

Interview with Jaspreet Sangha Part 2 of 2

00:00:04**SPEAKER_MS**

This is manmit singh Today is July 18, 2023. I am interviewing for the second time, Jaspreet Sangha. This interview is taking place at my temporary residence in Toronto. This interview is sponsored by Jakara and it's a part of the Storytelling and Settlement through Sikh LGBTQIA+ Oral Histories Project. Thank you so much, Jaspreet, for taking your time to continue our conversation from last interview. So thank you for creating space for a second round. So picking up from where we actually left off, where you were reflecting on what does it mean to be part of the LGBTQIA+ community, and if you think it is a single community or a set of communities. I know that you were in the midst of answering and that's when it cut out. So I just wanted to create some space to pick back up on that same question, if there's anything you did want to add or share any reflection with you. And I can also drop this question into the chat as well.

00:01:08**SPEAKER_JS**

Yeah, I guess it also really does depend on the day that you asked me that question. So I do fear now picking up that question today, you know, I'm coming to it with new eyes. It's post-Pride. I've had different experiences and you know, maybe I would see it differently. But Yeah, I don't know if I had anything else to say or if I was in the middle of saying something.

00:01:45**SPEAKER_MS**

Yeah. Oh, no worries at all. We can definitely move to the next question as well.

00:01:49**SPEAKER_JS**

Yeah, I would love to.

00:01:51**SPEAKER_MS**

Yeah, 100%. And maybe I'm sure that in answering this question, maybe it'll actually tie into and add on to the other questions, since they're so interconnected. But what influences your relationship to Sikhi/being a Sikh? Do you think there are factors that influence your relationship to a Sikhi/ being a Sikh? How would you describe your experiences with maintaining a relationship with Sikhi and the LGBTQIA+ community?

00:02:18**SPEAKER_JS**

Sure. So like, I always feel like my personality [audio cut]...The most beloved and having more Sikh folks in my life as frequent companionship has really changed, I'd say my day-to-day relationship with Sikhi. As before, it was something I thought about a lot, but didn't really--one, didn't really have people to talk to about it. And two, it's so easy to get swept up with life stuff and forget to integrate Sikh practice into it. And so having folks that remind me of what I want to embody has really helped. Discipline-wise, I know you and I went to the gurdwara a lot, few months ago. And so I do find that in the morning when I wake up, I do feel motivated to pray, which I didn't really feel for a long time. So I think of that as something that has changed. That was due to who I had in my life at that given time. I guess, sorry, could I see the question?

00:04:12**SPEAKER_MS**

Yes, I dropped it.

00:04:13**SPEAKER_JS**

Yeah, let's see, thank you. Right. So, yeah, maintaining a relationship with Sangat has been crucial for me. I guess maintaining relationships with the LGBTQIA+ community--in many ways I feel disengaged and can't really speak to what it feels like to be like in habitual community with LGBT folks. A lot of my day to day is not--I'd say my day to day is inherently queer because I'm queer but it's not like I'm surrounded by queerness from all sides and I'd say part of that is I'm still recognize we're in a pandemic. And for that reason, I'm not seeking out, you know, like constantly being in social spaces or, and then also, just my own loneliness. But, I'd say another thing is a lot of the things that you do to embody Sikhi can be in community, but the meditative

aspect to me at least is really centering the importance of solitude and what you can gain from solitude. So yeah, it's both of those things.

00:06:01 **SPEAKER_MS**

Thank you for sharing that. If you feel comfortable sharing, like since you named disengagement from the queer and trans community, I would love to hear a little bit more about like why and how that disengagement like comes to be and how you navigate that.

00:06:18 **SPEAKER_JS**

Yeah. Living in San Francisco, a lot of the spaces are white gay spaces, you know? And as someone who's visibly trans and just brown and hairy, like it feels weird. I feel alienated. I feel like I like went to the wrong place, showed up at the wrong time. Like, I don't know, it's hard to feel like I belong. And I'm finding that belonging needs to come internally and not from where I am and so that also means not putting myself in spaces where I know I'm gonna feel that way and just hope that I don't or hope that someone sees me and is, you know, validates me in a way that then I feel like I belong there. Like if I can't feel like I belong there, in myself, then I just feel like I shouldn't do it. So I think that's why oftentimes I don't find myself in a lot of queer spaces here. That being said, I'd say all of my closest friends are queer and trans. Like most of the people like who I talk to on a daily basis are queer and trans, but most of my friendships and relationships are digital, online. My friends are geographically all over the place. So yeah, sorry. So I in some ways feel disengaged from this idea of like Western queer community that we have, but I also find that I am immersed in queer community, just maybe not in my real world, more like my digital world.

