

Interview with Sundeep Morrison Part 2 of 2

00:00:02 **SPEAKER_MM**

All right. Okay, we're starting part two. I think we were talking about your relationship with finding Sikhi in community and Sangat, correct? I think that's what we were talking about. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Oh, and also being self-identifying as Sikhs. Like what are your thoughts on self-identifying as Sikh? I think that's where we are.

00:00:39 **SPEAKER_SM**

Yeah I think it's deep because I think that's where there's the most gatekeeping from my experience and you know kind of where I've landed is that there's been so many parameters on what it means to be a Sikh. And I think that Sikhi is personal. I think it's personal because for so long I was taught that oh in order to if I filled this box and this box and this box then my Sikhi was valid. And if I didn't then I wasn't a Sikh. So now I'm realizing that the core tenets are actually pretty simple, you know? And that the only entity that can judge my relationship to my Sikhi other than myself is Waheguru, period.

00:01:40 **SPEAKER_MM**

And then, so how do you, so you kind of spoke about, you know, growing up in Canada in various different parts and sort of moving to New York. How do you sort of find, you mentioned finding community in your chosen family now, But how do you sort of find that in new spaces? Because from what I remember, I think you're in California now.

00:02:11 **SPEAKER_SM**

Yeah, Los Angeles, yep.

00:02:13 **SPEAKER_MM**

Yeah, oh, me too. And so, yeah, so how do you sort of find a community and new places? How do you sort of arrange that for yourself? How does that sort of implicate your own relationship with Sikhi? Does that help it evolve based on where you're at geographically?

00:02:32 **SPEAKER_SM**

I think that it can be tricky sometimes and I've had to recognize this in myself that I have been so hungry for community. But you know it's it's hard to find, it's hard to find community where you feel completely safe you know. And so I have found like-minded siblings where I feel comfortable. But again in certain spaces where someone doesn't have, or they've already made their mind up about queerness, or what Sikhi should look like. It can feel like being othered all over again.

00:03:21 **SPEAKER_MM**

And so have you been able to find community in LA?

00:03:27 **SPEAKER_SM**

I am finding community now. I think I've been in my bubble for a long time, especially as a parent, I've been in my own little bubble and that bubble felt safe, you know? And I still, you know, there's triggers and traumas of being, you know, in a gurdwara space or in a sangat space, and coming into that space and bringing my fullness, you know, that's different. And so I'm slowly gauging, And then also letting myself know that you know what, it's okay. It's okay to feel discomfort or it's okay to not want to you know be in a space or to visit that space you know like going to the Gurdwara off peak hours in the middle of the week early in the morning where there's really nobody there. Because then I know that I don't have the off chance if I'm getting prashad, they're just sitting in the langar hall for a moment, I'm not gonna you know be bombarded with a million questions about what section I'm sitting in or what I look like, you know? So I think it's been hard, it's been hard.

00:04:44 **SPEAKER_MM**

Yeah, It also seems like going to the Gurdwara is very important to you.

00:04:51 **SPEAKER_SM**

I miss it. I miss, yeah, it makes me, you know, it's heartbreaking. I miss it, because growing up, it was such a big part of where we congregate, community, faith, all of these things. And then also since my mom's passing, of just listening to kirtan makes me feel closer to her. And so it is tough. And so now I'm like, "Okay, how can I bring those elements?" Because my biji did say, "Wherever you remember God, that is your gurdwara. Jhitvi rab yaad ounda, that's your gurdwara. Gurdwara is anywhere." Like she used to say, she's like, "You're, you know, sada sharir ek gurdwara aahiya, bich raab vasta. [*Our body too is a gurdwara because the Divine rests within it.*]" So, and so I remember these moments of like, "Okay, how can I, where am I at? What are my feelings in my body and how can I bring that to where I am?"

00:06:00 **SPEAKER_MM**

And so how would you describe your experiences with maintaining a relationship with Sikhi and LGBTQIA+? And how did you deal with that?

00:06:10 **SPEAKER_SM**

It's been difficult. I think it's been difficult. But I have hope you know, I have hope. And I think that it's it's hard because I remember even early when I did come out to my mom, I was visiting home from college and I just sat her down. And I was like through tears, I just had to like say it out loud to her. You know like, mom this is what I feel, this is what I am. And you know there was a lot of tears. And I even I don't think she fully ever understood my identity. But for me her for her to say, "Jiven tenu raab nei banaya, ome teekaa. [*The way that the Divine has made you, that is enough/ok.*]" That was enough. Like that was huge, right? That was enough. She's never gonna understand pronouns, she was never going to fully wrap her head around my lack of hair by choice, but I think that you know there was, that was enough for me because I was like, you know what, she sees me.

