often align more closely with the*

*Malwa region. For the purposes of this study, relevant data from Puadh districts have been categorized under Malwa to maintain consistency in regional analysis.*

### **Regions Covered in Punjab (Urban and Rural)**

<b>Malwa (Villages)</b>	Chanuwala, Wander Jatana, Randiala, Rajiana, Langiana Nawan, Mehron, Ghanie Wala, Kallar Majri, Tambuwala, Kasiana, Kuraiwala, Rouli, Phullo Mithi, Channu Wala, Motle Wala, Bhangar, Channj Wala, Attargarh, Smalsar, Shekhupur Khurd, Sadiq, Nanansu, Behniwal, Ghurkani, Gharachon, Kheri Sangrur, Bhinder Kalan, Ajitwal, Daun Kalan, Bilaspur, Gill Khurd, Shankar, Karipur Dumm, Alike, Ina Bajwa, Fatta Maloka, Peer Ahmed Khan, Hakuwala, Nukera, Sakrodi, Sirsiwala, Rehrwan, Rama Moga, Barewala, Sarala Kalan, Maur Mandi, Bagha Purana, Nihal Singh Wala
<b>Malwa (Cities)</b>	Bathinda, Barnala, Faridkot, Kotkapura, Ludhiana, Malerkotla, Mansa, Moga, Samana, Sangrur, Sri Muktsar Sahib, Zira, Ferozepur, Khanna, Gobindgarh, Rampura Phul, Abohar
<b>Majha (Villages)</b>	Akbarpura, Peroshah, Pireke Uttar Jalalabad, Ramuwala Kalan, Mehdipur, Kalas, Rattoke, Mastgarh, Thatta, Bangi Kalan, Sarhali, Bhikhiwind, Chohla Sahib, Valtoha, Naushera Pannuan, Jogiwala, Kathunangal, Behram, Mehatpur, Bilga, Alawalpur, Bara Pind, Dhariwal, Dhun, Khemkaran

<b>Majha (Cities)</b>	Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Khemkaran, Patti, Tarn Taran, Batala, Fatehgarh Churian, Qadian, Ajnala, Rayya, Sri Hargobindpur, Majitha, Raja Sansi, Dhariwal, Kot Budha, Sur Singh
<b>Doaba (Villages)</b>	Dhandwar, Phillaur Tehsil, Gura, Majri, Patto, Mandouli, Dharian, Jamitghar, Ullana, Gorakhpur, Sehbajpur, Begampur, Bathoi Khurd, Diala, Saroa, Ranewal, Garh Padhana, Kami Kalan, Khairabad, Bhogpur, Mahilpur, Bundala
<b>Doaba (Cities)</b>	Jalandhar, Nawanshahr, Garhshankar, Phagwara, Hoshiarpur, Kapurthala, Banga, Sultanpur Lodhi, Dasuya, Rahon, Shahkot, Bholath, Mukerian, Adampur, Kartarpur, Goraya, Mehli, Fatehgarh Panjtoor

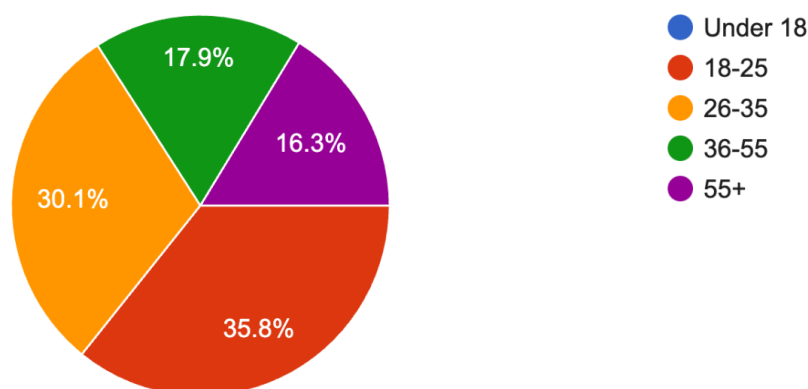
**Tri-City (Chandigarh, Mohali, Panchkula):** Chandigarh, the capital of both Punjab and Haryana, is a Union Territory known for its administrative importance, modern infrastructure, and significant Sikh professional and student population. Mohali (Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar) in Punjab is a growing IT and industrial hub with a strong Sikh presence, while Panchkula in Haryana features a mix of urban and semi-urban Sikh communities. Surveys in this region focused on migration patterns, economic participation, and cultural preservation among Sikhs in an urbanized setting.

**Delhi:** Surveys targeted urban Sikh communities in areas such as West Delhi (Tilak Nagar, Rajouri Garden), Old Delhi, East Delhi, etc.

- **Haryana & Uttar Pradesh:** Sampling included key regions like Yamunanagar and Ambala.

A total of over 1500 responses were collected using both online surveys and in-person interviews and focus group discussions, ensuring the inclusion of participants with limited digital access.

Age-wise Distribution of Respondents in Punjab (Sample Size = 1050)



### 3.2.3 Data Processing and Analysis

Survey responses were anonymized, coded, and entered into a statistical software for analysis. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, percentages, frequency distributions) and inferential methods where applicable. The resulting numerical data served as the backbone for our graphical representations (e.g., unemployment rates, drug addiction percentages) and helped validate qualitative findings.

## 3.3 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

The focus group discussions (FGDs) were designed to provide in-depth qualitative insights into the key issues identified in the quantitative surveys. By engaging diverse participant groups, the FGDs facilitated open conversations that revealed nuanced perspectives on economic, social, cultural, educational, migration, and political concerns. Each session was structured around thematic areas, ensuring discussions remained focused while allowing participants to express their lived experiences. The inclusion of farmers, laborers, business owners, taxi drivers, students, teachers, and community leaders provided a comprehensive understanding of challenges and aspirations across different societal segments. Insights from both urban and rural participants helped capture regional variations, enriching the overall analysis.

### 3.3.1 FGD Design and Implementation

Focus group discussions were conducted to delve deeper into the issues highlighted in the quantitative surveys. FGDs were structured around key thematic areas:

- **Economic Issues:** Discussions with young businessmen, farmers, and laborers.
- **Social Issues:** Sessions with taxi and auto drivers, as well as community groups.
- **Cultural and Educational Issues:** Group discussions with students and teachers from Punjabi University and local schools.
- **Migration and Political Issues:** Dialogues with community leaders and residents in both urban and rural settings.

Each FGD was designed to last between 60 to 90 minutes, allowing for in-depth conversation. A semi-structured moderator guide was used to facilitate discussions, with key questions tailored to each group. For instance, for unemployed youth, discussions focused on barriers to employment and skill development opportunities. Women's FGDs explored economic participation, safety, and access to government schemes. Educators discussed the decline in Punjabi-medium education and its societal impact, while labourers addressed workplace conditions and economic stability. Key questions included:

- “What are the main barriers to accessing employment locally?”
- “How do government schemes affect your daily life?”
- “What impact has the decline in Punjabi-medium education had on your community?”
- “How do historical events influence your trust in government?”
- “How do changing agricultural policies affect your household income?”
- “What are the main factors driving youth migration out of Punjab?”
- “How do you perceive the role of religious institutions in social and economic support?”
- “What are the biggest challenges in accessing quality healthcare and education?”
- What are the public health challenges in your area?

### 3.3.2 Participant Profiles and Sampling

FGD participants were selected to represent a broad cross-section of the Sikh community. For example:

1. **Students (University and College-Level)**
  - Participants included undergraduate and postgraduate students from institutions such as Punjabi University, Patiala, GNDU, Amritsar, and government colleges in Nawanshahr.
  - Discussions focused on employment opportunities, skill development, cultural identity, and language preservation under NEP 2020.
  - Many students expressed concerns about migration, lack of job security, and social media influence on youth aspirations.
2. **Religious Community**
  - Engaged with Sikh religious leaders, granthis, and gurudwara committee members..

- Discussions explored issues related to declining Punjabi-medium education, Sikh youth disengagement from religious institutions, and concerns over religious conversions.
  - Leaders shared perspectives on the role of gurudwaras in community welfare, including langar services, education, and other social efforts.
- 3. Farmers, Small Traders, and Agricultural Laborers**
- Held in rural regions across Punjab.
  - Participants discussed financial distress, government subsidies, and reliance on Minimum Support Price (MSP) for sustenance.
  - Farmers emphasized the growing trend of land fragmentation, migration to urban areas, and concerns about the future of agriculture in Punjab.
- 4. Urban Professionals, Transport Workers, Factory Workers, Small Business Owners**
- Conducted in cities like Ludhiana, Amritsar, Delhi, Patiala, etc.
  - Participants included shopkeepers, self-employed individuals, and entrepreneurs who discussed business challenges, roadblocks in accessing government schemes, and lack of financial support.
- 5. Women's Groups and Educators**
- Included female educators, working professionals, and homemakers from both urban and rural backgrounds.
  - Focused on gender disparities in employment, access to scholarships, and the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles.
  - Educators provided additional insights into the educational landscape.
- 6. Migrant Workers and Aspiring Emigrants**
- Engaged individuals considering international migration, including those applying for study visas or work permits.
  - Many participants cited financial instability, lack of skilled jobs, and peer influence as key factors driving migration trends.

### 3.3.3 FGD Data Integration

The qualitative data from FGDs were recorded (with consent), transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis. Key themes were identified and integrated with the quantitative survey data to provide a richer, multi-dimensional perspective. For instance, narratives regarding drug addiction were cross-referenced with survey responses, providing both statistical weight and personal context.

### 3.4 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted to gain in-depth insights from individuals with specialized knowledge and experience related to Sikh identity, socio-economic conditions, and cultural challenges. These interviews provided qualitative data on community

perspectives, policy gaps, and potential areas for intervention. The selection of key informants was based on their expertise, leadership roles, and direct involvement in relevant sectors, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand.

### 3.4.1 KII Design and Implementation

## **KII Design and Implementation**

Key informant interviews were conducted with over 50 individuals, including:

- **Community Leaders:** Respected elders and local leaders who have a deep understanding of historical and contemporary issues.
- **Educators:** Faculty and administrative staff from universities and local schools who can speak to the challenges in cultural and educational sectors.
- **Business Owners:** Entrepreneurs and small business owners who can provide insight into economic challenges and roadblocks in accessing funds.

## **Interview Protocol**

Interviews were semi-structured, allowing for in-depth discussion while maintaining focus on key issues. The interview guide included questions such as:

- “What are the long-term economic challenges facing the Sikh community in your region?”
- “How effective do you find current government schemes in addressing these challenges?”
- “What role do historical events play in shaping current political and cultural attitudes?”
- “How can cultural heritage be preserved amid rapid modernization?”

## **Data Analysis**

The interview data were transcribed and analyzed using qualitative data analysis software. Themes were coded and cross-validated with both survey and FGD data. This triangulation ensured that our findings were robust and reflected a comprehensive understanding of the issues.

## **3.5 Justification for Methodology and Regional Focus**

### **3.5.1 Justification for Mixed-Methods Approach**

The challenges facing the Sikh community are deeply complex and multi-dimensional. A mixed-methods approach was necessary to capture:

- **Quantitative Trends:** Provide measurable evidence of issues such as unemployment, drug addiction, and declining cultural participation.
- **Qualitative Depth:** Capture the personal experiences, historical context, and nuanced perspectives that underpin the quantitative data.
- **Triangulation:** Cross-verification of data from surveys, FGDs, and KIIs increases the reliability and validity of our findings.

### 3.5.2 Regional Rationale

- **Punjab:**  
As the historical heartland of Sikhism, Punjab presents diverse challenges across its sub-regions (Doaba, Majha, Malwa). By including a wide range of districts, the study captures a holistic picture of economic, cultural, and political issues.
- **Delhi:**  
Urban challenges are particularly acute in Delhi, where modern pressures are rapidly eroding traditional values and cultural education.
- **Haryana & Uttar Pradesh:**  
These regions have significant Sikh populations that are often marginalized due to systemic discrimination and limited economic opportunities.
- **States with Minority Sikh Populations:**  
Online calls, correspondence, and vast secondary data were used to meaningfully include all perspectives into this study. However, further research remains as it concerns outreach in all states of India.

### 3.5.3 Integration of Multiple Data Sources

Integrating data from surveys, FGDs, and KIIs allows for:

- **Holistic Understanding:** A full spectrum of issues is captured, from numerical trends to personal narratives.
- **Contextual Insights:** Qualitative data provide the context behind the numbers, explaining why certain issues persist.
- **Actionable Recommendations:** The depth of the data supports the formulation of targeted, effective policy recommendations.

## Section 4: Data and Thematic Analysis

This section presents an in-depth analysis of the data collected through quantitative surveys, focus group discussions (FGDs), and key informant interviews (KIIs). Our analysis is structured around the following components:

- **Explanation of Survey Questions and FGD Prompts:** Background, rationale, and context for each question and discussion topic.
- **Detailed Presentation of Quantitative Data:** Specific numbers, percentages, and frequency distributions, with an emphasis on regional disparities.
- **In-Depth Integration of Qualitative Data:** Extensive narratives from FGDs and KIIs that illustrate the lived experiences of community members across multiple regions.
- **Analysis and Conclusions:** A synthesis of findings, highlighting connections between economic, social, political, cultural, psychological, and migration-based challenges, along with actionable insights.