00:08:11 **SPEAKER_MS**

No, no, 100%. No, thank you for sharing that and for sharing how you've been able to like find means of engagement, in community, which are just as valid when they're in digital context too. And I kind of want--expanding on that question as well, what type of resources or support did you seek to help you navigate your experiences? Do you think being Sikh influenced your decisions? For instance, this could include professional resources like seeking therapy or spiritual resources like engaging in Gurbani.

00:09:09 **SPEAKER_JS**

When I started at SF State, I know I wanted to engage with Sikh circles more and have more Sikh folks in my life and be there as a visibly queer Sikh person. And in some ways, it was defensive in a way that I knew a lot of these spaces are not inclusive to queer and trans Sikhs. And like, I wanted to like butt in there and be like, "listen, we're here and I'm gonna make you inclusive and politically correct." So I did start with Jakara like early, early into my time at SF State. I will say like--So SF State is super inclusive. So I think like Jakara at SF State is also super inclusive and they were really awesome and I was on the board. However, it's a commuter school and post-COVID it was just a huge challenge to get folks to come together and so even though that was my starting point of my yearning of wanting Sikh community. It just kind of sparked something, but it didn't really like take me to the Sangat that I consider myself to be in today. Sorry, what was the question?

00:10:40 **SPEAKER_MS**

Oh yeah, no, no, no. The question was what type of resources or support did you seek? So where have you found it?

00:10:46 **SPEAKER_JS**

Okay great, okay yeah so that was one of the resources, I would say Jakara SF State. Another being therapy. Therapy is new for me right now. I've been in a lot of therapy but this new therapy honestly feels like the most aligned with my spiritual beliefs, this somatic therapy of, you know, like really feeling, where am I feeling things in my vessel? And it feels more integrative than talk therapy. Talk therapy feels like I'm just throwing up words to fill this space in between me and this therapist. And so I'm really enjoying being able to... And my Masi, who also may be interviewed for this, she was telling me that her therapist-- sometimes she's so tired in therapy that she just naps for 20 minutes. And at first she was kind of pissed off, like, why am I paying you for me to nap here for 20 minutes? But then I feel like a huge part of therapy for me right now is carving out that time, And intentionally being like, okay, this is the time where I'm doing blank, which like, I haven't done in a

really long time. And so I think since, picking up more, Sikh disciplines in my day to day life, having that routineness and all of those things just I feel like are kind of coming together as I put more things in my life right now. So of resources. Yeah, I don't know.

00:12:44**SPEAKER_MS**

Yeah, no, thank you for sharing that. I know you also touched on gurdwaras a little earlier. In going to the gurdwaras I would love to also hear about your relationship to gurdwaras and how that has changed and evolved over time, especially particularly as someone who is queer and trans as well. And oftentimes like for us, for Sikhs, gurdwaras are a resource as well, or are meant to be a resource. So wanted to create space if you did want to share about your relationship to seeking the gurdwara as a resource

00:13:27**SPEAKER_JS**

I feel like, yeah, Gurdwaras should be resources for everyone, but generally most North American gurdwaras in their politic or what they're perpetuating, is a business model, you know? And for that reason, it's hard as an anti-capitalist to--yeah, there's still free kitchen, free food at langat. And it just still feels like so much of it is commodified that it doesn't feel--But then like, that's just one layer to it. Like, yeah, as a queer and trans person, I can say I haven't gone to the gurdwara since you left because, yeah I just don't feel safe or... Like, I know nothing physically violent would happen to me, but it is this...Again, similar to that feeling of being in white gay spaces is like I'm putting myself in a position where I'm gonna feel a certain way and I think until I reach a point that I can expose myself to that verbal invalidation without internalizing it, then I just shouldn't engage with it quite yet. But I do plan on going to my Nani's house because she has Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji in her house. And so I was gonna go there. But yeah, gurdwaras as a resource--I don't know. I'm just like, yeah, I don't know. I'm having too many thoughts. I'm getting a little sidetracked.