But it's been hard because I think the same ideology is like that queerness is a white concept. Veh goreya da kaam ya. Sadey paanth vich nai hai ga. Sadi community vich nai, veh eh puraa goreya neey baneya sadey vich eh hunda hi nai. [*That it's the work of whites. It's not in our panth {faith communal nation}, it's not in our community, that it's made by whites, it doesn't exist in us.*]" And that's what, it's like, no, I think that the most culturally aligned thing we can do is be the *most* version of ourselves, is live in our fullness. Veh eh saab tu goreya tuh durr jeez ya jadu asi apni asliat vich rehndey haan. Eh hey sadi asli culture hagi ya, kyun ki ona ney aakey sadey desh vich aake, ena gaandh paaeya, tey eeh lakiraa ona ney banaiya mitti deh vich. —[*That it is the further thing from the whites to live in one's truth. This has been our true, actual culture. Because when they came, they came in our homeland, created such a mess/trash, these lines in the dirt are made by them.*]" Right? Like, they created the binaries. We may not have had the words for it or there were shades of it, you know, but it. And so that's been a, that's been a difficult thing of when someone aligns identity with, of being a white concept when it's complete opposite of that.

00:08:35 **SPEAKER_MM**

Yeah, and our colonial history doesn't help to kind of, you know, bring it, you know, make it easier for us to explain things either. There's like this inherent visceral hatred, you know, validly so, to want to not associate with colonial ideology and sort of like manifestations of today. But yeah, it is a huge challenge, especially when we live in the Western world.

00:09:04 **SPEAKER_SM**

Yeah, yeah. It's been tough.

00:09:11 **SPEAKER_MM**

And so what does like, so you talked about sort of your experience of coming out to your mom. What does being out or coming out mean to you?

00:09:22 **SPEAKER_SM**

I mean, I always say the only person you need to be out to is yourself, period. Like that's just, we deal with, you know, being out I also think is a shade. It's like it's also like if anything's a white concept it's bad, the act of coming out or the pressure of, you know. But for me and I thought I was like I just I have to I have to be able to have this conversation with my mom. Like I knew I would never have this conversation with my dad, you know, that he just, like, it was not. I tried to have the conversation with my brothers, you know, but for me, having like that moment was big for me. I just released so much, you know. Uchideinle kain li, vey mumi, mein a yaan. *[In a louder voice I said that mumi this is who I am.]* And, you know, and it's like just being able to say it out loud, I think, was healing. Regardless of what it was met with. But me uchi deni keya, apne zubaan naal boleya apni maa nu beytahke, pyar naal keyha, *[But I said, in a louder voice, in my own voice, to my maa, after sitting her down, I said it with love,]* “You know what, mom? This is who I am. This is who I love.”

00:10:45**SPEAKER_MM**

Yeah, you're sharing a lot of things too that I resonate with where we, especially appney aap vich *[within ourselves]*, we already hear all the voices telling us all of the things that we know they're thinking, they're just not saying. And it's ingrained in us so much, you know? And so like some of the things that you're kind of saying makes me think about how much of a challenge that is, especially when you're holding these sort of identities and you're trying to sort of figure it out for yourself and also maintain your relationship with who you want to be and all of that. Do you feel like those sorts of, I guess, voices are less now or now you can kind of counteract them better because you've built a more healthier therapeutic, I guess, relationship now of Sikhi and queerness.

00:11:44**SPEAKER_SM**

Yeah, because there was a version of myself that felt like I was a mistake. That felt like, that didn't wanna be here. I think a lot of us have felt that way, that we're somehow defective, that it's just easier for us to not be here. Because for me to live in my full expression means I have to completely obliterate the tasveer, the image that is being thrust upon myself and one that I've been projecting out. So then where do I land? And that's, that's terrifying. You know, because sometimes you don't know where you're gonna land. But for me, I was just so tired of playing a version of myself or a shade of myself and not being able to, and just to be able to say it to my mom, you know. But it is liberating. It's like, I feel, I feel the freest I've ever felt. And it's been a lot of hard work to get to this place. And I still have my moments. I still get super sad that you know what? That I have surviving family, that my mom's gone, and I have siblings, blood, like brothers, that don't really wanna have a relationship with me purely based on how I identify and that hurts. It sucks. But, I'll give space that sadness But but that other voice is like, okay You can mourn that relationship But what what do you have in front of you? And that's when I lean into community. You know what I mean? It's leaning in. And then I tell myself, I'm like, you know what? I'm a pretty rad sibling to have. You know? Like, I'm pretty, I'm super loving and I'm weird, but I'm a pretty rad sibling. So now it's like, the loss is yours. You know what I mean? I'm like, the loss is on your side. And that's where I'm like, you know, that's that part of feeling it.

