Radhika Chopra

MILITANT AND MIGRANT

The Politics and Social History of Punjab

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To Hari Sen and my parents,
Pran and Sarojine Chopra

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Glossary

aankh milana	look a person directly in the eye
aap ji	a respectful form of address, to an elder or superior
ab	water
abroadee	colloquially, a migrant; common to Diaspora Punjabi
adkar/adrak	ginger
apsos	sadness; ritual of grieving
Amriki	colloquially, America; American
amrit chakkna	literally, tasting the nectar; commonly, the ritual of initiation
amritdhari	literally, a person who has drunk the nectar; Sikh initiate
antim ardas	the final prayer for the dead recited at the conclusion of *bhog*
Apna Punjab	our land; my Punjab
ardas	prayer of the Khalsa
atma	essential spirit; colloquially, soul
ayahs	nannies
baba	honorific form of address; commonly, grandfather
bahu	daughter-in-law
bhaapa	colloquially, a trader; Sikhs of the trader castes
bhangra	Punjabi folk dance and music; usually performed by groups of men
bhog	the conclusion of a complete reading of the scriptural text
bichola	marriage advisor
bigar jana	literally, go bad; spoil
biraderi	coparcener group; sub-caste
bungas	quarter; rest house; in the Darbar Sahib complex *bungas* were built around the

	perimeter wall, the most well known of which is the Bunga Ramgariha
burj	fortified tower; obelisk
chardi kala	ascending optimism; indomitable courage
chattri	elevated, dome-shaped pavilions on the roof of a temple, tomb or mosque; architectural feature, resembling an umbrella
chaubarsa	literally, fourth year; fourth death anniversary
chikar/kichar	mud
chogas	tailored garment, resembling a coat, worn by men
darbari	courtly (from the root *darbar* or court)
darshan	literally, auspicious view of a divine being; commonly, audience with an exalted being; worship and blessing
dastar	turban
dhadi jathas	bands of musicians and orators of a Punjabi musical folk genre; Dhadi music was extremely significant during the militant decades in the contemporary politics of Punjab
dhakka	shove/shoved
dharm yudh morcha	battle for justice, launched in 1982 by the Akali Party
dhobi	washerman
Dhol vajje	drumbeats
donki bandeh	literally, donkeys; commonly, reference to illegal migrants or drug carriers
durries	rugs
fauji	literally, 'of' the army; soldier
fauji hamla	commonly, the term for Operation Bluestar, the Indian army operation in the Darbar Sahib
garh	fort
gatka	wooden stick; used in weapons-based martial art performances
ghallughara	carnage
ghar	home

ghar jawai/ khana damad	uxorilocal husband; commonly, live-in son-in-law
gyan	knowledge; intellect
jaddi	hereditary
jaddi jamin	patrimonial property
jatha	band
jimidar	landholder; peasant proprietor
jokham	risk
kalgi	egret feather; adorning a turban, the egret feather signified nobility
Kalgidhar/ kalghi vala	commonly, a reference to Guru Gobind Singh who wore an egret feather in his turban, denoting his aristocratic lineage (from *kalgi* or crest of the egret)
Kanada	colloquially, Canada
kanak roko	the 1984 agitation to prevent the export of wheat from Punjab
kar sewa (*kar seva*)	voluntary assistance
kavis	poets
kesri pugs	saffron turbans
khargku	militant (from the linguistic root *kharag* or scimitar); the use of the term indicated supporters or admirers of militants.
khes	thick cotton covering/bedspreads
kheti bari	agricultural labour
kirpan	one of the five kakars or symbols of the Khalsa; etymologically, defined as a defensive weapon — *kripa* meaning mercy and *aan* meaning to bless
kurahit	transgression of the Rahit, the code of conduct
langar	literally, community eating; commonly, the food served at gurdwaras
langar sewadars	free kitchen in a gurdwara (*langar*); kitchen volunteers (*sewadars*)
lehar	wave
luk luk ke	colloquially, hidden
Ma Boli	mother tongue
maharaj da prakash karna	literally, opening to the sunlight; ritual of ‘awakening’ the scriptural text

mard	man
maryada	custom; prescribed code of conduct
miri-piri	temporal (*miri*) spiritual (*piri*) authority
mona Sardar	a Sikh man who has shaved his beard and cut his hair
morcha	a gathering of protestors
nagara	kettle drum
nikal gaya	literally, left; commonly, illegal migration
nishan	mark; sign
paheliyan	riddles
pairan te chakkri	literally, wheels on the feet; constant traveller
Panj Piyareh	five ritual elect
panth	literally, path; system of belief and practice; the Sikh community
parikrama	circumambulation around a sacred space; in the Darbar Sahib, the walkway around the sacred pool
parohna	literally, guest; also, son-in-law
pata	known location; address
patit	literally, fallen; commonly used among Sikhs to mean apostate. The Sikh Gurdwaras Act, 1925, defines *patit* as a person who shaves or trims his hair or *kesh* or a Sikh guilty of one of the four cardinal prohibitions or *kurahits*
pind bandh, karza bandh	cordoning the village; in 1984, the movement to prevent loan recovery agents entering the village
pitrs	spirit of ancestors
prasad ghar	usually offerings to a deity or divine being; in the Darbar Sahib, the place where the *prasad* is made (from *prasad*, literally a gift)
pravachans	religious discourse; a lecture on the scriptures
ragi	singer of devotional music
rasta roko	barricades

Rehat maryada	code of conduct of the Khalsa Panth and pattern of prescribed behaviour
Saccha Padsha	true emperor; commonly, the title for Guru Har Gobind Singh, the sixth Guru, who wore the two swords of *miri* and *piri*, denoting temporal and spiritual authority
samadhi	cenotaph; site of an ascetic's interment, now used to refer to cremation sites of prominent people
sangat	congregation; ritual assembly in the presence of the sacred scripture
sarkar sewa	government service
sarovar	sacred pool; commonly, a reference to the pool at the centre of the Golden Temple complex
sarpanch	the head, usually elected, of a village council
sewa	assistance; ritual labour
shaheed	martyr
shaheedi	martyrdom
shaheedi parivar	family of a martyr
shakti	sacred energy; a personification of the divine feminine
shamiyanas	canvas canopies
siropas	a length of cloth, usually for a turban, bestowed as mark of recognition of piety or devotion
siyapa	lament/mourning ritual
sufi	a practioner of sufism, the mystical dimension of Islam
tankhahia	apostate
tashaddar	barbarity
tehkhana	underground chamber
tehsil	administrative unit within a district
tejas	divine energy
thes	injury/hurt
tithi	anniversary
totkeh	pithy sayings; wise sayings

uggarwadi	linguistic root *uggar* — literally, ferocious; bureaucratic term for terrorist
vand chakkna	to share with the community; one of the three main prescriptive practices of Sikhism, the other two being *Nam Japna* (recite the name) and *Kirat Karo* (to labour, work)
vars	ballads of battle; recitations of mythical narrative; a heroic ode
Vilayti	'from England'; English (from *vilayat*, referring to England)
vir ras	literally, the sweetness of brotherhood; bravery
wanggar	announce; challenge
Yadgar-e-Shaheedaan	martyr memorial
zinda	alive
zindabad	literally, live and flourish; 'long live'
zulm	oppression; brutality

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1

Bringing a Field to Focus

Punjabi is an idiosyncratic language. A mixture of Arabic, Persian and Urdu words, its speech full of metaphor, allegory, proverbs, small witticisms (*totkeh*) and rhyming puzzles (*paheliyan*), it is nevertheless oddly unmelodic in its intonations. Punjabi speakers migrating across different regions and nation states took their tongue with them, but often wrote their thoughts in different scripts. In Pakistan, for example, Punjabi is written in Shahmukhi, a modified Perso-Arabic script. In Indian Punjab, Gurmukhi (literally, the Guru's tongue) is the primary script. Punjabi cinema posters use the Roman script to reach out to non-Punjabi speakers and transnational audiences. A language transcribed in different scripts means there is no real consensus on spellings or transliterations of words. Disparate spellings are one reflection of movement. Migration is also apparent in the vast number of 'borrowed' words and idiosyncratic grammatical construction. Diaspora Punjabi in Europe, America and Canada is a complicated mixture of 'loan' terms from local contexts, but also a process of code-switching between the grammar of Punjabi and other languages. I was told by a migrant in Southall that Californian Sikh grape growers translate the plural of 'grape' into '*grapaan*'. The phenomenon of code-switching and code-mixing with other languages '…is a natural part of the verbal behaviour of Punjabis…(though) this type of verbal behaviour makes Punjabis a subject of jokes' (Bhatia 2008: 130). A professor of mine used to echo another standard version of Punjabi as an 'aunty-uncle' culture, which borrowed so freely from other language systems that it lost itself in the process. In a globalising world, however, cultural hybrids created through encounter are celebrated — sometimes ironically — as intrinsic to a 'portable' Punjabi culture.

The other face of borrowings and code-switching is the fear of losing Punjabi, an anxiety apparent in the restive history of language politics in Punjab. The 19th century Hindi movement in Punjab, mired in Hindu–Muslim communalism, sought to consolidate Nagri and displace Urdu in the Persian script as the official language (Brass 1974: 287; King 1994). In independent India, the fractious politics of linguistic reorganisation tore through Punjab, with Sikhs and Hindus identifying themselves with distinct language groups — Punjabi and Hindi (Brass 1974: 294). The Indian state's refusal to recognise communities on the basis of religion, or to recognise religion as the ground for territorial and administrative reorganisation, placed language at the centre of the claim for distinct territory. The Punjabi Suba movement of the early 1960s claimed a separate territory for Punjabi speakers, but was underwritten — or seen to be underwritten — as an incipient form of Sikh ethno-nationalism. Who were authentically 'Punjabis', was an issue that transformed into a politics of belonging and exclusion, seemingly based on language conflicts but understood as an attempt to displace Sikhs as key constituents of the state of Punjab. The Punjabi Suba agitation consolidated the claim of Gurmukhi as the authentic script for Punjabi, countered by a rejection of Devnagri.[1]

National language policies, communal boundaries and territorial rights oscillated between the public sphere of administrative reform and the more introverted sphere of family strategy. Hindu Punjabis sought to scuttle claims of linguistic and territorial rights by declaring Hindi as their mother tongue, and resisted what they interpreted as a future under Sikh dominance. Hindu Punjabi children were taught to deliberately lose the language, a loss that encouraged many to view Punjabi as an abject tongue fit only for coarse transactions, subscribing to the non-Punjabi view that spoken Punjabi sounds like a joke or abuse.[2] While there is no direct association between losing and reviving a language, the renunciation of Punjabi by one set of speakers — the Hindus — was countered by the more formal insistence of learning the language and the script by Sikhs. This was even more apparent among transnational migrant communities, and had as much to do with the retention of cultures as with homeland language politics. In the UK, for example, the Southall and Bradford Gurdwara Singh Sabhas actively promoted cultural and linguistic literacy among Diaspora Punjabis, many of whom were Sikh, so that transnational migrants and their children could read the scriptures in Gurmukhi, the language and script of the guru. To this

day, literacy and cultural revivalism intersect on websites (Punjabi World 2007), while ritual, culture and linguistic literacy are enhanced by collectives like theatre groups, who seek to restore and protect *Ma Boli* (the mother tongue).[3] Website Punjabi is rendered in the Roman and Gurmukhi scripts — a double rendition that signposts 'new' speakers, but also indicates the existence of a community that is unfamiliar with the script. However, spoken — and sung — Punjabi is now widely acknowledged in newer, expanded public arenas. Globalisation and its cultural hybrids have produced *bhangra* rap, Rabbi Shergill's Punjabi *sufi*, and Gurdas Mann's internationally popular rendition of *Apna Punjab*, indicating an energised language community of speakers (and singers).

The politics of language provides a lens to view politics and society of late 20th century Punjab. Issues of authenticity, revival and protection vis-a-vis transformation and corrosion have deeply affected social, political and cultural movements. The Khalistan movement was premised on the idea of loss. The lack of a distinct territory was perceived as an uprooting of the imagined culture of 'Punjabi' that needed a place of its own. Khalistan politics claimed federalist rights over the territory of Punjab to literally nourish a distinct identity. Citing scriptural authority, different leaders claimed the right to govern as the only way to sustain and preserve community. The politics of Khalistan concretised the dual political structure of Punjab, which oscillated between two spheres — one, the 'secular and multi communal, the other religious and confined to Sikhs' (Brass 1974: 313).

Migration and Militancy

Language controversies aside, Punjabi speakers of the late 20th century have struggled with social conditions of change created by biotechnological revolutions, economic restructuring, persistent migrations and political upheaval. Not surprisingly, post-green revolution Punjab bears little relation to social histories chronicled in Prakash Tandon's *Punjabi Century* (1969) or Tom Kessinger's *Vilayatpur* (1978). The pace and direction of change in the late 20th century have been revolutionary.

The dramatic transformations of late 20th century Punjab have been wrought by the conjunction — indeed the intertwining — of two significant social processes: transnational migration and religious revival, the latter resulting in a prolonged period of militancy. While

migration — of people, their language and their styles — has been an enduring process in Punjab, stretching back almost four centuries (Fischer 2004; Visram 2002), it is important to disaggregate the process itself. We need to shift focus from the 'stream' of outflows that presents migration as an endless and seamless movement, and instead pay attention to the political and social conditions under which decisions to migrate are taken. Further, the act of migrating reflects family responses and assessments of wider social contexts, and provides us another perspective on how larger social movements impinge on everyday worlds and individual lives. From the perspective of migration as 'response' or 'assessment' of wider political conditions, the 'stream' of migration is disaggregated into 'phases' or moments during and within which decisions to migrate are taken. An important theme in my analysis is the family as a site at which decisions to migrate are taken. The process of becoming a migrant is neither a wholly individualistic decision nor an entirely collective or familial one. Even though the migrant is *represented* as a volitional individual, assorted family members are critical to the process of a member becoming a migrant. Becoming a migrant then is a process that involves a whole set of people beyond the individual herself or himself. Therefore, while I agree with Parry and Gardner's view that migrants see themselves as high risk gamblers (Gardner 1995; Parry 2004) ready to cast themselves out upon an uncertain world, I disagree that the 'air of contingency' (Parry 2004: 220) that surrounds each decision is entirely spontaneous. Narrative accounts and family biographies of migration I collected over a period of some 20 years from the early 1980s to 2007, at successive periods of time, suggest that the family is a key player in the decision-making process that precedes migration.[4] So, while it is perfectly true that individuals rather than whole families migrate at any one point of time, different members of the family are critical 'actors' within each act of individual migration. In fact, families strategise to enable migration, taking loans to finance migrant journeys for example, or by activating urban networks to get legitimate travel papers, and so on. Thus, even if all family members themselves do not move, they are vital to the process and event of the migration of individuals. This aspect of family as actor becomes even more apparent when analysing migration jointly at 'sending' and 'receiving' sites — a village in the Doaba region of Punjab, and the transnational neighbourhood of Southall in the UK, respectively.

What emerged from this dual-sited view was that migration as an act is underwritten by a collective understanding of wider social conditions and a response to turbulent or uncertain events. It is impossible to think about migration without placing decisions to migrate within different political moments — to disassociate, for example, the transformative politics of Khalistan from the urgency to send young men away from a troubled political context. It is equally impossible to delink the contours of late 20th century migration from the enhanced engagements of the Diaspora with homeland politics.

The 'receiving' context of migration is intrinsic to my analysis. A transnational site where culture and politics interlock has meant that incoming migrants are located within shifting discourses that constantly create and address difference. Within the terms of these discourses, migrants are simultaneously stranger and family, risk bearers and dependents, dangerous as well as vulnerable, or quite simply, repositories and reminders of 'home'. Within such cultures of difference, migration is experienced and viewed as innately heterogeneous at discrete points of time; conversely, at each phase of migration, assorted 'views' of incoming migrants emerge from the perspective of the 'host state' and the settled inhabitants of the transnational community. In the course of this book, I try and outline what it means to migrate across space and time. I pay particular attention to the migration at the moment of militancy, to argue that neither the migrant nor the transnational host viewed the move as a replica of earlier or subsequent passage. Militancy transformed migration into a journey produced by politics, and, in turn, 'political' migrants like asylum-seekers transformed settled transnational communities.

By and large, the scholarship on migration, Diaspora formations and militancy remains distinct and segregated, though some scholars have analysed the connections. Brian Axel's important work *The Nations Tortured Body* (2001) or Gurharpal Singh and Darshan Singh Tatla's study of the making of the Sikh Diaspora (2006) link the formation of transnational communities with politically charged moments of militant politics. Other work alerts us to political 'activism' that flowed between the nations states (Fair 2005; Oberoi 1987, 2001; Razavy 2006). These analyses are distinguished by their close attention to the transformations of the Sikh Diaspora, as well as by their understanding of reactive migration impelled by political and economic conditions. Transnational migrations and transnational politics are, these authors argue, simultaneous.

It is the sense of connection between social movements of migration and militancy that are the focus of this work. Additionally, I draw on the work of migration theorists like Amit-Talai (1998), Bacchu (1996), Rapport and Dawson (1998), and Werbner (1999), who establish the value of 'home' in a world of movement, arguing that 'home as place' and 'migration as movement' are multiply situated. Multiple sites of identity formation form the structure of this book. However, I confine my primary attention to the period from the 1980s to the turn of the 21st century, to argue that militancy shaped identity in distinctive ways and, in turn, was transformed by migration.

Various questions have shaped my argument. How do people think about the period of militancy that transfigured the familiar landscape with violence and uncertainty? How do they look back upon this political moment? What were individual and family responses to the threat and violence unleashed by the state and militant groups? How did this violence shape and configure migration? While there is writing on the involvement of migrant communities of the Diaspora in shaping the direction of militancy in Punjab (Axel 2001; Deol 2000; Fair 2005; Singh and Tatla 2006), there has been less attention paid to the contours of migration of this period from the perspective of sending sites. Part of my endeavour is to understand how families responded to militancy. In retrospect, it does seem to me that some saw migration as a way to escape and critique violence, to cope with an ambient threat. Considering migration at specific points of time or as phases enables us to view it as a response to larger political events; it helps us link wider political movements and singular events to the everyday lives and decisions taken by ordinary folk. Simultaneously, I endeavour to plot the reception of migrants by their transnational compatriots during this politically uncertain period. Disaggregating migration across time and space is critical to the way I structure the chapters of this book, to enable me to think about other, less apparent 'connections' between militancy and migration.

Thinking Through a Past

My analysis of late 20th century Punjab begins from a 'critical event' — the army occupation of the Darbar Sahib, a sacred site of Sikhism in the city of Amritsar. While descriptions of the event itself are widely available (Dhillon 2006; Singh 1999; Tully and Jacob 1985), how

that event is remembered and commemorated is less well documented. My argument begins from the perspective of an event remembered, but while doing so, I argue that different locations of memory and commemoration are significant to understanding the processes through which the memory of the critical event is structured. At the Darbar Sahib in Amritsar, rituals commemorate the destruction of a sacred site. In transnational commemorations, on the other hand, the focus is on memorialising martyrs.[5] This disparity, I argue, makes us aware of the dissimilar intentions that underwrite memory-making, a view I explore through the analysis of the ritual of commemoration at two sites.

Disparate and multiple commemorations reflect the heterogeneous processes and decisions that underwrote migration. After 1984, the primary reasons to migrate shifted from livelihood and remuneration to asylum and safety. In the closing decades of the 20th century, livelihood and political rights merged; migrant narratives represented both political and economic dislocation as interlocking compulsions that shaped decisions to leave home. The idea of 'right to recompense' was transformed and reconstituted, underwritten by memories of political violence and loss of livelihood. In the later chapters, I explore the contradictory logic that shaped migration of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. To flesh out the difference and the character of the 'phases' of migration, I also look at the way the earlier process of migration and settlement were viewed by the host state, the settled community and incoming migrants.

The army occupation of the Darbar Sahib, the sacred complex at Amritsar, and the anti-Sikh riots that followed in Delhi, were the context that underwrote one phase of migration. But in the period preceding the 'critical event', the fear of emerging militancy and state-propelled violence was not voiced overtly but became apparent in small actions, including, I argue, in the sending away of young men. Creating a family member as migrant, especially 'battle-age' men (Jones 2004: 1), was a veiled way of resisting, critiquing and responding to the emerging violence. Migration decisions were a response to an ambient fear, a form of voicing an uncertainty about the future. In two chapters, I look back at some of these family decisions, which preceded Operation Bluestar but seemed to 'foretell' the violence that lay ahead. At the time of their enactment, these decisions to send young men away seemed to make no 'cultural' sense at all. It is in retrospect that each act can be understood in its fullness,

and it is the binocular disparity between the past and the present that enables the 'connection' between migration and militancy to become apparent.

It does seem to me, however, that the contemporary political and social history of Punjab, and militancy and migration as two significant social movements that shaped that political history, cannot be viewed or understood from a single location. Multiple and cross-cutting politics of location are critical to an understanding of contemporary politics and history of violence. To my way of thinking, it is important to traverse these multiple locations to properly understand the meanings and experiences of militancy and migration. It may be argued that the politics of identity are already multiply located in the relations between state, society, nation and community. However, it seems to me that state, society, nation and community, in fact, converge in cultural spaces like the village, the gurdwara or the transnational neighbourhood. Different spaces structure a sense of belonging — and, in turn, are constructed by everyday cultural practices. Migration between transnational and homeland spaces alters the visceral sense of belonging and identity. Spaces inscribed by state or militant violence, on the other hand, produce heightened 'feelings' of distance or assertion, of loss or entitlement.

Today, when Punjabis talk about themselves, especially those who live in Punjab, they rhetorically say 'the laughter has gone out of our lives'. It is a statement that is cited over and over, suggesting a loss so enormous and absolute that it has transformed what it even means to be Punjabi. 'What do we Punjabis want?' a long-term resident of Punjab mused, and rhetorically replied to his own question, 'Nothing much. A few dances, a rich wedding, a full stomach. What else is there?'[6].

The representation of simple things known and lost, colours the memory of a past before militancy. Underlying the image of loss is the issue of whether the past can now be put behind, or how it lingers and continues to shape everyday life.

Traversing Space

My fieldwork has been an extended and sporadic process, stretching across almost 20 years since I began my doctoral research. The spaces that I traversed have also been various — a village, a sacred centre and a transnational neighbourhood. At each point of time,

my research was framed by different questions. My earliest engagement 'in the field' was literally in the fields of a village of the Doaba, to study the cultural contours agrarian work. My interest in gender, masculinities and the making of male identities was the entry point for the shift to the transnational neighbourhood of Southall. I wanted to contrast the way families across borders — the sending family in the village and the receiving family of the transnational context — viewed young male migrants. In the village of which I have already written, the migration of brothers, sons and young husbands was viewed as a way of providing for the family — and clearly as the work of young men (Chopra 2005). However, it was not at all clear to me that in the transnational context young men were seen either as providers or as risk-takers. It was through the course of the second phase of fieldwork that I understood migration, especially without the safety net of institutional support (Amit-Talai 1998), as an event in two families — the sending family and the receiving family. From this dual-sited perspective of at least two families — or perhaps, more accurately, a transnational joint family — the migrant was clearly not the same person at all. From the standpoint of sending families, young male migrants were represented as risk-takers or gamblers [to use Parry's argument (2003) of contingent, spontaneous, highly individualised movements], but they were, and are, simultaneously represented as people who did what was required of them to sustain their families as well as to achieve an autonomous, independent masculine self. On the other side of the border, young male migrants were placed in positions of dependency vis-a-vis transnational kin, needing financial and social support for a long period of time, reverting almost to the position of children. The experience of migration, therefore, was clearly fractured and inconsistent.