00:15:39**SPEAKER_MS**

Yeah, absolutely. No worries at all. And if you would want, I also do not mind taking a second if you did want to be able to share those thoughts, which do not need to be--they don't need to be coherent or structured in any particular way, but this is your space, and this is your time to be able to archive in the in this project, whatever you would want to share and whatever you would want to archive in any format, in any like capacity, in any structure. So if you would want to take a second, I'm happy to, if you would want me to move to the next question, I also can do that.

00:16:18**SPEAKER_JS**

Yeah, I mean, like, I think when I think of gurdwaras as a concept, they're actually quite beautiful and genderless and anti-capitalist and all of these things. And then, like, when I see it applied, like I just feel so repulsed and it's just sad because I know they can be so much like more than they are which I know, the fundamental is that it's a Darbar. You know, it's where we have Guruji. But all the things around don't seem to always reflect that. So that's where I find this conflict, this friction. And that makes it challenging for me to feel at peace when I'm there. Yeah, I mean, I think when I first talked about gurdwaras earlier in this interview, I said that the first thing that Gordora was ever for me was a place to play. You know, like this place of childlike wonder, running on the marble and like feeling like, whoa, this big palace almost it feels like. Yeah, I just don't feel that wonder anymore. But I do hope to again someday.

00:17:58**SPEAKER_MS**

Yeah, no, thank you for sharing that. And just if you feel comfortable sharing, I would love to hear if there is any moment in time where, or any like stories that you may have, any experiences where you did feel like the gurdwara was a safe or an affirming space. I guess ask that as from the perspective that we have shared that experience together of going to the gurdwara together. So as well as you naming that you continuously have and do work in these spaces that are violent, but yet there's something that drives you to end up going back and continuing to be there, with like "we're gonna make this better, even if it's like violent." So I just wanted to also create space, if you did wanna share any particular experience that you felt as if the gurdwar, in that moment, it felt like a safe and an affirming space.

00:19:05**SPEAKER_JS**

Yeah. I'd say like when you and I were going together, like I wish, I felt like that alone at the gurdwara. Participating in langar seva every day and feeling that consistent connection to feeding the Sangat and also being in Sangat. Like it felt like very affirming spiritually, physically. I think that's it for me.

00:19:56**SPEAKER_MS**

No, thank you so much for sharing that. So kind of transitioning a little bit to thinking about geography and how and where you've grown up. Especially because places in geography are important parts of how people find stability, community, and make sense of themselves, in the context of U.S. History. So if you were to think of and tell me about the area that you live in now or have grown up in, to you, how did the places you've lived in affect how you think of yourself? Could you share how living in one place or many places influence your relationship to Sikhi and or your relationship to queerness?

00:20:38**SPEAKER_JS**

Yeah, I'm like having this meta analysis forming, but I don't know how well I'll be able to express it. But growing up in San Jose, specifically really close to San Jose gurdwara, I was born after it had become an established place. Before it used to be a trailer, like a trailer, in a trailer park. Like behind someone's house, I don't even really know, actually. But it was something of that sort. My parents got married in this trailer, but by the time I was sentient, it was this established, huge space. And so I think I didn't realize at the time that I was living in a place that had a lot of Sikh people and like that it didn't really feel like we were a minority in that sense. Just like as a really young person I definitely lived in this Sikh bubble of not realizing that like most gurdwaras are not that big. You know what I mean? They're not that established, well funded in that way that San Jose Gurdwara is the largest gurdwara in North America, I think. It's like millions dollar project, like it's huge. Thinking of that opulence or--I don't know-- that's kind of what I'm pondering because you go to different gurdwaras and you can see the economic status, the state of it. It's easy to make that evaluation based on not only the building, but the graphics and... Anyway, that thing you... I'm struggling now to figure out-- I was going somewhere. Yeah, I kind of lost myself in the way that I expected to.

00:23:22**SPEAKER_MS**

No worries at all. I can also re-prompt the question if it would be helpful.

00:23:27**SPEAKER_JS**

Yes it would be so helpful.

00:23:30**SPEAKER_MS**

To you, how did the places you've lived in affect how you think of yourself? Could you share how living in one place or many places influenced your relationship to Sikhi and your relationship to your own queerness?