00:14:10**SPEAKER_MM**

Yeah, and I think it's that, right? Like how the grief that then surfaces also then tells you about the joy that comes because of that. It's like a really interesting emotional?

00:14:31**SPEAKER_SM**

Yeah, and even with, you know, and then I think too I think it's just guarding the heart, but I think the noise is less. I think I do feel I'm grateful for where I've landed you know. And again it's like just just that weekend in Rochester like physically meeting people, souls that I've been in community with for years, and finally being able to hug, it was so healing. So I remind myself, I'm like, “Tu kalii nai. Tu sittii nai hoi. Tere kol hai gay ya. Tere aale davale bahut pyar a Sundeep. And that's because, asi pyar dey bukhe ya. Par sadey kol aale dewale pyar hai ga *[You are not alone. You have not been thrown away. You have people. There is love all around you, Sundeep. And that's because, we are starving for love. But there is love all around us.]*

00:15:25**SPEAKER_MM**

Pyar da daar bhi a. *[Yeah, we're scared of love.]*

00:15:27**SPEAKER_SM**

Pyar da daar bhi bahut a [*There is also a lot of fear of love.*]. You know. Its. I don't know. It's it's deep. I just had a dear sister-sibling move relocate here from the UK. And so that's been really heart-filling, but we've been having those conversations about just like the parameters of Sikhi, and the controlling factors of it and all of it. And that's where I have a radical dream of someday, I'm like, what would that Gurdwara space look like? Where the Nishan sahib is flowing And then we have a pride flag next to it. And that's just in my mind's eye of like, what would that space look like? We had a rotation of granthis -that identified however they want it. And from the tablaeya to the stage that when someone is doing vichar, that they're including queer folk in that vichar. You know because my Ardaas, it's always included you know. But I've always included you know like my siblings or our community that is living with you know AIDS or is HIV positive. And I include like my queer siblings will always be part of my panth. They'll always be in my paanth.

00:17:13**SPEAKER_MM**

Yeah, yeah, you're kind of segueing into the next section of the, that's where we kind of want to go into understanding desires. And you know, it sounds like, you know, you're articulating a desire for other people to resonate with sort of your way of like calling people in....

00:17:38**SPEAKER_SM**

Yeah, it's, you know, and I hate to use, and well, maybe not hate is a strong word, But it's like the only frame of reference like I have is you know in LA we there's queer churches, there's queer churches and we see beautiful like outside on their boards you know. They have their iconography, they've got like a cross, but then they've got the intersectional pride flag. So right away as a visual you know that you know what, you can come in this space and pray to your God and you're gonna be accepted here. I have yet, you know what I mean? Like and that's just the big daydreamer of me of having a space where we could freely congregare and come as we are. Because again and then this goes into the deeper of you know what is what is allowed or not allowed sanctioned by the Akal Takht or the SGPC. I'm probably messing that up. But you know what I mean? Like the different stations and it's just like, and I know that gets dicey, but it is something that when I'm driving through Hollywood, I'm Just like, oh, wow, what if, you know, in another space, wouldn't that be amazing to have, you know, a space like that?

00:18:56**SPEAKER_MM**

Yeah.Yeah. Having an umeed is very, is very crucial to your own growth and your own relationship, right? Do you have other hopes or aspirations?

00:19:19**SPEAKER_SM**

Yeah, I think that, like I grew up going to Gurmat camp and that has its own trauma too. But I thought wow what if there was a queer Gurmat camp? That it was like you know we have our LGBTQ centered camps but I was like what would that queer Sikh camp look like for adults? And you know maybe different iterations for different age groups down the line. But I do, I hold that time. Like while we were sitting, I was looking around and I was like, okay, I'm in Rochester and we all are, like what's the main thread that connects us all together is our Sikhi, and then culturally our Punjabiness, our Punjabi-bra. You know what I mean? And I was just looking, I was like, wow, wouldn't it be amazing to rent some cabins somewhere and to be able to heal that queer Punjabi Sikh kid inside ourselves, you know, that's another dream. And I think like other than them, like you're the only person I've shared that with.