Despite the fact that the two moments of fieldwork were occasioned by different research questions, I saw a connection between them in tracking the biographies of migrant men and their families. The critical divide between earlier and later migrations, for example, was the absence of a well-established and highly articulate settled community in the earlier phase, and the presence, in the later phase, of a clearly identified transnational neighbourhood. It also became clear through interviews and oral histories that the transnational community of the 50s and 60s was an 'introverted' community looking back towards the village homeland. Subsequently, the deeply

emotive politics of Khalistan transformed the social landscapes of this migrant community, fashioning inhabitants of Southall into advocates or critics of 'homeland politics'. The entry of 'political' migrants was vital to this process of transformation.

My research expanded from tracing the identities of migrant men in two homes to looking at migration in the political interregnum of the 80s and 90s. Migration impelled by militancy and state violence was a distinct process, and needed to be mapped on its own terms. Migrations of the post-1984 interregnum produced a set of questions that led me back to Punjab — this time beyond the village — and towards the sacred centre of Amritsar that bore the scars of a violent past.

The book follows my 'coming-going' journeys and questions that arose through the traverse. While I have tried to organise the chapters in some sort of chronological order, I am quite aware that the chronology of my research does not follow the order of chapters. At each stage, I looked back at and forward from my own fieldwork material, which seemed to splinter earlier constructions and change shape as I engaged with it at a later point of time.

Along the way, I also learnt different Punjabis. I learnt words in reverse, like *chikar/kichar* (mud) and *adkar/adrak* (ginger), which nuanced rural Punjabi; grammatical switches and extensions of '*abroadee*' Punjabi, like *grapaan* for grapes. And new words that evoked contradictory politics: the *uggarwadi* or terrorist, the term of state discourse, found its mirror opposite — *khargku* (the militant) — in the vocabulary of an imagined nation.

Notes

1. Caste politics further recast the language movement as a tussle between *bhaapa* (urban Khatri/Arora traders) and *jimidar* (rural Jat land-holders) dominance (Nayar 1965, 1966).
2. Popular *Santa-Banta* jokes, Indian TV serials like *Ulta Pulta,* or *Goodness Gracious Me* on BBC Two, create a disparaging discourse about the language and its speakers, but also stand testimony to the sardonic take on Punjabis, by Punjabis, for others, as indeed for themselves.
3. *The Tribune*, Amritsar Plus, 28 March 2009.

4. Migration narratives were gathered at different points of time and across different sites. My record begins from the village of the Doaba in which I did my doctoral work from 1982 to 1984, and moves to the borough of Southall in west London, where I did fieldwork at various points of time, beginning in March 2006; and in Amritsar and Chandigarh from 2005 to 2007.
5. In this book, I have only been able to explore commemorations at one transnational location —London. However, other commemorations of Operation Bluestar are marked across the globe. Counter memorials and commemorations memorialise those killed in the mid-air explosion of the Air India Flight 182 in June 1985, bound for London from Montreal. For example, the Canadian government presented a plaque 'to the citizens of Bantry' in Ireland, who helped the families of the victims of the Air India flight. In July 2007, a memorial park was established in Vancouver by the families of the victims of the ill-fated flight. Counter memorials that re-signify 'critical events' of that period are a rich area of analysis. Unfortunately, here I have not been able to address this issue.
6. Interview, Manjit Singh, Punjab University, Chandigarh, 16 April 2007.

2

Commemorating Hurt

Sahiba ho…
Agon Singhan likheya Zain nuh
Sun Shah de tabbehdar
Ajay karni saleeh salah
Sadde rajdeh nahin haithiyar
Ajey pi pi rakht dushmanan di
Saddi raji nah talwar
Tuh naviyaan mangan lor da
Pahilan pichla karz utar
Tera dhake kila Sarhind da
Kar pathar tarat sawar
Assi rchiyeh uthe Fatehgarh
Jithe usri si divar…

[Extract of *Var Dulle di/Var Mirza,* sung in front of Akal Takht, Golden Temple Complex, Amritsar, by the Bhai Surinder Singh Bhangu Jatha, 5 June 2007, on the occasion of Ghallughara Diwas (Genocide Day)][1]

The past, Marx wrote bitterly in the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, 'weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the living' [Marx (1852)1973:147].

Not everyone shares Marx's cynicism. Remembrance of things past[2] is a fundamental resource for actors and social groups living in the present, who, to Marx's disgust, 'conjure up spirits of the past to help them… borrow their names, slogans and costumes…' (Marx 1973: 147).[3] We do not leave our past behind; it's a palpable presence in our present, and we actively commemorate and remember the past in monuments and memorials, in texts, images, songs, stories, rituals, art, and in evocations of the spirit of persons. It is in society that people acquire memory (Halbwachs 1992), localising the

present in the past. The most personal memory is given meaning within social frameworks, and is collective, not only because its content is shared, but because the process of remembering is shared (Eves 1996: 3). Tidying up what is perhaps elusive, more process than thing, Paul Connerton argued that 'images of the past and recollected knowledge of the past… are conveyed and sustained by (more or less ritual) performances' (Connerton 1989: 3–4). The emphasis on reiterated acts — done and redone — as a 'store' of and for memory (Connerton 1989: 65) forefronts the performative as a crucial mode of remembrance.

Both Halbwachs and Connerton spoke of social memory as selective. Different groups, argued Halbwachs, have different collective memories that produce diverse forms of remembering. Connerton put his finger on a central aspect of selective memory, contending that social memory is a dimension of political power, and 'the control of a society's memory largely conditions the hierarchy of power… and hence the organisation of collective memory (bears directly) on legitimating (1989: 1) … images of the past to commonly legitimate a present social order' (1989: 3).

Both writers addressed commemorations — physical monuments or rituals — asserting that the past is preserved as a moral universe, sanctified and homogenised by deleting disruptive counter memories. Commemorative monuments convey the illusion of reconciliation to a particular version of an authentic past, offering a façade of fixed and frozen memory, implying the successful transmission of messages of power and the submission to authorised memory. However, scholars suggest that memorials and commemorations as modes of making memory meaningful are not a fossilisation of memory, but a process of meticulous remembering and active forgetting of the past. Remembering is an inherently generative process, selective, creative and performative, mediated by material culture and ritual performances, as well as by the written and spoken word (Williams 2006: 2). Despite façades of permanence, commemorations are sites of creative remembering and strategic forgetting, and are deeply contested. Treating forgetting as either forgetfulness or unintended social amnesia 'effectively excludes consideration of forgetting as a willed transformation of memory (and) blinds us to situations in which forgetting is linked to social reconstruction and cultural revaluation, or further yet, in which persons actually approach forgetting as a desirable social goal' (Battaglia 1992: 14). Acts of

remembering and forgetting create a paradox, for it is important for people to remember what it is they must forget. Producing legitimated memory creates the context of strategically forgetting some elements of inherited memory, so that memory can be directed towards acceptable or 'usable pasts' editing in what people need to remember and editing out what they need to remember to forget.

But the past, as Marx warned, can be a nightmare, its memory producing an intense sense of disquiet. An uneasily remembered past is the subject of this chapter, drawing on diverse writings on memory and the work of artists constructing memorials of the dark side of a society's brutal past. Histories of violence compelled artists to draw a fine line between remembering personal sacrifice without celebrating violence. The serene aesthetic of the Vietnam Memorial suggests a move away from the horrors of violence, and peaceful reconciliation with a past. On the other hand, monuments of the Nazi regime provoked some German artists to create 'counter monuments' (Young 1993), which offered no closure or solace, but evoked a deep disquiet and an uneasy remembrance. Memorials, and the emotional landscapes they create, are objects that embody emotion, and are designed to evoke emotions and feelings in the viewers and participants.

Like monuments, commemorations are repositories of collective memory and expressive fields of power, sites at which hegemony and resistance are articulated, where officially authorised collective memories and contradictory counter memories exist in uncomfortable synchronicity. The simultaneity of both versions of a shared past within the same set of ceremonials or commemoration, makes memorialising a rich field for understanding relations of hierarchy, national imaginations, the creation of new shared memories and divergent identities. The meanings of memorials shift over time and space, reflecting strategic memory loss and recollection. William Blair's analysis of the metamorphoses of the Arlington Cemetery, from the epitome of Civil War discord to a site of reconciliation (Blair 2004), demonstrates the continuous process of construction and meaning-making to which memorials and commemorations are subject. Performance constitutes what is strategically lost in the redoing of a past in re-enactments that are unstable, incomplete and, I argue, often fragmented across different sites.

Emotional Landscapes

The orchestrated military assault on Sri Darbar Sahib, the Golden Temple complex in Amritsar (Punjab), by the Indian Army during Operation Bluestar, was executed in the first week of June 1984. The assault on the sacred site is most frequently spoken of as a deeply traumatic event evoking intense, but uneasy, recollections, uneasy remembrances, and explicit proscriptions on memorialising.[4] I have already briefly addressed the politics preceding the attack, and will not go over the same ground here, except to say that the Indian government represented the military act as the only possible response to militant violence, and as an endeavour to 'flush out'[5] militants, including Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale,[6] and confront the demands for a separate state of Khalistan.[7]

Residents of Amritsar, confined to their homes during the course of a 32-hour curfew imposed on the walled city from 1 June 1984, heard the staccato gunfire and felt the ground shake. [8] On that day, some of the heaviest exchanges of fire between security forces and men inside the Golden Temple resulted in 11 deaths. Six bodies were handed over to the authorities by officials of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), the body that manages gurdwaras and the activities within them. Amrik Singh, of the All India Sikh Student Federation, a close associate of Bhindranwale, reported to the press on 1 June that bullets fired by the military had created 26 holes in the temple complex (*The Tribune*, 2 June 1984). Another report stated, 'As a result of the firing the situation has become explosive in the city…there is a general feeling of scare among the residents and people are in a state of shock' (*The Tribune*, 2 June 1984).

When curfew was finally lifted, many ran through the narrow gullies towards the Golden Temple, in frenzy akin to mourners hearing the news of death. Looking at the damaged dome, women broke out into spontaneous *siyapa* (laments).[9] The first viewing of the shell of the takht, is a hurt remembered, and people come back again and again on successive anniversaries of Operation Bluestar to mourn the death of the temple.[10]

Cited most frequently as the source of 'hurt' of the Sikh community, the event is one in a series of prior and consequent political episodes; but it also stands apart as an exemplar of hurt.[11] As a

term in everyday speech, 'hurt' signals a sense of deliberate offence or politically intentioned injury of community sentiment. Punjabis use the English word 'hurt' to denote the feeling of being seized by pain, as well as to suggest intentionality embedded in an act — 'hurt *paunchaya*' (hurt caused).

Sometimes it is replaced by another English word that conveys the sense of embodied emotion — 'feel *hoya*' is a phrase that is often used among Punjabi speakers to suggest emotional distress. When not using the word in English, Punjabis use the word *thes* or *dhakka* to convey a sense of bodily injury. The term 'hurt' and the phrase 'hurting the sentiment of community' are frequently deployed to argue cases of loss or injury that are not necessarily physical. By profaning sacred space, the occupation of the Golden Temple complex was, and is, viewed as a deliberate 'hurt' inflicted on the sentiments and standing of the Sikhs.

'Hurt' is signified across different domains of experience. It is personal affront — numerous men interviewed during 2006–07 (including those who fled Punjab and took refuge in Southall) recounted stories of being accosted by police and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel because they wore turbans, had long flowing beards,[12] or rode motorbikes.[13] Hurt was, and is, projected as political — the inclusion of Sikhs under the category of 'Hindu' under Article 25(b) of the Indian Constitution is resented and represented as 'hurting' their collective self. The sense of submergence of a distinct identity within the larger category of Hindu is represented as a deliberate attempt to obliterate the foundation of a political community. A sense of political 'hurt' is embedded in the demands of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution.[14] Championed by Bhindranwale and other Sikh leaders at various points of time, the Anandpur Sahib Resolution may perhaps be viewed as a constitution-in-the-making of a clearly theological state of Khalistan (literally, the nation of the pure). Mimetically replicating the Indian Constitution, the Anandpur Sahib Resolution crucially drew away from the idea of the secular. On the one hand, it demanded the right to carry religiously prescribed weapons like the *kirpan* (dagger) in public places, and on the other, it claimed the right over river waters of Punjab and the right to regulate the movement of food grain outside the state [the '*kanak roko*' (prohibiting grain export) agitations of 1984 were an outcome of this demand]. The imagined demography of Khalistan envisioned by the Resolution effectively excluded non-believers as well as *patit*

(or non-observing) Sikhs, who did not conform to the code of *Rehat maryada* (Sikh way of life enunciated in religious documents and pamphlets [McLeod 1997]). Its provisions emphasised abstinence, observance of bodily symbols and cultural rejuvenation, and envisioned a baptised community of 'faithful' citizens. Only those who were initiates could be citizens of Khalistan. While initiation rituals of *amrit chakkna* (drinking the holy nectar) are a vital ritual in the creation of community and incorporation of new members, publicly enacted *amrit chakkna* initiations were performed throughout the early and mid-80s as a form of renewal of faith and commitment to the emerging political community of Khalistan. Before he fled to take sanctuary in the Golden Temple, Bhindranwale toured the state and conducted initiation ceremonies. Subsequently, his father Jasbir Singh Rode also toured villages of Punjab, actively encouraging people to re-enact the *amrit* ritual as a form of a personal pledge to defend the faith. The Anandpur Sahib Resolution seemed to suggest that citizenship was not an abstract identity conferred by the Indian state, but rather a matter of language, ritual observance and embodied spirit converging on a specific territory.

The emotive language of disavowal drew simultaneously on scriptural tropes and political disaffection of dissent. From the Indian government's point of view, the Resolution and the claim to Khalistan were interpreted as an illegitimate political document of an unlawful nation, which nevertheless had profound implications for the 'authentic' nation. The contest between Nations was fought within the precincts of the Golden Temple.

That battle of Bluestar produced the monumental hurt — the architectural mutilation of the Akal Takht, a premier building of the complex that represented the site of political authority and autonomy of the Sikh community. The shattered shell of the Takht, destroyed by a rocket-propelled grenade launcher, was, and is, represented as the 'hurt' that struck at the heart of the sacred community (*sangat*) and every individual member within it. 'Hurt' moved from community to territory — the land of the imagined nation of Khalistan, it was said, was being drained by a rapacious Centre, and only the control over its natural resources of water and food could make Punjab/Khalistan regain its sense of worth. The distribution of the *ab* (river water) of Punjab to other states was cited as 'hurting' the rights to livelihood and territorial integrity.[15] The decimation of the takht and sapped territory of Punjab were widely spoken of

together as a deliberate injury inflicted on Sikh *maryada* or sense of honour (Bourdieu 1979). A contextual term, *maryada* variously connotes honour, way of life, ritual and traditions. *Rehat maryada* is the code of conduct incumbent on all Sikhs (McLeod 1997: 71–85). But as Uberoi (1996) has pointed out, it is the bodily observances of men that symbolic-ally constitute the collective body of community. The hurt to *maryada,* therefore, was understood as debasement of *mards* (men), who sustain and embody *maryada.* Sliding across a series of sites, 'hurt' became a key trope in remembrance.

The remembrance of the hurt of Operation Bluestar has a double tenor. The death of specific people is mourned as part of the rituals of remembrance. But the desecration of the sacred complex as a wellspring of hurt is powerfully stressed. The two sources of hurt are not evoked in the same way or with the same intent. I would argue, in fact, that among all the violent incidents that engulfed Punjab for almost three decades (Grover 1995; Narayanan 1996; Puri et al. 1999; Singh 2000), the siege and attack on the Golden Temple complex, and the destruction of its sacred buildings in June 1984 are remembered as pivotal, especially hurtful because of the place of the Golden Temple in Sikh history and hagiography.[16] In the sacred geography of Sikhism, Sri Darbar Sahib and the eponymous Golden Temple are the centre of a moral and religious world; so the army action was seen not merely as a military occupation but a desecration, continuously cited in commemorations as an irreparable hurt.[17]

The other interwoven event — in fact, the explanation offered for the military operation — was the elimination of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and his militant cohorts. Though central to the entire event, there is a peculiar ambivalence surrounding the remembrance of Bhindranwale's death. His death is frequently fused with remembrances of other deaths, many of ordinary people.[18] One prominent death link, however, is between his death and the subsequent assassination of Indira Gandhi on 31 October 1984 (who, Prime Minister, ordered the forcible takeover of the temple complex). The two deaths have been coupled — Bhindranwale's death as the revenge of the Indian state against militant violence unleashed against the legitimate nation by him and his followers, and Indira Gandhi's assassination by her Sikh bodyguards as a retaliation for violating and laying waste the sacred shrine and the massacre of Sikh pilgrims.[19] Though the two deaths are equally mired in

violence, remembrance and representation are wedged between forbidden and authorised memorials of two lives positioned as the antithesis of each other — Bhindranwale, the *uggarwadi* (terrorist)[20] and a threat to the nation, and Indira Gandhi, the putative mother of modern India.

Performances of commemoration oscillate between allegories of sacrilege on the one hand and tropes of national identity, violence and political personhood on the other. While most scholars pay attention to one memorial, we need to recognise that commemorations are dialogic and range across multiple sites and multiple memories. Dispersion creates the possibility of articulating the event differently at distinct sites, each seeming to bear no relation to the other, but each, in fact, transmitting messages of what can be remembered or needs to be elided. The forgotten is resurrected at its exclusive site or breaks through the surface of authorised memory. To fully understand the meaning of remembrance, we need to think through a series of connected rituals and artefacts of memory that flesh out the meanings of past event and present identity. Dispersed commemorations suggest the marginalisation of some memories by other hegemonic ones, but there are times when marginality protrudes into the making of meaning.

Operation Bluestar is an event at one site, but memory and rituals of remembrance move across space and time. Memorialisation of Operation Bluestar metaphorically jettisons the before and after, denoting the singularity of the event and its categorical, unsullied remembrance. Reflecting on the series of memorials placed in dialogic relations of reference, however, it is clear that remembrance is layered, weaving historical pasts and contemporary politics into a patchwork quilt of memory that fragments what Operation Bluestar is remembered for.

Commemorations of the deaths of Bhindranwale and Indira Gandhi are fragmented over a string of sites, including newly created public spaces (Indira Gandhi's home where she was assassinated and her riverside *samadhi* or cremation site), familiar sacred places (the Golden Temple) and days of remembrance (6 June and 31 October),[21] even cities — the commemorations for Indira Gandhi occur in Delhi, for Bhindranwale in Amritsar.[22] The construction of a double-sited memorial for Indira Gandhi has for years been stabilised by an embargo on the construction of a *Yadgar-e-Shaheedaan* (martyrs' memorial) for Bhindranwale. The invented styles of

remembrance signal transformations in the meanings of memorials and commemoration rituals to decipher memory and forgetting.

Death and the Nation

Remembering Indira Gandhi is uncertain business. The problem of remembrance is compounded by her problematic legacy of rule, which includes the extremely popular victory in the Bangladesh War and the exceptionally unpopular imposition of the Emergency. At her memorial sites, however, these highs and lows of her governance remain unmarked. The second problem is that there are two memorials for Indira Gandhi, one denoting her violent death at the site of her assassination at her home in central Delhi, the other a *samadhi*, the place of her cremation along the banks of the Yamuna, aligned with other public monuments to national memory. The splitting of the memorial evokes different elements in collective memory.

The memorial at the house she occupied for 20 years lies at the heart of the heritage zone of the city, the Lutyen's Bungalow Zone. Though urban bylaws are strict about modifications in the heritage zone, the house at 1, Safdarjung Road has been converted into a museum that contains family photos, books she read, as well as official gifts she received during her prime ministerial tenure. This half of the double memorial is anchored in the pathway where she fell, her body riven with bullets fired by her two Sikh bodyguards. The blood stains, now fading to brown, are preserved under the crystal covered pathway, providing a clear view of her violent death, a memory of violence substantiated by the preservation in the museum of the epitome of Hindu feminine clothing, her sari, blood-stained and bullet-tattered, chemically treated to retain the stains of violence. The pathway and the sari evoke the sense of the violated feminine and a transgression of protected personhood.

In popular imagination, ambivalence inflects violent death, representing it as an outcome of past transgression or as an inauspicious and dangerous death since the restless *atma* or spirit hovers irresolute over the site of her/his violent death. But the trope of sacrifice alters the meaning of violence, transforming dismembered bodies to a sacred and procreative body, and this is the shift suggested in the way the objects within the memorial are laid out. For many tourists, the exceptionally emotive memorial-within-the-memorial

are the printed pages of what are now seen as prophetic utterances of Indira Gandhi's last speech the day before she died: 'I do not care whether I live or die, and when I die every drop of my blood will invigorate India and strengthen it.' The referential quotation on a printed page evokes the dismembering of the Hindu sacred/sacrificial body, and the allusion to the symbolic spilling and distribution of her blood across the territory of the nation made meaningful for visitors conversant with Vedic Hindu ideology of sacrifice, where the dismembered body and spilt blood become generative and productive (Das 1983). Viewing the blood on the path and the stained sari become *darshan* (perceiving the divine through the lens of devotion) through mimetic replications of bodily attitudes of reverence of a sacred valued object, and this converts the memorial into a shrine. 'Some visitors get emotional when they see the spot where Mrs Gandhi was killed. Some of them bring bouquets and stand quietly for hours. Some just break down looking at the pathway,' the memorial curator, Vijay Puri Goswami, is quoted as saying.[23] The style of perceiving and ritual commemoration ruptures the hierarchy of ruler and ruled, creating an intimate topography of shared sentiment. The floral tributes and the vigil create a symbolic exchange between the dead person and the visitor, who remembers her through artefacts of memory, and transform the political personhood of the secular leader to that of a sacred Mother Goddess with her dismembered, though regenerative, body. Post-1984 calendar art depicted Indira Gandhi as a Mother Goddess standing at the centre of the map of India in her blood-stained sari. 'This is one of India's biggest tourist spots. I do good business here,' says Bishan, who sells Indira Gandhi photos and postcards on the sidewalk outside the memorial (ibid.). In 2006, newspapers reported that a Congress worker wanted to build a temple named 'Indira Dham', in Jaipur district, where the late leader would be worshipped like a goddess.[24]

The second memorial is at the site of Indira Gandhi's cremation. The memorial is situated between Rajghat (the samadhi of the Father of the Nation) and Shanti Van (Forest of Peace — where Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, and Indira's own father, was cremated). Indira Gandhi's memorial, Shakti Sthal (*shakti* means divine feminine power), is in line with a string of memorials of assorted national leaders along the banks of Yamuna, converting the entire space into a memorial milestone. Indira Gandhi's cremation site

is marked by a stone monolith (Plate 2.1),[25] but scattered through the parkland are large boulders collected from all over India, many from river valleys and riverbeds, a simulacra of a geological park studded with natural artefacts that artfully symbolise a naturalised unity of the nation anchored at a bounded space — the Sthal. Designed by the Central Design Wing of the Central Public Works Department (CPWD), its gardens maintained by the horticultural department, and ceremonies managed by the Ministry of Urban Affairs, Shakti Sthal commemorates an authorised official memory of a national leader.

Yuthika Sharma (2002) convincingly argues that the tended gardens at cremation sites are an entirely modern creation, since cremations are traditionally understood to release the *atma* from earthly associations. The continued connection of people with the leader through the memorial counters the normal construction of cremations. While I endorse Sharma's argument that the memorial is a unique modern public space, I evoke the spirit of my own anthropological ancestors to understand modes of remembrance. Anthropological understandings of Indic concepts demonstrate that the release of the spirit is complemented with the incorporation of *atma* into the collective cosmic body of the *pitrs* (ancestors). The location of Shakti Sthal next to Rajghat, the cremation ground of the Father of the Nation, as well as the subsequent carving out of a portion of Shakti Sthal for Vir Bhumi, the cremation site of Rajiv Gandhi, Indira Gandhi's son,[26] suggest the assimilation of the person to a pedigree of political *pitrs*, an incorporation that dissolves the specificity of personhood, but in doing so, restores order after the chaos of death. The assemblage of natural stones, cremation grounds and political lineages suggested in spatial layout of the memorial mile, create a public, unified, un-gendered body of national *pitrs*. 'Official' ceremonies that might be said to reinstate the individual person (supporting Sharma's argument), in fact, establish continuities with familiar cultural modes of remembering connections with dead persons at periodic intervals, like *chaubarsa* (fourth death anniversary) and *tithi* (anniversary day), which commemorate the *pitr* rather than the person.