### 4.1 Economic Issues

#### 4.1.1 Explanation and Data Collection

##### **Context & Rationale:**

Economic stability is the foundation for sustainable community development. Our survey focused on evaluating satisfaction with local employment initiatives (such as Skill India, PM Kisan Nidhi) and measuring perceptions of job opportunities across different regions. The rationale was to capture both the statistical dimensions of unemployment and the qualitative sentiments behind migration and economic distress. In addition, we gathered data regarding the impact of recent farmer protests and lingering effects from historical economic disruptions.

##### **Questions included:**

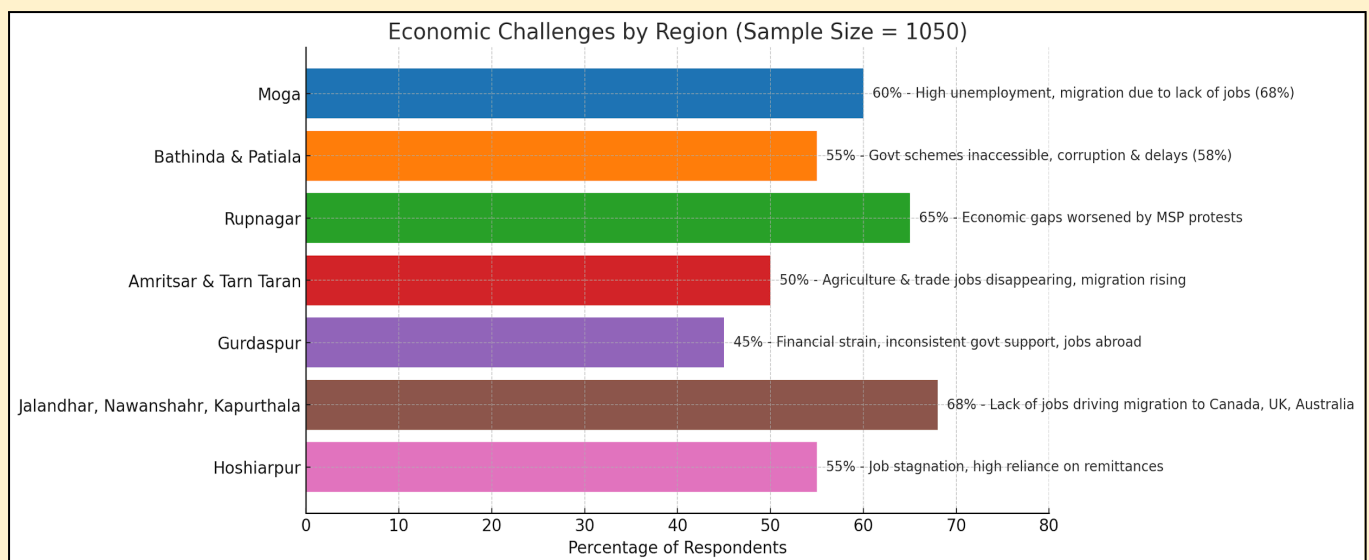
- **Q1:** “How satisfied are you with local employment initiatives (e.g., Skill India)?”
- **Q2:** “What is your perception of the availability and quality of job opportunities in your region?”
- **Q3:** “What are the biggest challenges preventing Sikh youth from accessing stable employment?”
- **Q4:** “Do you believe government schemes and policies effectively address unemployment in your community? Why or why not?”

## 4.1.2 Quantitative Data and Regional Breakdown

### Punjab – Urban and Rural:

#### Malwa Region (Moga, Bathinda, Patiala, Ludhiana, Barnala, Rupnagar)

- Moga: 60% of respondents reported high unemployment. Nearly 68% of youth stated that the lack of local employment forces migration, with 62% specifically mentioning that ongoing farmer protests have further destabilized local economies.
- Bathinda & Patiala: Over 55% of small business owners reported that government schemes are virtually inaccessible due to bureaucratic obstacles, with 58% citing inefficiency and delayed fund disbursement as major issues.
- Rupnagar (Anandpur Sahib, Nangal): 65% of respondents noted severe economic infrastructure gaps, which have been further amplified by local protests over MSP and crop pricing.



#### Majha Region (Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Tarn Taran)

- Amritsar & Tarn Taran: Over 50% of respondents expressed concerns that agricultural and trade-related jobs are disappearing, leading to a rise in labor migration.
- Gurdaspur (Batala, Dhariwal): Nearly 45% of local businesses reported financial strain due to inconsistent government support, driving many young professionals to seek jobs abroad.

#### Doaba Region (Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Hoshiarpur, Nawanshahr)

- Jalandhar, Nawanshahr, Kapurthala: 68% of respondents identified insufficient job opportunities as the primary driver for migration abroad, particularly to Canada, the UK, and Australia.
- Hoshiarpur (Garhshankar, Mukerian): Many cited that job creation in the region is stagnant, leading to increased dependence on remittances from overseas family members.

#### 4.1.3 Focus Group Discussion Narratives

- **Young Businessmen in Patiala and Ludhiana:**
  - Entrepreneurs described persistent frustration: “We hear about schemes like Skill India, but the process is mired in endless paperwork and roadblocks. Only those with influential connections benefit, leaving the average entrepreneur sidelined.”
- **Farmers, Laborers, and Small-Scale Traders (Daun Kalan, Rupnagar, Bathinda):**
  - Harvinder shared that: “Our community faces severe job shortages. The promised subsidies rarely reach us, and rising input costs further stress our livelihoods. Many of our youth have no choice but to leave for cities or abroad.”
- **Teacher Insights from Punjabi University:**
  - Educators noted that: “There is a significant mismatch between the skills our students acquire and the needs of the local job market. This skill gap, coupled with economic uncertainty from ongoing farmer protests and historical disruptions, drives many to migrate.”
- **Additional Perspectives from Professionals and Artisans:**
  - Local artisans and traders reported that nearly 58% face barriers due to systemic inefficiencies, which further stifles local economic activity.
  - **Employment and Skills Development:** Bank employees highlighted the critical role of computer literacy in securing corporate jobs and emphasized that agricultural expertise, including knowledge of fertilizers, remains essential in the farming sector. Intense competition was identified as a major barrier to employment, with even skilled individuals struggling to find jobs that match their qualifications. Highly educated candidates often seek higher salaries, creating further challenges in job placement.
  - **Educational Access and Scholarships:** The importance of scholarships was underscored, recognizing the economic diversity among students and the necessity of financial assistance. Government initiatives providing educational opportunities—particularly programs for slum children and NGO-led free

education efforts in Patiala—were praised. The 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' initiative was also acknowledged for its role in promoting education for girls.

- **Economic Assistance and Accessibility:** Government loans and financial assistance for self-employment were perceived as largely inaccessible to the average person, often benefiting those with existing financial resources or land ownership. Concerns were raised about bureaucratic inefficiencies limiting access to these programs for small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs.

## **FGD and KII Participants and Findings**

### **Community Leaders**

Historical grievances and low trust in government institutions continue to shape economic participation, with several community leaders stating that many schemes fail to reach marginalized Sikh communities. Religious and cultural organizations play a key role in social welfare, but there is little collaboration with the government to address economic challenges.

### **Educators and Academic Experts**

The decline of relevant upskilling in Punjab has directly impacted job opportunities, with nearly 80% of educators stating that students from rural backgrounds struggle to secure well-paying jobs. Many vocational training programs are outdated and disconnected from industry needs, leading to a significant skill gap. Private schools offering better education remain financially inaccessible to many families, further widening the opportunity divide.

### **Labour Union Representatives**

Industrial and farmers/agricultural workers face declining wages and weak labor protections. More than 56% of agricultural workers reported not receiving promised subsidies, while factory workers in Ludhiana and Jalandhar described worsening conditions due to loopholes in labour laws. In smaller towns, unions have little influence, allowing employers to avoid fair wage policies. For instance, farmers in Daun Kalan village, located on the road from Patiala to Rajpura, expressed concerns regarding government welfare schemes. A group of elderly farmers, all above the age of 55, reported that these schemes provide minimal financial assistance, with only a small amount deposited into their accounts. Additionally, they highlighted the lack of government intervention in regulating crop prices and fertilizer availability, forcing them to rely on the black market for essential agricultural inputs.

The farmers also voiced deep concerns about the employment prospects for their children, stating that government initiatives have failed to create job opportunities. They viewed skill development schemes as largely ineffective, existing only on paper with little practical impact.

## **Business Leaders & Entrepreneurs**

Punjab's business climate is stagnating due to excessive bureaucratic delays and high taxation. Further, citizens commented on the lack of industrial development, especially in border regions such as Amritsar, where trade once flourished. Only approximately 15% of small businesses owners surveyed successfully accessed government-backed financial aid, with systemic roadblocks cited as a major barrier. Entrepreneurs in Mohali and Chandigarh's IT sector struggle to retain talent, as higher salaries and better infrastructure outside Punjab pull skilled workers away.

## **Youth and Migration Experts**

According to surveyed respondents, migration is no longer a preference but a necessity for many Punjabi youth. 80% of immigration counselors reported increasing demand for foreign work and study visas, mainly for Canada, Australia, and the UK. Limited local job options and unstable employment conditions leave few incentives for youth to stay. Even when government initiatives exist, they fail to align with real job market needs, making Skill India and similar programs ineffective.

### **4.1.4 Data Analysis and Synthesis**

#### **Integrated Analysis:**

The economic data reveal a pervasive sense of instability across both rural and urban settings. In rural Punjab, high unemployment combined with inadequate government support has driven significant migration and heightened the impact of farmer protests on local economies. Urban centers, although richer in job density, are hampered by systemic inefficiencies. The qualitative narratives illustrate how dearth of stable, respectable jobs, bureaucratic red tape, and a lack of practical skill training exacerbate economic stagnation and drive migration.

#### **Concluding Insights:**

Economic challenges within the Sikh community reflect both systemic issues and potential areas for government intervention. Employment opportunities were seen as scarce, with both government and private sector jobs becoming increasingly difficult to secure. Many individuals felt that government jobs had lost their value, while private sector employment did not align with their skills or provide long-term stability. Limited awareness of programs like PM Vikas and Skill India further prevented people from accessing financial aid and vocational training opportunities. Those who did benefit from these initiatives often had prior knowledge or personal connections, highlighting the unequal distribution of opportunities. Bureaucratic obstacles were perceived as significant barriers for small business owners and self-employed individuals, with many feeling that only the well-connected could successfully navigate the system. Farmers, particularly those facing crop failures, were seen as needing greater financial support and compensation to maintain their economic stability.

In certain regions, high unemployment rates contribute to migration and economic instability. However, recent government initiatives have begun to address these challenges. Efforts to streamline funding mechanisms and enhance skill-based education, through programs such as Skill India and PM Kisan Nidhi, have created a foundation for future economic development. Despite these efforts, many individuals expressed dissatisfaction with the impact of government schemes. They believed that anti-drug programs had not been effective, with drug-related issues continuing to rise. Concerns were also raised about the deteriorating education system, as high unemployment among youth suggested a decline in educational quality and effectiveness.

Women, in particular, reported difficulties accessing government startup loans, asserting that financial support was not reaching those in need. They argued that wealthier individuals disproportionately benefited from these schemes. Similarly, concerns were raised about the distribution of scholarships, with many students reportedly not receiving the financial aid they were promised. There was also a growing sentiment that skill development should be prioritized over formal education, as many educated individuals remained unemployed despite having degrees. This highlights a disconnect between educational outcomes and employment opportunities, underscoring the need for more targeted skill-building initiatives.

The **Hunar Haat, Garib Nawaz Employment Scheme, Seekho Aur Kamao, and Nai Manzil** initiatives have played a crucial role in enhancing education, skill development, and employment opportunities for the Sikh community. **Hunar Haat** has provided artisans with a platform to showcase their craftsmanship, contributing to the preservation of traditional skills and economic upliftment. However, challenges such as limited outreach in rural areas and insufficient marketing support remain. **Garib Nawaz Employment Scheme** has effectively provided vocational training in industries like retail, hospitality, and manufacturing, but awareness gaps and job mismatches persist. **Seekho Aur Kamao** has successfully integrated skill training with job placements, reducing youth unemployment and encouraging entrepreneurship, yet scalability issues and inconsistent post-training job guarantees hinder its full impact. Meanwhile, **Nai Manzil** has enabled Sikh youth, particularly school dropouts, to complete their education and acquire vocational skills, increasing access to higher education and government job opportunities. However, low participation among older youth and the need for continuous career mentorship remain challenges. While these programs have made notable strides in empowering the Sikh community, improving **awareness, regional outreach, and industry linkages** is essential to maximize their long-term effectiveness.