00:20:33**SPEAKER_MM**

Like we said in the beginning, we're creating the future.

00:20:37**SPEAKER_SM**

We're creating futures, you know what I mean? And yeah, I think that it is. And I think it's in my art, too, of just playing with, just culturally with masc and femme, present, like just presentation. And, and you know, just sharing with them of like, you know, my dad would take his pagh off and it would still hold its shape. And he put it on the dresser. I would come in and I would put it on just to see what that felt like. And it was so amazing,

you know what I mean? It was so amazing I was like, oh my gosh. You know and like moments, moments like that. But yeah those are some wild dreams that I have that may not be dreams may come to fruition someday. But it is looking at other faith spaces and honestly having some form of inclusion in me. Or it's like, that would be amazing.

00:21:49**SPEAKER_MM**

So these days, where does creating space for intimacy or your fulfillment of your own desires fall on your list of priorities?

00:22:00**SPEAKER_SM**

I think it's high because it was slow for so long you know. And then it's removing all of the parameters of going, no, you know what intimacy, joy, pleasure, all of these things are my birthright. Those are my birthright and I don't have to feel like I have to put them on the back burner or anything. But I think that's been a lot of the work that I have done and am doing in therapy, which has been life-saving for me. But yeah it's very very important for me to have connection in all aspects.

00:22:44**SPEAKER_MM**

Is that how you would define intimacy and/or desire?

00:22:50**SPEAKER_SM**

Yeah I think it's connection. And it can be you know like not only romantic for me with my partner right, like that that core connection for us. But even in the platonic sphere of of my friendships, of my kinships, right? Of having that one-on-one time of just having that heart talk. It is it's something that is high on my kind of ladder of needs as a human being. And so it's like that that is that is something that I've realized because I didn't didn't have it for so long. Or if I did, it had to be hidden or you know in the shadows or whispers of or something I had to really sanitize or keep some sort of mask in front of it. Now I don't, it's like the mask is off.

00:23:53**SPEAKER_MM**

So what in what scenarios and in sort of what circumstances do you think are required for you to create that sort of opportunity to be in an intimate space or have an intimate connection?

00:24:11**SPEAKER_SM**

I think I think it's safety. I think if I don't if I if I don't feel safe there's no way I can arrive at a juncture of intimacy or connection. I think safety is the main thing. Because for me, once I feel safe, and then it's like, OK, you know what? You can completely be at ease and then build that connection. But it really is I think a sense of safety is the prelude to that.

00:24:46**SPEAKER_MM**

You used this idea of having a mask on and taking it off a few times. And I'm curious if there's something about that where, is that sort of like how you're kind of also feeling like you are experiencing spaces where you're like, am I accepted here because of this identity? Am I not accepted here because of this identity? And you kind of feel like you're in that flux constantly. Do you feel like you're doing this mask on, mask off thing constantly?

00:25:18**SPEAKER_SM**

No, but I did it. I did have that moment where my friend is staying, who's relocated, staying at a Punjabi Sikh house not too far from it's like a 20-minute drive. Very sweet family. But, you know so like I walk in and immediately I become hyper aware of all of a sudden what I'm wearing, right? And then I become hyper aware of like, oh they have Gurusahib parkash at their house. Mera sir naai dhakey hoye [*My head is not covered*] But I'm not in that room but if I were to go in that room, of course, I would, me sir dhak lu gi, right? [*I would cover my head if I were to go in that room*] And then all of a sudden I'm just hyper aware. But then the smells are warm, and then I'm thinking of my mom and all of that. And then it's interesting, because I feel like I code switch in those moments, right? I'm like code switching where I'm like, okay, I know that I'm gonna connect