The processes of remembering useable pasts combine with strategic forgetting of uneasy deaths. The two memorials for Indira Gandhi move across an imagined landscape of ritualised remembering and forgetting, with Shakti Sthal evoking peace and 'rest'

through inclusion with putative *pitrs*, and the museum suggesting a vulnerable woman slain by those who should have protected her, but also a transformation of the feminine 'in danger' to a regenerative and compelling mother, revitalised through the power of memory. The opposition between violent end and peaceful resolution are split over the two memorials; it is at the domestic site that Operation Bluestar remains the unstated, uneasily remembered event.

Memory and Metamorphosis

There is no physical memorial that marks the death of the *uggarwadi* Bhindranwale. No 'official' public memorial has been built in his memory, and walking through the gullies approaching the Golden Temple no noticeable signs suggest his significance .[27] The refusal of the state to permit the construction of a memorial in Bhindranwale's memory is compounded by the refusal of many of his followers to acknowledge his death. In government records, Bhindranwale is a dead man. But until 2004, two decades after Operation Bluestar, functionaries at the Damdami Taksal, the seminary of which he was head during his lifetime, refused to concede his death, insisting that Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale was *chardi kala* — in an intensely energised state of high spirits.[28] No performances of *bhog* or *antim ardas* (last rituals of mourning) were permitted by the cliques within the seminary or the state.

The absence of a martyr to mourn and the spectacular presence of the damaged dome of the Akal Takht, clearly visible on the city skyline for many years after 1984, inflect the memory of Bluestar with indecision, elision and dissent. It is not always easy, therefore, to ascertain and excavate what is remembered on 6 June of every year. Accounts of remembrances vacillate over a range of oppositions: martyrs/desecrations, personal loss/collective hurt, unique versus familiar rituals. Passing time and political hierarchies have been critical in constituting memory, producing commemorations as sites of politics and power (Blair 2004: 10). In the immediate aftermath of Operation Bluestar, the Indian state's efforts to 'clean up' and 'clear out' all signs of military battle were simultaneous with attempts at deleting culpability. In an attenuated form of military tourism, newspaper reporters and photojournalists were invited by the army to view fortifications that disfigured buildings of the

sacred complex, and to scrutinise the display of captured weaponry laid out on the *parikrama* (the walkway around the sacred pool).[29] The graphic message of the sightseeing tour was to reassign guilt for the desecration, legitimise army entry into the gurdwara, and to seek validation for a whole series of subsequently enacted prohibitions. The underlying significance of the performative presentations was to implicate those killed in the army action as people who had turned a sanctuary of religious belief into a fortification of aggression. The army's efforts at obliteration were synchronised with administrative bans on processions and other forms of collective mourning, clearly suggesting that those who violated sacred spaces (of temple or nation) had no place in ritual memory. No ceremonials were officially recognised; at various points of time, the District Magistrate of Amritsar imposed Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code to prevent assembly and procession,[30] and until the formation of the Akali government, no state officials participated in any memorials.[31]

From the moment the Golden Temple reopened, the problem of remembering Operation Bluestar became the central focus of debate. The two months immediately following Bluestar were dominated by the issue of rebuilding the severely damaged Akal Takht. Some Punjabi intellectuals wanted to retain the wounded shell as a mark of collective hurt (Singh 1999; Tully and Jacob 1985); the Central government moved swiftly and appointed Budhha Dal *Dera* chief Baba Santa Singh Cheyyanvi Korori (Cheyyanvi Korori literally means the leader of 96 crore people) to conduct the *kar sewa* (voluntary labour) to restore the appallingly damaged buildings, the bullet-riddled *parikrama,* and remove all signs of Operation Bluestar from the takht and the temple. There was intense opposition to the co-opted Baba,[32] especially since the complex was still under army control and the building work conducted under his supervision was not funded by donations from the community but by 'tainted' government funds.[33] Despite the ridicule to which his portly frame and his alleged penchant for opium were subject,[34] and accusations that he was performing *sarkar sewa* (government duty), repair work proceeded under Santa Singh's ostensible supervision.[35] Allegations and rumours circulated that the Budhha Dal chief was a compliant fig leaf, and the actual work was outsourced to a construction firm, Skipper Builders. Curfew was re-imposed throughout the period of the reconstruction, and ordinary Sikh worshippers were not allowed

to have *darshan* (ritual viewing) of their most sacred shrine. The sense of desecration was heightened by allegations of pay-offs to co-opted *babas* ('saints') and sacrilegious construction companies, deepening the sense of hurt.

The army vacated the Golden Temple complex on 28 September 1984, and it was handed over to the five high priests of the five takhts on 29 September 1984. Within a day of its handover to the five priests,[36] the thanksgiving ceremonies were hijacked by a 300-strong *jatha* (band) of young men, who shouted pro-Bhindranwale slogans and mounted a Khalistan flag on the dome of the restored Akal Takht. The gathered audience greeted these noisy interventions with approval and admiration.[37]

When the rebuilt temple was finally handed over to the SGPC,[38] Gurcharan Singh Tohra, the then president of the SGPC, decided that the entire building would be pulled down and rebuilt.[39] The demolition began on 26 January 1986,[40] on another apparent coincidental twinning of memorials for recasting nations — India's Republic Day, and also the martyrdom of Baba Deep Singh,[41] who had been killed while defending the Akal Takht against Afghan invaders in 1757. The allusion to past destruction, invasion, and martyrdom in defence of political ideals and sacred spaces in the coincidence of dates, were not lost on the contemporary audience of believers. From the moment the complex was opened right up to the present, Operation Bluestar has been memorialised in some form within the precincts of the Golden Temple complex, though the tenor and style of the memorialisation has altered dramatically over time.

After 1986, some religious observances were permitted. In late May 1988, for instance, the Punjab government released one of the high priests 'so that religious ceremonies could resume'.[42] 'Religious programmes' to honour the dead were gradually inaugurated, presented as 'normalising' rites of mourning to restore a sense of order after chaos. However, what might be constituted as prohibited memory gets inserted within the restorative rituals. Visiting the temple on 6 June every year is one way in which pilgrims interviewed in June 2007 designate the day, their repeated pilgrimage a commemoration of personal loss, but also a way in which they mark their connection to the larger event. Forty-two-year-old Deep Singh, who came as part of the Darawale *jatha* on 6 June 2007 from his village Bhikhiwind Dara, interleaves his own idiosyncratic

memory into the collective ceremonials. Deep Singh was a member of a *jatha* that marched towards Amritsar and the Golden Temple as part of the *rasta roko* (barricade the roads) and *kanak roko* (prohibit grain export) agitations begun by the Akali Dal as part of the *dharm yudh morcha*; on 1 June 1984, Deep Singh's *jatha* was prevented from reaching its destination by security forces, and he couldn't blockade a road or crowd a jail cell to signal his protest. He gestures toward the 1984 embargo in all his subsequent visits, arriving as part of formal *jathas* on 6 June every year to recreate a journey he could not undertake. Sixty-year-old Dalip Singh lost his father-in-law during the assault; he comes to the Golden Temple on 6 June to remember a personal loss within the rites of collective mourning.

More public and prominent shifts occurred over time, most particularly the naming of the day. In 2004, for example, in a programme called *Flashbacks* for the BBC, Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti, the jathedar of the Akal Takht, said in the interview, 'My heart cries when each year, we gather to honour the martyrdom of the hundreds of children, women and men who were brutally murdered by the Indian Army soldiers. I was inside the Temple complex right through the mindless massacre… late on 5 June evening, they entered with their tanks which targeted the Akal Takht' (*BBC News-South Asia*, 3 June 2004). The Giani's remembrance emphasises honouring of 'innocents' killed in the 'mindless massacre', and the memory of army tanks targeting the Akal Takht.[43] The significance of the day of gathering, mentioned almost as if in passing, is known to all those to whom the Giani alludes when he talks of 'we' who 'gather'. The audiences of listeners fully understand the significance of the day as the designated death anniversary of Bhindranwale and his major followers. The naming of 6 June as Ghallughara Diwas[44] in 1995 is a powerful mnemonic, harking back to the carnage of 'innocent' women and children by Afghan invader Ahmed Shah Durrani (the 'Shah' of the ballad quoted at the start of this chapter). The event remembered is the Vadda Ghallughara (the major massacre) in Sikh history,[45] aligning the modern event with the medieval carnage, tracing a lineage of persecution, mass death and destruction of the temple complex. On the face of it, the solemn ritual performances of *ghallughara* mime ceremonial observances enacted within the Golden Temple on virtually every religious occasion, a performance of ritual normalcy that seems to veil the violence of the modern *ghallughara*. But the set apart

nature of Ghallughara Diwas is signalled by the absence of a specific category of actors — politicians, for example — and the presence of particular others. On 6 June 2004, the day he was interviewed, Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti conferred *siropas* (robes of honour) on the family members of Bhindranwale and other militants killed during Operation Bluestar (*The Tribune*, Amritsar, 7 June 2004), his grave demeanour a model of formal propriety appropriate to the occasion of mourning. Sombre ceremonials have been understood as acquiescence to legitimated memory, a willingness to remember only that which is permitted. But in deciphering Decoration Days and southern commemorations of the American Civil War, Blair (2004) and others have argued that outward sober forms of rituals are often pragmatic responses to state regulation and surveillance, but whenever permitted, commemorations of the forbidden very quickly break through barriers of prohibition. The Giani's bestowal of *siropas* militated against any delusional understanding of his act as a submission to authorised memory or a return to normalcy.

Rituals as a storehouse of memory enacted within mnemonic spaces combine to shape commemoration. The Golden Temple as a space haunted by diverse memories is a visceral site of emotion expressed in commemoration. It is to the complex, a theatre of rituals that recreate particular events and embody remembrance that I now turn through an account of Ghallughara Diwas.

Sacred Spaces and the Ritual Day

It is important to understand the spatial structure of the Darbar Sahib, or the Golden Temple complex as it is more popularly known, and the architectural location of the Akal Takht, the structure that became, and remains, the site of debate. Though I have already discussed the structure of the complex in more detail earlier, it is nevertheless important to traverse the spaces once again to ground the ritual in its context.

The Akal Takht is one half of the Darbar Sahib; the other, the Harmandir Sahib (literally, the divine temple). The latter is the site of the spiritual, where recitations from the Adi Granth are sung every day. Set in the midst of a *sarovar* (sacred pool), the Harmandir Sahib is physically linked by a marble causeway to the forecourt of the Akal Takht. The physical bridge symbolises an essential concept within Sikhism — the juxtaposition and continuous movement

between the temporal (*miri*) and the spiritual (*piri*) within the sacred geography of the temple complex. While the Harmandir Sahib as the site of the spiritual is crucial to the built environment of this sacred landscape, it is also veiled, literally and metaphorically protected by the edifice of the Akal Takht that stands before it facing outwards, towards the city. It is the dome of the Akal Takht that comes into view in the approach to the sacred complex, and dominates the city skyline. In relation to the Akal Takht, the Harmandir is the sanctum, while the takht is the protective architectural and ideological layer. The Harmandir as a spiritual core cannot be wholly accessed without 'passing' through the forecourts of the takht. The sacred landscape as a habitus embodies critical ideas of spiritual realisation through the political, creating dispositions to think through the political, not as belonging to the sphere of the secular, but intrinsic to the religious domain and sense of sacred community. To realise the euphoric spirit — *chardi kala* (literally, to raise, to soar and fly) — the exercise of temporal political power is essential. The site of temporality, the Akal Takht, is then more than a 'passage' to the core; it is a form of being that enables the realisation of the state of euphoria. So *chardi kala* is also a blossoming of courage, an un-wilting spirit and certitude in divine justice embodied in the Akal Takht. The takht, it seems to me, represents and legitimises passion in politics.

In Sikh hagiography, the Akal Takht plays a significant role, because it is in the takht that the guru sat as a representative of God, hearing petitions, issuing orders, accepting offerings, and 'ruling' in the everyday affairs of the Sikh community like a king in court, mimetically replicating the *darbari* practices of Indian kingship and patrimonial power. In the medieval period, the guru was represented as the *Saccha Padsha* — the real and true emperor and charismatic leader — opposed to the central and hegemonic power of the Mughal emperor. The sacred landscape of the temple complex creates dispositions that orient people to think through the political as a critical journey to the spiritual, and as a way of being true believers. Since Sikhism does not have the tradition of a living guru, the sacred text is the embodiment of the guru. The care of the text is of immense concern. Each morning, the Guru Granth Sahib is placed on a palanquin and 'escorted' from the Akal Takht to Harmandir in the ritual of *maharaj da prakash karna* (literally, opening to the light; unfolding the cloths in which the book is wrapped); after the

evening recitations, it is brought back across the bridge to 'rest' in the Akal Takht, a journey between temporality and spirituality. The site of the temple complex embodies the conceptualised juxtaposition of the political and the religious as two halves that form a core, not as segregated domains. Such a conceptualisation is invested with an intense emotion which finds a 'telling' in Sikh history, ritual practice and community gathering.

On the morning of Ghallughara Diwas, *jathas* of pilgrims formally arrive in the temple complex, their spectacular presence conveying a sense of unity of the group, as well as the singularity of the occasion when Sikh *maryada* was lost. What is most remembered is that which was most lost. The attack on the takht was seen as an attack on Sikhs and their *maryada*. The loss is continuously recouped through the performative presence of mainly male *jathas*, who arrive on 6 June in regimented groups dressed in *kesri pugs* (yellow-saffron turbans), the colour that came to symbolise politics of protest and effervescent spirit (*chardi kala*), and white ensembles (the colour of mourning), circumambulating the *sarovar* and then paying obeisance at the Harmandir and listening to the discourses at the takht, their collective presence representing the unity of the male body (Plate 2.2). Their formal entry, ritual ensemble and solemn demeanour segregate them from ordinary pilgrims, and their cohesive presence imparts a depth of significance to the day and those who gather to restore *maryada*.

At the end of the day, the gathered assembly stands in attitudes of deep reverence to listen and recite the *ardas*, in the forecourt before the Akal Takht and around the *sarovar*. The *ardas,* one of the few prayers not found entirely written in the sacred scriptural text, continuously changes in response to the conditions of the *sangat*, the bounded community. One of its central elements is the recitation of 'feats' that have been accomplished to defend the faith and the religious community. The recitation of the *ardas* is, in part, a ritual commemoration of former martyrs who are evoked as a collective body of defenders, and also a remembrance of modern events and martyrs, constituted as critical to the defence of faith and bounded community.

It is exactly the sense of *maryada* and defence of faith Bhindranwale constantly referred to in his discourses when he actively toured the state before he fled to take refuge in the Golden Temple in 1982. His speeches were widely received as a call to defend the *maryada* of

the Sikh community from the incisions made by the rule and cultural domination of a Brahmin woman, Indira Gandhi (Jurgensmeyer 2000: 88). The entry and movement of the formally dressed and regimented *jathas* replicate Bhindranwale's movements within the complex during his tenure there.[46] Despite the absence of a physical memorial, collective performances remember the personhood of Bhindranwale, who is referred even now as *chardi kala*. He is represented in calendar art flying a hawk, a sign of *chardi kala* and also a symbol of valour most often depicted in religious art in portrayals of the tenth and last guru, Guru Gobind Singh, who created the Khalsa, the bounded political body of Sikhism.[47]

Formal gatherings, solemn discourse, personal memories, the history embedded in the name of the day and ritual recitations mark Ghallughara Diwas as a newly inserted event in the Sikh ritual calendar. Through the course of the day, people hang around in the complex for hours, moving across and around the different spaces of the temple, a habitus of the past. Under the shade of *shamiyanas* (canopies) in the forecourt of the Akal Takht, groups gather to listen to *dhadi jathas* (bands of bards) singing *vars*, ballads that hark back to a heroic history. They wander towards the community kitchens to eat together in an act of sharing bread. As the crowds swell, the *langar sewadars* (kitchen volunteers) seat pilgrims in the long verandas that run around the overcrowded halls. Pilgrims perform *kar sewa* (voluntary labour), many of them collecting steel buckets to fill with the water from the *sarovar* to wash the *parikrama* and cool the marble of the uncovered path. As the June sun rises, some sit in quiet contemplation along the sides of the *sarovar,* against marble plaques donated in the memory of family members or comrades lost in battle. Continuous recitations from the Granth Sahib cast an aural canopy over the complex. It is at once a familiar ritual day, replicating many others, seeming to invest an overt normalcy into the commemoration. It is the contemporaneity of the insertion of Ghallughara Diwas into the gurdwara ritual calendar, and the fact that its observance is still mired in controversy, which militate against any assumption of normality.

That ritual insertion is substantiated in the commemorative plaques set at the base of the steps leading up to the Akal Takht. Like the other descriptive plaques set before each shrine or sacred spot within the complex, the plaques at the base of the Akal Takht steps (in three scripts: Gurmukhi, Devnagri and Roman) outline the

significance of the takht; but in doing so, simultaneously lay out events in the life of the takht and its significance in the politics of Sikhism. The fourth paragraph in the English translation of the plaque reads: '… Its building was pulled down several times in the 18th century by the MUGHAL ARMY and AFGAN raiders. In June 1984, the Indian Army under OPERATION BLUESTAR destroyed and desecrated it. But each time the die-hard Sikhs sacrificed their lives while contesting the assailants and rebuild (*sic*) it with great enthusiasm…' The inscriptional style of capital letters and the different colour that highlights the words 'Operation Bluestar' underlines what needs to be remembered as events in the life of the takht and the political community as targets of violence (Plate 2.3).

Memory is deliberately evoked and coalesced by relics of 1984 preserved within the complex. Partially replicating the signs of violence that contour the domestic memorial of Indira Gandhi in Delhi, in the otherwise meticulously maintained Darbar Sahib, an untended *burj* and *chattri* on the roof of the *prasad ghar* (where sacred offerings are cooked and distributed) and the bullet-riddled *burj* of the Teja Singh Samundri Hall are deliberately retained as traces of past events. The Akal Takht itself presents the appearance of calm continuity. It is the pockmarked walls of the half-hidden *burj*, the poorly restored watchtowers of the Bunga Ramgariah,[48] vestigial signs of concealed tunnels created as internal communication routes within the fortified *tehkhana* (underground chambers) that conjointly, though tangentially, allude to the spectacular destruction in the modern history of the Akal Takht.

Perhaps one of the most interesting set of spaces within the complex are the galleries and exhibition rooms of the Sikh Museum. Most writings on the Central Sikh Museum talk of the burning of rare manuscripts and objects destroyed or displaced during the last days of Operation Bluestar. When fire broke out in the temple complex, a great deal of the art, manuscripts and religious objects of the Sikh kingdoms preserved in the museum were burnt. Since 1985, the restoration of the museum has been a special concern. I have not been able to establish whether current exhibition spaces of the museum replicate earlier arrangements, but it is clear that 'new' post-1984 objects, paintings and memorials were added in a specially earmarked gallery. Among the assorted exhibition spaces within the museum, one of the most interesting recent spaces is the gallery of martyrs portrayed as defenders of *maryada*. Down

the centre of a long gallery, empty tank- and bullet-shells used in the '*fauji hamla*' (the Bluestar army attack) recovered from the walls and debris of the ruined Akal Takht are displayed in glass cabinets. At one end of that gallery, the facing wall is dedicated to a 1987 painted rendering of the destroyed takht, with a caption that unequivocally states 'Sri Akal Takht *fauji hamleh toh baad* (6 June 1984)' (The Akal Takht after the army assault).

The painting is set at the centre of a group of portraits of men involved in the assassinations of individuals responsible for the *hamla* (assault) on the takht (Plate 2.4). The portraits of these men are placed on the top left and right corners, and on either side of the takht painting; they portray the men who died or were put to death by the Indian state as traitors or assassins, but the captions of the paintings hung in the museum describe the men as *shaheed* (martyrs). The realist rendering of these portraits differ in style from the some of the other paintings of earlier martyrs, who are depicted in action as it were, with arrows in their chests or being thrown in the air to be caught on bayonets. The Bluestar martyrs face out toward the viewers, resembling faces in passport photographs, looking directly at the camera/viewer. The photographic replication suggests not only a realist aesthetic sensibility, but also proposes an identity of 'likeness' through the direct gaze. Looking a person in the eye — *aankh milana* — is a deeply gendered gesture to establish relations of correspondence between men (this gesture would never occur between genders), and here establishes a relationship of reciprocal resemblance between contemporary martyrs and their modern viewers. Subeg Singh and Satwant Singh are painted in their full army and police uniforms, while others like Beant Singh are in full-sleeved formal attire with carefully tied turbans, immediately recognisable to the viewer as a presentation of the public self. Unconditional intimacy, however, is elided by the use of the third person honorific, *aap ji* and *shaheed bhai*, in the captions that reach out towards the viewer but simultaneously create a distance through idioms of deference, evoking attitudes of respect. An identity of sameness is disrupted in the captioning that details the style of death of these men, who, like the viewers, are mentioned as being in the police force or the army, or born in specific villages; but it also retains them as different, as people out of the ordinary but to be emulated. The caption under the portrait of Satwant Singh, executed for the assassination of Indira Gandhi, reads: '*phansin te latka ke*

kattal kitte gaya. Us vakat aap di umar 22 sal si, aap ji police *vich naukri kardeh san*' [he was hanged to death. At the time, his (the respectful plural pronoun, *aap,* is used) age was 22 years, and he worked in the police department]. The captions below the portraits painted in 1997 of both Jinda and Sukha, the two men accused and hanged for the assassination of General A. S. Vaidya, Chief of Army Staff at the time of Operation Bluestar, are slightly different. They end with the words: '9 October 1992… *phansi di saza ditti, jo eihnah neh hasdaiyan hasdaiyan pravan karke* Sikh *qaum da nam roshan kitta*' (on 9 October 1992… he was sentenced to be hanged till death, a punishment he embraced laughing, making the name of the Sikh community shine). It is interesting that in almost all the captions of the portraits, the year of birth is noted without a day or date; but the exact date of each man's death is meticulously recorded, because this is the day to remember them by.[49]

The movement of visitors through the interlinked galleries creates a visual lineage of medieval to modern martyrs;[50] paintings of medieval battles, the Chotta Ghallughara and the Vadda Ghallughara, the visualisations of the Punjabi Suba agitations of the 50s and 60s with their attendant martyrs, literally leading to the wall of 1984. Museums as heterotopias of memories of sacrifice enable the segregation and conversion of individuals from ordinary men to martyrs. Repositories and material manifestations of cultural memories preserved and exhibited in the museum indicate what is to be actively remembered, and what is marginal. Portraits preserve the memory of those made famous by the style of their death, marking them out as extraordinary because of their death.[51]

The galleries open into the corridor leading to the exit, a special exhibition space in itself. The corridor walls are a memorial of a different order, inscribed with names of those whose bodies were discovered within the complex and could be identified, or those who were not cremated by the army, and therefore 'missing'. The name, father's name and village of each person, organised by district, are inscribed in blue on white. The wall of lists is captioned: 'June 1984 *de fauji hamleh samme* complex *vich hoye shaheed viyaktiann de nam te pate*' (Names and addresses of people martyred in the complex during the army assault in June 1984). For many family members of those whose names are thus inscribed, the corridor list is a substitution for the cremation they could not perform; the list provides a space and occasion for a periodic commemoration that doubles as personal and collective mourning.

The visual field is not independent of the narrative, but forms the ordering landscape of significant sites and momentous events. The endless lists sign off, as it were, the museum as memorial. But people who wander through the galleries of exhibits in the museum sit in the corridors for a while, staring at the names listed flatly before them, mimetically replicating the ritual act of *apsos* (grieving), when mourners arrive to share in the grieving after a death (Plate 2.5). The replication of mourning rituals gives the whole act of sitting in a public corridor the colour of collective memorialising on a marked and signified day.