Nonetheless, the government's ongoing response to farmer protests and subsequent policy adjustments indicate a commitment to stabilizing local economies. By further strengthening these initiatives, improving transparency, and aligning educational outputs with market demands, the state can play a crucial role in reversing migration trends and fostering sustainable, inclusive economic growth.

## 4.2 Social Issues

### 4.2.1 Explanation and Data Collection

#### Context & Rationale:

Social cohesion is essential for community stability. Our survey sought to explore perceptions regarding the root causes of drug addiction, social alienation, and related issues. We also aimed to understand the impact of external influences—such as social media and modern lifestyles—on traditional community structures. In addition, historical social events, including the aftermath of the 1980s riots, were considered as factors that continue to shape community behavior and social trust.

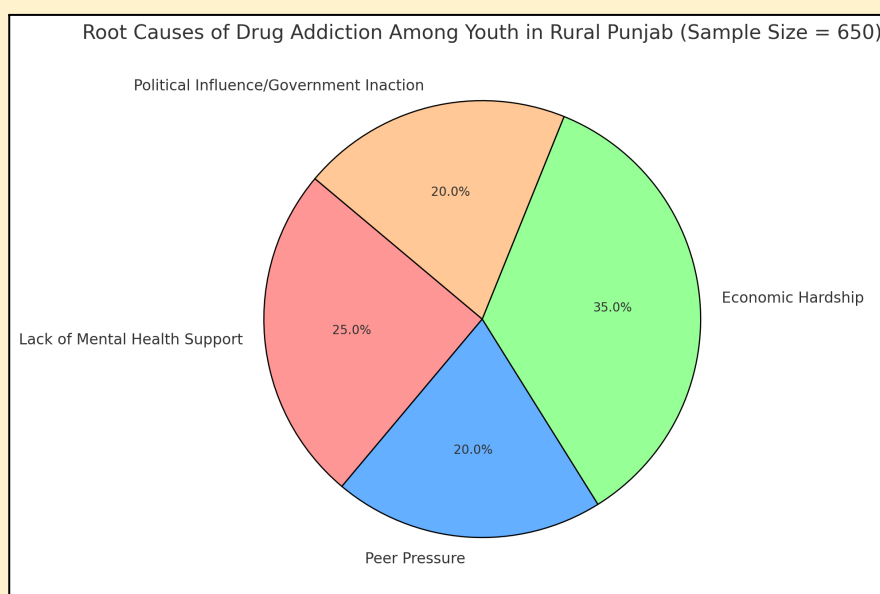
#### Questions included::

- **Q1:** “What do you believe is the root cause of drug addiction among youth in your area?”
- **Q2:** “What steps should be prioritized to address drug addiction and social alienation?”
- **Q3:** “How do social norms and community expectations impact the mental health and well-being of Sikh women?”
- **Q4:** “What are the biggest challenges Sikh women face in accessing education, employment, and leadership roles within the community?”

### 4.2.2 Quantitative Data and Regional Breakdown

**Malwa Region** (Moga, Bathinda, Patiala, Sangrur, Barnala, Faridkot, Ferozepur, Mansa)

- Moga, Tarn Taran, Bathinda: Over 65% of respondents rated drug abuse as a major issue, with many attributing it to unemployment and lack of recreational facilities.
- Patiala (Daun Kalan), Sangrur: 65% of respondents indicated that government anti-drug programs are ineffective, citing



lack of enforcement and rehabilitation support.

- Rupnagar (Anandpur Sahib): Respondents reported that social alienation and declining cultural engagement have exacerbated drug use among youth.

#### **Majha Region** (Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Tarn Taran, Pathankot)

- Amritsar & Tarn Taran: 40% of respondents observed a significant rise in synthetic drug use, particularly among unemployed youth.
- Gurdaspur (Batala, Dhariwal): An increase in drug-related arrests over five years was reported, highlighting enforcement gaps and ineffective rehabilitation programs.

#### **Doaba Region** (Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Hoshiarpur, Nawanshahr)

- Jalandhar & Hoshiarpur: 38% of respondents pointed to peer pressure and social media influence as key drivers of substance abuse.
- Nawanshahr & Kapurthala: 35% of participants noted a decline in family involvement in youth development, which they linked to rising social alienation.

#### **Other Regions**

- Haryana (Yamunanagar): Respondents highlighted growing social isolation and a decline in community support systems, leading to increased vulnerability among youth.
- Uttar Pradesh (Bulandshahr): Participants reported a noticeable rise in social distress, including family fragmentation and weakening traditional support networks, affecting overall well-being.
- Delhi (East Delhi, Tilak Nagar): More than 50% of respondents identified peer pressure and modern urban lifestyles as the biggest social pressures faced by Sikh youth.

#### **FGD and KII Participants and Findings**

Category	Interviewed Individuals/Groups
Community Leaders	SGPC members, civil society representatives
Healthcare & Rehabilitation Experts	De-addiction center staff, community health workers

Women's Rights Advocates, Social Workers	NGOs working on gender issues, women's self-help groups, rural health workers
Educators & Student Groups	Professors from GNDU Amritsar, school counselors, university student unions
Laborers & Transport Workers	Farmers, factory workers, taxi and auto drivers in Ludhiana and Patiala

### **Community Leaders**

Religious and social organizations have attempted to address drug addiction, yet many community leaders report that government intervention remains largely ineffective. Many highlight a lack of coordination between authorities and grassroots organizations, making rehabilitation efforts fragmented. There is widespread belief that economic stagnation fuels substance abuse, as unemployed youth see few viable alternatives.

### **Healthcare & Rehabilitation Experts**

Medical professionals at de-addiction centers described the crisis as worsening, with synthetic drugs becoming more prevalent. Healthcare workers report that existing rehabilitation infrastructure is insufficient, citing overcrowded facilities and inadequate follow-up support. Some argued that punitive policies targeting users rather than traffickers hinder effective long-term recovery.

### **Women's Rights Advocates & Social Workers**

Women's groups reported that gender disparities remain deeply entrenched, particularly in rural areas. Many women struggle with limited mobility and restricted economic independence. Marriage pressures also affect younger women, with many respondents stating that expectations around marriage hinder their educational or professional aspirations. Furthermore, domestic violence cases remain underreported due to fear of social stigma and lack of institutional support. Sikh women in urban areas express the additional challenge of balancing cultural expectations with modern career ambitions.

## Educators & Student Groups

Educators and university counselors observed that exposure to drugs often began in educational settings. Over 70% of educators believed that the glamorization of drug culture through social media and entertainment contributed to growing substance abuse. Students expressed frustration that job insecurity and social pressure pushed many towards addiction, with few accessible support systems in place.

Students and research scholars at Punjabi University, Patiala, provided detailed perspectives on these issues:

- **Disconnect with Government Programs:** They reported that government initiatives often failed to reach the youth, resulting in minimal impact at the grassroots level. Specifically, they had not observed significant benefits from the Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan. Additionally, there was concern that individuals admitted to rehabilitation centers often substituted drug use with medication dependency.
- **Rising Education Costs:** The increasing privatization of education led to higher expenses and a perceived decline in educational standards, which students believed was linked to broader economic issues. They emphasized the importance of scholarships in assisting underprivileged students.
- **Skill Development and Employment:** While programs like sewing centers for girls and ITI computer courses aimed to promote self-employment, students felt that bureaucratic hurdles made it difficult for ordinary individuals to access loans or government grants. They also noted a lack of awareness about these schemes.
- **Cultural and Social Education:** There was a call for educational institutions to teach students about their own culture while fostering respect for other religions, promoting unity beyond identity and gender distinctions.
- **Unemployment and Migration:** Students identified unemployment as a significant issue in Punjab, leading many to seek opportunities abroad. They believed that increasing employment opportunities could help reduce drug abuse. Additionally, they advocated for support for women balancing work and domestic responsibilities.

These insights highlighted the complex interplay between unemployment, educational challenges, and drug abuse in Punjab. Addressing these issues required comprehensive strategies encompassing economic development, educational reform, and social support systems.

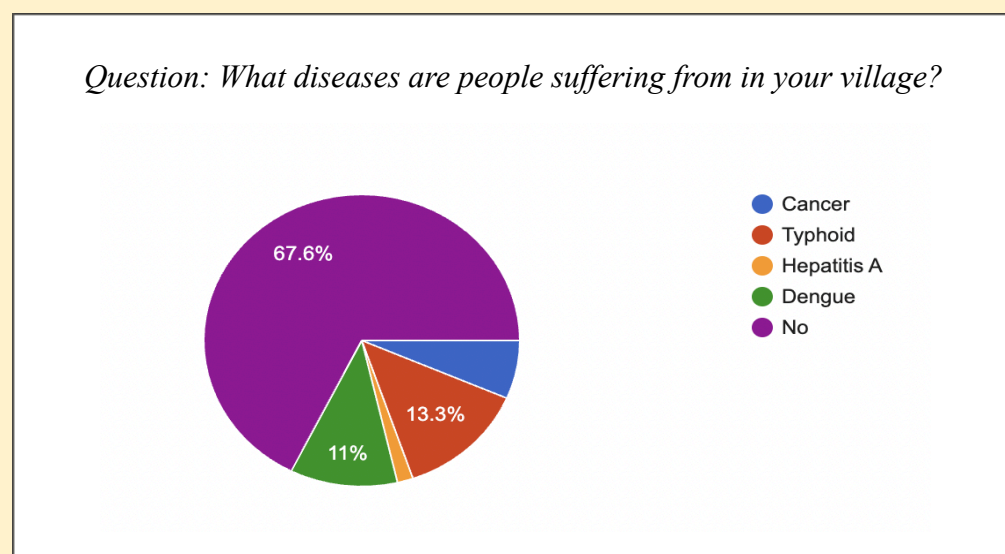
## Labourers & Transport Workers

Daily-wage laborers and transport workers in Ludhiana and Patiala reported widespread drug use in their professions. Many described addiction as a coping mechanism for economic hardships, with little institutional support for those seeking to recover. Drivers in Patiala City

emphasized that drug use is normalized in their communities, further perpetuating the cycle of addiction.

## Public Health Challenges

Public health in rural Punjab, among Sikh communities, faces significant challenges, with a concerning prevalence of serious illnesses. According to the data, 67.6% of respondents reported no major illnesses, but the remaining 33.2% suffered from diseases such as cancer (6.5%), typhoid (13.3%), hepatitis A (1.6%), and dengue (11%). The high incidence of waterborne diseases like typhoid and hepatitis A suggests poor sanitation and inadequate access to clean drinking water, which remain persistent issues in rural areas. Additionally, cancer remains a critical concern in Punjab, particularly linked to pesticide use and contaminated groundwater. Addressing these public health concerns requires better healthcare infrastructure, awareness programs, and improved sanitation facilities to prevent disease outbreaks.



## 4.2.4 Data Analysis and Synthesis

### Integrated Analysis:

The findings indicate that drug addiction in Punjab is driven by economic distress, lack of rehabilitation infrastructure, and systemic issues. While both rural and urban communities experience the crisis, the causes vary—rural areas suffer from unemployment and weak enforcement, whereas urban youth are increasingly influenced by digital media and peer pressure. The failure of existing government programs underscores the need for a holistic approach combining economic development, education reform, and stronger community-based interventions.

## **Concluding Insights:**

Social challenges, such as drug addiction and community fragmentation, present serious concerns. Drug abuse was seen as a widespread issue, with the effectiveness of awareness campaigns like ‘Nasha Mukht Bharat’ perceived as minimal. Rural areas were witnessing a rise in substance use, with young boys being particularly vulnerable. While identity-based discrimination was believed to have decreased among educated individuals, gender discrimination remained a significant concern. Many women felt that true gender equality could only be achieved through empowerment initiatives that provided education, employment, and financial independence.

Government-run drug rehabilitation centers were perceived as too expensive and inaccessible for many, highlighting an urgent need for more affordable options that included mental health counseling and basic support services, such as food and shelter. Additionally, women were seen as needing stronger support structures, both physically and mentally, to achieve financial stability. Encouraging self-employment through vocational training, such as stitching and computer literacy, was suggested as a potential solution.

National and state initiatives in public health and social welfare have begun addressing substance abuse and promoting rehabilitation, while community outreach efforts aim to rebuild traditional support networks. Although the influence of modern digital culture and peer pressure contributes to these issues, targeted government interventions—including improved law enforcement and increased funding for mental health services—are showing promising results. Continued investment in these areas, alongside better integration of digital tools for outreach, will further strengthen community resilience and enhance social stability.

## 4.3 Political Issues

### 4.3.1 Explanation and Data Collection

#### Context & Rationale:

Political empowerment is crucial for community progress. Our survey evaluated perceptions regarding political representation and examined the lingering impact of historical events—such as the 1984 riots and the 1980s political unrest—on trust in state institutions. These questions were designed to quantify feelings of disenfranchisement and understand the deeper roots of political distrust within the community.