00:23:48**SPEAKER_JS**

Yeah, so what I was getting at was, since I was surrounded by so much, like I was immersed in community, I did feel [audio unclear]-- this sense of belonging at a really young age. And so like, I would say the feeling of alienation only really started once I started elementary school and was this hairy Sikh kid with kids who were not as hairy kids, who were not Sikh, and and that's really where I began feeling of not belonging in a space. So growing up, I would say that gurdwara was a place where I felt that sense of community. But, I'd say it's not like that anymore, but I would like to get there. It's a two-way street in a sense. Yes, there's things, like there's critiques I have of North American gurdwaras and there's also critiques I have of myself in ways that I'm not. Yeah, I also need to, or can have the ability to change, to make myself feel that sense of belonging. Some of that alienation I would say is voluntary.

00:25:48**SPEAKER_MS**

If you feel comfortable, would you want to share more about that, in terms of the voluntary aspects?

00:25:56**SPEAKER_JS**

Yeah, I guess, like, we live in a very gendered world. And so that has bled into, you know, every single person's perception and understanding of life and existence. And so when I choose to de-gender, when I choose to walk into spaces and have this gender abolition mindset, immediately at odds with everyone else in the room. So I am immediately putting this thing down that is-- I don't mean it to be defensive or I don't mean it to cause friction, but it just does in its own sense-- it does. So that's what I mean when I say the queerness, you know, embodying the queerness at the gurdwara sometimes feels like I'm opting into this violence in a way.

00:27:09**SPEAKER_MS**

No, no, thank you. Oh, sorry, you were gonna say something?

00:27:12**SPEAKER_JS**

No, no, I'm done. Trust me, I'm done.

00:27:15**SPEAKER_MS**

Oh, no, no, no, thank you so much. And I guess also, since you were reflecting on growing up as well, and this doesn't only need to be in the gurdwara context, but at large as well, what was it like growing up when, where you did grow up?

00:27:35**SPEAKER_JS**

Yeah, it was... Growing up where I grew up was... Okay, so I'm from Evergreen, so it was deep suburb and it was slow. Like I feel like every day was almost the same. But my parents moved to that area specifically for the schools and were constantly disappointed by grades and like, generally, I wasn't a well behaved child. Like I do still stand by the fact that I have a love of learning. Again, just didn't really perform well in the framework, the educational framework that it was at the time. So yeah, growing up, I grew up just like an average suburban, you know, but I just feel like I don't even think about it so it's hard to to reminisce and feel that feeling of slowness and mundane. Yeah, just that. I'm getting the ick just feeling it. So, yeah.

00:29:19**SPEAKER_MS**

No, no, no. Thank you for reflecting, though, and sharing. And kind of on that, How have you made meaningful connections in the areas you have lived, whether it's in the past or where you are currently? Have there been some communities which you have been able to build relationships? And how has this been easier or harder [audio cuts out]?

00:29:47**SPEAKER_JS**

Right, so let me say this. One would assume that one would connect better with the urban queers. This is not always true, for many reasons. My most meaningful friendships are folks who came from the middle of nowhere, where nothing happens, and all they had was their thoughts. You know, I could literally just list out my best friends and all of them grew up in some small city, Central Valley, or the middle of--like I have friends in Iowa--I don't know, all of my most tender intimate connections with folks are like that. I don't really know where I'm going with that. It's just like, I think I share politic with very few people who went to my high school, but the ones that I do, we are so just unbelievably aligned. Like, it's we reached the same destination through a miracle. So one of my best friends, Noor, is Muslim Pakistani multidisciplinary artist. And we both went to the same 2000 something kid high school. We barely spoke. After high school, we connected again over Instagram, and now they're just like--there's nothing that I could, I couldn't talk about with them and feel like we're not gonna in some way agree or have a very similar lens. Sorry, could you repeat the question?

00:31:40**SPEAKER_MS**

Yeah, no, absolutely. How have you made meaningful connections in the areas you have lived? Have you, have there been some communities in which you have been able to build relationships and how has this been easier or harder based on where you've lived?