The series of memorials within and outside the museum, coupled with the rituals observed by the gathered assembly, constitute Ghallughara Diwas as a day of remembrance of an emotive event that marked a sacred landscape with violence. But within the material, ritual and aural commemorations, there is a remarkable absence — no paintings of Bhindranwale are exhibited in the museum,[52] no rituals are enacted specifically in his name, and nowhere is his name and *pata* (location/address/identity) listed. He is mentioned in the captions detailing the death history of Amrik Singh (killed on 6 June 1984) and General Shabeg Singh (whose body was found in the forecourt of the Akal Takht on 6 June); these are oddly tangential references for such a significant figure, whom many identify as the animating spirit of the Khalistan movement. The absence of memorials for Bhindranwale might signify the telescoping of all martyrs, a fusing reinforced and substantiated by the organisation of space and visual mnemonics of interconnected galleries displaying endless images, to suggest an unbroken lineage of martyrdom and a collective history. Nevertheless, the absence of specific memorials for Bhindranwale and the ambiguity surrounding his memory need to be addressed.

The predominant debates around Bhindranwale's actions from September 1981 (when he was arrested for the murder of the head of the Nirankari sect) to his death sometime on the night of 6 June 1984, cast him simultaneously as the leader of terrorists (*uggarwadi*), and the honed warrior (*khargku*) who represented the spirit and honour of true Sikh *maryada*. In the two years between 1982 and 1984 (while he was at the Golden Temple), he was often represented as the charismatic Sant who embodied *chardi kala* (the blossoming spirit) and *piri* (the spiritual way) more effectively and completely than

the legitimate jathedars of the Akal Takht who 'ruled' by committee, and certainly more powerful than many political leaders of the Akali party. Bhindranwale promoted the willingness to fight and destroy the 'enemies of religion' as essential qualities of devotion, citing Baba Deep Singh, hero and martyr who died defending the Golden Temple against Afghan invaders in the 18th century.[53] Reinstating individual charisma and the energised community, Bhindranwale was seen to epitomise that recovery of spirit. Before his escape to the sacred complex, Bhindranwale toured the state as a mobile preacher; he had the ability to 'summarize great themes in simple phrases and clear cut images' (Juergensmeyer 2000: 88). Part of that imagery was a visual body language that conveyed the spirit of *chardi kala* and *wanggar* (confronting the enemy by showing the self; literally, announcing the presence).

During his tenure in the temple complex, Bhindranwale received deputations and petitioners; a group of Sikh farmers from a cluster of villages in Faridkot district, for example, came to him in deputation to complain of and seek redress for shortage of water and inadequate electricity supply, grain prices and the fact that the CRPF was targeting true followers of the faith who expressed their allegiance to the guru and *Rehat maryada* through correct body observances. Others came to protest about the ban on pillion riding and the prohibition on motorbikes between 8 pm and 6 am that had been imposed in various districts (*The Tribune*, 11 May 1984). So, despite the fact that the roots of the Akali movement are entrenched in resistance — the term Akali means sacrifice bands or, in modern parlance, suicide squads — it was Bhindranwale who usurped the legitimate authority of the Akali party as well as of the jathedar of the takht, evoking charismatic authority.

In the Indian context, the concept of charisma is viewed as the presence of divine energy — *chardi kala* of Sikhism or *tejas* within Hindu thought — in extraordinary human beings, including exceptional religious teachers or preachers. The concept also legitimises fresh commentaries on canonical texts, or new sacred scriptures, expanding the Weberian notion to include the reanimation of cults and images in the range of charismatic agendas (Dalmia et al. 2001). When the tenth Sikh Guru Gobind Singh closed the line of spiritual succession, he simultaneously prevented future rivalries for the status, and invested the book with the status of spiritual guide.

A canon was declared guru and became the charismatic centre of the Sikh community located at the Golden Temple (von Stientencron 2001: 25). The investiture of the book with a personhood is complemented by a disavowal of a living guru or divine person, a transfer presented as fully accomplished and uncontested. That is the canonical memory. But the theatrics of memory rituals, and their continual *reiteration* of the centrality and inviolability of the canon through repeated disavowals of 'living' gurus, seem to me to suggest an incompleteness of the transfer of charisma to the book, and the underlying threat that a magnetic preacher of the canon can pose to the non-human text.

The ambivalence — indeed the almost complete absence — surrounding the memorialisation of Bhindranwale to me seem to rest only partially on the refusal of his followers to acknowledge his death. Nor are his usurpation of the authority of elected jathedars and wresting political power from the leaders of the Akali party reason enough to explain the absence of commemoration. The ousting of elected officials and party men can only be the overt text of political science. The unspoken transcript centres on the anxiety about the depth of his claim to charisma. The unease inscribed in speech, image and ritual can be excavated from successive performances that reiterate the collective over the individual. Repeated demands for an 'apology' from the Indian state for the collective hurt incurred by community in Operation Bluestar, and the constant harking back towards the death of 'innocents' as the key figures of remembrance, bypass the significance of individual actors. Visually, the telescoping of individual heroes within a lineage of martyrs combined with familiar sacred rituals submerge and minimise the extraordinary within the customary, creating an alternative text of memory in which Bhindranwale is only tangentially located. I would argue that the successive restorations of the Akal Takht and the intense debates about the process and doing of the restoration signal not just the centrality of a premier political building, but also the inviolability of the *sangat*, that needed to assemble to exhibit its presence to itself in the act of restoring the takht through collective labour. I suggest, even speculatively, that in the restoration of the takht, the restitution of the authorised collective and its legitimate representatives, both non-human and mortal, are centred. Performative and visual commemorations that place the destruction of the takht at their centre reclaim legitimate sources of power

and order. They also produce a deliberate forgetting of the hurt that cannot be enunciated — individual charisma and its power to displace a canon.

Globalisation and the Commemoration of Hurt

Where does the curiously omitted memory of Bhindranwale surface, if at all? It's clearly not at sites in Amritsar. At Mehta Chowk, the gurdwara and the surrounding buildings of Damdami Taksal, of which he was head for a brief period during his lifetime, wore a deserted, shuttered look in the days just before and after Ghallughara Diwas. A few posters flapped forlorn in the gullies around the Golden Temple, announcing a 'programme' at Mehta Chowk , but there was little evidence of its performance. Kahan Singh and Sohan Singh, sellers of religious souvenirs, including hagiographies and religious literature in the covered bazaar around the complex, sell more framed posters and CDs of gurus, sants and preachers than the Taksal Pustak Bhandar dedicated to writings, recorded speeches and poster art of Bhindranwale. Posters of Bhagat Singh are liberally available on the pavements of Amritsar, but Bhindranwale calendar art is not immediately obvious.

One place where Bhindranwale is resurrected is the internet. Blogs and websites successfully reinstate his life and hagiography, added on continuously through comment and postings. It is possible to argue that the websites as public space interrogate the near absence of Bhindranwale in tangible physical space. Internet text is fiercely supportive of Bhindranwale, graphic in detailing his life and the style of his death. But another aspect of the internet as a location of memory questions the extent and depth of political intention reflected in internet publics. Scrolling through the websites, it is clear that many of them are oriented to propagating knowledge about tenets and ritual observances of Sikhism to the Diaspora. Along with writings on a violent past, are images of the Woolwich Vaisakhi Nagar Kirtan, for example, or the meaning of *gatka* (martial arts) performances. It is not clear to me whether hits on a website are producing a politically energised *sangat* or promoting ritual literacy, neither is it clear which of these is the primary intention.

Other, more 'conventional' ritual commemorations of Ghallughara Diwas are enacted in cities across the globe, and establish more clearly (at least to my eyes) the claim to political personhood

through public performances. The ritual of commemoration is re-inscribed in 'Never Forget' rallies and processions of the Diaspora. In the Punjabi dominated neighbourhood of Southall, West London, for example, protests against Operation Bluestar that began in 1984 in Southall streets[54] and the local Havelock Road Gurdwara (*Southall Gazette*, 6 July 1984) expanded to huge processions in 2007 that traversed Hyde Park and ended at Trafalgar Square.[55] The first anniversary of Operation Bluestar commemorated in the grounds of Hounslow College was named 'Genocide Week' by friends and relatives of people who died in the Indian Army action (*Southall Gazette*, 14 June 1985), a term that travelled back in translation from Diaspora to Home.

In Diaspora commemorations, enunciations of hurt intersect with human rights discourses to create new styles of memorialising. Objects of protest — placards, banners, armbands and gags — drawn from modern art aesthetics, and appropriations from exhibitions of human rights violations inserted within spectacular displays of 'traditional' ritual performances, reveal a fine understanding of maximising international media attention. The *nagara* (huge drum) and the *Panj Piyareh* (ritual elect) dressed in turbans and *chogas* (long shirts) march barefoot, leading the procession into Trafalgar Square; the *sangat* enters behind them, bearing banners with photographs of the disappeared, bloodied corpses and demands for justice, and slogan-emblazoned T-shirts in ritually appropriate colours of blue, black and saffron. Placards and posters carried in procession are laid at the steps of India House (the Indian High Commission) after a candlelight vigil. Reaching an international audience created through harnessing media, and the innovative deployment of modern technology, are critical to Diaspora commemorations. In a modernised version of the Balinese cockfight, giant digital screens display the *sangat* to itself, while mammoth music systems transmitting sounds of the *nagara* and recitations of *ardas* cast an aural canopy over the 'Sikhs in the Square'.

The theatrics of exhibition and display are a form of witnessing a past. Equally, I would argue, the symbolic displays address the estrangement and distance that Diasporas inevitably experience, and the need to evoke community through recreated event. But Diaspora commemorations go beyond bearing witness and sharing what is witnessed with the wider world via the visual word. Transnational commemorations are also purposive in a different way — assertions

of trauma express claims for political asylum and rights of residence of migrants, who insert themselves into collective political memory as the embodiments of state-inflicted hurt. High street lawyers in Southall continue to represent Sikh clients seeking asylum in the UK (Kashminder Bhogall, *Southall Rights,* October 2006).[56]

Within the globally enacted event, Bhindranwale is *zinda* (alive) in *zindabad* (long-live) slogans and banners, because he is both the exemplar victim of a repressive state as well as a symbol of the *sangat* of martyrs. Migrants cannot release the *atma* of contemporary martyrs into rest because their representational presence articulates the political need for asylum in the present.

The Disappeared of human rights discourses are the new martyrs, transformed as recognised individuals and symbols of a memory the migrants must remember never to forget. The restitution of Bhindranwale through exhibitions, banners and speeches in the rallies and remembrances of the Diaspora is purposive, and comes from an imperative to insert the migrant self within the unfolding histories of homeland, as well as a desire to claim status and citizenship in the new Home. Bhindranwale is a symbol of links established through shared pain, but also a site of the pain of Homeland. It is important to recognise that Diaspora processions and the artefacts of protest produce Home as an inverted world so outside the normal as to be almost alien. It is exactly the production of Home as unfamiliar traumatised space that validates the act of leaving, and the need to seek sanctuary elsewhere. The transnational evocation of hurt is a public ritual, dramatically displayed to international and migrant audiences. The imprecision implicit in Never Forget banners, posters and processions hint at what this commemoration is 'for': the remembered hurt of a specific event and the continued need to find a new place called home.

Notes

1. A *var* is a heroic ballad. Some *vars,* like *Chandi di Var,* are martial poetry, said to have been sung by Sikh soldiers before going into battle. In the contemporary period, Sikh militants went into 'combat' missions with *vars* recorded on their headsets (Mahmood 1997). Poets and

bards had an intensely political role in the agitation for Khalistan. At a convention of *kavis* (poets) and *dhadis* (bards/folk singers) held in early January 1983, singers endorsed various demands of the Akali Dal, and were urged to preach the policies and programmes of the Akali Dal among the Sikh masses to create momentum for the Akali agitation (*The Tribune*, 12 January 1983). Standing at the crossroads of poetry and politics, the importance of *vars* was, and continues to be primary, at politically significant moments.

Translation

Hear Ye …
Then the Sikhs wrote to Zain Khan
Listen, you agent of the Shah
Our weapons are not satisfied
We have to still settle accounts

We've drunk the blood of enemies
Even now our swords are restless
Before you place new demands before us
Lets settle prior debts

We destroyed your Sirhind Fort
With the clash of brick and stone
We want the revenge of Fathegarh
Of that ill-famed wall…

- Singhan: Sikh Misls at war with the Afghans.
- Shah: The Afghan ruler Ahmed Shah Abdali (and Zain Khan, Subedar of Sirhind and commander of Sirhind Fort). The Sikh confederacies came together to battle Abdali, not always successfully. A bitter battle between Abdali and the Sikh Misls is referred to as the *Vadda Ghallughara* (the major carnage) in which many non-combatant women and children were also killed.
- Divar: The reference is to the wall in which Guru Gobind Singh's young sons Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh were bricked alive.

2. The phrase is one of the translations of the title of Marcel Proust's seven-volume work on involuntary memory.
3. Knowing his views, Marx perhaps would have been horrified to learn that the place where he sat and wrote his major treatise on capitalism in the British Museum is now a memorial of sorts, gazed upon with reverence by countless academic tourists, partly as a mark of respect for his scholarship, but also in the hope that his mental energy, though long dead, is not extinguished, and might still infuse the space and

flow like a magical force into the mind and pen of the contemporary scholar, transforming their work into a luminous masterpiece.

4. In an opinion poll conducted by a news channel, on the eve the 60th anniversary of India's independence, 44 per cent of the respondents felt that Operation Bluestar and the anti-Sikh riots of 1984 were India's 'greatest political blot' (*The Hindu*, 13 August 2007). On 6 June 2009, at the silver jubilee function to commemorate Operation Bluestar, 'separatists virtually hijacked' the official function organised by the SGPC at the Akal Takht (*The Tribune*, 7 June 2009). In a televised interview, the spokesperson for the Dal Khalsa, an organisation closely associated with the demands for Khalistan, insisted that there were some mem-ories that were important to keep alive (*NDTV*, 6 June 2009).
5. The term 'flush out' is deployed in a multitude of civic and policing contexts; city drains and sewers are flushed to rid them of dirt and vermin (Corbin 1986). Criminal gangs are 'flushed out' from disorderly neighbourhoods. The twinning of regulation and purification were critical tropes used in military narratives of Operation Bluestar, and the subsequent, more sweeping Operation Woodrose that cleared villages of militants. Television newscasters have seamlessly adopted the term — for example, news reports announced that radicals in the Lal Masjid in Islamabad, Pakistan, had been 'flushed out' (*CNN* and *CNN-IBN,* 10 July 2007; and *Hindustan Times*, 11 July 2007). *Hindustan Times*, in fact, headlined the army siege and assault on the mosque as 'Pak's Bluestar' (ibid.).
6. Head of a Sikh seminary located on the outskirts of Amritsar, Bhindranwale was a charismatic preacher and vociferous advocate for the imagined nation of Khalistan.
7. The imagined demography of Khalistan effectively excluded non-believers as well as *patit* (non-observing [McLeod 1997: xviii]) Sikhs who did not conform to the code of *Rehat maryada* (Sikh way of life enunciated in religious documents and pamphlets [ibid.: 71–85]). The Anandpur Sahib Resolution, which might be viewed as a constitution in the making of this imagined nation, demanded the right over river waters of Punjab; the right to regulate the movement of food grain outside the state [the '*kanak roko*' (stop grain export) agitations were an outcome of this demand]; the right to carry religiously prescribed weapons like the *kirpan* (dagger); and so on. The Resolution challenged the Indian Constitution's categorisation of Sikhs as 'Hindu' (and, therefore, among other things, not entitled to the special privileges of reservation). The emotive language of disavowal drew simultaneously on scriptural tropes and political disaffection of dissent.
8. *The Tribune*, 2 June 1984.
9. Lakkha Singh Phadda of West Drayton, interviewed in September 2006 at Southall Day Center, Southhall, UK. Phadda worked in a catering

unit at Gatwick, but had been in Amritsar during that fateful week in June 1984. After that experience and the deep outrage it evoked in him, he began to grow his beard and wear a full *dastar* (turban), even though it created a problem for him at his job at Gatwick Airport.

10. Deep Singh of Bhikhiwind Dara village in Khemkaran (Punjab), interviewed on 6 June 2007 at the Golden Temple (by Rajnish, Research Assistant). In 1984, Diaspora Sikhs of Southall were urged not to celebrate Diwali. Gurcharan Singh, the Cultural and Welfare Secretary of the Southall Gurdwara, explained that it was customary for Indians not to celebrate festivals in the first year after a death (*Southall Gazette*, 26 October 1984), reinforcing the link between personal and architectural loss.
11. Subsequent events include Operation Black Thunder One and Black Thunder Two (in 1986 and 1988, respectively), when the Golden Temple was again besieged and entered this time jointly by the Army and Police forces. These operations have been less well documented (See Sarab Jit Singh 2002).
12. Sikhs usually keep their beards groomed and tied. The tying of the beard in specific styles connotes difference within the community. For example, traders tie netting to keep their facial hair in place. Others tie special pieces of cloth over the beard, either tucking the cloth under the turban, or tied in a knot over a truncated turban. Matching turbans, beard cloths and neckties are styles adopted by the urbane. Flowing beards, by contrast, and blue or saffron turbans, were a style adopted during the militant decades to assert an ascendant political identity.
13. Motorbikes, a sign of male prowess and wealth among the Punjabi peasantry, were viewed with suspicion by the constabulary as swift getaway vehicles during the entire period of militancy. At various points of time bans on adult males riding pillion were imposed (*The Tribune*, 7 May 1984). This suspicion was perhaps heightened by the fact that the Punjab police were ill equipped and feared for their safety. Almost 40 per cent of the constabulary applied for leave during this period (*The Tribune*, 14 May 1984).
14. The Resolution challenged the Indian Constitution's categorisation of Sikhs as 'Hindu' (and, therefore, among other things, not entitled to the special privileges of reservation).
15. The forerunner to the Khalistan movement, the Punjabi Suba movement of the 1960s also stressed the right of control over territory and water. The claim to territory has been interleaved with the demands for a substantive federal political structure.
16. Operation Bluestar was not the only time the temple complex was entered and taken over by the state in the course of the period referred to as the 'militancy period'. Its memory, however, is marked because of the simultaneous concurrence of events; it was the Gurpurab (day

of remembrance) of Guru Arjan Dev, and thousands of Sikh pilgrims had gathered to celebrate in the temple precincts. Many killed in the army action on those two days included such pilgrims. The temple and its sacred buildings also suffered major damage.

17. For Sikhs, pilgrimages to the Golden Temple on designated days of the ritual calendar, or to mark personal life cycle events, or for no special reason at all other than because someone 'felt' like it, are a performance of membership of the *sangat* (religious collective). Visits are part of personal and collective memory, recounted and performed to produce a sense of community. Religious souvenirs — paintings, posters, books of religious discourses — purchased from the surrounding bazaar shops layer memory with artefact. Bathing in the sacred pool around which the complex is structured, making offerings to the Book housed in the Harmandir, the symbolic centre of the sacred complex, singing, listening to scriptural recitations and eating at the *langar*, the community kitchen of the complex, are all part of creating a sense of *sangat*, the gathered community of believers. Most of all, the sense of community is created by the care of the complex through voluntary ritualised labour — *kar sewa* — through which the monuments are maintained and quotidian tasks performed. Anything from regular sweeping, washing, cooking, to building and repair work in the temple is done through *kar sewa*. Building contractors give their labour and expertise in a spirit of worship. Throughout the performance of *sewa* (care of a superior being or site), some, though not all, workmen wear ritual clothing of blue turbans and *chogas* (long shirts), denoting the practical as ceremonial, distinguished from the mundane.
18. Two other major supporters of Khalistan were also killed during the Operation. Amrik Singh headed the militant All India Sikh Student Federation, while Shabeg Singh was a decorated Army General, who resigned his commission in 1976. Shahbeg Singh was primarily responsible for the fortification of the temple complex and planning the armed resistance. Houses in the narrow gullies surrounding the complex functioned as outposts connected by wireless to the command post within the temple precinct. Soldiers of the Indian Army were killed or wounded first by the sniper fire from these outposts, a situation reminiscent of the experience of the colonial British army entering the narrow gullies of Lucknow during the hot May days of the Mutiny of 1857 (Oldenberg 1984). The exact day and time of Bhindranwale's death is unclear; he is said to have died either on the night of 5–6 June or the night of 6–7 June. The 'confusion' may reside in the different cal-culations of dates in Roman and vernacular calendars. However, 6 June is designated as the death anniversary of Bhindranwale and his closest followers (whose portraits are displayed in the Akal Takht Museum). The day has become an occasion for many to mourn those killed in the violence, and is

literally a death anniversary by extension of other deaths. In Amritsar, people who lost family members participate in the Ghallughara Diwas at the Golden Temple in June every year. In London, placards with the photos of missing and dead kin are displayed in 'Never Forget' rallies that mark public commemorations of Operation Bluestar.

19. The politics of aftermath is punctuated by assassinations that moved across national and global space, from the assassination of Indira Gandhi in Delhi (1984), to Pune in western India of General Vaidya, incharge of Operation Bluestar (1986), to Bucharest and the assassination attempt on Julio Ribeiro (1991), the Chief of Police in Punjab, whose 'bullet for bullet' policy created a new dimension of rule of the modern Indian state.
20. *Uggarwadi* was the official term used freely in government statements and in the English language media, state television and radio broadcasts. The official term stands in opposition to the more popular term *khargku,* or freedom fighter. Both terms refer to masculine bodily styles — while *uggar* means ferocious, *khargku* is derived from *kharg*, meaning sword, embodying honed weaponry.
21. There is a peculiar imprecision in the commemorations. 31 October is the anniversary of the assassination of Indira Gandhi, who was gunned down at her residence; but most official ceremonials of remembrance are conducted at Shakti Sthal, where she was cremated on 4 November 1984. The exact date of Bhindranwale's death is unclear (until very recently, some of his supporters in the seminary refused to acknowledge that he had died at all, declaring that he is *chardi kala* — in rising spirit). However, it is speculated that he was killed sometime on the night of 5–6 June, when the 'storming' of the temple complex began and some of the heaviest shelling of the temple complex occurred. Surprisingly, Ghallughara Diwas is fully memorialised on 6 June, which may or may not be Bhindranwale's death anniversary. Imprecision argues against memorials as inextricably tied to both place and date a point made by Lowenthal (1979: 121) in his discussions of IWW memorials.
22. In the absence of a physical memorial to anchor collective memory, the commemoration of Ghallughara Diwas, and the death anniversary of the militant, has 'travelled' to become a transnational ritual, and a consequent shifting of meanings across space.
23. Soutik Biswas, *BBC News*, 29 October 2004.
24. *The Times of India*, 12 June 2006.
25. The natural stone monolith streaked with red veins of minerals resembles a flame, creating a visual analogy of the eternal flame at martyrs' memorials, and the flames of small oil lamps that are floated down the Ganga in rituals remembering the dead.

26. A few rooms in the Safdarjung Road memorial are dedicated to Rajiv Gandhi, who succeeded his mother as prime minister. Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated in Tamil Nadu, by a Sri Lankan suicide bomber. During his tenure as prime minister, he lived with his mother and his family at her residence.
27. This absence is peculiar, given that Jallianwala Bagh, the site of the massacre of unarmed pilgrims by Brigadier General Dyer on Baisakhi (13 April) in 1919, is down the road from the Golden Temple, and posters of other martyrs like Bhagat Singh are sold on the pavements in the surrounding bazaar.
28. However, a Shahid Sant Jarnail Singh and Holocaust Commemoration Committee formed at the Damdami Taksal decided to perform his *antim ardas* at Akal Takht on 6 June 2001. The committee members stated there was nothing political behind the decision to perform the *ardas,* but insisted that 'vested interests continued to float rumours and create confusion among the Sikhs about the sant's presence'. Because of this reason, *antim ardas* could not be performed all these years (*The Tribune*, 17 May 2001).