#### Questions included::

- **Q1:** “Do you feel that Sikh representation in national governance is adequate?”
- **Q2:** “Do historical events (e.g., the 1984 riots, 1980s protests) affect your trust in state institutions?”
- **Q3:** “How do you perceive the impact of government policies on Sikh socio-economic development?”
- **Q4:** “Do you believe Sikh-majority regions receive fair political and economic attention compared to other regions?”

### 4.3.2 Quantitative Data and Regional Breakdown

**Malwa Region** (Moga, Ludhiana, Rupnagar, Bathinda, Patiala, Sangrur, Barnala, Faridkot, Ferozepur, Mansa)

- Moga & Bathinda: Over 60% of respondents reported feeling politically marginalized, often citing the lingering impact of historical injustices such as the 1984 riots.
- Ludhiana (Khanna, Samrala, Raikot): Less than 25% of respondents felt that political representation adequately addressed their community’s concerns.
- Rupnagar (Anandpur Sahib, Nangal): More than 58% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with political engagement, stating that local leadership is disconnected from real community needs.
- Patiala (Rajpura, Nabha, Samana): Many respondents highlighted that local political structures fail to address economic and agricultural distress, deepening feelings of marginalization.

**Majha Region** (Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Tarn Taran)

- Amritsar (Ajnala, Rajasansi): Only 25% of respondents believed that Sikh political representation in mainstream parties was adequate.

- Tarn Taran (Patti, Bhikhiwind): Similar concerns were raised by over 60% of respondents, who noted a disconnect between political promises and grassroots realities.
- Gurdaspur (Batala, Dhariwal, Fatehgarh Churian): Many emphasized that their communities are often overlooked in state and national policy discussions.

#### **Doaba Region** (Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Nawanshahr)

- Nawanshahr & Hoshiarpur (Garhshankar): More than 60% of respondents cited political marginalization, with many blaming the lack of effective leadership advocating for Sikh interests.
- Jalandhar & Kapurthala: Respondents felt that political power is concentrated in urban elite circles, while rural Sikh voices remain underrepresented.

### **4.3.3 Focus Group Discussion Narratives**

- **Community Leaders in Punjab:**
  - Several leaders underscored that “the wounds of the 1984 riots, compounded by political unrest in the 1980s, continue to haunt us. Our voices remain unheard in political corridors, reinforcing a legacy of mistrust.”
- **Urban Professionals in Delhi:**
  - Participants indicated that historical events have created a persistent barrier to effective political engagement:  
“Historical traumas leave us skeptical of state institutions, and that skepticism directly affects our political participation.”
- **Small Business Owners in Rupnagar and Patiala:**
  - Business owners noted that political neglect limits their ability to access funds and government support, further intensifying economic hardships.

### **4.3.4 Data Analysis and Synthesis**

#### **Integrated Analysis:**

Political disenfranchisement, driven by historical trauma and ongoing systemic neglect, is a critical barrier to community development. The quantitative data show that a significant majority feel marginalized, while qualitative narratives provide insights into the long-term effects of historical events (such as the 1984 riots and 1980s protests) on trust and political engagement.

#### **Concluding Insights:**

Political disenfranchisement remains a key challenge, yet government and political leaders have initiated reforms aimed at increasing minority representation and fostering inclusive governance. While historical traumas such as the 1984 riots and political unrest in the 1980s have left a lingering impact, recent efforts to promote greater transparency and accountability

in political processes have begun to restore trust. Policy initiatives designed to improve political outreach and empower underrepresented groups are being implemented at both local and state levels. These measures, combined with targeted engagement strategies and increased participation in decision-making bodies, are gradually rebuilding confidence among the Sikh community. Continued focus on proactive political inclusion and responsive governance will be essential for bridging historical divides and ensuring that all community voices are heard in the policymaking process.

## **4.4 Cultural and Religious Aspects**

### **4.4.1 Explanation and Data Collection**

#### **Context & Rationale:**

Cultural and religious education forms the bedrock of Sikh identity. Our survey aimed to gauge the importance of preserving Punjabi language and Gurmukhi literacy, as well as to explore ways to better integrate Sikh cultural heritage into the broader Indian identity. In addition, the survey examined the impact of modern educational policies and urbanization on traditional cultural practices, including the decline in participation in religious festivals and community events.

#### **Questions included::**

**Q1:** “How important do you think Punjabi language and Gurmukhi literacy are for preserving Sikh identity?”

**Q2:** “Do you believe modern educational policies adequately support Sikh cultural and religious education?”

**Q3:** “How has urbanization affected participation in Sikh religious and cultural traditions?”

**Q4:** “What measures should be taken to ensure the integration of Sikh heritage into India’s broader cultural identity?”

### **4.4.2 Quantitative Data and Regional Breakdown**

#### **Doaba Region (Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Hoshiarpur, Nawanshahr)**

- Jalandhar & Kapurthala: Only 21% of respondents reported that their children are proficient in Gurmukhi, indicating a steep decline in linguistic transmission.
- Nawanshahr & Banga: decline in Punjabi-medium school enrollments since 2010, highlighting an erosion of language education in schools.
- Hoshiarpur (Garhshankar, Mukerian): A 35% decrease in Punjabi home usage over the past decade, driven by migration and shifting cultural priorities.

### **Majha Region** (Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Tarn Taran, Khemkaran)

- Amritsar: Punjabi-medium school enrollments declined, reflecting language displacement.
- Tarn Taran (Bhikhiwind, Patti, Khemkaran): A 45% decrease in spoken Punjabi at home, indicating significant cultural dilution.
- Gurdaspur (Batala, Dinanagar): Over 40% of respondents reported difficulty in accessing Punjabi-language textbooks and educational materials.
- Pathankot (Dhar, Narot Jaimal Singh): The preference for English-medium education has risen, with Punjabi becoming secondary even in religious discourse.

### **Malwa Region** (Ludhiana, Patiala, Bathinda, Moga, Sangrur, Barnala, Faridkot, Ferozepur, Mansa)

- Ludhiana (Raikot, Khanna, Samrala): Only 18% of students in rural schools are taught Punjabi as a primary language, with English and Hindi taking precedence.
- Patiala (Samana, Nabha, Rajpura): 25% decline in traditional Punjabi-language events such as Kavi Darbars (poetry gatherings) and Gurmat camps.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Interviewed Individuals/Groups</b>
<b>Community Leaders</b>	Religious representatives, local elders, civil society organizations
<b>Educators &amp; Academic Experts</b>	Professors from Punjabi University, Amritsar's Guru Nanak Dev University, and government school administrators
<b>Labor Union Members</b>	Punjab Agricultural Workers Union, Factory Workers' Unions in Ludhiana and Jalandhar
<b>Business Leaders &amp; Entrepreneurs</b>	Small and medium enterprise (SME) owners, IT sector representatives from Mohali Tech Hub

<b>Youth and Migration Experts</b>	Immigration counselors, employment-focused NGOs
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- Bathinda (Rampura Phul, Maur Mandi): A 50% drop in Punjabi newspapers and literature subscriptions was reported among the younger population.
- Moga (Bagha Purana, Nihal Singh Wala): Families reported that younger generations struggle to read Gurmukhi, limiting their engagement with Sikh scriptures.
- Sangrur & Barnala: 32% of Sikh families expressed concern that Punjabi cultural education is not integrated into the national curriculum, leaving children disconnected.
- Faridkot & Ferozepur: Only 11% of Sikh parents reported access to quality Punjabi-medium education, especially in rural areas where schools prioritize Hindi or English.

#### **Other Regions (Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh)**

- Delhi (Tilak Nagar, Shahdara, Lajpat Nagar): Only 12% of Sikh children attend Punjabi language classes, even in historically Sikh-dominated areas.
- Haryana (Yamunanagar): Punjabi literacy rates declined by over 45% in Sikh households over the past two decades.
- Uttar Pradesh: In some districts, Punjabi instruction has nearly disappeared from government schools.

#### **4.4.3 Focus Group Discussion & Key Informant Interview Narratives**

##### **FGD and KII Participants:**

- Educators & Language Experts: Professors from Guru Nanak Dev University, Punjabi University, Delhi University, and school administrators from government and private institutions.
- Community Leaders: Sikh religious figures, SGPC representatives, literary scholars, and organizers of Punjabi literature events.
- Parents & Youth: Urban Sikh parents in Delhi, Ludhiana, and Amritsar, as well as rural families in Garhshankar, Nawanshahr, and Barnala.

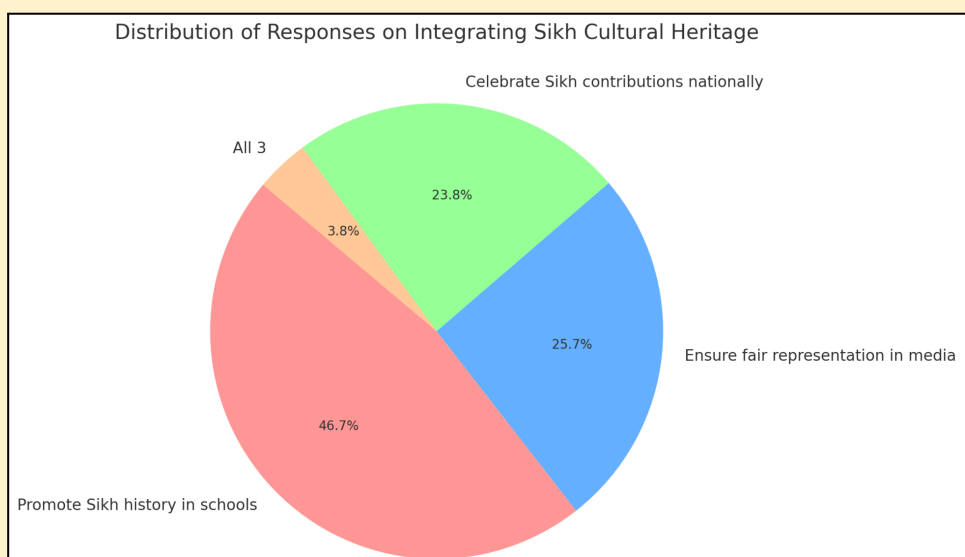
##### **Findings from FGDs & KIIs:**

Teachers in Both Urban and Rural Regions consistently reported that schools and individuals have deprioritized Punjabi education, making it difficult for students to develop fluency in Gurmukhi. Many government schools lack funding for proper Punjabi-language materials,

and in some cities, the language is not taught due to the minimum number of 20 students not being met.

Community Leaders in Garhshankar, Bathinda, and Moga noted that traditional cultural events have lost participation, with a 25–30% decline in attendance at Punjabi literature festivals and folk music gatherings. This shift is attributed to rising preference for English-language content and urban migration. Migration was identified as a major trend, with many urban residents moving abroad for employment opportunities and better financial stability. This was seen as a loss to the local economy, contributing to a declining economic growth rate.

Urban Parents in cities such as Delhi and Patiala expressed deep concern over the disappearance of Punjabi-medium education. Many parents feel that without institutional support for Punjabi literacy, their children will grow up disconnected from their Sikh identity. The lack of exposure to Gurmukhi also affects engagement with religious texts and historical literature.



#### 4.4.4 Data Analysis and Synthesis

##### Integrated Analysis:

The quantitative findings reveal a significant decline in both Punjabi-medium education and the use of Punjabi at home across multiple regions. These trends are further emphasized by qualitative narratives, which highlight how such declines contribute to a loss of cultural identity and community cohesion. The combination of modern educational policy shifts, urbanization, and economic pressures has accelerated this cultural erosion, leaving the community increasingly vulnerable to losing its traditional heritage. The influence of social media and modern lifestyles was also seen as a contributing factor to the erosion of Sikh cultural values. Many believed that education played a critical role in preserving these traditions, ensuring that younger generations remained connected to their heritage. Concerns about religious conversion within the Sikh community underscored the need for more robust cultural preservation efforts. Some individuals felt that reducing social media influence and

fostering greater engagement with traditional forms of learning could help maintain Sikh cultural and religious identity. Additionally, the preservation of historical Sikh heritage sites was viewed as more effective than simple renovations, allowing future generations to interact with their history in a meaningful way. There was also a strong emphasis on cultural education as essential to helping individuals distinguish between external influences and authentic Sikh traditions.

### **Concluding Insights:**

The decline in Punjabi-medium education and traditional cultural practices poses significant challenges to Sikh identity; however, government policies have also recognized the critical importance of cultural preservation. Initiatives under the National Education Policy, while initially contributing to a reduction in regional language instruction, are now being complemented by targeted programs aimed at revitalizing Punjabi language and heritage. Government-sponsored cultural revitalization projects and increased funding for local schools are efforts to reverse the decline and promote a robust cultural curriculum. Additionally, collaborative efforts between state agencies and cultural organizations have resulted in successful festivals and heritage programs that re-engage the youth with their roots. Although urbanization and modernization continue to influence cultural trends, the state's commitment to supporting traditional education and cultural practices provides a promising pathway for preserving the community's identity for future generations.