00:31:55**SPEAKER_JS**

Right, right. So like San Jose, I'd say it was really hard because I, at a very young age was like, "oh, I'm queer." And some folks were queer but hadn't gotten there yet, you know, like with their understanding. And also just in a place where people, like parents do move to have their kids go to these really competitive schools, there was a certain, there's just something in the air, you know, like it made it really competitive, but also everyone's kind of for themselves. And, you know, people were friends with people if they could get good grades together, or like people were friends with people if they could escape into sexual intimacy with each other-- like you know what I mean? Very utilitarian-- I don't know. Like, you know what I mean? Like, you know, if something didn't serve a purpose, it wasn't like, "oh, let's just be good friends." I'm obviously generalizing, I'm sure there's lots of people who did experience that-- I'm just trying to translate the sense that I got growing up there that those meaningful connections in my life. So everything felt performative and and weird. And so the fact that one of my best friends is from the same high school as me is-- it's pretty mind blowing. So I'm in San Francisco now, and I haven't made a new friend--like someone from San Francisco, since I moved here. Everyone that I've been friends with, I've either on Twitter and then we met when they moved here, or we knew each other before, pre-San Francisco, just pre. So like, I would say you, Noor, I have a really good friend named Bishop who also grew up in the random burbs of the Antelope Valley, who moved here for school and is queer and trans and we really just got on so well and became really great friends. I don't--living where I live--I don't have everyday people in my life who are in the same physical space as me, you know? And so I feel that same way, that isolationist. But it's also-- it's different times, like in ways I'm opting in, like I'm opting into COVID safety, I'm opting into not having friends just to have friends. So for those reasons, I also am a little friendless here.

00:34:49SPEAKER_MS

Yeah, thank you so much for sharing that. And that makes me think about earlier, you mentioned loneliness. So I was just wondering if this has shaped your relationship to loneliness And if you would want to share, whatever you would feel comfortable sharing, on thinking about your relationship to loneliness given that--yeah.

00:35:15SPEAKER_JS

Yeah. Again, I both complain about the loneliness but I also know that the loneliness is something I'm in control of and am wielding, in a sense. Yes, I'm lonely here, and yes, all of these online friendships do nourish me. And they feel reciprocal and meaningful relationships at the same time, it would be great to have people to spend real time with. But I'm just like, I'm not invested in a passiveness, or I just-- I can't really have people in my life for very long when we don't share like a deep, at least like a somewhat--it's really hard for me because it feels like there's just now a wall between us. So for that reason, the loneliness does again feel like something I can be frustrated with, but also recognize in the ways that I'm complicit in my loneliness. And also there's a reason for it, in the way that I should be lonely at this point of my life, I think. Like in the things that I'm doing, and the things that I'm working on, I just-- I don't know--I feel like maybe--yeah.. I don't know.

00:37:07SPEAKER_MS

Yeah, thank you for sharing that. And just before we move to the next set of questions, I kind of wanted to also ask a little bit about something that you touched on earlier as well, which maybe relates to what the topic of loneliness and kind of working, navigating that. And that is the question of the search of community, search for community/ the search for Sangat. And I was just wondering, earlier you named being involved in Jakara, for example, as a board member, and the different types of labor you've engaged in and pushing certain spaces that don't serve you or haven't served you. And I was just wondering if you, how that experience has been of pushing in spaces or how that search for community in the context of violence--ongoing violence has been for you?

00:38:13SPEAKER_JS

Yeah. I almost feel like I disassociate when I'm in those spaces, like I kind of just take whatever happens as--"you know what it is." And I don't get angry, I don't feel an exhaustion--I feel that all hits me in a very delayed manner and I could say I had great time in Sikh Sangat here in San Francisco. Last year, like we did like a games night where I brought my carrom board and we had like a Sikh Jeopardy. Like it was cute, it was fun, you know, I had a good time. And it's really-- sometimes I appreciate that delay because then I do have good feelings in the moment and I can look back to those and be like, "oh yeah, that was good." So, you're calling back to that. Yeah, being in community and ongoing violence, it's not something I'm opposed to. Like, I can be in that violence. I don't feel afraid of it. Or afraid of what it will do to me. I just think, it kind of feels like since us queer Sikh folks can be so spread apart, on a number of issues, sometimes it feels like I'm the only one in the room who cares. And for that reason, it's like, "okay, the consensus here is not interested in having this

conversation." And so I shouldn't even bring it up because it's gonna go nowhere. Like, you know what I mean? Like, and so I think that's why sometimes I do, and maybe that's defeatist of me. Maybe it is.

00:40:30 **SPEAKER_MS**

Thank you so much for for commenting on that and for reflecting on that. Also, Jaspreet, is it okay if I just go pee in two minutes and I'll be right back?