with them because me Punjabi bol sakdiya ena dey naal. Ovvi more so than not, asi duunghi Punjabi bol sakdey haan bei ke, right? Tey gala battaa kar sakdey haan. But then I also know that panji's eyes are still at my head. And she hasn't really looked me in the eye. She's still, mere panji di aakhya mere bhaal par han. And you know what I mean? And uncle ji – oh virji's, you know, they're like old enough, but not, they're also still young. So I was like, "Virji, pahenji." So it's like navigating those spaces where, and then they'll be like, "Teri tey Punjabi hi bahut badiya." You know, and I'm like, "Thank you, tohadi." *[I can speak Punjabi with them. And even then more so than not, we can sit down and we can speak in deep Punjabi. We can chat. But then I also know that sister's eyes are still at my head. And she hasn't really looked me in the eye. She's still, my sister's eyes are on my [lack of] hair. And you know what I mean? And uncle ji – oh brother, you know, they're old enough, but not, they're also still young. So I was like, "Brother, sister." So it's like navigating those spaces where, and they'll be like, "But your Punjabi is really good." You know, and I'm like, "Thank you to you [respectfully]."*

And I'm like. And then the question inevitably will come, be.

00:27:00SPEAKER_MM

I think you're muted.

00:27:02SPEAKER_SM

Oh, am I muted? Oh no, am I still? Am I still with you?

00:27:08SPEAKER_MM

Oh, can you turn it off? Sorry, I think the Bluetooth, my Bluetooth came off.

00:27:14SPEAKER_SM

Oh, Can you hear me?

00:27:16SPEAKER_MM

There you go, yeah.

00:27:17SPEAKER_SM

Okay, okay, gotcha.

00:27:18SPEAKER_MM

Yeah, sorry. My partner was putting on the headphones.. Technical difficulties today

00:27:24SPEAKER_SM

It's okay It's okay. I totally, that happened to me the other day. It's all good, it's all good. That happened to me the other day where I ended up, I was singing to myself along with something else and then he picked me up in the car with his conversation. And I was like, oh my gosh. But yeah, I do feel like it's code switching. Because menu pata, jadu mein Punjabi bolen lag pavaagi ona naal right, pher tohada jeha ena li sikala ha, right? *[Because I know that when I begin speaking Punjabi with them, right, then it's a little easier for them, right?]* So then I'm not that othered, right? Then I have language point. Then when we talk about maybe some parts of Sikhi then, but then the question that is going to come is, "Putth, ja penji, tuhadey jede baal a, enna da like, tuhade kol condition hagi, medical condition hagi? Ja tusi jaan ke kitha?" *[My child, or sister, about your hair, is it like that, do you have a condition, a medical condition? Or did you do this purposely?]* And then I'm like, ah, shit, right? "Asi cha da cup pii key samabath kar sakdey sigay, pher me baahj jana si ithoun. Par hun gal morey aai hoi ya, gal karni pehni ya tuhadey naal. *[We could have simply had our cups of tea and finished up here, then I would have rushed home from here. But now you've brought the topic to the front, I now have to talk about this with you.]* And I'm having an internal struggle. Like me kive kein va? Ji, mein na non-binary haan." *[Like, how do I say it? Respectfully, I am non-binary.]* And then they're obviously not, or maybe they are, Jina me apney aap nu mard dey roop vich sabat sukhi samaj sakdiya, oni me nari dey roop ch. *[Just as I feel comfortable and happy in the form and presentation of a man, I feel the same in the form of a woman.]* Or I'm going to try to find

the language that's closest in proximity. And sometimes it goes over their head. Or they'll be like, "Tu baal rakhe they tu jada vi sohni laggu" [*You would look even better if you kept your hair*]. And I'm like, okay, thank you. Yeah, noted. But it is that tug of war of Like, you know, because, and then I've had the moment where, you know, I'll put on a chunni and I'll tuck it behind my ears. And if it's cotton, you can't tell, right? But then once the chunni comes off, then they're like, "a ki ho gaya?" [*what has happened here?*]" You know what I mean? Mind is blown. Then all of a sudden, that little bit of warmth is maybe gone. And I'm like, shit. And then I have had moments like, "Ja main munda hondi, tusi gal karne vhi nahi sigi." [*If I were read as a man, you would never have brought up this issue.*]" You know what I mean? So it is, it is exhausting. And then after I left that, I was like, man, I need a milkshake. And you know what I mean? I need to come home and I need to take a hot shower. And I was, I was exhausted. I'm tired. And that's And that happens in Gurdwara spaces too. That's why I'm like, what's my energy levels? Because the only other option is, I just pretend like I don't know Punjabi at all. And I have done that. I've just not said a word.