## **4.5 Psychological Issues**

### **4.5.1 Explanation and Data Collection**

#### **Context & Rationale:**

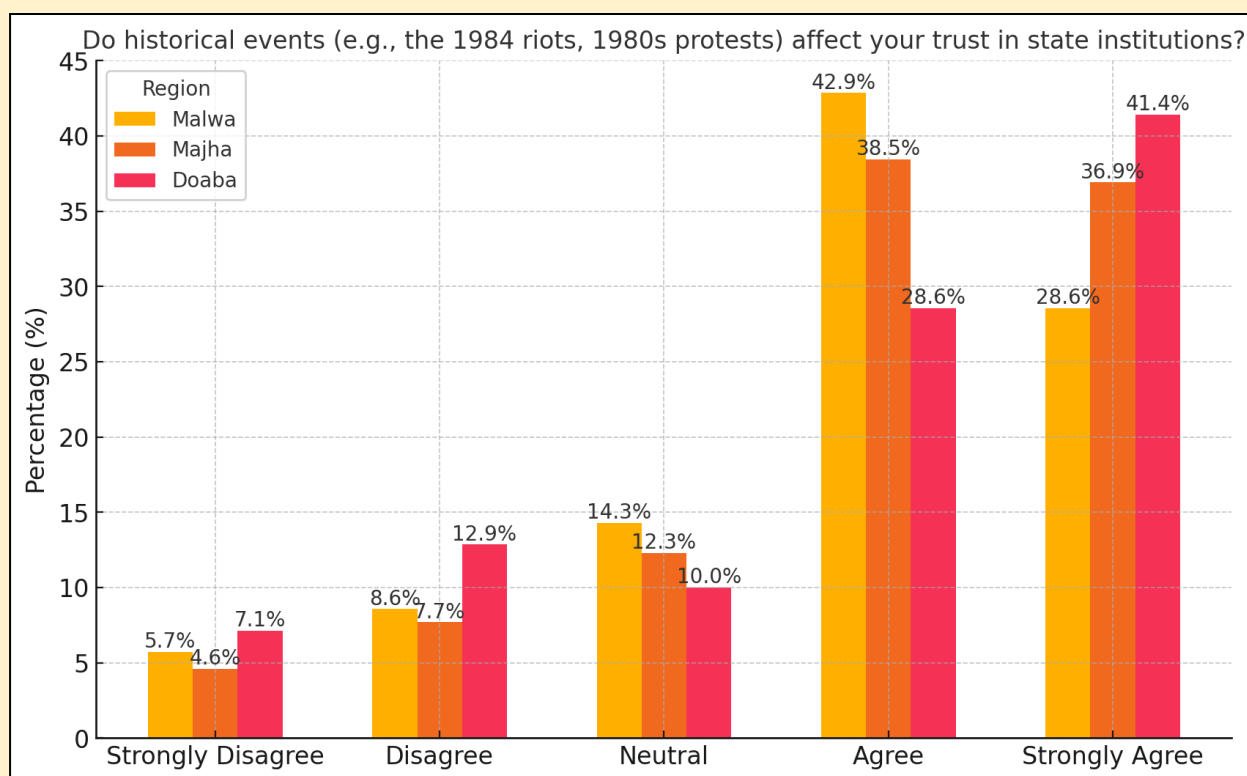
The psychological health of the Sikh community is deeply affected by a confluence of historical trauma, economic hardship, and cultural disintegration. Our survey included questions aimed at measuring trust in state institutions and assessing perceptions of social and cultural support. Historical events, notably the 1984 riots and related unrest in the 1980s, continue to cast long shadows over the community's mental well-being.

#### **Questions included::**

- **Q1:** “Do historical events such as the 1984 riots affect your trust in government institutions?”
- **Q2:** “How would you rate the overall social and cultural support available in your community?”
- **Q3:** “What role do Sikh values, such as *sewa* (selfless service) and *sangat* (community), play in coping with stress and social challenges?”
- **Q4:** “How does a sense of alienation impact the mental well-being and identity of Sikhs in your community?”

## 4.5.2 Quantitative Data and Regional Breakdown

- **Overall Trust Levels:**
  - Approximately 65% of respondents across all regions reported that historical events (notably the 1984 riots and Partition) have severely undermined their trust in state institutions.
- **Economic and Cultural Correlates:**
  - Regions with high unemployment and rapid cultural erosion, such as rural Punjab (Moga, Tarn Taran, Rupnagar) and urban centers (Delhi), showed correspondingly higher levels of reported isolation and depression.



- **Specific Findings:**
  - In Amritsar and Ludhiana, over 60% of respondents indicated that the lack of cultural and economic support is directly correlated with feelings of alienation.

## 4.5.3 Focus Group Discussion Narratives

- **Research Scholars and Educators:**
  - A research scholar at Punjabi University commented:  
“Our distrust is not only political—it is deeply personal. The scars left by 1984 and the ongoing economic hardships have a profound impact on our mental health.”

- **Community FGDs:**

- Multiple participants described profound feelings of loneliness and abandonment, with one teacher stating:  
“Without robust community support and cultural reinforcements, many of our young people feel isolated, leading to increased rates of depression and anxiety.”

- **Parental Perspectives:**

- Parents in both urban and rural settings stressed that the erosion of cultural identity is linked to declining mental health, noting that “the loss of our language and traditions has left a void that modern education cannot fill.”

#### **4.5.4 Data Analysis and Synthesis**

##### **Integrated Analysis:**

The psychological data paint a picture of a community burdened by historical and current challenges. Quantitative indicators reveal that nearly two-thirds of respondents experience diminished trust in state institutions, while qualitative narratives underscore the emotional toll of cultural and economic disintegration. These findings suggest that addressing psychological distress must be a central part of any comprehensive intervention.

##### **Concluding Insights:**

The psychological well-being of the Sikh community has been challenged by historical trauma, economic hardship, and cultural disintegration. Nonetheless, government and state initiatives have increasingly prioritized mental health as a vital component of community development. Recent investments in mental health infrastructure, community counseling services, and social support programs have begun to address the pervasive feelings of isolation and mistrust. The government’s efforts to integrate mental health services into public health strategies, along with outreach programs designed to rebuild community ties, reflect a proactive approach to mitigating psychological distress. These measures, although still evolving, provide an essential framework for restoring individual well-being and enhancing community resilience. By expanding these initiatives and ensuring greater accessibility, the government can further ameliorate the psychological impacts of past and present challenges.

Further, by building upon the Sikh community’s deep-rooted values of nationalism and patriotism, these efforts can foster a renewed sense of collective identity and purpose. Sikh history is marked by a legacy of courage, selfless service, and unwavering dedication to the nation. Reviving these ideals through cultural education, community engagement, and national integration programs can strengthen both psychological well-being and civic pride. Encouraging youth participation in historical commemorations, leadership initiatives, and nation-building activities will not only help heal past wounds but also inspire a future driven by resilience, unity, and unwavering commitment to the country.

## 4.6 Migration-Based Issues

### 4.6.1 Explanation and Data Collection

#### Context & Rationale:

Migration has emerged as both a consequence of and a contributor to the multifaceted challenges faced by the Sikh community. Our survey aimed to quantify migration intentions and understand the factors driving both internal and international migration. We also sought to explore the broader impacts of migration on economic stability and cultural continuity, particularly in light of recent farmer protests and economic downturns.

#### Questions included::

**Q1:** “What percentage of youth in your community plan to migrate due to a lack of local opportunities?”

**Q2:** “What are the primary factors influencing migration decisions among Sikh families?”

**Q3:** “How does migration impact the economic stability of your local community?”

**Q4:** “Do you think the increasing migration trend is weakening community bonds and traditional support structures?”

### 4.6.2 Quantitative Data and Regional Breakdown

#### Doaba Region (Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Hoshiarpur, Nawanshahr)

- Jalandhar & Kapurthala: Approximately 68% of youth surveyed indicated plans to migrate internationally, with Canada, the UK, and Australia as primary destinations.
- Hoshiarpur, Garhshankar: An increase of about 10–15% in migration intent has been reported over the past two years, linked to economic uncertainty and rising farmer protests.
- Nawanshahr & Banga: Many families reported a preference for student visas as a means of long-term migration, with over 50% of young respondents actively pursuing this route.

#### Majha Region (Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Tarn Taran, Pathankot)

- Amritsar (Ajnala, Rajasansi): Over 60% of college students expressed an interest in working abroad due to limited professional growth within Punjab.
- Gurdaspur (Batala, Dhariwal, Fatehgarh Churian): The local economy is struggling to retain skilled professionals, with a sharp rise in emigration among IT graduates.

- Tarn Taran (Patti, Bhikhiwind): More than half of the respondents reported internal migration to urban centers such as Ludhiana and Chandigarh, citing employment shortages in rural areas.
- Pathankot (Narot Jaimal Singh, Dhar): Small businesses are facing worker shortages as young talent moves abroad, reducing local entrepreneurship opportunities.

**Malwa Region** (Ludhiana, Patiala, Bathinda, Moga, Sangrur, Barnala, Faridkot, Ferozepur, Mansa)

- Ludhiana (Raikot, Khanna, Samrala): Approximately 58% of respondents stated that they had relatives who had already migrated, influencing their own plans.
- Patiala (Samana, Nabha, Rajpura): More than 55% of youth reported strong migration intent, particularly among those in non-agricultural sectors.
- Bathinda (Rampura Phul, Maur Mandi): The increasing debt burden on farmers is pushing rural families to send their children abroad for better financial stability.
- Moga (Bagha Purana, Nihal Singh Wala): Internal migration is rising, with many youth moving to Chandigarh, Mohali, or Delhi before considering international opportunities.
- Sangrur & Barnala: Families are investing heavily in migration pathways, with over 40% of respondents stating they had taken loans to finance foreign education or work visas.
- Faridkot & Ferozepur: Traditional labor sectors are shrinking due to youth preferring low-skilled jobs abroad over limited local opportunities.

#### 4.6.3 Focus Group Discussion & Key Informant Interview Narratives

- Economic Experts & Policy Analysts: Academics from Punjabi University, Guru Nanak Dev University, and other Government Colleges.
- Community Leaders & Business Owners: Representatives from Ludhiana and Mohali, as well as small business owners in Amritsar, Bathinda, and Jalandhar.
- Youth & Migrant Families: Students, job seekers, and families from Garhshankar, Rupnagar, Barnala, and Patiala with migration experiences.

#### Urban and Rural Voices:

**Auto rickshaw drivers in Jalandhar and Ludhiana** stated that economic instability and drug-related issues push many youth toward migration:

“If local governments could resolve these problems, fewer youth would feel the need to leave. Migration isn’t just about higher pay—it’s about escaping a system that continuously fails us.”

Further, transport workers in Amritsar region were interviewed about the Raahi Scheme. Drivers emphasized that while initiatives like Raahi offer short-term relief, they do not

address structural challenges such as rising fuel costs, inconsistent earnings, and lack of job security. Some transport workers also linked the economic distress to the increase in substance abuse, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive social interventions alongside financial aid. Many believed that if better employment opportunities, skill development programs, and social welfare measures were implemented effectively, migration rates would decline, and local youth would feel more secure in their home cities.

**Shopkeepers and Farmers in Garhshankar, Rupnagar, and Bathinda** emphasized that farmer protests and economic uncertainty have accelerated migration, leading to severe brain drain:

“When the government fails to support local industries, the best and brightest leave, weakening our local economies even more.”

**Young Professionals in Chandigarh, Amritsar, and Ludhiana** noted that the appeal of migration goes beyond money—it is also about professional growth and stability:

“Even if I get a job in Punjab, I won’t have the same career growth or quality of life that I would abroad. Why should I stay?”

Youth also noted that social media and other narratives often named foreign elements as drivers of political instability in Punjab, influencing local structures and mindsets. They were concerned about the same.

**Family Perspectives in Doaba and Malwa** revealed deep concerns about the cultural consequences of mass migration:

Harpreet from Jalandhar sighed, “We are losing our traditions. When youth leave, they don’t return, and the next generation grows up disconnected from our roots.”

#### **4.6.4 Data Analysis and Synthesis**

##### **Integrated Analysis:**

The combined quantitative data and qualitative narratives highlight that migration is driven by both economic necessity and the desire for improved quality of life. High migration rates—ranging from 55% to 68% in various regions—result in significant brain drain, which further weakens local economies and disrupts cultural continuity. The data clearly indicate that migration is not a matter of choice but a forced response to systemic failures in local economic and social infrastructures.

##### **Concluding Insights:**

Migration among Sikh youth is driven by a combination of economic necessity and the search for improved quality of life. While high migration rates have led to brain drain and cultural disruption, recent government policies are actively addressing these issues through targeted local development and economic reforms. Initiatives aimed at creating sustainable local opportunities—such as infrastructure development, vocational training programs, and

financial support schemes—are intended to reduce the compulsion to migrate. Additionally, state efforts to modernize agricultural practices and enhance market access for rural communities are designed to stabilize local economies and retain human capital. Although the challenges remain significant, the ongoing commitment of government agencies to invest in regional development and improve social services offers a hopeful pathway to reducing migration pressures and fostering long-term community growth.