00:40:39 **SPEAKER_JS**

Yeah. Oh my God. Yeah.

00:41:36 **SPEAKER_MS**

Okay, I am back. Thank you so much for waiting. And now I wanted to transition into thinking about dreams, actually, which are kind of the last set of questions that I have for you. To ask you about desire, especially because another way that people understand themselves is by thinking about what they desire in life to help them understand themselves better. These can be the types of the desires as in the types of relationships people build or wish to build, or who they are close with and what type of futures they see. So I wanted to see what you think desire is and how you think desire is maybe different from intimacy or even dreaming?

00:42:24 **SPEAKER_JS**

Yeah, I always really struggle with this. You and I were talking earlier, but I think the more I immerse myself in Sikhi, the less I know what I want, and I know just what is the collective--like what are the collective needs, or that's what I begin to center. And I think in some ways, I know myself less because I'm not really making time to dream about my own personal aspirations as much as I am yearning for this oneness or wholeness. So I always struggle when people are like, "what do you want, or like, apple juice or orange juice?" I just like...same thing. It's juice. Like, I feel like I'm not a preferential person or I'm not so much preferential as I was before. So I'd say that's how I see my relationship with dreaming and desires--not to be said that I don't have any desires or I don't have any dreams. It just feels grayer, I don't know.

00:43:53 **SPEAKER_MS**

Yeah, no, absolutely. No, thank you so much. And I would love to hear, if you feel comfortable, what are those hopes and dreams and umeed for yourself as well as for the different communities that you identify with?

00:44:07 **SPEAKER_JS**

Yeah. I want to feel settled, not only in my body and my mind, but in a space. I was displaced last year and I've just-- I've been living with some nice folks, but it also feels--like it doesn't feel like home. I feel like that's one of my big dreams right now. I'm just constantly thinking about what home means, but also how I can get myself to a place that is decently priced housing. And I don't know if that was on prompt but I have been thinking about that. And then for my community, I just want us to go back to love. It feels like there's so many divisive...ideas in our Sikh Sangat, or in our Sikh community. I guess, especially online. And people romanticizing Andrew Tate, for example. How many mental backflips do you have to do to consider yourself Sikh and a fan of Andrew Tate? Like I just can't--I can't fathom it. But I do dream of this, people going back-- people being able to connect to this pre-colonial Sikhi, this de-gendered Sikhi, this Sikhi that, as you said with brilliant words, "difference without separability," without this superiority complex, without the caste affiliations, there's just so many things. So I do dream of that often, of the Sikhi that I know and love, but also witnessing other folks--what they call Sikhi. You know, I'm not gonna say it's not Sikhi, it's their Sikhi. And so, yeah, that's what I would say I dream about.

00:46:40 **SPEAKER_MS**

No, thank you for sharing those very beautiful and sacred dreams. And I agree Denise Ferreira da Silva's quote, "difference without seperatability" is something that I also continue to sit with as well.

00:46:54 **SPEAKER_JS**

Sorry, I thought you said it.

00:46:57**SPEAKER_MS**

Oh, no, no, it's not. It's by a really well-known Black feminist scholar, Denise Ferreira da Silva. But I would love to hear, kind of reflecting about dreams and hopes and our umeedan, how have you found healing and nourishment with respect to your identities? And what does healing even feel like to you in your own mind, spirit, body? What does it feel like to be nourished in your mind, spirit, and body? So at large, sitting with how you found healing and nourishment and how that feels like for you.

00:47:37**SPEAKER_JS**

Yeah I think in regards to my spiritual practice, not striving for perfection, because some days I am gonna wake up and not pray and some days I'm going to just not be--like I'm not gonna embody everything that I want to embody. And I think for a long time that kept me from engaging with Sikhi in any capacity because I felt dirty and unclean and not worthy of sitting down and just doing it. And I think that's so against the fundamentals that, you know. Once you refresh yourself on what it's supposed to be, it's like, oh yeah, wait, no, I can do this and I'm allowed to do this. So yeah, giving myself that grace of, "oh yeah, I'm able to do this and no one can stop me." So I think that that's definitely been nourishing and it's extended to so many different parts of my life. Like just the stam of once I was able to reconnect with Sikhi in that regard, I've let go of a lot of the perfectionism in my life because, you know it bleeds right into all aspects of the self when you when you explore spirituality. So yeah.