    Subsequently, on 2 June 2005, the Damdami Taksal decided to honour Mr Apar Singh Bajwa, a retired superintendent of police, who had identified the body and then witnessed the cremation of Bhindranwale in 1984 (*The Tribune*, Amritsar, 2 June 2005). Mr Bajwa had been the main investigator of the Sikh-Nirankari clash in 1978, in which Bhindranwale was the main accused, and in the course of the investigation Bajwa 'had met Sant Bhindranwale and leaders of the Taksal hundreds of times… as part of his official duty' (*The Tribune*, Chandigarh, 20 May 2001). In an interview with *The Tribune* reporters, Mr Bajwa said he was called upon to recognise the body, which he said was injured on the right side of the face and had bled profusely in the abdomen. Bajwa said army officers agreed to cremate the bodies of Sant Bhindranwale, General Shabeg Singh, Baba Thara Singh and Bhai Amrik Singh according to Sikh rites at his personal request, while the rest of the bodies (more than 800) were cremated en masse. Mr Bajwa said the Army allowed him to cover the body of Sant Bhindranwale with a sheet and pour *ghee* on it.
29. Media footage however, was not confined to an army-orchestrated fantasy; pictures and stories of putrefying debris of bodies and buildings left behind by the army also circulated in news reports.
30. On the 15th anniversary of Operation Bluestar in 1999, there was a clash between the workers of the district Akali Dal and others with plainclothes police, who prevented the former from marching towards the Golden Temple. Newspapers reported that 'turbans flew…(and)… police in mufti was busy in bundling hardliners into the police vehicles' (*The Tribune*, 7 June 1999).

31. In 2004, Parkash Singh Badal, president, Shiromani Akali Dal, participated in Ghallughara Diwas for the first time after Operation Bluestar (*The Tribune*, Amritsar, 6 June 2004). However, as chief minister, Badal did not attend the silver jubilee commemorations in 2009, his absence a testament to the struggle between 'official' and oppositional ceremonials of Operation Bluestar.
32. *India Today*, 15 August 1984.
33. Rumours that Santa Singh was paid Rs 1 lakh a day by the government flew through the city (Tully and Jacob 1985).
34. *India Today*, 15 August 1984.
35. Baba Santa Singh was eventually declared *tankhahia* (excommunicated) for *kurahit* (breach) of *Rehat*, the code of conduct of the Sikh community.
36. Post Operation Bluestar, with Bhindranwale and other leaders dead, and major Akali party leaders jailed, the five high priests of the major Sikh shrines became the centre of negotiations and conduct of affairs of the community.
37. The handover of the Golden Temple did not mean army withdrawal from the state. In fact, in the days just prior to and after the handover, 68 young men between the ages of 18 and 30 years were rounded up in adjoining Gurdaspur district. The police chief, A. P. Pandey, when asked to clarify if they were militants, declared that most of them were 'emotionally charged people who act impulsively' (*India Today,* 31 October 1984).
38. Shiromani Gurdwara Parbadhak Committee, the body that manages gurdwaras and the activities within them. Despite their centrality in the management of gurdwara affairs, the temple complex was not handed over to the SGPC by the army on 29 September 1984, partly because the president of SGPC, Gurcharan Singh Tohra, was in jail, and the SGPC was treated as a highly suspect organisation for giving sanctuary to Bhindranwale within the complex.
39. Tohra's decision was disputed as unauthorised by the *sangat* and the *panth* (Giani Kirpal Singh 1999) unrepresentative of community opinion, a sign of the instability of the leadership within the community and divided opinions about the event itself.
40. The rebuilt Akal Takht was opened for ritual prayers on Baisakhi, 13 April 1997.
41. A shrine to Baba Deep Singh is built in one corner of the *parikrama* and forms part of the shrines of the complex.
42. Sanjoy Hazarika, *New York Times,* 23 May 1988.
43. The citation of innocent lives lost was a continuous tenor in Sikh critiques of Indira Gandhi's policies. 'If the government itself is indulging in the killing of innocents, how can it avoid retaliation?' declared Kirpal Singh, jathedar of the Akal Takht in 1984, refusing to acquiesce to Indira Gandhi's demand that the jathedars issue an edict for Sikhs to

withdraw support to militants (*India Today*, 31 October 1984). Coincidentally, Kirpal Singh's assertion was published by *India Today* the day Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her bodyguards.

44. Ghallughara Diwas was first observed officially by the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) in 1995 when Gurcharan Singh Tohra was SGPC President. Until then, small functions had been held in dispersed gurdwaras, which emphasised the remembrance of disconnected pasts.
45. *Vadda Ghallughara* occurred in village of Kup, near Malerkotla, on 5 February 1762.
46. Bhindranwale and his followers lived and held court mainly in the Guru Nanak Nivas, one of the main buildings in the temple complex.
47. Most recently, violent controversy surrounded the Baba of another Dera, Baba Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh of Dera Sacha Sauda, who was shown with a *kalgi* (egret feather adorning a turban; a sign of royalty and superiority) and a hawk, in an advertisement that mimetically replicated the depictions of Guru Gobind Singh, whom no person can hope to emulate, let alone impersonate. The popular depiction of the guru is from a 20th century painting by Sir Sobha Singh.
48. *Bungas* were mansions built by Misl chiefs to house themselves and their retinues when they visited the Darbar Sahib (Patwant Singh 1999); the *bungas* also served as defensive bastions in times of war, and were thus deployed through the period of the 1984 conflicts.
49. Amrik Singh [*Aap ji Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale (mukhi Damdami Takhsal vale) de vadde puttr san. Bhai Sahib Bluestar Action dauran bharti fauj diyan topan ateh tankan da mukabala karde hoye Sri Akal Takht Sahib vicheh shaheed hoye]*, and Subeg (sic) Singh (*Sri Darbar Sahib Ji upar bharti fauji hamel da datt ke mukabal kitta. Hari tainka da mukabala karde hoye Sri Akal Takht de samneh shaheedi pa gaye*] killed in the Operation are referred to as Shaheed Bhai, and while the year of birth of both men is noted to indicate the beginning of the lifespan of this *shaheed* or martyr (1954 and 1923, respectively), the day and year of death of both are indicated clearly — 6 June 1984.
50. Fenech (2001) also writes about the juxtaposition of recent 'martyrs' from the Punjab conflict placed alongside depictions of historical martyrs from the annals of Sikh history in gurdwaras of the Diaspora.
51. Ajeet Singh Khera (a former associate of Jagjit Singh Chauhan, who declared the independent state of Khalistan in Bayswater, London) ironically said in an interview, 'We've learnt how to die but not to live' (Interview, Ajeet Singh Khera, September 2006, Southall).
52. On 29 November 2007, the SGPC installed a portrait of Bhindranwale in the Central Sikh Museum at the Golden Temple amidst intense controversy. The gesture was read as an attempt to forestall the attempts by radical Sikh organisations to install a portrait depicting Bhindranwale

armed with weaponry. A newspaper report noted that the low key ceremony was a way of keeping radical organisations at bay (*The Tribune*, 30 November 2007). Bhindranwale's portrait-posters are routinely carried by people who march to the complex, most recently at the 25 silver jubilee commemorations of Operation Bluestar.

53. Baba Deep Singh was also the founding head of the Damdami Taksal, of which Bhindranwale was head.
54. In an uncanny mimesis, 1984 street events in Southall replicated sorrow and celebration enacted in Delhi streets. Post Bluestar, Hindus at the Margaret Road temple offered sweets to passersby and wrote letters to the local newspapers in large numbers. On hearing the news of the assassination of Indira Gandhi, young Sikh men burst firecrackers, and Southall sweet shops stayed open all night (*Southall Gazette*, 20 July and 2 November 1984), reflecting the deep fissures that the Punjab events had driven between the communities of Diaspora.
55. In 1984, a week after the meetings in Southall, hundreds of coaches bringing Sikh protestors from all over Britain jammed Hyde Park. An estimated 50,000 Sikhs marched in procession. Bhindranwale was proclaimed a martyr by the protest marchers, who carried a painting of him at the head of the procession (*Southall Gazette,* 15 June 1984).
56. In June 2007, the UK High Commissioner to India, Sir Michael Arthur, revealed that at least 10 or 12 applications for political asylum from Punjab were sent back every year (*The Tribune*, 14 June 2007) after Country Reports of the Home Office declared India as a safe and 'friendly' country.

3

Risky Strategies and Family Plans

Momentous events present a challenge to state and society at once. In response, the state unleashes a string of strategies, countered by social groups and the polity, which reshape the future and imprint themselves on directions of change. Transformative strategies are not necessarily 'large' scale, in the sense that they are located in the institutional domain of the state or the public polity. Individuals and small groups like families think about and adopt transformative strategies that have far-reaching consequences for each member of the social group. What is significant, however, is that each 'level' of strategising does not look the same, nor can such strategies be accessed in identical ways. Further, transformative strategies take on a particular resonance at times of extraordinary events and uncertain periods. In the last chapter, I analysed one momentous event — the politics of remembrance of a violent past. However, it is important to look back at the period prior to that event. While Operation Bluestar is a critical event, the unfolding of other transformative changes that preceded that event had enormous consequences for the lives of ordinary folk in Punjab, events that reconfigured the political landscape in the early 1980s. The downward spiral of agricultural productivity and falling farm incomes were deeply emotive issues, and gave rise to agrarian protest and state politics. What is significant about the nature of agrarian protest of the period is that the rights and claims to livelihood and well being were espoused simultaneously, sometimes jointly, with religious-political demands for a separate state. The key document on which the claim to Khalistan was made, the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, combined political demands for a federalist structure with rights over resources that were vital to agriculture (Tatla 2004: 310). Despite the fact that many versions of the Resolution circulated through the militancy period, all of them contained demands for decentralised rights over river

waters. A key demand was that the control of headworks should be vested in Punjab. Another was parity between the prices of the agricultural produce and industrial raw materials. Amidst the 'political' demands for the transfer of some districts to Punjab to balance the electoral constituencies, were demands for a reduction in the prices of farm machinery like tractors and tubewells, abolition of excise duty on tractors, and the purchase of cotton through the Cotton Corporation.

In May 1984, literally days before Operation Bluestar, Akali Dal leader Harchand Singh Longowal (also called Sant, like his political rival Sant Jarnail Singh) declared that the Dal would launch a non-cooperation movement on 3 June 1984, on the day of the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev. All grain movement out of the state would be stopped, in a *kanak roko* agitation, and farmers would not pay revenue or water cess. While media and political attention was focused on the siege by paramilitary forces of Gurdwara Gurdarshan Prakash at Mehta Chowk and various gurdwaras in Moga, a union of farmers, the Punjab Bharti Kisan Union (BKU), blockaded villages, blocking the entry of loan recovery agents, and refused to repay loans in *pind bandh* and *karza bandh* protests (*The Tribune*, 1 June 1984). Senior administrators warned of seething unrest in rural Punjab (*The Tribune*, 29 May 1984), and were deeply disturbed at reports that the Akali Dal and BKU agitations would merge and cause widespread unrest in the state.

In the years just prior to 1984, however, the heightened tensions of besieged gurdwaras and blockaded villages were still in the future. The more overwhelming concerns centred on difficult agrarian conditions, diminishing returns and insecure futures. On 4 April 1982, farmers began an agitation (*morcha*) against the digging of the Sutlej Yamuna Link (SYL) canal. The *morcha* was followed by a protest in early 1983 against the alignment of the SYL canal that would reduce the amount of water available to Punjab for irrigation, and divert it to the neighbouring states of Haryana and Rajasthan (*The Tribune*, 7 January 1983). These were the momentous events in the years just prior to 1984, and the fusion of agrarian agitations with the religious-political protests created an emotional landscape of uncertainty.

From the stance point of looking back (Battliaga 1992, Eves 1996 and Blair 2004), we can identify the initial stages of violence and its aftermath. What we need to ask, however, is whether individuals

who lived through traumatic events may or may not have foreseen an impending and uncertain future.[1] It goes without saying that the view of a future is shaped by a past, and is apparent in routine performances that encapsulate past and future. But if the future is uncertain, how do we know this? Not just as societies and collectives, but as individuals who plan and strategise? Clearly, all societies and individuals harness strategies in the present that can shape a future in particular directions. But foretelling, I argue, demands binocular disparity. To extract information from both right-left, past-future eyes, we have to harness the slightly different viewpoint of the world of each eye. Different viewpoints are observed by each eye and they do not all converge at a single point. The challenge in deciphering the future lies in the social imagination and people's ability to unite the binocular disparity into a coherent image, simultaneously retaining the 'real' binocular disparity as two slightly different lines of sight.

It is this 'social' sense of binocular disparity to which I turn to decipher the strategies deployed by two families in shaping the future of and for their young sons. The narratives I present are, in fact, a retrospective view of these families in the two years preceding Operation Bluestar — early 1982 to the end of 1983. The analysis of family strategies is located at a period when the outlines of militant violence were embryonic and vague. What was increasingly clear and widely discussed, however, was the downward spiral of agriculture and the problems created by a failed 'green revolution'. Farm incomes were no longer front page news, and food grain prices had plummeted. The money spent on fertilisers, pesticides, seeds, farm machinery and technology were no longer yielding the promised return. Discussions in the village were rife with anxieties about the agricultural and material future.

I choose the narratives of these families for two distinct reasons. Both families adopted what seemed to me to be aberrant choices for their sons, that did not 'fit' social patterns, and this was a puzzle. Looking back, however, it does seem to me that these aberrations emerged from extracting information from both eyes that looked to the present and to the future, displaying the social capacity to see the signs of a future as a trace in the present. It is precisely because we now know that in 1982–83 the future for these families was uncertain that it becomes important to step back into the anthropological past, and pose questions that were not comprehensible in

that 'fieldwork present'. Aberration and retrospection persuade me to bring together sociological questions that normally are treated separately — schooling and migration, for example, or militancy movements and the transformation of a son to a transnational *ghar jawai* (uxorilocal husband) — because they are evidence of successful harnessing of binocular disparity, and an uncertain future foretold.

Unlike the earlier chapter, where I drew on written and visual primary sources, in the analysis that follows, I rely on biographical narratives excavated from interviews and observations recorded as fieldwork notes and diaries. However, I need to state at the outset that these are not life histories in the strict sense of the term, since each focuses on a brief span of each family's biography. At the same time, they draw on the methodological interpretations of biographies as stories that reflect the larger social world in which they are located (Arnold and Blackburn 2004; Chamberlain and Thompson 1998; Rapport and Dawson 1998a). Further, these were not choices that were explained, nor cogently laid out or defended. To decipher their rationale, it is important to understand the kinds of tangential information that circulated throughout the period. Rumours, gossip, stray incidents, unconnected events together constituted the world turning upside down.

Risk, Choice and Young Men

The village in which the first narrative is located lies off a highway connecting the bustling city of Jalandhar and its army cantonment with a *tehsil* (administrative sub-division) town.[2] The village was resettled after the partition in 1947, and again after land consolidation in the 1950s. The development of technology-laden green revolution agriculture from the mid-1960s onwards, meant an intensive cropping calendar, with scarcely a moment when the fields lay fallow. Newer crops were, and are, constantly experimented with, and bands of migrant labour from eastern India arrive through successive harvests. Itinerant traders move in and out of the village, selling everything from milk, traditional rugs (*durries/khes*) to the more utilitarian commodities of the contemporary world, like plastic buckets and toys. Gujjar herdsmen from snowbound areas of Himachal and Kashmir settle along the peripheries of the village during the winter, selling milk and labour in the village. The outside world has a large presence in the villagers' everyday lives.

I begin with the story of Goldy, the younger son of a well-heeled Jat Sikh landholder of the village. When I first met them, their household included Sarabjit Singh's bedridden father, his energetic, spry mother Biji, his wife Surinder Kaur and three children, Rosy, the eldest child and only daughter, Sonu the son and heir, and Goldy, the younger son.[3] Filling in survey questionnaires about levels of education, access to 'modern' medical care, and other Nehruvian modernities, I kept stumbling on the puzzle of Rosy. At the time of my first round of fieldwork in 1982, Rosy was 19 and had finished school.[4] She essentially lived sequestered at home, helping her mother with the housework in the well-established practice of young unmarried adult women. Towards her family, she maintained a slight air of aloofness that intrigued me, but (unusually) did not seem to disturb them. In comparison to her mother and most other village women, Rosy was exceptionally meticulous in matters of personal hygiene and beauty care, carefully cleansing her skin with raw milk and shaping her eyebrows. This beauty care regime was familiar to my convent-educated eyes but, truth be told, I never expected to find these beauty practices in the village. Fairly early in my fieldwork, I learnt that Rosy had been withdrawn from the local school and sent to a very prestigious and well-known school in the hills, part of a chain of convent schools and colleges administered by a Christian mission, to complete the last three years of high school. Sarabjit Singh was a substantial landholder by village standards and could meet the costs of such an education. St Bede's, a convent run by nuns in Shimla (the erstwhile summer capital of the colonial state), is considered 'safe' for girls, in addition to providing the significant language resource of correctly spoken and properly accented English. This indeed is its cachet. St Bede's is also regarded as a sort of finishing school for girls who are groomed for marriage. Its students are drawn from rural and urban middle-class or aspiring middle-class backgrounds.

By contrast, Rosy's brother Sonu was a virtual illiterate. He had dropped out of the village middle school, and his mother, in the customary style of many Punjabi parents, constantly professed her inability to make him stay there: '*ajj kal nyane kisse di nahi sundeh*' (young ones don't listen to anyone these days). A young adult at the time of fieldwork, he rarely spent time at home and was out in the fields all day, and sometimes late into the evening. I learnt about him from the way he was 'talked about' in the odd remarks

and allusions people made. Once, I was told that he had acquired a horse and was breaking it in. On another occasion, he was reported to have been in a fight with a labourer. My early impressions of him were of a young man with little to do and under very cursory parental supervision.

The youngest son, Goldy, was a school-going teenager. He attended an English-medium boarding school in a nearby small town and returned home during short vacations. This was a puzzle, since the family was by no means badly off. It would have seemed more logical to send Goldy to a colonial hill school and keep Rosy home. Unlike Rosy, who spoke to me only in English, Goldy rarely spoke English at home, and when he did, there was a strong Punjabi flavour to his accent and grammar. I never visited Goldy's school, but I gathered that it was privately run and catered to the sons of landowning upper and middle peasantry. The school calendar's acknowledgement of agrarian rhythms enabled Goldy to come and go frequently and help with the village harvests. For him, agrarian work seemed to be useful, though not vital, knowledge.

Punjabi villagers think of schooling as part of the broader category of learning or *gyan*; it is not regarded as substitutable by any other form of *gyan*. However, not all formal knowledge is treated identically. Learning Sikh scriptures is considered appropriate, but schooling is not judged in the same benign light. Punjabi parents have quite articulate and emotive ways of talking about schooling and knowledge. They value schooling, but also think it possesses an actively transformative potential, and can, like magic, be simultaneously benevolent and dangerous, or might improve or spoil a person. Schooling, therefore, is literally treated with care. Metaphor and analogy are common to Punjabi, and schooling is likened in speech genres to friendship or food. Just as a person can go wrong or get spoilt (*bigar jana*) with too much food or unregulated friendships, school education can hijack 'identity'. Like crops, schooling yields results in the future and is *jokham* (a risk). Formal education, including schooling, is sought, but it is also evaluated along a sliding scale of 'sufficient' or 'too much', an abstraction that is not numerically fixed but is conceptually debated within the family or community. Within this version of schooling as risk, is a discourse about what is at risk and who can be risked. Particular categories of person are more readily risked to the uncertainties of potentially transformative family experiments in contexts that range from employment to

migration or education. Conversely great efforts are made to offset the risk that something like education might present to daughters. For example, families try to minimise the risk of 'too much' education for daughters — who may become unmarriageable — and 'not enough' schooling for sons — who may remain unemployable. The judgement of what is adequate or excessive varies with the circumstances in which a family finds itself at various moments of time and at different stages of its domestic cycle. This balance is not a decision arrived at individually. Rather, it forms part of discursive formations within which ideas of 'sufficient' and 'too much' are located.

On the face of it, Sarabjit's family might be viewed as an aberration. The schooling choice that made their daughter more privileged than their sons is clearly not typical of patterns that connect gender and schooling. But aberrations bring particular worldviews to the surface, and enable ethnographers to see connections that are otherwise veiled. The aberrant choices made for the sent away children, Rosy and Goldy, compel us to look away from the schooling choices in isolation, towards other expanded domains that shape and situate choice. The circulating anxiety about agricultural productivity, coupled with the centrality of land and landownership to identity formation for Jat Sikhs (Chopra 1994, 2003), meant that people had to innovate to reproduce and shore up valued identities that depended on successful agriculture and continued landholding. Transnational migration was — and continues to be — a known and established path to improve and retain family fortune.

But who is to migrate? Who bears the risk of the uncertainties of migratory movements? Unfortunately, the literature on migration does not address the nuances of choice and decision-making as a process, nor how migration might sway choices within the country of emigration. Typically, the literature examines the question of migrants from the perspective and location of the host culture. That literature is rich in outlining the manner in which migrant communities create alternative cultures and inhabit urban spaces (Baumann 1996; Yanagisako 1985). Urban quarters expressive of migrant movements and circulations connect cities across the globe through the evocation of exotic locales, like the 'China Towns' of San Francisco and Kolkata. Specific space names and neighbourhoods evoke particular settlements — New York's Little Italy or Southall, metonymic of the Punjabi Diaspora, have been the focus of ethnographic and fiction writing.

Some work has examined the emigration-immigration locales simultaneously (Mitchell 1969a; Watson 1977). The networks that migrants maintain in the city receive attention, but again, how migration affects choices within the sending locales is not necessarily addressed. Analyses of push and pull factors that govern migratory movements pay attention to the stream of migration, rather than to individual choice or family strategy. In the more recent literature on structural flows and migrant experience, migration is seen from the perspective of more than one site since '…an increasing number of migrants experience successive movements to second, third, fourth countries of settlement…' (Amit-Talai 1998: 45; Bhachu 1996). Understanding the multi-sited experience of migration enables me to re-examine migration from the perspective of the *sending* culture as one of the 'sites' within which migration and choice can be addressed. The global-local interactions of migration have a particular resonance for a range of choices and plans in the sending societies. To be able to fully understand how the decision to migrate is played out, I extract one strand from within the process of decision-making to flesh out how people think about making migration a possibility in their lives. My focus on schooling choices is an attempt to locate one set of choices — of schooling — along a terrain of other critical decisions made 'for the sake of the family'. At the same time, I argue that choices are also a response to a wider environment of risk that converts the future from a knowable chronicle to an uncertain abyss. The narrative of Goldy enables me to look at the way migration 'enters' the biographies of families in the sending sites and discern the evaluation, assessment and understandings of migration-as-risk that shape decisions.

The Background of an Aberrant Choice

A great deal has been written about social developments that contoured the political and cultural landscape of Punjab through the 1980s till the end of the century (and beyond). As previously outlined, assertive social movements that took the form of separatism and militancy transformed the political landscape of the state. Agricultural modernisation and the commodification of agriculture were, and remain, fundamental. Added to this is the long history of international and internal migration in districts such as Jalandhar. All these developments influenced household strategies of reproduction, but have mostly been treated as distinct phenomena,

operating in separate spheres, with a few exceptions (Shiva 1991). Here, I concentrate on the interconnections between agricultural modernisation, migration and education.

In 1982–83, the anxieties created by political movements were concealed. By contrast, the apprehension produced by the commodification of agriculture and the increasing risks entailed in migrant journeys were deep-seated. Every landholder, large and small, felt the pressure of rising costs of agricultural innovation and experimentation. Newer technologies and increasing investments meant that landholding cultivators needed to be market savvy in order to survive. Economic, social and cultural resources needed to be harnessed in new ways to keep from going under. Various strategies were marshalled to overcome the limitation of landholding size, including experiments with new crop cycles, renting in land, taking loans and deploying family labour in non-agricultural occupations like truck driving. Modern agriculture and globalised markets unleashed an anxiety and insecurity about the future, and about the family's possible failure to reproduce itself in known and trusted ways. Within this scenario of vigorous change and the uncertainty of flux, formal education and schooling took on a resonance as a possible means of ensuring the future. We might agree in part with Beck-Gernsheim's (2002: 44) view that modern social guidelines 'are no longer set by class, religion and tradition, but rather by the labour market…the educational system, the judicial system, and so on. The crucial feature of these modern guidelines is that individuals must to some extent produce them through action of their own and incorporate them into their own life history'.