00:30:03**SPEAKER_SM**

You know what I mean? Or I just don't make eye contact. I go in, matha tek [prostrate] come back out, and it's it is hard. Yeah. It's fielding all of it. It's just the code switching. But again, if I didn't have, like, my Punjabi helps. Knowing Punjabi helps. That's a huge buffer. If I didn't have that, it would be definitely be harder.

00:30:31**SPEAKER_MM**

Or even potentially easier, depending on sort of the circumstances, right? Like how you're saying, like it helps you kind of get out of a situation much quicker. I don't want to engage.

00:30:45**SPEAKER_SM**

Yeah, 100%. I'm just like, oh, okay. You know, because, and that's another thing too, it's like the female moni, right? Which is the word they keep saying, is gonna be received very differently than the male mona. You know? Yeah.

00:31:10**SPEAKER_MM**

And it's also interesting, na like in Punjabi, there's like all of these like derogatorily used terminologies that we're so familiar with, but yet we can't find the nomenclature around like how to express love, you know?

00:31:24**SPEAKER_SM**

Yes, yes, yes. It's insane. Yeah, I'm just plugging my phone in. Yeah, I think that's a kicker too, right? That's been a big, big thing of like just language. I don't have the language for my identity in so many spaces. I just don't have the base language. Like Sadele [*for us*], we don't have it. And, sorry, This is a terrible angle, I apologize, but my phone needs charging. But it's the exhausting kind of dance of just not having a term, just the language, and it's very, very hard.

00:32:20**SPEAKER_MM**

But I liked how you vocalized and articulated sort of your conversations with not just older adults about these sorts of things that you're sort of encountering, right? But also with your mom, you know, or with your naniji and stuff. Like I feel like there's something that I hope, you know, listeners are gonna be like, okay, so this is kind of an example, you know? This is kind of like something that's happened in someone's life. Like, I feel like you brought in a future for them to even think about the articulation and sort of potentially having that conversation if they need to, you know?

00:33:03**SPEAKER_SM**

Yeah, I think it just takes, for me, she was that one person that made me feel seen. You know that made me feel seen and also was the one person that was very firm in that no one can dictate your Sikhi. That is a part of you and how you choose to be a Sikh is fully part of you and here are the things that are the most important. And here are the things that are part of it, but this is the core. You know, they like, what are your convictions, right? Like, how are you living? How are you treating people? That's a key. You know, and so I think identity is is all

baked in there, but I think more than that is how we treat ourselves and each other. I always fall back on that.

00:34:01 **SPEAKER_MM**

Yeah, So how are you manifesting all of that? How are you sort of bringing that? What does your practice look like today for you?

00:34:11 **SPEAKER_SM**

I think that I've come back to strengthening my reading of Gurmukhi. Because for a long time, I turned, I just was like, you know what I need to excavate myself and religion I'll come back to it. But it was always a deep part of myself. So now it's sitting with and going back to Gurbani and really finding it and learning it on my own. And then having those moments of reconnecting with you know Ardaas and Nam Simran in a completely different way, but also being able to listen to kirtan too. That was another part of it. So I think slowly integrating those things, you know, because my, you know, my kids, they know of the faith and I think that we've been more so non-religious in the house just because of the trauma. And so now I feel like at the age of 41, I'm reconnecting to all the things that were presented to me through a very patriarchal lens and now I'm stripping that and going I'm having so many aha moments like oh wait a minute the core of this actually All these rules they put around it actually don't exist. And so that's been one interesting thing. And then just all, again, I go back to finding community that I'm not, me kalli beyti nahi hai gi [*I am not sitting alone*].

00:35:49 **SPEAKER_MM**

Do you find these moments to be healing and nourishing? Are there other ways in which you're also finding healing and nourishing?

00:36:02 **SPEAKER_SM**

Yeah, I think it is deeply healing. You know, because it's like I don't have to qualify my Sikhi anymore than I have to qualify my queerness. And I think that that is something I remind myself of. Of all the spaces and practices that made you feel good, that made you feel warm, that made you feel connected, I can connect, I can find that again. And I feel like I'm finally finding that.

00:36:43 **SPEAKER_MM**

Those are most of my questions. One of my last questions kind of circles back to the first question I asked was, what do you hope comes out of sharing your life history and what you shared some of it does?

00:36:59 **SPEAKER_SM**

That young, non-binary or GNC, or trans queer kid that has a love for their Sikhi can also have a love for themselves and that every part of you can exist and that you're good enough and you don't have to make yourself smaller or hide parts of yourself or if you're living under a roof right now where you can't live in the full expression of yourself, that someday you will. It'll get easier, you know, but that no one can take your Sikhi away from you. And it doesn't have to look one certain way. That's what I would hope. Thank you.