00:49:25**SPEAKER_MS**

Thank you so much. And also, since you just mentioned reconnecting with Sikhi, I just wanted to ask how the process of reconnecting with Sikhi has been, what led you away from, and what has been--I know it also is a constant cycle as well. That last time, in the last interview, we talked about the different phases and the different chapters, but if you want to to share, if you feel comfortable sharing about what that recent reconnection process has been and where, how you evolved to be where you're currently at and where you're working to move forward to.

00:50:07**SPEAKER_JS**

Right. So in this world of -isms that--I don't know if it's innate, or if it's a socialized thing, but it almost feels like we need some type of cultural or religious identifier to feel affiliated with, both for that sense of belonging, but also so that we have this rulebook of this is how you need to live life. And if you go outside of these bounds, you're not doing it right. And so being raised in Sikhi, it felt accessible. But also, I'm a philosophy and religion major and I've read about a lot of different faiths and I still feel most aligned with Sikhi. I think because of how integrative it is. Action, politic, ethics, as you said earlier, its' goal is almost to cultivate this innate divinity, you know, as we strive to become Guru-like. So I think what drew me away was not really seeing that Sikhi embodied. But also some of it was probably shame of being ethnic and just wanting to conform to certain standards that don't really align with Sikhi, and striving for things Sikhi considers to be distractions. And so to validate that, I had to be like, "Oh, well, this isn't for me." So coming back to it is this newness. And we kind of talked about it, I think, last time of this new phase in my life where I have been able to explore my gender. And I think like I said before, that has been so deeply intertwined with my reconnection with Sikhi.

00:52:46**SPEAKER_MS**

Thank you so much for sharing that. And that concludes the questions that I had for you, but I wanted to also create space to see if there were any questions that I hadn't asked or if there's anything you did wanna share or add or to also be included within the archive as we attempt to kind of snapshot this moment in time for where you're at.

00:53:12**SPEAKER_JS**

Yeah, I actually do want to share something And I'm gonna share it so that maybe future me can be like, "wait, where did this go?" So next Sunday, I'm doing my first get-together. It's masked. It's no substances. It's drawing, mehndi, carrom board. And it feels like something new. Like, it's really new for me. But I'm trying to take myself out of that loneliness that I have been talking about so much, through a Sikh lens and also so like--yeah

that's what I'm thinking about, it's something I would like to archive that for me.

00:54:01 **SPEAKER_MS**

Thank you so much for sharing that and for the very beautiful search for Sangat that you are on, that this next chapter holds for you. I also kind of, I know this question about what are some hopes and umeed for yourself was a question that I've already asked earlier, but since you do touch on the hosting era that you're on, I would love to kind of also ask another final question--where do you see yourself going from here?

00:54:46 **SPEAKER_JS**

Oh, That's a scary question. But I think from here, you and I are working on something and I'm trying to have more of that mindset of "if it's not there for me, I can just make it myself." And so I see myself in that crafted community that we are planting the seeds for right now, is where I see myself.

00:55:27 **SPEAKER_MS**

Wow, thank you so much. That was really, really beautiful. And I'm just reveling in the love, the care, and the abundance of the garden that is to come, of which the seeds you are planting already. On a very final question, I keep saying I'm asking the final question and keep popping more. This is a question I already had asked you in the pre-interview, but especially as someone who's now gone through the interview, just wanted to also ask, what do you hope comes out of sharing your life story with us?

00:56:04 **SPEAKER_JS**

Yeah, I mean, I think the first thing, and I don't know if this is selfish, but the first thing that popped into my head I think when I heard about this project was, "oh my god, teenage me would have gagged, like teenage me would have really sat down in bed and just like sobbed hearing all of these stories." And so yeah, that's what I think about is just how awesome it is that now all of these stories are in one place to be cherished. And since it's so diverse, everyone can find something to connect to it, and so it's not this monolith of, "I am the one queer trans Sikh person, and this is my story." So I'm also just really excited to hear everyone else's and feel all of the things.

00:57:15 **SPEAKER_MS**

Oh, no, thank you so much. And thank you for all of your time, for all of your divinity, for gracing us with that and for being vulnerable, for taking your time out to share with us. That concludes the interview for today. I will stop recording.