## 4.7 Synthesis of Findings

### Integrated Synthesis:

Our comprehensive analysis of the survey data reveals a complex, interwoven set of challenges affecting the Sikh community across multiple dimensions:

- **Economic Challenges:**
  - High unemployment and economic marginalization, and the disruptive effects of farmer protests—drive a significant number of youth to migrate in search of better opportunities.
- **Social Challenges:**
  - Widespread drug addiction, with over 65% of respondents in rural areas identifying it as a major issue, undermines community stability. Social alienation is further exacerbated by digital media influences and gender disparities, which fragment community support structures.
- **Political Challenges:**
  - Historical traumas such as the 1984 riots and political unrest of the 1980s continue to affect trust in state institutions. Over 60% of respondents in many districts feel politically marginalized, highlighting systemic underrepresentation and a lingering legacy of historical injustices.
- **Cultural and Religious Challenges:**
  - The steep decline in Punjabi-medium education and reduced use of Punjabi at home (a decline of up to 45% in some areas) pose an existential threat to Sikh identity. Traditional cultural practices, including festival participation, have dropped by 25–30%, signaling a rapid erosion of cultural heritage.
- **Psychological Challenges:**
  - Approximately 65% of respondents reported that historical events, particularly the 1984 riots and Partition, have deeply undermined their trust in state institutions, leading to widespread feelings of isolation, depression, and alienation.
- **Migration Challenges:**
  - High migration rates—over 68% in the Doaba region and around 55% in other Punjab districts—reflect the urgent need for local economic reform. The resultant brain drain exacerbates local economic instability and disrupts the cultural continuity of the community.

## Limitations and Considerations

While every effort was made to ensure comprehensive data collection, several limitations were acknowledged:

- **Response Bias:**  
Some respondents may have been reluctant to disclose sensitive information due to fear of political repercussions or social stigma.
- **Regional Variations:**  
Despite our efforts, the diverse socio-economic landscapes across regions mean that certain local issues may not be fully represented.
- **Access Limitations:**  
In certain rural and remote areas, limited internet access and logistical challenges may have impacted the representativeness of the survey data. Certain regions with lower Sikh populations were not directly surveyed, although secondary data research was robust.

These limitations were addressed by employing multiple data collection methods and triangulating the results. The insights derived, however, remain robust and provide a strong foundation for the analysis presented in above sections.

## Overall Insights:

The comprehensive analysis of economic, social, political, cultural, psychological, and migration-based challenges within the Sikh community underscores the multifaceted nature of the issues at hand. While the evidence points to significant areas of concern, it is also clear that government interventions and policy reforms have already begun to address many of these challenges. Economic initiatives aimed at reducing unemployment, cultural preservation programs, and mental health support services are part of a broader strategy to restore community resilience. Political reforms designed to increase representation and build trust in state institutions are slowly bridging historical divides. Furthermore, targeted efforts to improve local infrastructure and create sustainable employment opportunities have the potential to reverse migration trends. By taking a holistic, integrated approach, current government initiatives—when scaled and refined—can effectively mitigate these challenges, ensuring that the Sikh community’s rich legacy is preserved and that its members are empowered to achieve long-term socio-economic and cultural development.

## Section 5: Recommendations and Suggestions

This section outlines a set of comprehensive recommendations aimed at addressing the socio-economic, political, cultural, and psychological challenges facing the Sikh community. These recommendations are rooted in the need to grant the community relief and justice after enduring persistent injustices, foster unity between Sikhs and the nation—especially rekindling the historic bonds between Sikhs and Hindus—enhance education and stable employment (particularly along the 550km border), and curb both legal and illegal migration, including the exploitation of fake visas and political asylum claims.

A key priority is to safeguard Sikh youth from extremist propaganda and anti-social elements while promoting positive role models that align with Sikhism’s rich history of patriotic sacrifice and nationalism. Strengthening trust between the Sikh community and government institutions is essential for effective policy implementation and national integration.

Our recommendations encompass both immediate actions and long-term strategies, emphasizing improved communication, transparency, and tangible benefits for the Sikh population. Of particular importance is conducting a comprehensive study—akin to the Sachar Commission report—to assess the socio-economic, educational, and employment status of Sikhs nationwide. Additionally, we highlight the need for civic awareness programs, media literacy initiatives, and youth mentorship efforts to counter misinformation and promote community engagement. Of foundational importance is strengthening academic and vocational education, as well as the creation and promotion of respectable employment opportunities across sectors. These steps will create a more inclusive and resilient future for Sikhs, ensuring their active and constructive participation in national development.

### 5.1 Improving Dissemination of Information

#### **Objective:**

To ensure that critical information about government schemes (particularly relevant minority schemes) and support initiatives reaches all segments of the Sikh community effectively.

#### **Recommendations:**

- **Multilingual Communication Strategies**
  - Develop and distribute informational materials in Punjabi and other languages for clarity and accessibility.
  - Use radio, local newspapers, social media, and community bulletin boards for outreach.

- **Localized Outreach Programs**
  - Deploy community liaison officers in rural and urban areas to educate residents about key initiatives (Skill India, NEP 2020, Startup India, and other schemes).
  - Organize workshops and town halls to ensure accessibility for those without internet access.
- **Partnerships with Community Organizations**
  - Collaborate with NGOs, gurdwaras, and community networks to simplify and circulate application procedures for schemes and programs. A few minutes during Kirtan Darbar could be used to spread awareness to Sikh community members about existing schemes.
  - Establish a “Community Ambassador” program where local leaders act as liaisons between government agencies and the community.
- **Digital Information Hubs**
  - Create a centralized online portal featuring government schemes, eligibility criteria, application processes, and deadlines.
  - Ensure the platform is mobile-friendly and accessible for those with limited digital literacy, including video tutorials and FAQs.

## 5.2 Enhancing On-Ground Efficacy of Government Programs

### Objective:

To improve the implementation and effectiveness of government programs, ensuring that funds and resources reach intended beneficiaries. Further, to increase the reach of existing schemes in Punjab.

### Recommendations:

- **Streamlining Administrative Processes**
  - Reduce bureaucratic red tape and introduce optional digital verification to simplify applications.
  - Establish one-stop service centers in each district for in-person guidance.
- **Improving Transparency and Accountability**
  - Implement real-time tracking systems for fund disbursement.
  - Form an independent oversight body with community representatives, government officials, and third-party auditors.
- **Capacity Building and Training**
  - Conduct regular training sessions for government officials on transparency and service delivery.
  - Partner with private sector experts to enhance program management.
- **Grievance Redressal and Community Feedback**
  - Establish online and offline complaint systems for timely issue resolution.

- Conduct surveys and community meetings to assess policy effectiveness and make necessary adjustments.

- **Increase Minority Scheme Coverage in Punjab:**

- Expand the reach of minority schemes like the Multi-sectoral Development Programme (MsDP) to include marginalized Sikh communities in Punjab.
- Ensure that these schemes address the specific socio-economic challenges faced by marginalised Sikh subgroups.

Key Challenge	Proposed Solution	Expected Outcome
Lack of awareness about schemes	Localized outreach & multilingual materials	Increased participation in programs
Bureaucratic delays in fund distribution	Digital tracking & oversight body	Faster fund access
Limited community trust in government programs	Community liaison officers & feedback loops	Greater policy impact & trust-building

### 5.3 Strengthening Cultural Identity and Education

#### Objective:

To preserve Sikh heritage, reinforce linguistic identity, and ensure access to cultural, academic, and vocational education; to strengthen access and quality of education.

#### Recommendations:

- **Deployment of Punjabi Language Teachers in Each Electoral District**

- Provide an option of Punjabi language education as an elective subject in schools across all districts. Ensure that students have access to Gurmukhi learning even if the 20-student minimum is not met.
- Develop structured curriculums incorporating Punjabi literature, history, and Sikh cultural studies.
- Partner with academic institutions and cultural organizations to enhance teaching resources.

- **Cultural Heritage Promotion Through Festivals**

- Expand national recognition and participation in key Sikh festivals, including Gurpurabs, Baisakhi, and Hola Mohalla.
- Develop festival-based outreach campaigns in schools and public institutions to educate people about Sikh traditions.
- Establish **national-level celebrations** similar to the Maha Kumbh model, with government support for large-scale events.
- Promote tourism around Sikh festivals by improving access to religious and cultural sites, encouraging economic benefits for local communities.
- Support documentary and film projects that highlight Sikh historical and cultural significance, ensuring broader awareness.

- **Academic and Vocational Initiatives:**

- Enhance access to academic and vocational education through the strengthening existing and required specialized scholarship programs and vocational training centers tailored to Sikh youth.
- Collaborate with technical institutes, community colleges, and cultural organizations to offer specialized courses in vocational skills training relevant to emerging industries in line with India's growing economy.
- Integrate modern educational technologies and innovative teaching methodologies to bridge the gap between traditional heritage education and contemporary academic demands.
- Foster industry partnerships to provide internships, apprenticeships, and job placement support for graduates, ensuring practical application of acquired skills and facilitating smoother transitions into the workforce, thereby decreasing Punjab's "brain drain."

## **5.4 Digital and Social Media Campaigns**

### **Objective:**

To leverage digital platforms for cultural preservation, social awareness, and community engagement.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Multimedia Content Development**

- Produce videos, podcasts, and infographics showcasing Sikh traditions and festivals.
- Highlight Sikh contributions to India's freedom struggle, agriculture, and cultural heritage.

- Promote Sikh history, including key figures like Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Diwan Muhkam Chand, Bhai Kanhiyaji, Bhai Nandlalji, and Diwan Sawan Mal.
- Emphasize Sikhism's core values of equality, justice, *sarbat da bhallā* (wellbeing for all) and *sewa* (selfless service).
- Develop e-learning modules for Gurmukhi literacy and Sikh history.
- **Interactive Social Media Engagement**
  - Launch hashtag campaigns, live Q&A sessions, and discussions with historians and religious leaders.
  - Partner with Sikh influencers and diaspora leaders to reach global audiences.
- **Awareness on Digital Literacy & Misinformation**
  - Develop campaigns to educate Sikh youth on responsible social media use.
  - Implement fact-checking initiatives to counter misinformation about Sikh identity.

## 5.5 Community-Led Anti-Drug Initiatives

### Objective:

To address substance abuse through law enforcement collaboration, community leadership, and social campaigns.

### Recommendations:

- **Strengthening Law and Order Measures**
  - Increase cooperation between law enforcement and community leaders to combat drug-related crimes.
  - Establish anonymous tip lines and neighborhood watch groups.
  - Tackle the nexus of drug supply including local figures, business owners and elite, as well as peddlers.
- **Engaging Religious and Community Leaders**
  - Train gurdwara leaders and elders in youth counseling and rehabilitation.
  - Training and education of Sikh Granthis, religious preachers, etc.
  - Promote values-based education programs to reinforce self-discipline and responsibility.
- **Large-Scale Anti-Drug Awareness Campaigns**
  - Conduct school and college outreach programs featuring real-life testimonials.
  - Use digital storytelling through short films and interactive discussions.

Anti-Drug Strategy	Implementation Method	Impact
Law enforcement collaboration	Anonymous tip lines, increased policing	Reduced drug trade
Community-driven rehabilitation	Gurdwara-led counseling & awareness programs	Increased youth engagement
Digital awareness campaigns	Social media videos & real-life testimonies	Shift in public perception

## 5.6 Establishing Sikh Cultural Centers

### Objective:

To preserve, promote, and revitalize Sikh heritage, language, and traditions through government-supported cultural institutions, fostering a sense of pride and identity among Sikh communities while encouraging cultural exchange and awareness at the national and global levels.

- **Develop a National Sikh Cultural Center**

Establish a hub for Sikh history, literature, performing arts, and traditions, beginning in New Delhi and expanding to other states. The center should have a welcoming atmosphere and interactive elements such as auditorium and restaurant to engage visitors.

- **Establish a Sikh Heritage Museum**

Create a museum featuring exhibitions on Sikh heritage, historical manuscripts, artifacts, and digital archives to preserve and showcase the community's rich history.

- **Promote Research and Documentation**

Set up a research and documentation wing to study and highlight Sikh contributions to India's cultural and historical landscape, ensuring accurate representation.