00:38:11 **SPEAKER_MM**

Thank you. You called in all the ancestors today. You took us to the past, the present and the future. And you are a rad sibling, Sundeep, you really are. I think you're like, yeah. Like seva, like this is seva in my mind, like for sure.

00:38:38 **SPEAKER_SM**

Yeah. Bheeney I send you so much pyar.

00:38:42 **SPEAKER_MM**

Yeah, you too.

00:38:44**SPEAKER_SM**

Oh, and you're in LA, I hope to meet you.

00:38:50**SPEAKER_MM**

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I wanted to ask sort of about your profession and like, you know, like sort of how you're bringing all of that together. But I don't know, I felt like the wavelength was different. You know, I felt like it was more about like connecting to you as like an individual level and like sort of what's underneath the surface, you know?

00:39:19**SPEAKER_SM**

Yeah, I think my, You know, even in my art, you know, it's like, my queerness is, like, whatever I create, it's always gonna be part of it, but I think my art is such a healing part for me as well. And it was, you know, like I had this auntie character that I created called Gulabo Masi and she's a mashup of my Masiji and my mom. And, you know, she's like a comedic character but she's like the Masi we all need. I was like, I'm gonna be the Masi that's gonna give me halla sheri [*praise/affirmation*], but Masi also has been living with her partner, Preeto, for a long time. She never got married. You know what I mean? So there's shades of her. And that's joyful to me, that's play. You know what I mean?

And, but then I also, one of my, my performance, my first performance art piece that I debuted, because I was like, what do I want to speak to? And it was about 1984 and kind of and Sikhi and so my nanaji was a fauji. He was a major and I remember my conversations with him is you know war did a number on him and he was one of the first people to fight for in Calgary because he was he wasn't allowed to come into the Legion because he was wearing a pagh. They were like, you have to remove your head covering. He was like, I'm a serviceman. So there was a case and then they moved their rules. But my conversations with him of just being in the Indian army and his experience, I asked him, I was like, "Nanaji, do you ever regret it?" He goes, "No, I just regret the time we lost – jina asi samaa gawatcheya." I was like, damn, that's real. They said, "Saddi khun di keemat ki ya [*what is the value of our blood*] when we're fighting for their cause, right? Versus for when there's injustices in Punjab."

But anyways, I did it. My character was Sant Sepahi and it was a soldier character inspired by my Nanaji where you know I was wearing a false beard and I did tie a pagh. You know what I mean? But I feel like those are all the parts that live in so through performance I'm able to honor Maybe the sardarni and the sardar that live inside of me. And I can do it that way. But yeah, it's been a journey too. And that's been interesting too, of like, anytime you speak to religion or politics, people are going to be like, "Eh nai kar sakdi. Pehla eda naa dekho. Pher eney baal nai rakey ho. Pher eh aan ya, pher edey kol girlfriend bhi sigi naale boyfriend vi ah." [*They can't do that. First look at their name. Then look at how they don't keep their hair. Then they also had a girlfriend, and they have a boyfriend.*] And you know, all of that. And it's, and so just filtering out the noise of going, You know what I mean? Just building and being in that. But yeah, sorry, I went on a little bit of a tangent.

00:42:08**SPEAKER_MM**

No, absolutely not.

00:42:10**SPEAKER_SM**

Yeah, but it's, and then also, you know, I've been dabbling in what it means to also speak to my masculinity. And I came up with a drag king. And my drag king's name is Tantalize Singh. And I think that's so joyful. You know, I was like, why can't I play in that masc-ness? So I'm still discovering, but I would love to meet you and thank you for these questions. I feel like mostly what I did was just cry and unravel, but thank you for holding space.

00:42:48**SPEAKER_MM**

Yeah, no, you didn't just mostly cry. I think you were your whole self and I'm glad that you felt comfortable to be vulnerable, and wanting to share your story and making this public. This is hard. This is really, really hard, you know? And so I'm just grateful that we were able to be there together.

00:43:15**SPEAKER_SM**

Thank you, Manu. I appreciate you. I send you love and gratitude.

00:43:20**SPEAKER_MM**

Yep, yep. Okay, I'm gonna stop the recording and then, yeah, stay in touch.