The divergent schooling choices made by Sarabjit for his children can be understood at one level as a harnessing of family resources in innovative ways, locating the choices within the local cultural context, as well as the way the village oriented itself to the wider world. Sonu — as the elder son of a landowning family —was a key player within the family, but this centrality limited some of his options. He was expected to follow in his father's footsteps, harnessing the resources of the *jaddi jamin* (ancestral property) to reproduce the family. The chronicle of his life was already foretold, as it were, and schooling played only a small part in it.[5]

Sonu's mother's expression of helpless inability to persuade her elder son to continue school was also a construction of him as a decision-maker weighing everything in his own life, including

'enough' schooling. Her seeming disinterest about his decision to drop out of school was, in fact, an active expression of an expectation: that he would place family above all else, while learning to be self reliant, and that 'too much' schooling beyond the family's needs and his own destined obligations was a waste.[6] Despite the gains of agricultural prosperity, rural Punjabis have very articulate notions of wasteful expenditure, and they embrace frugality as a virtue. Money is usually kept in the innermost pockets of undergarments and spent with care. The first thing to be queried about any new acquisition is the cost, more exclaimed over and commented on than anything else. Cash is not readily disbursed, and heated arguments ensue over the price of everything from a bucket to a bus ticket. The idea of waste, and particularly 'wasting money', was part of the discourse around careful strategising with family resources.

While Sonu's story seemed to fit the pattern of sons as privileged over daughters in landholding, the life stories of the two sent away children — Rosy and Goldy — break the pattern (Seymour 2002; Sharma and Retherford 1993). But, in fact, the extraordinary choice of keeping Sonu 'at home', while sending Rosy away, are part of a single logic of risk-taking that tied the futures of brothers and sister together. It is a planning choice that also produced the younger son, Goldy, as the child to be risked, not retained, whose life seemed to be unmapped and geared towards an uncertain future. I return to this later.

Choosing an expensive and distant boarding school run by English-speaking nuns, a school that undermined the entire normative structure of Punjabi village culture (and was known to do so), could not have been easily resorted to, especially for a daughter. It was clearly not a perfunctory or unreflective choice, its risky potential displayed in the extensive discussions and negotiations that preceded the event. Sarabjit and his wife Surinder Kaur sought the consent and sanction of a wider set of persons, who could stand 'social surety' for them. Given the worldview that schooling could spoil as well as benefit a person, the extreme act was clearly prompted by more than the issue of 'good' schooling. The decision needs to be placed within a larger set of family plans, and, in this sense, sending Rosy away was an illocutionary act productive of a series of desired events.

People judged to be better versed in the ways of the larger world made the choices for Rosy. Sarabjit's sister was married into one

of the foremost political families of Punjab — her husband was a substantial landowner and a senior office bearer of a political party. More to the point, all their children were in well-known residential hill schools intended to enable them to move seamlessly into the Diaspora of well-established Sardar families. In time, Rosy narrated all of this to me, and I presumed that Rosy was being groomed and 'finished' for a successful marriage with an NRI Sardar, just like her cousins. And, indeed, this was part of the story. Well after I left the field, Rosy was married into a family in the USA.

Anthropological tracts often seem to be timeless. But a great deal of anthropological knowledge is acquired through seemingly unrelated events and acts that are not necessarily part of the anthropological present. We sometimes witness consequences of a past that produce a trace in the present. In deciphering these traces, we perceive a configuration of a future from which we are also absent. This peculiar position of looking backward and forward enables anthropologists to comment on social relations, not only as they appear in the present, but also on what possibly produced them and how they might unfold. Rosy had already finished school when I knew her, the discussions about schooling choices never happened before me — so I am speaking through traces in my present, interpreting them with binocular disparity. Rosy's insistence on speaking English with me, and her slightly obsessive attention to beauty care, created for her the patterns of a world elsewhere, with its past and its possible future expectations (Rapport 1992: 79–80; Jansen 1992: 103). Her schooling was certainly seen as a form of self-improvement and transformation. At the same time, beauty practices (plucking eyebrows and cleansing skin) brought home the peculiar hybrid nature of her existence, simultaneously capturing past movement to the convent and envisaging future migration for marriage, signifying an identity rooted in movements. Her reserve was respected as proof of having successfully acquired ways of a 'foreign' world, towards which she was being oriented.

It is clear from the perspective of rural Punjabi families that migration is a very real prospect envisaged not as a distant dream, but as an event that is actively sought, talked about and planned for — an event-in-process. *Jaddi* property, and the pressure to keep it intact, is reason enough to migrate. Property provides more than economic security, for it is a key resource in the creation of cultural capital. For landowners, undivided ancestral property is the

cornerstone of a family's survival, and of its social belonging to the community of Sardars. Keeping property intact has its own logic and its own harsh imperatives. Wholeness requires sending away some of the entitled members. To reproduce the group and family in the future, movement away is a fundamental strategy. But who will migrate? Entire families rarely do (Friedl 1976). Individual members, usually single young men, are charged with the responsibility to migrate. Studies note the higher number of men to women who migrate (Brettell 1986; Brettell and Hollifield 2000; and Hammar et al. 1997). Official statistics — such as the US Census and Department of Justice statistics (Gibson 1988), borough records or census data like the *Area of Origin of Population* tables of assorted localities in the UK — record the country of origin (Oates 2003), the gender, age and educational profile of incoming migrants. But rarely is the kinship position (or birth order) of incoming migrants reflected in demographics. Although I have no statistics to support the claim, oral narratives of household histories from the village, and subsequently in the west London borough of Southall, position younger or middle sons as the most likely choice for internal and international migration, the person destined to undertake a risk for the sake of the family. Younger sons, for example, are the ones sent to work outside the village economy and make their way in the world.

In rural Punjab, the reason for risking younger sons is twofold. Ancestral land is supposed to be divided equally among all a man's children (including daughters, who are entitled to claim a share under joint property laws), but the pressure to keep a landholding intact is intense. The rising costs of agricultural production and the inability of smaller holdings to remain viable intensify the urgency to find additional and alternative means to generate a cash flow and sustain the family. Daughters are the first coparceners encouraged to forgo their claims to ancestral property. Sons do not follow suit in quite the same way, but the realities of unsustainable holdings and the consequent inability of families to retain their *sardari* lifestyle from a restricted production base are well known. While I was doing my fieldwork in the village, I came upon two Jat Sikh *jimidar* families who had been forced by debt to sell their land; the stories of their ill-fated life were held up as an example obvious in a child's puzzled question, '*Eh Jat kiddan da? Eh tah mazdoori karda*' (What kind of Jat is this, who labours for wages?). The

tragedy of that life was there for all to witness. Sons and daughters alike are privy to the anxieties of adults and discussions about the family's future reproduction. Younger children learn that the place of the elder brother is to bear the burden of carrying on the family tradition, and their own role is to enable him to do so. Migration, as a potential and possible means to sustain *sardari*, falls squarely on younger sons.

Going away is an uncertain process that single young migrant men negotiate in the course of reaching their destinations. Many try to overcome border restrictions by migrating illegally or with the help of 'agents' who are a cross between labour contractors and travel agents, and who are not always reliable. Stories circulate of young men who were duped by fly-by-night agents, who abscond with all the payments made by trustful migrants, or of young men who managed to get out (*nikal gaya*) in the boots of cars or non-pressurised luggage holds of airplanes. More recent investigations have revealed the connection between 'promises' of opportunities abroad to lure young men into militant groups like the Babbar Khalsa, or money given to the families of young men as 'recompense-in-advance' for their certain deaths in militant action (*The Hindu*, 9 June 2005). The predicament of precarious employment for unskilled workers in the informal economies of global cities in the West has been commented on (Sassen 1988, 1991). Labour mobility associated with the economic restructuring of modern global economies is '…conducted without an institutional safety net… (and) reduced corporate and state responsibilities toward labour…' (Amit-Talai 1998: 52). The restrictions and uncertainties associated with migration were well known within the village. In the face of such insecurity, relatives who could sponsor a young man were the preferred option. Families actively cultivated foreign relatives who could smooth the trail: the closer the relative, the greater the claim that can be exerted and the assurance that the obligation will be met.

From this standpoint, families strategised to produce a relative who could enable migration. Rosy was clearly the chosen one. Rosy's father's sister, Sardarniji, had been expected to help her own brother, essentially by looking out for his children — she was Rosy's sponsor at St Bede's, for instance. In the same vein, Rosy was seen as the person who would, and could, look out for her own brother. By becoming his sponsor, she would discharge her responsibility towards the family. Her education was an investment in Goldy's

future as much as in her own. Goldy needed 'just enough' schooling to enable him to migrate and make his way. Sonu needed even less formal schooling. Anything more than he actually received would have been considered wasteful of family resources and, therefore, 'too much'. In a sense, Rosy was a security blanket for her brother, and her schooling was an essential resource in the reproduction of the family, a means to keep the ancestral property intact. Women and ancestral property alike are generally seen as symbolic resources for maintaining family honour. It is not often recognised, however, that women and ancestral property reinforce each other in jointly reproducing the family, a mutuality loaded with expectation and forethought.

Within the context of the village, migration is not simply a single event. Migration is an *event-in-process* that is doubly experienced and viewed as a *before* and *after* event, or as a process of *becoming* migrant and *being* migrant. Migration is a process that 'begins' before any member of the family actually leaves the village. Imaging the movement toward a Diaspora produces a resonance in the way families strategise for their own sake, while simultaneously producing members who will constitute the Diaspora of Sardars. The choices, risks and strategies that govern how migration becomes part of life histories are a way of understanding a form of safe keeping, with a future that could be secured.

Forethought and planning are undeniably part of survival and reproductive strategies of rural households in Punjab. A family with a clear view of the future is considered best able to withstand the vagaries of the world outside, and valourised for having the capacity to maintain *sardari* status and lifestyle. Forethought and planning are marks of the proper Sardar, who must be able to deploy his family resources to the best advantage and not be buffeted by the fickle inconsistencies of life.[7] Foresight is valued as a form of knowledge, and constitutes the possibility of reproducing *sardari*. On the face of it, Sarabjit's choices for his children might be viewed as an aberration. The schooling choice that made the daughter more privileged than the sons is clearly not typical of patterns that connect gender and schooling. But aberrations, as I said earlier, bring particular worldviews to the surface. In fact, this family's schooling strategies were not a complete oddity, for Rosy's schooling fits the larger gender pattern in a particularly individualistic way. Her schooling is harnessed for the sake of her brother, and is not seen

as something that is solely 'for' her. In this sense, her schooling is still underwritten by socially constituted gender divisions, in which girls are not thought of as repositories of value unless they can be geared towards particular felt needs of others. In some senses, Rosy's life also fits Dasgupta's contention, that not all girls in a family are undervalued. Demographically speaking, it is not the firstborn daughter but the later ones who face the greatest challenges to provisioning and survival in Punjab (Dasgupta 1987).

Moments of uncertainty produce an imperative to strategise. In Punjab, the 1980s were fraught with the uncertainties of militancy and terror. Though the two years I spent in the field were not marked by incidents of militant violence in the village (though militant strikes and police operations did occur later), the increase in political aggression and the discourse of grievance and separatism was certainly developing during that time.[8] Young Sikh men increasingly became the targets of state terror, or were influenced by militancy. Producing Goldy as migrant and sending him away, was purposive in accomplishing the explicit objective of preserving the *jaddi jamin*. While I place Goldy's story explicitly within the context of declining agriculture and the strategies to initiate recovery — because this is where it primarily belongs — the interconnections with other movements cannot be discounted in configuring his story and his personhood. So, things seen slightly differently also produce Goldy, the younger son without a clearly chronicled life story, as the most likely target of militant persuasion, more 'loosely' fitted into a crumbling world, most likely to fall prey to the kind of politics that Sardarniji's husband and his party faction espoused — a separate state of Khalistan (discussed in the following chapter). From within this imperative, saving the *jaddi* by sending him away was an optical illusion. The other was removing him from contexts of violence.

Telling a life story of any single individual or family in its completeness would require a different time span to be addressed, and certainly a greater attention to 'voice'. Nevertheless, drawing out one single strand — schooling choice — from a family's biography and the matrix of family strategies of reproduction, does allow me to see how this thread is braided with seemingly unrelated social patterns and choices. It enables a view of how a single act of choice becomes the mirror for other choices and averted risks that might not be visible in the same way — in this case, the connection between Rosy's schooling and the larger story of migration.

I want to emphasise that aberrant choices have to be viewed as an indication of anxieties and threats produced by emerging militancy. But it is also germane to my argument that anxieties about agrarian futures underwrote political separatism. It is important to reemphasise the recognition of the loss of agrarian livelihoods implicit in the demands of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. The demands for control over *ab* (river water), and the movements and prices of food grain were about an assertion of identity crafted through and rooted in agrarian ways of life. Though political demands — and their more violent outcomes — overshadowed the economic claims of the Resolution, their importance needs to be kept in focus when we reflect on individual decisions and choices.

The past, inscribed in archives, memories and folklore, does make itself available to us. We have to accede, at least methodologically, that unlike the past, the future does not always appear in easily accessible or 'knowable' ways. This does not mean that the future remains unmapped. Indeed, the future foretold is the very stuff of collective and individual social imaginations. In the previous chapter, I argued that forgetting dark histories while creating useable pasts is a way of looking backward, towards the past. But looking backward is only one perceptual movement through which people imagine themselves. The other is a view of a future horizon. If we think of the past as a transcript that endures deletions, presents journeys as safe passages, or underscores certain 'passages' of memory appearing to us almost like highlighted text, we gain a stance point from which to read between the lines, uncover erasures, and discover 'hidden' narratives. It is important to perform a similar exercise of recovery for the future as understood by people. At least in this narrative, the future foretold does seem to be the hidden transcript in family strategies of reproduction.

Notes

1. I say this, particularly, since even on the 25th anniversary of Operation Bluestar in 2009, Major General J. S. Jamwal, the Garrison Commander stationed at Amritsar during 1984, claimed that the operation need never have happened (*The Tribune*, 4 June 2009). For him, the event was not a future foretold. In outlining the period immediately prior to

the events of 1984 in Punjab, I looked at the signs of 1984 available to me in newspaper archives, government reports and academic commentaries to discover the pre-history of the critical event, and found their meaning literally with hindsight. Both Jamwal and I share a spot; we are knowledgeable in retrospect.

2. The name of the village has been masked; I use pseudonyms throughout.
3. Part of this narrative is published in 'Sisters and Brothers: Schooling, Family and Migration' in Chopra and Jeffery (2005: 299–315).
4. I did the fieldwork in 1982–1984, and then in a shorter spell in 1989 as part of my PhD.
5. Not all forms of learning were absent in Sonu's life. As inheritor of patrimonial property, he was expected to acquire elaborate forms of *gyan,* and encouraged to spend all his time in the fields getting to know the nuanced rhythms of agriculture. Styles of labour management, the cure of sick animals, transactions involved in fixing a price for cash crops with grain agents, were essential *gyan* for the son and heir of a landowning family. This was a prolonged initiation process into manhood — becoming a Sardar (the polite form of address for those who own ancestral property) and maintaining a sardari lifestyle. Work as a performance of status is constructed as more than an instrumental means to a livelihood: it is understood as an art, not available to everyone, a presentation of the self, the lineage, and status to public gaze (Chopra 2003: 43–44). Very little of this chronicle is reported by Sonu —much of it is reconstructed from other people's 'tellings' of his life story, partly because our interactions were habitually formal, typical of avoidance behaviour between cross gendered strangers.
6. The possibility of breaking out of this life story always existed — but his continuous mocking of his younger brother's books and inadequate knowledge of farm and field suggested that he accepted, at least in part, that continued schooling was 'too much'.
7. Knowledge of a family's labour power rests with the household head. At harvests, for example, decisions about deploying labour are taken by the household head. Harvests are a time when the whole village labours in the fields, and the planning, knowledge and decisions of the head of a family are visible and available to be judged and evaluated by everyone. The assumption that this is 'male' knowledge is clear (Chopra 1994, 2003). In the numerous instances of women-headed households in the village, however, women (like sons) are thought able to assume this knowledge, though they may choose to surrender this ability to male collateral kin.
8. Militancy meant that I could not go back to attend the panchayat elections that followed closely on 'Operation Bluestar' in 1984 and the assassination of then PM Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards.

4

Sent Away Boys

When the downward spiral of agricultural production, economic necessity and political discontent become the condition for the aberrant acts of individuals or social groups, it is possible for people to present them as 'fate', and perhaps restore the deviant act to normalcy. Condemnation of aberrant acts does not remain constant, especially of acts that can be justified or forgiven. Goldy's story, discussed in the previous chapter, belongs to this realm of aberration. The making of Goldy as migrant 'fitted' certain cultural expectations of responsibility that sons must demonstrate, or be seen to demonstrate, towards the family. The disparity between his education and that of his sister was balanced by an expectation that the sister would provision her brother's future to enable him to contribute to family fortunes. Imbalance and aberration were 'levelled' within a future foretold.

However, we need to ask if there are some aberrations so unorthodox that they remain beyond the horizons of fate and forgiveness. I address this question through another family biography in a village not far from the city of Jalandhar. I was witness to the transformation of a younger son to a *ghar jawai*, an uxorilocal husband or resident son-in-law,[1] during 1982 and 1983, when the son finally married and migrated to live with his transnational affines. The time of this transformation is of some consequence, for it happened just prior to the three climactic political events in 1984 — the occupation of the Golden Temple complex in Amritsar by the Indian Army in June 1984, the subsequent assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who ordered the army action, and the pogrom of the mass killings of Sikhs that followed her assassination in November of that year.[2] The dramatic transformation of everyday life by these spectacular political events is well documented (Puri et al. 1999; Tully and Jacob 1985), and range from writings on state and militant

violence, when young men became targets of state terror and militant persuasion (Singh 1999; Juergensmeyer 2000; Mahmood 1996; Pettigrew 1995; Singh 2000), to the transformation of religious discourse as political rhetoric (Axel 2001; Deol 2000; Fair 2005; Oberoi 1987; Singh 2000; Tatla 1999). The responses at the level of households and families, however, are less obvious. The unspectacular, often muted, responses might be mistaken for routine practices, for the appearance of acts as 'routines' can obscure a more purposive response to the generalised state of violence. To unravel routine, and read it as intention directed towards larger events, requires a traverse through disconnected discourses, bringing them together into a simulation of a legible chronicle. Interpretation requires looking back in time with questions and knowledge framed in the present. It is the fusion of past and present horizons that enable us to reinterpret routine events and unravel personhood. Bringing forward an act of the past into its own future by knowledge garnered from beyond the time of its enactment, is an act of displacement that enables an understanding of the act both as an aberration and a re-inscription. It enables us to literally return the act to its moment after displacing it with interrogations from our present. To understand the aberrant act of producing the ghar jawai, we need to fully explore the context of its enactment, an exploration possible only if we see the past with the knowledge of hindsight.

I locate my interpretation of this aberrant act of converting a son to ghar jawai at the crossing of three dialogues — transnational migration, militancy and the discourse of shame. The intersection of these seemingly disparate discourses at particular moments of time enables different readings of the ghar jawai, creating the context for my questions — why would a family convert a loved and valued son to a degraded figure? Why would a son agree to go?

To look more closely at the circumstance of these questions, I shift attention away from the affinal home (where the ghar jawai is located as a kinship position, and where most writings on ghar jawai locate themselves), towards the patrilineal home of the young man, where the choice of sending the son away is made. With the shift in perspective, the ghar jawai no longer remains a symbol on a kinship chart, or an anthropological and cultural aberration, but acts as a lens to decipher the sense of generalised violence and the uncertainty of fear, bringing to the surface certain critical stances towards hegemonic constructions of heroic martyrdom.

The Ghar Jawai

It is important to outline the terms in which the ghar jawai is configured within a discourse of shame and degraded masculinity, and see this not as a digression, but the defining ground on which the conversion and the critique of particular formations of masculinity are expressed. Within a kinship structure that conceives the place of primary residence as intrinsic to the construction of personhood (in whatever terms location and person may be constituted), sons are highly valued members of the patrilineal family, and parables of prodigal sons sent away by furious fathers are not common to Punjabi folklore.[3] In her discussion of the nature of person, Strathern (1987) outlines the different order of attachment and detachment with respect to particular kin that constitute 'person' and identity, and 'are visible in the different ties he or she has with others' (ibid.: 275). To detach a son from his patrilocal residence is to make him 'out of place' (Douglas 1966). The sending away process that transforms a son to ghar jawai decimates his status, casts a slur upon his personhood, and transforms him from honoured guest (*parohna*) in his affinal home to ghar jawai. It reduces his ability to be appropriately male, precisely because he is incongruously 'out of place', dependent on his affines, countering the structured hierarchies of kinship exchange that subordinate wife-givers to wife-takers. In Punjabi kinship, the patrilocal home is critical to the formation and assertion of masculine personhood — the affinal home must reinforce this primacy, not dispute it.

Surprisingly little ethnography exists on the ghar jawai, but the little that does, elucidates some key issues. Hershman briefly suggests that the ghar jawai in Punjab is a phenomenon among landed rural families, who may not have sons to farm their land and therefore invite the son-in-law to conduct the affairs of the family (1981: 73–80), though this is not a first option, and distant agnates or collateral kin are usually preferred. In the absence of agnates (for whatever reason, including family conflicts), a daughter's son is welcomed. Customary law places the ghar jawai as a conduit for the real heir to property — his own son — who acquires fuller and more complete rights in his grandfather's property, while a ghar jawai may benefit only tangentially. The Punjab Civil Law Digest interprets a daughter's entitlements in customary law, as:

> the daughter takes no share in ancestral land by inheritance [… but…] if she continues to reside in her father's house with her husband, the father being sonless, she is sometimes found to be capable of taking his land for her life, and transmitting it to her own male issue (Rattigan 1880: 39–40).

The real purpose of the institution of the ghar jawai is to benefit the daughter's son and not leave land and property untended. The ghar jawai is 'brought into the house with the sole objective that he would procreate an heir…for the appointer…' and is '...*merely a medium* by which the son born to the daughter of the proprietor to whom he is married succeeds to the property of the proprietor' (Diwan 2004: 39–40; emphasis added).

Without the ability to claim full rights in his affinal home, this move '…is only conceivable where the son-in-law's own patriliny was so paltry and the property of his father-in-law so tempting that he would be willing to brave the shame and dangers of taking up residence in his wife's village' (Hershman 1981: 77–78). Property is the reason for the move into uxorilocal residence, as well as the reason for the hostility and derision directed toward the ghar jawai in rural Punjab. The proverb, *sohre ghar jawai kutta/ Bhen ghar bhai kutta* (A cur! In his father-in-law's home/A cur! In his sister's marital home) pithily captures the derision towards a ghar jawai. Taken together, custom and practice present the ghar jawai as a muted category of person, effeminised by the loss of dominion, a mere instrument in the reproduction of rights in property. Jeffery, Jeffery and Lyon (1989) describe the position of the ghar jawai as the mirror image of the new *bahu* (daughter-in-law) in her husband's home, dependent on and subservient to her conjugal kin (ibid.: 37). They also suggest that, precisely for this reason, the status of being ghar jawai is unappealing, even if it entails personal economic gain for the individual man and his sons.

From the perspective of the ghar jawai and his patrikin, the move into degraded personhood is 'explained' as a sacrifice, an obligation and a duty to renounce patrilineal property and prevent fragmentation of landholdings. The movement is cast as duty that sons must exhibit towards their families, justified by a string of details of why this move was necessary, or even underplayed by infrequent reference. In either case, of exhaustive excuses or silence, it is considered a troublesome move.