- **Support Sikh Performing Arts**  
Encourage Sikh martial arts (Gatka), Giddha, Bhangra, and Punjabi folk music through festivals, workshops, and live performances to sustain traditional art forms.
- **Strengthen Kirtan and Devotional Music Training**  
Provide support for kirtan training programs, artist residencies, and public concerts to promote Sikh devotional music and ensure its transmission to future generations.
- **Encourage Theatre and Storytelling**  
Use theatre and storytelling to narrate Sikh history, folklore, and literature, making cultural narratives accessible to wider audiences.
- **Revitalize Punjabi Language Initiatives**  
Launch reading and writing programs, calligraphy workshops, and storytelling sessions to promote and preserve the Punjabi language.
- **Expand Translation and Publishing Efforts**  
Establish a translation and publishing unit to make Sikh literature and historical texts available in multiple languages, increasing accessibility.
- **Preserve Oral Traditions and Historical Narratives**  
Develop digital archives and educational resources to document Sikh oral traditions, poetry, and historical accounts.
- **Support Traditional Sikh Handicrafts**  
Assist artisans practicing phulkari embroidery, woodwork, metal engraving, and turban-making to preserve traditional crafts.
- **Organize Craft Fairs and Exhibitions**  
Showcase and market Sikh handicrafts on national and global platforms to ensure the sustainability of these artistic traditions.
- **Integrate Sikh Visual Arts into Public Spaces**  
Promote Sikh-inspired paintings, murals, and frescoes in public spaces and heritage sites to enhance cultural representation.
- **Host Annual Sikh Heritage Festivals**  
Organize festivals featuring music, dance, literature, culinary arts, and discussions on Sikh identity to celebrate and promote Sikh heritage.
- **Engage Communities with Interactive Workshops**  
Conduct workshops on Sikh customs, philosophy, and daily practices to educate youth and non-Sikh communities, fostering greater cultural understanding.

## 5.7 Formation of a Sikh Development Board

### Objective:

To create an institutional bridge between the Sikh community and the central government to facilitate policy discussions and socio-economic initiatives.

### Recommendations:

- **Create a Government-Recognized Sikh Development Board**  
Form a board comprising representatives such as industrialists, academics, etc. from the Sikh community, policymakers, and subject matter experts to ensure inclusive decision-making.
- **Advisory Role in Policy and Development**  
Ensure the Board actively advises on economic policies, minority welfare initiatives, and infrastructure projects that directly impact Sikh-majority regions.
- **Support for Sikh Entrepreneurs and Artisans**  
Develop targeted, specialised funding programs to assist Sikh entrepreneurs, artisans, and community-led development initiatives, fostering economic self-sufficiency and cultural preservation.

## 5.8 Research on Agricultural Innovation, Public Health, and Climate Change

### Objective:

To strengthen agricultural sustainability, enhance climate resilience, and ensure long-term food security for Sikh farmers in Punjab while addressing the public health impact of agricultural practices and environmental degradation.

### Recommendations:

- **Research and Innovation in Climate-Resilient Farming**  
Establish dedicated research programs on climate-resilient crop varieties, soil health restoration, water conservation techniques, and precision agriculture to address Punjab's agrarian challenges.
- **Promotion of Sustainable and Regenerative Agriculture**  
Invest in agroforestry, organic farming, and regenerative agriculture to improve soil fertility, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and enhance long-term farm productivity, benefiting Sikh farmers who balance traditional and modern methods.
- **Water Conservation and Efficient Irrigation**  
Develop and implement policies for sustainable groundwater use, rainwater

harvesting, and efficient irrigation technologies like drip and micro-irrigation to combat Punjab's severe water crisis and ensure long-term agricultural viability.

- **Collaborations for Agricultural Innovation**

Partner with agricultural universities, research institutes, and international organizations to drive innovation, share best practices, and develop locally adapted climate-resilient technologies tailored to Punjab's cropping patterns.

- **Incentives for Eco-Friendly Farming**

Provide targeted subsidies, incentives, and capacity-building programs for farmers adopting eco-friendly practices, renewable energy solutions (such as solar-powered irrigation), and high-yield, climate-adaptive crops to ensure sustainable livelihoods.

- **Climate Monitoring and Early Warning Systems**

Implement data-driven climate monitoring and early warning systems to help farmers anticipate and mitigate risks related to extreme weather events, pests, and diseases, reducing financial losses and ensuring stable agricultural output.

- **Strengthening Cooperative Farming and Direct Market Access**

Enhance cooperative farming models and direct market linkages to empower Sikh farmers, improve profitability, and reduce dependence on exploitative middlemen.

- **Advancing Mechanization and Smart Farming**

Promote mechanization and smart farming techniques, such as AI-driven crop management and automated irrigation, to enhance efficiency and reduce labor-intensive practices while ensuring economic security for small and marginal farmers.

### **Public Health Considerations:**

- **Research on Pesticide-Related Health Risks**

Conduct studies on the health impact of excessive pesticide and fertilizer use, promoting sustainable alternatives to reduce pesticide-related illnesses among farmers.

- **Addressing Air Pollution and Stubble Burning**

Improve air quality by tackling stubble burning through viable alternatives such as biofuel production, composting, and farm machinery subsidies to prevent respiratory diseases in rural communities.

- **Ensuring Access to Clean Drinking Water**

Mitigate groundwater contamination caused by excessive chemical runoff and

overuse of fertilizers, addressing its link to rising cancer rates in Punjab and ensuring safe drinking water for rural populations.

- **Strengthening Rural Healthcare Infrastructure**

Enhance healthcare services in rural areas, focusing on preventive care, occupational health for farmers, and mental health support to address stress-related issues arising from economic uncertainty and climate change.

- **Promoting Nutritional Awareness and Food Security**

Launch initiatives to improve dietary awareness and food security in farming communities, promoting balanced diets to combat malnutrition and lifestyle diseases linked to changing eating habits.

## **5.9 Expanding Mental Health and Counseling Services to Safeguard Youth from Malicious Propaganda**

### **Objective:**

To strengthen mental health support systems that protect youth from psychological vulnerabilities exploited by pro-terrorist propaganda and extremist elements. This includes providing accessible counseling, community engagement, and preventive interventions that foster critical thinking, emotional resilience, and social cohesion.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Establish Dedicated Mental Health and De-Radicalization Centers**

Set up counseling centers in collaboration with medical professionals, social workers, and religious institutions. These centers should address stress, anxiety, trauma, and ideological manipulation, offering specialized interventions for individuals targeted by extremist narratives.

- **Implement a Government-Supported Helpline**

Launch a helpline providing immediate psychological support, crisis intervention, and counseling for individuals struggling with ideological confusion or emotional distress. It should also offer referrals to professional services, faith leaders, and community mentors trained to counter radical influences.

- **Introduce Mental Health Awareness and Digital Literacy Programs**

Develop structured programs in schools, colleges, and community centers to equip youth with critical thinking skills, stress management techniques, and resilience-building strategies. Educators should be trained to identify signs of ideological manipulation and provide timely intervention.

- **Launch Awareness Campaigns in Community Spaces**

Organize campaigns in gurdwaras, community centers, and online platforms to educate youth and families about extremist propaganda, psychological tactics used by radical groups, and the importance of seeking support. These efforts should promote positive Sikh values, community service, and non-violent solutions to grievances.

- **Foster Peer-Led Support Groups and Mentorship Programs**

Create safe spaces for youth to discuss concerns, develop a strong sense of identity, and build social networks that reduce vulnerability to extremist recruitment. Encouraging community involvement in guiding at-risk youth can help prevent isolation and reinforce constructive engagement in society.

- **Ensure Accessible and Affordable Mental Health Services**

Integrate therapy and counseling into community institutions and public health initiatives to ensure accessibility, particularly for marginalized groups and individuals vulnerable to ideological exploitation. Reducing stigma around mental health will further encourage at-risk individuals to seek help.

By strengthening mental health support, fostering resilience, and promoting positive engagement, these initiatives can help safeguard Sikh youth from malicious propaganda, ensuring they are empowered with the knowledge and emotional stability to resist extremist narratives.

## **5.10 Compensation for Families of 1984 Victims**

### **Objective:**

To provide financial relief and justice to families of proven victims of the 1984 anti-Sikh violence whose cases remain pending.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Expedite the disbursal of compensation** for families of victims with verified claims that remain unresolved.
- **Provide long-term support**, including educational scholarships and employment opportunities, for affected families.
- **Implement legal aid programs** to assist victims' families in navigating judicial proceedings for justice and restitution.

## **5.11 Ensuring Timely Democratic Elections in Religious Institutions**

**Objective:**

To uphold transparency, accountability, and democratic governance within key Sikh religious institutions, including the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC).

**Recommendations:**

- **Regular and Transparent Elections**

Ensure timely and consistent democratic elections for the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) and other Sikh religious bodies to uphold legitimacy, accountability, and community trust.

- **Fair Representation Without Political Interference**

Safeguard the autonomy of Sikh religious institutions, ensuring that leadership represents the diverse Sikh population in India without undue political influence or external intervention.

- **Preserving the Sanctity of the Priestly Class**

Maintain the independence of Sikh religious leaders, including the Jathedars and Granthis, by preventing any political or governmental control over their appointments and decision-making processes. Religious leaders should be accountable primarily to the Sikh community and its institutions rather than external political forces.

## **5.12 Highlighting Military Achievements and Enhancing Targeted Army Recruitment from Punjab**

**Objective:**

To recognize Sikhism's rich military history and ensure equitable representation of Sikhs in the Indian Armed Forces through targeted recruitment, fostering nationalism, reviving patriotism, and motivating youth participation. Further, to instill pride in Sikhs and motivate youth to contribute to the national cause, following in the steps of heroes.

**Recommendations:**

- **Increase targeted recruitment drives in Punjab, particularly for the Sikh Regiment and other branches of the Indian Armed Forces, to reflect the historical contributions of the Sikh community in national defense.**

Given the Sikh community's long-standing tradition of military service, strategic efforts should be made to boost recruitment from Punjab into the armed forces. This includes launching awareness campaigns in schools, colleges, and rural areas to educate youth about opportunities in the military. Special emphasis should be placed

on the Sikh Regiment, which has historically played a crucial role in India's defense. Recruitment fairs, career counseling sessions, and government-backed incentives such as scholarships and preparatory programs should be introduced to attract and support aspiring candidates.

- **Promote the real heroes of the Sikh Community** such as **Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Sardar Kapur Singh, General Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Sardar Chahat Singh, Hari Singh Nalwa, Master Tara Singh, and Diwan Singh Kalepani**, highlighting their contributions to Sikh history, governance, and resistance against oppression.
- **Highlight the legacy of Sikh military leaders** such as **Banda Singh Bahadur, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Lt. General Harbaksh Singh (1965 Indo-Pak War), Air Chief Marshal Arjan Singh (India's first and only five-star-ranked Air Force officer), and Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora (1971 Bangladesh Liberation War) to inspire youth participation.**

The valor and leadership of Sikh warriors and military officers have been instrumental in shaping India's defense history. Educational programs, museum exhibits, and public lectures should be organized to honor figures such as Brigadier Kuldip Singh Chandpuri, who played a pivotal role in the Battle of Longewala (1971), and Lieutenant General Inderjit Singh Gill, a key strategist in modern Indian warfare. Recognizing the contributions of Major General Gurbaksh Singh, Lieutenant General Harbhajan Singh, and Param Vir Chakra awardee Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon will further reinforce the community's military heritage. Additionally, celebrating the achievements of Flight Lieutenant Harita Kaur Deol, India's first woman to fly solo in the Indian Air Force, can encourage greater participation from both men and women in defense careers.

- **Name scholarships and relevant schemes** after historical and military figures, highlighting the Sikh community's sacrifice and contribution to the nation.
- **Establish training academies and preparatory programs in Punjab to equip aspiring candidates with the necessary physical and academic skills for military service.**

To enhance the preparedness of Sikh youth for defense careers, dedicated military training academies should be set up across Punjab. These institutions should offer rigorous physical training, leadership development, and coaching for entrance exams such as the NDA, CDS, and other defense recruitment tests. Collaboration with retired military officers and professionals will ensure high-quality mentorship and guidance. Scholarships and financial assistance programs should also be introduced to support

economically disadvantaged students who aspire to join the armed forces.

- **Address concerns related to declining Sikh representation in defense forces by revising recruitment policies and ensuring regional balance.**

Over the years, there has been a noticeable decline in Sikh representation within the Indian Armed Forces. To counter this trend, recruitment policies must be reviewed to ensure fair representation of Sikh youth. Quotas or special incentives could be introduced for candidates from Punjab, particularly those from rural areas. Awareness campaigns highlighting the benefits of a military career, such as job security, national pride, and leadership opportunities, should be intensified to reignite interest among young Sikhs.

- **Organize outreach programs in collaboration with veteran Sikh officers to mentor young recruits and encourage military careers.**

A mentorship network can be established, wherein retired Sikh officers actively engage with students and aspiring candidates. This can be facilitated through school visits, motivational talks, and one-on-one career guidance sessions. Creating alumni associations of Sikh military personnel will foster a support system for recruits and help guide them through the selection and training process. These outreach programs can also include interactive workshops, military exhibitions, and leadership camps designed to instill discipline, patriotism, and confidence in young recruits.

### **5.13 Supporting Gurdwaras and Communities in Sikh-minority states:**

#### **Objective:**

To strengthen Sikh communities in minority states by ensuring equitable representation, preserving cultural heritage, and fostering community development through policy advocacy, collaboration, and outreach initiatives. To develop leadership of Sikhs in states of India where there is a smaller yet significant population, in order to further strengthen national unity and progress.

#### **Recommendations:**

- **Inclusive Policy Advocacy:**

Advocate for policies that ensure Sikh communities in minority states receive equitable representation and resource allocation, reinforcing their role in local governance and community development.

- **Cultural Preservation and Community Engagement:**

Organize cultural events, festivals, and interfaith dialogues that celebrate Sikh heritage, thereby reinforcing community bonds and enhancing cultural preservation.

- **Strategic Partnerships:**

Foster collaborations with established Sikh organizations to share best practices, provide mentorship, and support local initiatives that enrich community life.

- **Educational and Outreach Programs:**

Implement comprehensive outreach initiatives that educate both Sikh communities and the broader public about Sikh traditions, historical contributions, and the contemporary challenges they face, thus reinforcing cultural pride and social cohesion.

## **5.14 Nation-Wide Socio-Economic, Educational, and Employment Status Survey**

### **Objective:**

The Sachar Committee Report (2006) highlighted the socio-economic marginalization of Muslims in India. A survey along these lines would benefit Sikh subgroups, such as lesser-known Sikh communities such as Sikligars, Vanjaaras, Lobanas, and Dakhini Sikhs. These groups often face similar socio-economic hardships, including low literacy rates, lack of access to stable employment, and inadequate political representation. While mainstream Sikh communities have made economic advancements, these subgroups remain economically and socially disadvantaged, requiring targeted interventions. These disparities within Sikh subgroups, as well as developmental indices of the community at large, highlight the need for interventions for inclusive development.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Need for a Socio-Economic Survey:**

Conduct a comprehensive, nation-wide survey (both in Punjab and outside), similar to the Sachar Committee Report (2006) to assess the socio-economic, educational, and employment status of Sikh population. Gather data on key indices at all village and block-levels, including literacy rates, employment levels, income disparity, and political representation. Use findings to develop targeted interventions that address their unique challenges, and thereby increase their developmental indices.

- **Targeted Socio-Economic Policies:**

Develop policies that address the unique challenges faced by these communities, including employment assistance, housing support, and access to government schemes, ensuring their full participation in economic and social progress.

- **Cultural and Identity Reinforcement:**

Establish Sikh cultural centers and dedicated outreach programs in regions where these communities reside, promoting awareness of their historical contributions and fostering a stronger connection to Sikh heritage.

- **Educational and Skill Development Initiatives:**

Expand scholarship programs, vocational training, and mentorship opportunities tailored to the needs of marginalised communities enabling upward mobility and economic empowerment.

- **Community Integration and Representation:**

Advocate for increased political and social representation, ensuring these communities have a voice in decision-making bodies and are included in broader Sikh and national development initiatives.

### **5.15 Strengthening Government Colleges in Punjab to Increase Sikh Representation in Civil Services**

#### **Objective:**

To enhance the quality of education and competitive exam preparation in government colleges across Punjab, ensuring greater Sikh representation in civil services like the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), Indian Administrative Service (IAS), and Indian Police Service (IPS).

#### **Recommendations:**

- **Upgrade Infrastructure and Faculty in Government Colleges**

Improve the quality of education by modernizing classrooms, libraries, and digital learning resources. Recruit highly qualified faculty and subject matter experts to enhance teaching standards, particularly in subjects critical for UPSC and state civil service exams.

- **Establish Dedicated Civil Services Coaching Centers**

Set up specialized coaching programs within government colleges to prepare students for UPSC and state-level exams. These centers should offer expert-led mentorship, study materials, mock exams, and personality development training to help students compete on a national level.

- **Ensure Scholarships and Financial Aid for Aspiring Candidates**

Many talented Sikh students from rural and underprivileged backgrounds lack access to quality coaching. Ensuring that both minority and majority schemes such as scholarships, financial aid, and subsidized training programs are applied will ensure that economic constraints do not hinder their aspirations.

- **Promote Awareness and Career Guidance in Schools and Colleges**

Launch awareness campaigns in schools and colleges to inform students about career opportunities in civil services. Organize workshops, mentorship programs, and guest lectures by successful Sikh bureaucrats to inspire and guide students toward

government service careers.

- **Integrate Soft Skills and Leadership Training**

Competitive exams require more than just academic knowledge. Colleges should introduce leadership development programs, communication skills training, and personality grooming sessions to prepare students for interviews and real-world challenges in administration.

- **Strengthen Language Proficiency and Analytical Skills**

Many UPSC aspirants from Punjab struggle with language proficiency, affecting their performance in exams and interviews. Dedicated language training, essay-writing workshops, and analytical reasoning classes should be introduced in government colleges.

- **Leverage Digital and Online Learning Platforms**

Provide free access to online courses, webinars, and digital resources to government college students. Partnerships with leading educational platforms can bridge the gap between rural and urban aspirants by offering high-quality preparatory material.

- **Encourage Sikh Representation in Governance and Public Policy**

Establish mentorship networks connecting Sikh civil servants with aspiring candidates, fostering a culture of guidance and community support. Encourage Sikh youth to view government service as a means of contributing to national development and policy-making.

## **5.16 Promoting Stable Employment and Industrial Development Across Punjab, Including Border Regions**

### **Objective:**

To create sustainable employment opportunities, strengthen industrial growth, and prevent the outmigration of skilled youth by developing key industries across Punjab, with a special focus on border regions.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Establish Special Economic Zones (SEZs)**

Develop SEZs in strategic locations across Punjab, including border districts, to attract investment through tax incentives, infrastructure support, and simplified regulations.

- **Promote Agro-Based and Manufacturing Industries**

Encourage industries that leverage Punjab's agricultural strengths while expanding

into manufacturing, food processing, and technology-driven sectors to generate long-term employment.

- **Encourage High-Value and Climate-Resilient Crops**  
Support the cultivation of horticultural crops, medicinal plants, pulses, and oilseeds to reduce dependency on wheat and rice while improving soil health.
- **Promote Agri-Tech and Precision Farming; Develop Agro-Processing and Value-Addition Industries**  
Introduce modern farming techniques such as drip irrigation, hydroponics, and AI-driven crop management to enhance productivity and resource efficiency. Establish food processing units, cold storage facilities, and supply chain infrastructure to create market opportunities for diversified crops.
- **Strengthen Market Linkages and Export Potential**  
Expand domestic and international market access for Punjab's products through cooperative models, e-markets, and government-backed trade initiatives.
- **Enhance Infrastructure and Connectivity**  
Improve transportation networks, logistics hubs, and power supply across Punjab, particularly in underdeveloped and border regions, to facilitate industrial expansion.
- **Foster Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)**  
Partner with private enterprises to establish industrial clusters, skill development centers, and entrepreneurship hubs that create job opportunities across urban and rural areas.
- **Expand Vocational Training and Skill Development Programs**  
Integrate industry-specific vocational training in government colleges and technical institutes to equip students with skills that match modern job market demands.

### **5.17 Strengthening Law and Order in Punjab**

#### **Objective:**

To enhance public safety, curb organized crime, and build trust between law enforcement agencies and the community while ensuring a secure and stable environment for Punjab's development. A key focus is on improving law and order to encourage business growth, particularly in border areas, and to create an environment conducive to economic investment and prosperity.

**Recommendations:**

- **Enhance Security and Counter Extremism**  
Strengthen intelligence-sharing mechanisms and law enforcement capabilities to prevent extremist activities, cross-border smuggling, and organized crime. Equip police forces with modern technology and specialized training to address emerging threats effectively.
- **Improve Community Policing and Trust-Building**  
Establish community outreach programs and grievance redressal mechanisms to foster stronger relationships between law enforcement and local communities. Train police personnel in cultural sensitivity and conflict resolution to enhance public trust.
- **Combat Drug Abuse and Organized Crime**  
Implement a multi-agency approach to dismantle drug trafficking networks, including stricter border control measures and cooperation with national and international law enforcement agencies. Expand rehabilitation and de-addiction programs to support individuals affected by substance abuse.
- **Judicial Reforms and Accountability**  
Ensure fast-track courts for cases related to drug crimes, organized crime, and extremist activities to deliver timely justice.
- **Encourage Business and Economic Growth in Border Areas**  
Strengthen law and order in Punjab, particularly along the **550km border**, to create a safe and stable environment for businesses to flourish.

**5.18 Increasing Soft Communication with Sikh Youth****Objective:**

To foster meaningful engagement with Sikh youth, rebuild leadership structures, and create effective communication channels that encourage active participation in socio-political and community development while addressing historical grievances.

**Recommendations:**

- **Identify and Promote Good Leadership**  
Establish leadership development programs to nurture Sikh youth leaders by providing mentorship opportunities with community elders, academics, and policymakers. Encourage youth participation in governance, policymaking, and socio-economic initiatives to build future leaders.

- **Rebuild Leadership Structures**

Address the leadership vacuum created after the banning of the All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF) due to the Punjab insurgency in 1984 by developing new leadership pipelines. Support youth-led initiatives within Sikh organizations, educational institutions, and civil society groups to cultivate a new generation of responsible and informed leaders.

- **Organize State-Wise Sikh Leadership**

Develop structured, state-level Sikh youth organizations to facilitate representation and dialogue. Establish regular forums for young leaders to engage with policymakers, law enforcement, and community stakeholders, ensuring their concerns and aspirations are addressed.

- **Enhance Communication and Engagement**

Expand digital and offline communication channels, including social media outreach, cultural exchange programs, and leadership forums, to strengthen dialogue with Sikh youth. Establish youth outreach cells within religious and community institutions to provide guidance on education, careers, and civic participation.

## **Section 6: Concluding Remarks**

Sikhism is a distinct and independent religion with its own rich traditions, philosophies, and identity. Rooted in the principles of equality, selfless service, justice, and spiritual devotion, it seamlessly blends faith with social responsibility. The recommendations and findings outlined in this report seek to uphold and reinforce Sikhism's unique religious identity while addressing critical socio-economic, political, and cultural challenges.

Ensuring justice for past and ongoing injustices and strengthening national unity—particularly the historic bonds between Sikhs and Hindus, which have at times been unfairly undermined through linguistic and other divisions—is vital. Also integral are expanding educational and employment opportunities, and curbing legal and illegal migration, including the exploitation of fake political asylum visas. These are essential steps toward securing the long-term stability and prosperity of the Sikh community. At the same time, safeguarding Sikh youth from extremist propaganda, misinformation, and ideological exploitation is vital to preserving the community's integrity and resilience. Despite the challenges faced over the decades, the Sikh community has remained a vital, loyal, and hardworking force in India's development, contributing significantly to its defense, agriculture, economy, and cultural heritage. Strengthening this relationship through trust-building measures, fair representation, and policies that address Sikh concerns will reinforce national unity and foster a sense of belonging. A crucial step in this process is the need for a comprehensive national survey—similar to the Sachar Commission report—to assess the socio-economic, educational, and employment status of Sikhs across India. This data could serve as the foundation for well-informed, targeted policy measures that directly address the needs of the community. Without an accurate, nation-wide understanding of the challenges faced by Sikhs, efforts to improve their socio-economic conditions could remain fragmented and ineffective.

Further, by fostering cultural pride, promoting media literacy, and integrating Sikh values into governance, these initiatives mentioned above would create an environment where Sikhs can thrive—spiritually, culturally, and economically—while maintaining their independent religious identity with pride and dignity. Strengthening trust and cooperation between Sikhs and national institutions will not only lead to more effective policy implementation but also encourage greater civic engagement and national integration.

Ultimately, the successful execution of the aforementioned recommendations—supported by robust, data-driven policies—has the potential to transform the socio-economic landscape of the Sikh community, addressing not only the systemic challenges but also healing the enduring scars of past trauma. By actively reducing both legal and illegal migration, including the detrimental practices associated with fake visas and political asylum claims, and by curbing the brain drain that undermines local talent, these measures will lay the groundwork for a more stable and self-sufficient community.

Furthermore, fostering education and economic growth is pivotal in this transformative process. Expanding access to quality education and vocational training, particularly in regions along the critical 550 km border, will empower the youth and create sustainable employment opportunities. Improving the law and order landscape will also encourage businesses to flourish, particularly in the border region. This focus on human capital development is essential for building resilience and ensuring that the community's socio-economic future is secure. At the same time, preserving and celebrating cultural heritage will reinforce the unique identity of the Sikh community, creating a sense of pride and continuity that is rooted in centuries of tradition. In addition, these comprehensive efforts will help dismantle the false sense of insecurity that has been perpetuated by external elements. By addressing the underlying causes of economic and social instability, the proposed initiatives will contribute to dispelling myths and misinformation, ultimately fostering an environment of trust and safety. This renewed sense of security will, in turn, promote greater unity and civic engagement among community members, encouraging a more proactive and collaborative approach to national development.

Through a carefully crafted strategy that combines immediate action with long-term vision, the Sikh community can overcome its historical challenges and move towards a future defined by unity, prosperity, and genuine national integration. In doing so, Sikh identity will not only remain vibrant and resilient but will also serve as a beacon of progress—firmly anchored in the community's rich traditions while dynamically engaging with the modern world.

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