This is not to suggest that men never move along affinal networks. Village-level histories and family biographies reflect the movements of men as migrants enabled by affinal connection and networks, within and across generations. The affinal enablement, however, is downplayed in different ways. Male patronymics and personal names carry the sense of movement to transnational destinations — *Vilayti, Amriki, Kanada* Singh[4] — but make little reference to any affinal tie that may have enabled migration, or facilitated the conversion of a local person to 'transnational traveller'. What is celebrated in the name, and the inherited patronymic, is the idea of adventure and individual volition, feted in congratulatory allusions — *pairan te chakkri* (he had wheels under his feet), *aggeh nikal gaya* (he crossed borders). The signs of transnational migration are visible in domestic architecture, landholding patterns, the material artefacts of everyday life, and, increasingly, in philanthropic or religious donations.[5] It is quite common to see double-and triple-storeyed village homes, with airplanes and automobiles cast in cement on rooftops, as symbols of passage identified with successful travel and earnings of migrant men.[6] However, such transnational movements of men are distinct from the movement of the ghar jawai, primarily because the former are viewed as volitional, while the ghar jawai is positioned as 'acted upon' rather than 'acting', placing him directly into the domains of the regulated feminine.

Though admired, migration and individual volition are simultaneously projected as dangerous, and stories of perilous travel, incarcerations and young men duped by 'agents' are part of village folklore.[7] The narratives of migration are stories of hope and success, but also of sacrifice. Just as often as volition is feted, migration is represented as the duty of sons to bear risk and uncertainty to enable the continuity of the family and ensure its prosperity (Chopra 2005). 'We knew it was dangerous. We knew it could be a matter of life and death. We knew it was illegal....But there was no other way. It was up to my sons to give a good upbringing for their children' a Punjabi peasant tells a journalist (*International Herald Tribune*, 15 April 2007). Fliers and pamphlets distributed within villages, advertising 'travel agent and visa consultant', become a source of optimism and planning. Not all migration is successful, and this, too, is known. Stories of single men illegally crossing borders with the help of agents to whom they pay huge amounts of money circulate within the village imaginary as cautionary folk tales. Young men

who travelled illegally were dubbed *donki bandeh* (donkey men), sold like pack animals — hence, the term — by agents down the routes of migration that begin in villages of Punjab and cross through Russia, Eastern Europe and then into the UK, hidden in lift vans transporting goods across the English Channel, packed close together in airless vans, handed milk bottles to pee, ordered to remain still and silent for fear of discovery. During interviews, illegal migrants in Southall (September–October, 2006) narrated how one agent would consign them to another, how they walked through the night, or hid in copses or goat huts on the outskirts of villages in Eastern Europe, wading through streams or crossing fields of snow. Some did not make it. If they fall sick on the way, and others cannot help, they are either left behind or shot by the agents, who fear that a lingering sick man would delay progress and lead to discovery.[8] During these interviews in Southall, and later in 2007 in Chandigarh and Amritsar, I was struck by the geographical accuracy with which each man could describe the complicated map of Eastern Europe, indications of journeys endured.

The knowledge of risks entailed in migration without safety nets re-inscribes the transnational ghar jawai in a more positive frame. Transnational families are crucial to an understanding of the personhood and masculinity of the ghar jawai. South Asian migrant communities view marital import as a way of retaining their links to home and language. Older residents in settled communities like Southall rued the loss of language of their third-generation[9] grandchildren, or the fact that children view the homeland as a tourist site rather than a place imbued with moral value (Rapport and Dawson 1998b; Webner 1999). The loss is sought to be recouped by the 'imported' spouse, who can impart the morality seen to reside in homeland 'traditions'. Migration imparts a status to transnational families which they deploy in marriage markets of their homelands (Beck-Grensheim 2007).

If sending families view their choice as a 'safer' option to illegal migration, and migrant families idealise imported spouses (both brides and grooms) as potential repositories of cherished tradition that can be passed on to children, the actual process of negotiation between imported spouse and transnational kin is far from smooth. From the perspective of the ghar jawai, the transnational family may, in fact, be an uncertain space. Helweg's (1986) study of Jat Sikh landowners settled in Gravesend (UK) draws attention to the

uncertainties of being an imported spouse. In a short illustrative sketch of Ajay Singh, brought from a Punjabi village as a ghar jawai to wed a Jat Sikh girl raised in Gravesend, Helweg outlines the nominal commitments made towards the ghar jawai by his transnational kin. Burdened by cultural illiteracy, faced with alien household tasks like hanging wallpaper, Ajay had to meekly bear the criticisms of his wife's wider kin, who dismissed him as 'useless' precisely because he lived with his wife's family. His father-in-law declared that there were enough bridegrooms for a daughter with a UK passport. Clearly, transnational communities perfectly understand the passport as a substitute for property, and deploy this precious commodity to keep the ghar jawai in place.

Katherine Charsley's essay (2005) on migrant Pakistani men in Bristol who arrive as *ghar damads* (house son-in-laws) is perhaps one of the more detailed descriptions of the experience of being a transnational uxorilocal husband. Her essay focuses on the fragmented masculinity and debased position of the *ghar damad/jawai,* especially vis-a-vis his male affines. In contrast to his wife, surrounded by her own kin, the migrant ghar jawai is without the support or network of his own patrikin. One of the interesting points Charsley makes is that while a girl is literally primed from her childhood to leave her natal family and home at marriage, a man is unprepared to face the consequences of such a move (2005: 95–97). Locating herself within the worlds of migration and marriage, Charsley also argues that the term *khana damad* falls into disuse, because the disparaging discourse around the 'imported wives' of the South Asian community profiled in the British press, makes the usage of 'imported husband' or *khana damad* disagreeable for many families. Further, given their number (especially, with the elimination of the Primary Purpose Rule), uxorilocal husbands literally vanish into the social landscape, enabling a change in normative practices within Diaspora communities.

The period during which an imported husband remains dependent upon his affinal kin is open-ended. Both Charsley and Helweg draw attention to the efforts of the young conjugal couple to establish nuclear households, which represents a chance for the ghar jawai to amend his everyday dependence and achieve the status of a household head, an option unlikely to be available to rural Punjabi ghar jawais. But success is not guaranteed even to the transnational ghar jawai. Independence may remain an incomplete achievement

if the father-in-law purchases the 'independent' home and retains the mortgage and title deeds. The stigma of his export is partially recouped by the purchase of agricultural land and rebuilding village homes via remittances, though this reclamation of status is in his patrilineal home, not the transnational home of residence, in which he remains ghar jawai.

I extend the terms of this argument, for it seems to me that the movement from transnational ghar jawai to household head, while primarily aimed at establishing a nuclear household, enables the creation of an attenuated 'patrilocal context' within the transnational settlement. During the course of fieldwork in Southall in 2005, and again in 2006, I was told of 'uncles' who had come as imported husbands to live in their wives' homes. Atma Singh Kang of Cranford told me that his father, who had arrived in the 1940s as a ghar jawai, had been 'brought' by his mother's brother.[10] Mr Johar, formerly a teacher in a Punjab village school, narrated similar instances of imported husbands for whom he had been a *bichola* (matrimonial advisor). At the time of my fieldwork in 2006, many former ghar jawais had set up nuclear households, and were instrumental in enabling the subsequent migration of younger men of their patrikin to Southall, simulating a partilineal context for themselves and for subsequent migrants. The juxtaposition of an earlier personhood and a later identity — ghar jawai transformed to 'benefactor'— were simultaneous in the narratives and life histories of these men. Lambert's (2000: 82) study of locality and relatedness is a particularly interesting framework to understand the creation of kinship contexts, 'used to emphasise the processual and contextually determined character' of relatedness. Lambert examines relatedness as a broader concept, to include fictive and genealogical kinship. Her understanding of locality and proximity in constituting consanguinal 'relatives' within affinal villages among women in rural Rajasthan, is useful in thinking about the constitution of transnational patrilocality. Fictive kinship and forms of relatedness are cited by migrants in general — many come with nothing but a telephone number or an address of a distant relative and it is locality and proximity that transforms the genealogical distance into a more substantive relationship for reckoning kinship support and relatedness. This transformative potential of kinship as 'processual and contextual' is even more important for the migrant ghar jawai. While financially dependent on affines, the possibility

of a localised patriliny that rests on sentiment and affect, which Lambert characterises as a form of substance critical for creating relatedness, is of immense value to the otherwise effeminised ghar jawai.

The processual creation of a transnational patrilocal context implies forgetting of a past as ghar jawai. This forgetting may be deliberate, a response to damaging press reports of imported spouses among South Asian Diasporas, or the ability to fade away into different cultural landscapes and disavow an awkward identity. Perhaps the absence of property enables forgetting, for there is no dispute over inheritance rights. From whichever perspective or locale we look at it, however, the figure of the rural or transnational ghar jawai is ensnared in economic constraint and financial need. Incongruously, within kinship discourse, resorting to the conversion of a son to ghar jawai because of economic necessity is an act perfectly intelligible to a wider cultural audience of interpreters, who may subscribe to the ideology of shame in which the ghar jawai is mired, but also represent this as the inevitability of 'fate' occasioned by dire circumstance. Retrospective tolerance weakens the stigma of dependence and degradation, cloaked by a sense of restoring normalcy. In the transnational context, the fact that the ghar jawai might become a conduit for future migrations of kin and village folk, purges some part of the shame. It is possible, therefore, to argue that while hegemonic discourse assigns the ghar jawai to the domain of the abject, practice and processual kinship enable a form of collective forgetfulness and a partial recouping of misplaced masculinity. At least some aberrations fade into forgiveness.

Addressing the existing literature on the ghar jawai to understand the sources of degradation and potential recuperation, is half the story, for the perspective is from the affinal home of the ghar jawai. To understand more fully what it means to make an aberrant choice, from the point of view of the sending family, I consider the partial biography of one family who made that choice. Focusing on an aberrant act in one biography presents a methodological problem of non-representative social phenomena, but, in my view, this truncated context enables particular ideas to surface that are not apparent in the generalised norm. I argue that people's choices reflect their interpretations of social and political environments, and their understanding of what constitutes appropriate action within specific contexts. What is *generally* inappropriate may shift in response

to volatile, uncertain contexts that require an innovative harnessing of social and cultural capital. A deliberate act of aberration may imply a critique of hegemonic discourses. It is the sense of critique ingrained in an aberrant choice that, I think, allows the ghar jawai to be recast in a more affirmative light. The metamorphoses of the ghar jawai, and the re-inscription of the discourse of degradation toward an idea of protected personhood, give a different understanding of these sent away sons.

Alien Sons

During the course of fieldwork in 1982–83 in Punjab, I was introduced to a Jat Sikh family of substantial landholders — the Gill family.[11] The village was literally and metaphorically the stronghold of a prominent political family active in state politics, and, as I later learnt, associated with the separatist factions within the Akali party that supported the movement for Khalistan, a separate nation for the Sikhs.

What was so striking — and, for me, perhaps most schizophrenic — about the Gill family was the presence of two girls, who, like me, were strangers in the household, but unlike me, were there as prospective members of the household. In fact, they were there to decide if one of them would marry the younger son, Amrik Singh. Their names were Dolly and Delia, and they were the daughters of a rich businessman who had migrated to the UK in the late 60s, held assorted jobs as taxi driver, window frame fixer and then worked with a catering firm at Heathrow, before buying out his employer's window fixing firm and becoming a successful building contractor. With my own agenda of 'learning' Punjab, I was conducted around the fields to interview the labourers and become acquainted with agrarian work. Dolly would accompany me, and in sharp contrast to my *salwar kameez* and desperate attempts to keep my head covered, she roamed the fields in jeans and chatted with the labourers (via me) in accented English. The whole scenario had a fantastical quality, wholly un-rustic.

What struck particularly was the fact that the two girls were there to choose a husband through a form of supervised dating. Since Dolly was the elder, she was the one who needed to decide first if she was ready to marry Amrik. Her style of arriving at a decision

was to tease him incessantly, though he scarcely lifted his eyes and was far too self-conscious to respond. This wholly reversed my sense of gender relations between Punjabi men and women; in no way did it conform to my understanding of arranged marriages. In the end, Dolly decided against marrying, and her younger sister Delia decided she would marry Amrik. Later, I was shown photographs of the young couple in Southall. Amrik was almost unrecognisable. Gone were his turban and beard. His coiffure of curls fashioned a halo around his head, and unlike his father's flowing beard, Amrik's was cut and shaped.[12] He was in Punjabi parlance a 'cut surd' or a *mona Sardar* (shaven Sikh), a body transformation that was, and is, quite common among migrating Sikh men (Brah 1996: 24).

It is not only the unusual marriage arrangement that needs to be explained, but also Amrik's parents' anxiety about the match, and their worried queries about this unusual courtship. Amrik's mother, whom I shall call Sardarniji, would ask her elder daughter-in-law, who was acting as a *bichola*, whether Dolly had reached a decision, and expressed immense relief when the other sister, Delia, chose to marry her son. Neither her anxiety nor her relief made sense, given that she was detaching her son from his patrilocality and sending him away to become a ghar jawai to reside with a family whose daughters, Dolly and Delia, demonstrated their 'foreignness' by non-conformist clothing, provocative banter and tardy decisions.

The Gills were substantial landholders, whose economic status was bolstered by their political clout. Economic constraint and financial need cannot explain their choice of converting their son to a ghar jawai. Their puzzling decision is made more acute by the fact that Amrik's elder brother was already a migrant, and there did not seem to be any compelling reason for a second, ignominious move.[13] Amrik's father had become increasingly involved in state and separatist politics, and in his absence, there was no male member to manage family affairs. In such circumstances, Sardarniji's act is odd, for, after all, this was not the only way she could have sent Amrik away. Throughout the period of the 80s and 90s, the more frequent strategy adopted by families was converting 'visit visas' to permissions to stay as a first step toward transnational migration.[14] Unlike Ajay Singh in Helweg's study, or the imported husbands in Charlesy's discussion, who were all constrained by financial need, there seemed no good reason at all to send Amrik away.

It is the absence of good reason that compels attention. If we accept that aberration occurs in response to extraordinary events or situations, then how does any situation get evaluated or understood as extraordinary? How were contexts constructed, information garnered, and responses crafted? As anthropologists, we know that a great deal of our own knowledge is acquired through seemingly unrelated events, acts and fragments that are not accessible or visible in identical ways; it is part of the methodological challenge of our discipline. To construct something meaningful, we grapple with the interpretive task of deciphering fragments, of making unrelated events talk to each other and to us. What we often ignore in our methodological reflections, however, is that similar problems of disconnection, deciphering meaning in fragments, or making sense of things separated by space and time, also confront social actors. Facts circulate in arbitrary circuits, and are not always available to everyone in the same way. The ability to activate networks of information and interpret circumstance place social actors in positions of power vis-a-vis each other. How information is deployed is critical when departing from the norm. This is what enables people to judge a decision as good or improper. It also allows the key players to present themselves as constrained by circumstance, deploy the idiom of fate and misfortune, and others to tolerate the deviation as well as the subsequent restoration of reputation. [15]

In 1982 and early 1983, the time of Amrik's conversion to ghar jawai, whispered rumours of *zulm* (oppression) and *tashaddar* (barbarity) were insidious. Signs of a troubled polity began to surface, and a sense of ambient anxiety emerged.[16] I heard conversations, sometimes in passing, and snippets of news brought by people dropping in to meet the family. An episode of a country-made bomb thrown at the residence of the Deputy Superintendent of Central Jails in Amritsar was discussed with some concern. Newspaper accounts reported five separate instances of bomb explosions in the city of Amritsar.[17] In early 1983, news of the death in police custody of a young man known to the family in Sidhwan Bet of Ludhiana tehsil, was received with horror and discussed for many days in the household. Police in the neighbouring state of Haryana arrested 51 young *amritdhari* Sikhs, who had adopted the entire set of visible body symbols of resistance: open beards, blue turbans, ritual daggers and *chogas* (long shirts). None of those arrested was more than 30 years old. Rumours claimed the young men were targeted because

they had been ritually initiated by Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale when he toured villages preaching and conducting Sikh initiation rites. Publicly enacted initiations were performed throughout the early to mid-80s as a form of renewal of faith and commitment to the emerging political community of Khalistan.[18] By early January 1983, the Punjab government had released 25,000 arrested protestors.[19]

The ban on pillion riding on motorbikes came into effect in 1982, and unconfirmed reports of young men interrogated because they were on motorbikes caused some anxious moments. Amrik's motorbike was usually parked in the courtyard, and there was always some friction between son and mother if he wanted to go off with it.

What came to light later, but was veiled knowledge at the time, was the formation of cells in villages composed of young men trained in the use of arms. The organised (and recognised) guerrilla movements that came to the fore in the post-1984 period after Operation Woodrose and Operation Black Thunder (police and army surveillance operations in Punjab), have been the subject of literature on the politics of that period (Deol 2000; Embree 1990; Fair 2005; Juergensmeyer 2000; Mahmood 1996; Pettigrew 1995; Singh 2000). Before this period, however, small groups in isolation carried out uncoordinated attacks on seemingly random targets. These groups were formed around one person — and often named after him — and they operated with as few as three or four 'core members' and seven or eight workers. The workers kept supplies going, and provided safe getaways for those who conducted actual attacks. Core members recruited others to be part of the group or some aspect of the operation. By the mid-1980s, the state was fraught with a fear of militancy and uncertainties of terror unleashed by a disorganised police force. Young Sikh men, targets of state hostility (Gossman 2000: 266–67) or influenced by militancy, were vanishing in perceptible but imprecise numbers. We know they disappeared, from interviews conducted with parents who had been questioned by the police (Mahmood 1996; Pettigrew 1995), from the traces they left of themselves on statistics of missing and disappeared persons (Amnesty International 1991), and from scattered reports in newspapers.[20] Rumours circulated about young men who wore blue or saffron turbans, carried the *kirpan* (ceremonial dagger) or had open flowing beards, being taken into custody. Sarbjit Singh, a former deputy commissioner in Amritsar district, is quoted as saying, 'I used to tell people in the villages, you keep an eye on your young

men. Make sure they don't spend the night away…and if they go off from time to time…talk to them. If one son became a terrorist…the police would require the other son for interrogation…parents have had a horrible time' (Pettigrew 1995: 59).

Juergensmeyer (2000) writes in retrospect: 'from 1981 to 1994 thousands of young men and perhaps a few hundred women joined the movement. They were initiated into the secret fraternities of various rival radical organisations, Babbar Khalsa, Khalistan Commando Force, the Khalistan Liberation Force, Bhindranwale Tiger Force, etc.' (ibid.: 89). Reconstructing evidence of the scale of the disappearances, Gurharpal Singh (2000) comments:

> 25,000 deaths were recorded between 1981 and 1993 as result of militant violence and counterinsurgency operations by security forces […] Human rights groups have put the figure much higher to account for 'involuntary disappearances'; they estimate that illegal detainees varied between 20,000 and 45,000 … In almost all the data series published so far there are significant variations (ibid.: 163).

These statistics were not the source of Sardarniji's information of what was happening outside her home, but her perceptions, like those of others in her world, manifest what the statistics are now saying — that sons, brothers and husbands were 'in danger', and dangerous. She probably endorsed the inchoate anger expressed by a visitor to their home — *Nyanian de picche pai gaye* (they went for the children) — and feared for her own son. In a world turned upside down, young men lured toward the passions of militancy or targets of state violence, became a threat to their own families. Literally and metaphorically, young men became the opening though which the uncertain outside entered and destroyed protected spaces of home. The transgressions of spaces reassigned protection away from men, into the hands of women, an inversion that could not be voiced but surfaced in aberrant acts.

Looking back, it does seem to me that Sardarniji's understanding of uncertainty was there before my eyes in the ill-assorted household of unrelated, unmarried girls engaged in the unconventional practice of choosing a bridegroom, a process that resulted in a great deal of teasing, flirting and intemperance, to all of which Sardarniji turned a blind eye. Her peculiar oblivion needs to be understood as more than a marriage strategy. I see it as an act that was saying something about larger events and the hegemonies of heroism. We

can only understand her own aberrant tolerance of Dolly and Delia if we are willing to expand the horizons of how we locate and give meaning to aberration.

For Sardarniji, the 'foreignness' of her future daughter-in-law embodied safe passage and a sanctuary space for her son. She was willing to stomach the distinctively provocative teasing to which her son was subject, and the fact that her potential daughter-in-law did not conform to any of the mannerisms and mores of the good Punjabi girl. She must have been a key player in persuading her son to accept his changed role from top dog in his father's house to ghar jawai — dependent in his wife's home. Amrik was sent away to safety precisely at a time when his presence in the household was the most threatening to him and to the future of the family. To be sent away as a groom was a culturally comprehensible mode of moving away from the home, especially since it involved transnational migration. Transnational movement was the fictive fig leaf to deflect questions about a decision made by a well heeled family that did not need remittances. Migration as a valued, valourised movement in itself offset at least some part of the shame. Indeed, Sardarniji made no reference to the discourse of degradation, and displayed the post-marriage photographs of Amrik and Delia with a deep sense of pride, running her fingers lovingly on the photographed face of her 'cut surd' son. Through a language of gestures, in the act of feeling the photographed faces, her deliberate assertion of an affective tie conveyed another pleasure — the successful protection of her son.[21]

Amrik Gill's 'disappearance' from an emerging landscape of violence was wholly un-heroic. His leaving was an event in itself, but it was accomplished by a series of actions that made no ostensible reference to generalised violence. Young men who took to violence to defend the faith and fight for Khalistan, the 'Nation of the Pure', were framed within a heroic discourse that catapulted them into positions of prominence. They were the citizens-as-soldiers, *khargku* — a word that traces etymological links to sabre and weaponry. Young men as *khargku* were said to be 'honed' like weapons, trained in combat, but inspired by *vir ras* (heroic passion), embodiments of *chardi kala* (spiritual euphoria), going into combat missions with guns in their hands and hymns on their headsets (Mahmood 1996: 48).[22]

Implicit to this formation of masculinity was the allusion to violence, an allusion that brings the *khargku* and ghar jawai up

against each other. The discourse of the ghar jawai presents a figure in compliance, the embodiment of obedience, everything that the *khargku* was not. Heroic *khargkus* were also seen to be inspired by *shaheedi* (martyrdom) that led them to extreme actions, including death; they were imbued with an agency that referred back into the historiography of religious persecution and rebellion. They were doing the work of men, defending community and identity in the face of bigotry. The spirit of *chardi kala* and *shaheedi* demanded confirmatory performances, and *khargkus*, it was claimed, would stand and display themselves before their adversaries in the act of *wanggar* (announcement), unwilling to be quietly eliminated, announcing their intentions (sometimes even their names) before quickening into combat and almost certain death. Violence and death equated with sacrifice and resistance, transformed the *khargku-shaheed* discourse from one of unregulated disorder to a hegemonic frame that catapulted young men into the forefront of community, reversing the hierarchies of age and seniority (Peteet 2002).

Amrik was deleted from the discourse of masculinity of that political moment, inserted instead into a recognisable discourse of obedience and compliance, the embodiment of everything the *khargku* was not. Rather than the stance of confront and challenge, the ghar jawai faded away, literally and metaphorically. It is the intentionality embedded in the erasure that, I think, opens out the paradigm of protected person, disrupting the way masculinity is constituted and affirmed. It is the intentionality of the act that makes us think of it not merely as an alteration of patrilocality, but perhaps a critique and a subversion of heroic masculinity. Nothing happened to Amrik, and he was able to accomplish the other responsibilities of sons — passing on and continuing his family name. His transformation into the status of a degraded person needs to be understood as an act of extraordinary protection, an utterance of love that could not be voiced. Located outside the framework of heroic masculinity, the bizarre conversion of the son was an act of affirmation. Of life over death, confirmed in the protected personhood of the ghar jawai.

Conclusion

Emigration is by no means a special feature of any period in the social history of Punjab, or indeed of South Asia as a region

(Gardner 1995; Olwig and Hastrup 1997; Sriskandarajah 2002; Werbner 1999). Long histories of migration are part of every family biography, evident in close social and political links fostered between village and migrant families (Axel 2001; Ballard and Ballard 1977; Bhachu 1985; Deol 2000; Singh 2000; Tatla 1999). What is less evident, however, is the way choices are made within sending communities and families about how best to accomplish migration and who will migrate.

In post-green revolution Punjab, after the initial euphoria of rising production levels and cash-rich farming, the decline in agricultural productivity due to falling water levels, higher costs of inputs, unstable grain prices and the enormous cost of agricultural loans was felt across the board. Economic, social and cultural resources needed to be harnessed in new ways to keep from going under. Migration presented a path to recuperation.

Post the 1980s, however, avenues for migration have become more difficult. Increasingly stringent immigration regulations make a distinction between migrants 'for economic reasons' and 'family reunification'.[23] But precisely because migration is a risky process, the uncertainty captured in cautionary folk tales and rumour, as well as tales of returning migrants, families think about alternative 'routes' to enable migration. The production of the ghar jawai as migrant (in Punjab, as elsewhere, viz. Gardner 1995: 167–68) is a strategy responsive to shifting economic scenarios and knowledge of dangerous migration.

The point about Amrik is that he does not fit the 'pattern'. The Gill family was part of the cultural profile of Jat Sikh landholders whose migration histories have been documented, but unlike the majority of their caste compatriots, they were a family of very large landholders, powerful in state politics. There was no economic need to send Amrik away as ghar jawai. Despite legal impediments blockading migration, the Gill family's powerful networks could have enabled Sardarniji to send Amrik away as a 'normal' migrant. It is important to think about Amrik's move in the particular time frame in which it was made — the period of emerging militant violence — for it was unlike any other period of time in which economic hardship is the hegemonic discourse that underlies migration movement.

A move that does not fit, demands we traverse another route to understanding. Marriage constitutes a legitimate 'route', but, in this

instance, marriage was clearly 'not enough'. Marrying within Punjab would not have removed Amrik from the contexts of violence. Marriage itself had to enable another act of protection without any overt statement or acknowledgement. Voicing fear would have placed Sardarniji in the unacceptable position of a critic of her husband's increasing involvement in state politics that represented it seems to me, a threat to her son. It is Sardarniji's illocutionary act of displacing her son, deploying the available cultural strategies of her time and place, but doing so without 'comment' on the other significant man in her life — her husband — that illuminate her as a person rich in social capital. What we need to understand is that strategies were not directed toward enhancing her personal power. Rather, in her act of producing her son as a degraded ghar jawai, she literally effected his protection. Sons killed or maimed, sons who went underground or were never seen again, the interrogation of parents of militants or suspected militants, were then events in the biographies of many rural families of Punjab during the militant decades. Interviews I conducted with men who were in their late teens or early adulthood are replete with details of being picked up, interrogated, falling unconscious, needing the guarantee of others to substantiate their character, and so on.[24] Amrik and his family escaped this. The fact that nothing happened to Amrik is the event that inspires interpretation.

Notes

1. The term 'ghar jawai' has sometimes been mistranslated as house husband. Unfortunately this translation places an incorrect emphasis on the conjugal couple, whereas the critical relation is between wife's father and the incoming son-in-law, upon whom the latter is incongruously dependent (Chopra 2009: 96–105). The contiguous term *khana damad,* translated as 'house son-in-law' (Charsley 2005), is a more accurate reflection of the position.
2. In an opinion poll conducted by a news channel, on the eve of the 60th anniversary of India's independence, 44 per cent of the respondents felt that Operation Bluestar (the army action in Amritsar) and the anti-Sikh riots of 1984 were India's 'greatest political blot' (*The Hindu* 13 August 2007).

3. The significance of being a son of the house runs throughout an individual boy's biography, and simultaneously shapes the life history of his family. '*Putr jamiya, pair jamme*'— a boy's birth secures a woman's status in her conjugal home, and his birth is as much an event in his mother's life cycle as it is in his own. In rural Punjab, gender-segregated work cycles enable families with sons to undertake a large variety of agricultural tasks that cannot be performed by daughter-only households. A son is viewed as a visible symbol of the prosperity of households, and represents the idea of protected spaces — the home and the field — shielded by the presence of males.
4. In translation, the men from *Vilayat*: England, *Amrika*: America, and *Kanada*: Canada.
5. Interviews conducted with residents of Southall, UK, in 2006 were replete with stories of social investment by migrants in their villages, from opening schools and orphanages, constructing religious buildings to introducing new technologies. Philanthropy by members of the Diaspora has been systematically tracked by Thandi (2000) and Walton-Roberts (2004).
6. Signs of women's migration are not immediately obvious. Organisation of kitchen spaces, or different sorts of fabric in clothing, or terms of endearment like 'luv' or 'ducks', suggest women's movements.
7. Labour recruiters-cum-travel agents.
8. Documentary films are another rich source for narratives of unsuccessful migration, duplicitous travel agents and human traffickers who take money and leave migrants stranded en route or incarcerated in detention centres. See *Dur Kinareh* (Jain 2007) and *Backstage Boys: Punjab's Labour Goes Global* (Dewan 2002).
9 To call these children 'third generation' is a misnomer to an extent, since one of their parents may be a new migrant.
10. In interviews, it was clear is that these 'uncles' were impelled to move by economic circumstance, because village households were unable to retain them. They clearly had to go, and migrating, even as ghar jawai, was a better option than staying on and fragmenting overburdened landholdings. Migrating was seen as their duty. Gardner on the other hand, indicates that Bangladeshi migrant men often leave their less affluent sons-in-law in charge of the home, and while the young husband is converted to a ghar jawai, he also becomes the sole decision-maker in the absence of his migrant father-in-law. Uxorilocal residence is seen as 'a response to the practical problems posed by migration…but uxorilocal residence in the long term is also presented as a sad state of affairs…' (Gardner 1995: 167–68).
11. Names, locations and some personal details of the family have been changed.

12. Among Sikhs, being unshorn is intrinsic to cultural identity (Uberoi 1996). Sikh initiates are meant to observe these bodily symbols (referred to as the five Ks) to demonstrate their faith. During the militancy period, when Khalistan was asserted as a right, keeping beards open and wearing full turbans (*dastar*) were enforced. However, contingent circumstances of employment, migration or personal preference often result in shaving or trimming beards and forsaking turbans.
13. The elder son has been sent to do a 'course' (to study) in America. His wife's family had 'seen' him (a euphemism for arranging marriages) in America and proposed the match to his parents. The elder son and his wife set up an independent home right away. Before his marriage, he had created his own independent social networks and was not dependent on his affines.
14. By the mid-80s, converting visas was becoming a tenuous option. Channels for legal migration were drying up, though the dreadful risks, including detention and deportation of illegal migrants en route, came later, after 2001.
15. Melhuus's (1993) analysis of the biography of a Mexican woman, who sought to re-establish herself in the eyes of her community, despite embarking on a course that questioned her 'place' and social personhood, resorts to the idiom of fate and misfortune in the presentation of herself and her inappropriate acts, is pertinent to this context as well.
16. Bourdieu's early discussions of the Kabyle 'sense of honour' (1979: 95–132) as diffuse and generalised, making 'sense' over a period of time, more understood in the tactical field of transaction, or as a practical accomplishment that does not reside in rule, is of immense value when thinking about the disposition to act in particular ways.
17. *The Tribune*, 15 January 1983.
18. In army dispatches, the public performance of *amrit chakkna* (initiation rite) was construed as anti-state activity when performed by young men, distinguishing it from the *amrit chakkna* ritual performed at birth (Jaijee 1999: 122).
19. *The Tribune*, 11 January 1983. In May 1984, Sant Longowal, the elected leader of the Akali party, claimed that over 200,000 volunteers had courted arrest since the launch of the Dharm Yudh Morcha (religious resistance) in 1982, and that 200 people had 'sacrificed' their lives (*The Tribune*, 24 May 1984).
20. 'Notice issued to SHO Sharma for the disappearance of Mr Dalip Singh', *The Tribune*, 7 January 1983; 'Akalis demand release of innocent Sikhs', *The Tribune*, 11 January 1983; '8000 people missing from their homes over the last year', *Indian Express*, 15 October 1984.
21. The eclipse of individual voice by third person narrative adopted through my narration is a deliberate choice. I use this stylistic devise to position Amrik as an object in the action of others. Third person voice

resists making the person explicit, and it seems to me that this shadow existence exactly captures the processing of men to the position of the ghar jawai, who is more 'acted upon' than 'acting'. Further, the third person narrative underlines the fact that this is not the story of Amrik alone, but of many people's circumstances, acts and choices. Writing in the third person suggests the sense of imperative conditions which, I have tried to show, restricted individual choice.

22. The *khargku* as devout hero is distanced from the state-initiated term, *uggarwadi*, a personification of the action of rushing forward with fists threateningly raised. Both *uggarwadi* and *khargku* were familiar usages during the period, though the contexts of their usage varied. Police reports and the English language dailies used *uggarwadi* for example, while everyday speech was peppered with references to the *khargku-shaheed* (militant martyr). It is *khargku* that is retained in contemporary memorialisation, though it is increasingly eclipsed by the term *shaheed* (martyr).
23. The Primary Purpose Rule of the UK government is a case in point.
24. Fieldwork in Chandigarh, Amritsar and London, 2006–07.

Plate 2.1: Shakti Sthal, Indira Gandhi's cremation site.

Source: All photographs courtesy of the author.

Plate 2.2: *Jathas* arrive formally on Ghallughara Diwas, 6 June 2007.

SRI AKAL TAKHAT SAHIB

The symbol of MIRI-PIRI (political and spiritual ideology) here stands Sri Akal Takhat Sahib (the immortal throne) representing the 'SIKH SOVEREIGNTY'. The Sixth Nanak, Guru Hargobind Sahib revealed and set it up as an institution in 1606 A.D., is also known as 'AKAL BUNGA' (immortal residence).

After the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji, he issued a HUKAMNAMA (edict) directing the Sikhs to present him horses and weapons instead of money. Himself started wearing two swords of MIRI-PIRI. While sitting on this place he used to watch the martial art and military feasts of his Sikhs and himself participated. He invited several Dhadd players (Bards) to sing 'VARS' (heroic songs) in order to boost martial spirit in the hearts of the Sikhs. He encouraged the sikhs to settle their problems with unanimity while assembling at this place.

During the struggles against their common enemy, the Sikhs assembled here to seek guidance and line of future actions through 'GURMATA' and this tradition is still going on. During the 20th century, most of the peaceful Sikh agitations were launched from here after making prayers. Each and every HUKAMNAMA issued from here is respectfully followed by the whole Sikh Nation.

Its building was pulled down several times in 18th century by the MUGHAL ARMY and AFGHAN raiders. In June 1984, the Indian Army under 'OPERATION BLUE-STAR' destroyed and desecrated it. But each time the die-hard Sikhs scarified their lives while contesting the assailants and rebuild it with greater enthusiasm. The present building is reconstructed through VOLUNTARY SERVICE(KAR SEVA).

A number of weapons used by Guru Hargobind Sahib, Guru Gobind Singh Ji and other sikh warriors are preserved here. After the closing ceremony of SRI HARMANDIR SAHIB at night, The Holy Guru Granth Sahib is brought and kept here for rest till next morning.

Amrit Initiation Ceremony is held here on Wednesday's and Sunday's

Plate 2.3: A plaque, one of three, set at the base of the steps leading to the Akal Takht.

Plate 2.4: A rendering of the destruction of the Akal Takht, surrounded by 'Bluestar martyrs' painted after 1987.

Plate 2.5: The 1984 memorial wall at the exit of the Sikh Museum, within the sacred complex.

Plate 6.1: Backpacks and T-shirts sold in Southall, October 2006.

Plate 6.2: Funeral home, Southall, October 2006.

Plate 6.3: 'Foods of home'. A supermarket shelf in Southall, October 2006.

5

Transacting Asylum

> Overseas Sikh communities have a complex web of exchanges with the Punjab in an ongoing process of mutual dependence. Sikhs have sought to reproduce many of their social norms, culture and religious values in their new homes (Tatla 1999: 63).

> Migrations thus lead to a pluralisation of allegiances and commitments and to the growing complexity of…state's borders: the Westphalian state which extended towards the rest of the world now finds that its borders are porous in both directions and that it is not only the centre which flows to the periphery but the periphery which flows towards the centre (Benhabib 2007: 55).

The late 20th century saw a huge movement of people across the globe. By the end of the century, the number of people residing outside their countries of birth was estimated at 175 million, constituting 3 per cent of the world's population (United Nations 2002: 20). Within a decade, from 1990 to 2000, the number of migrants in the world increased by 14 per cent, confirming the view that 'the closing years of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first will be the age of migration' (Castle and Miller 1998: 3). While economic opportunity and family reunification continue to be primary reasons to migrate, almost 9 per cent of migrants are refugees, fleeing conflicts or displacement. This seemingly small statistic of 9 per cent dominates 21st century considerations of global movement, and 'asylum policies are now at the core of the discussions on migration in many parts of world' (UN 2002: 35). It is in this small, but significant, percentage that I see the connections between militancy and migration.

Phases of Migration

Plotting 'reasons to migrate' captures only part of the story of Punjabi migrations to the UK. The other aspect is mapping the distinct phases within continuous and seemingly undifferentiated general movement. South Asian migration to the UK has a long history, stretching back to the East India Company, connecting different classes and social groups (Ballard and Ballard 1977; Fisher 2004; Visram 2002). Though servants and sailors formed the earliest Indian working class settlements in Britain from the 17th century (Visram 2002: 2), settlements of Sikh, primarily rural, migrants became more discernable from the late 1950s (Ballard and Ballard 1977; Helweg 1986).

Looking back at migration through the lens of the politics of militancy, however, it is clear to me that migration is not — perhaps, never was — a seamless movement at all. Within the latter half of the 20th century, at least three distinct phases of Punjabi Sikh movements to the UK are discernable, underwritten by different intentions and diverse experiences. Transnational movements and transnational communities were vital to the process and politics of militancy, and it is imperative to ask how migration was accomplished or enabled during this period as distinct from earlier and later migrations. It also enables us to ask some questions: who migrates and how is this choice made, and which locale or place do we need to look at to understand migrations of a moment?

Broadly speaking, the three phases were from 1950s to 1970s, which I see as primarily 'labour migrations'; from early 1980s to approximately the mid-1990s as 'political migrations', and from the late 1990s to the cusp of the 20th century (and beyond) as the phase of illegal migrations. The condition of illegality is specific to the last phase of migration, and defines — and is defined by — the requirements of grey area zones within global economies and the unpredictable conditions of existence in global cities (Sassen 2006).

In my exploration, and the organisation of my chapters, I do not look at these phases chronologically. Since migrations and militancy are the focus of my work, I begin my discussion with a closer look at political migrations of the middle phase (the early 1980s to the mid-1990s) in this chapter, and then move backwards, towards the labour migrations of the late 50s, finally 'leapfrogging' over the middle into the late 20th century in the following chapter. However,

I would like to reiterate the point made in an earlier chapter that the violent politics of separatism was not the only tenor of that period. Any analysis of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, the document cited as the key to understanding the demand for Khalistan, amalgamated political demands for a separate territory and federalist structures with 'economically' oriented demands. Political demands for transfer of some districts to balance electoral constituencies were juxtaposed with economic demands for the reduction of prices of farm machinery, abolition of excise on tractors, parity between prices for agrarian produce and industrial goods, and purchase of cotton through the Cotton Corporation. Political demands and political events, it seems to me, were underwritten by an anxiety about agrarian futures.

I retain this sense of connection between the political and the economic; in part, to rearticulate the imprecise character of decision-making processes and choices made to migrate, and also to critique policies that segregate and quarantine 'political migrants' from 'economic migrants'. The idea that an 'asylum-seeker' or refugee does not experience economic displacement, nor has any economically impelled need to migrate, limits the possibility for exploring the range of migrant experiences. Neither does this segregation allow us to understand migration from a dual-sited perspective of sending and receiving sites. In the two previous chapters, I tried to establish the anxiety-ridden contexts of the sending sites, which viewed migration simultaneously as a route to safety and a critique of the 'heroism' espoused by militant violence. The 'receiving' context, on the other hand, was seen as a sanctuary space produced and established by prior migrants. Arrival legends of this period are marked by the stories of escape, but also of a celebratory discourse affirming the identity of the militant *khargku* and the heroic martyr. The incoming migrants became a source and frame for affirming identity in neighbourhoods like Southall.

I discuss the earlier and later phases in more detail in the next chapter. Suffice to say at this point that, in the immediately post-colonial period of the late 1950s, the relocation of labour from plantations and armies to factories in the metropole was legitimised by the need for post-war reconstruction, and enabled by an ideology of chivalry toward former colonies. Migrations of this period were

characterised by the 'going-coming' character of circular migrations between social spaces of difference (Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan 2004). Statistics on house ownership, taxation and electoral records became the site for the transformation of migrants to citizens, with the right to invite family members to join them. From the perspective of the village, the activation and affirmation of extended family networks enabled the migration of individuals. Family biographies reflect these cross-generational, consanguinal and affinal connections that lay at the heart of producing a transnational joint family.

However, since the late 1990s, migration is constituted as a problem. Many nations have devised ways to blockade their borders against incoming migrants, inventing new institutions along migrant routes to sift between 'economic' and 'political' migrants (Balibar 2004; Benhabib 2007; Derrida 2001). The necessity of global capital for cheap labour and global traffic in labour is juxtaposed with a denial of welfare rights to migrant labour by the host states and the periodic 'cleansing' of the nation of migrants without status. The effects of this double-sided view of migrants as illegal but necessary, has created households within areas like Southall composed simultaneously of members who are 'citizens' , foreign 'visitors', and 'illegal' foreigners. The taint of foreignness and illegality can contaminate and spread to members of the settled multicultural community, converting citizens to 'outsiders' or minorities (Asad 2003: 159–80). The earlier acceptance of rural family members is now greeted by Southall Punjabis with a mixture of pity, irritation, worry and, sometimes, exploitation (to run small enterprises like restaurants or building firms).

The Politics of Asylum

At the turn of the 20th century, restricting asylum was a key to immigration policies across the globe, resulting in a proliferation of procedures to check refugee movement. Some nation states have introduced visa requirements or 'in-county processing' that requires asylum-seekers to submit applications to consulates/embassies in their countries of origin (UN 2002: 36). Such measures stem from a view that equates asylum-seekers and/or refugees with economic migrants, discounting earlier regimes of international law — primarily the Geneva Convention of 1951, and the subsequent 1967 Protocol — that sought protection and freedom for refugees. In the

Geneva Convention, a refugee is rather elaborately defined as a person who 'owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it' (UNHCR 2007: 16). Until the application for refuge has been accepted, however, the person remains an 'asylum-seeker'. Only after official recognition for asylum is acknowledged does the person receive protection, and certain rights and benefits pertaining to refugee status. Whether or not a person can be granted refugee status is left to an assortment of institutions within the host state to determine. Quite often, the host country neither recognises the refugee status of asylum-seekers, nor views them as legitimate migrants, treating them instead as illegal migrants and aliens. Evidence of reluctance is apparent in the low recognition rates of asylum applications under the 1951 Convention. For example, in the EU as a whole, 'recognition rates averaged 11 per cent in both 2000 and 2001' (UN 2002:35). Other countries deported asylum-seekers whose claims were rejected, sometimes after a period of detention, or even imprisonment. It is clear from reports of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that some of these restrictive measures were effective, making it necessary for the UNHCR to develop new strategies 'to ensure that measures combating irregular migration do not negatively impact on refugees' (UNHCR 2006: 10).

The nature of sanctuary, exclusion and the separation of 'economic' from 'political' rights have become critical issues in defining the status — and, therefore, the experiences — of immigrants. The contradiction produced by procedural categories of 'refugees for economic reasons' and 'political refugees' has generated theoretical and philosophical debates that challenge a state's prerogative to impose increasingly stringent immigration regulations (Balibar 2004; Benhabib 2007) and deny asylum. In resurrecting the protective aspects of international law towards refugees, debates — sometimes couched in idioms of hospitality, chivalry and cosmopolitanism (Derrida 2001) — draw attention to the virtual political consortium of nation states that collectively prevent the flow of migrants, and

define ways of converting and redefining the claims for asylum into economically motivated migration (Balibar 2003, 2004).

Most of these writings and debates, concentrating as they do on the perspectives from the host nations (whether governments and immigration policies or social groups and 'national communities'), convey the anxieties expressed by host countries about migrants, in general, and asylum-seekers, in particular. What we do not get a sense of is the anxiety that uncertain status and the experience of transience produces for the asylum-seekers. It is possible to decipher this unease from certain accounts that suggest that even those escaping persecution seldom resort to the UNHCR determination procedures for asylum and/or refugee status, primarily because they fear discovery or mistreatment by police or official authorities while they wait to be processed (Hatton and Williamson 2004: 9–10). Given the convoluted legal procedures and the prolonged periods between applying for and becoming a refugee, asylum-seekers remain in limbo, with little recourse to sustenance and certainly very little by way of rights.

How, we might ask, do asylum-seekers sustain themselves in the interregnum? Is the host state the only source and means of sustenance and provisioning for these liminal people? What role do transnational communities play in sustaining incoming migrants? Can we distinguish the provisioning extended by members of transnational communities for asylum applicants from the more generalised sustenance of migrants by migrants? How do political engagements and involvements of Diaspora communities with the politics of home translate into material and moral hospitality towards political migrants?

The context of my exploration is post-1984 Southall, the west London borough which has habitually been identified with the Punjabi community — Sikh, Hindu and Muslim. The connections crafted by Sikh settlers of Southall with 'home' and the homeland political demand for Khalistan, are my focus here. I argue that provisioning of migrants by migrants is not limited to economic sustenance; it includes different moral and ideological forms of help. I shift my focus, therefore, from state policy to the ethical and material conditions that sustain asylum applicants *before* they acquire legal status. What then does hospitality look like when viewed from the perspective of migrants who sustain migrants? While Southall Punjabis may be unfamiliar with the Book of Leviticus, unable to

quote the verse, 'but the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself', they perfectly understand that they were all strangers once, and without their hospitality, charity and provisioning, asylum-seekers can be converted to illegal migrants by the national host and be expelled as strangers. Hospitality of migrants by migrants, I argue, is an act of inclusion that is at once political and economic.

While a great deal of the writing on the Punjabi Diaspora has addressed the social, material and cultural connections with the homeland (Ballantyne 2006; Ballard and Ballard 1977; Bhachu 1996; Brah 1996; Dusenbery 2007; Helweg 1979; Oates 2003; Singh and Tatla 2006), some scholars have specifically analysed the continued political connections maintained by Sikh migrants (Fair 2005; Razavy 2006; Tatla 1999) and political transformations within Diasporic communities (Axel 2001; Deol 2000; Fair 2005; Gunawardena 2000; Singh 2000). As I see it, these persistent connections and transformations are critical in animating support for asylum-seekers by the settled, transnational community. Without that sense of political engagement, it is highly unlikely that asylum-seekers would be hosted, since the implications of that hospitality does reconfigure relations with the homeland. By its very nature, seeking asylum involves a representation of the homeland as a place of pathological violence, contradicting and dispelling images of home as repository of moral value held by settled migrant communities (Werbner 1999). That conversion of home to an alien unrecognisable space can be subscribed to only if there is an engagement with the politics of that alteration.

In the first part of the chapter, I briefly outline the political connections sustained by Sikh Diaspora organisations with homeland politics prior to 1984, a history of connection that fed into post-1984 support of (or resistance to) homeland politics. This brief foray into a history of connection illuminates the way Diaspora politics fuelled homeland politics, reversing the flow of political ideologies. Then, I move to the ethnographic site of my own fieldwork, the neighbourhood of Southall, to understand the way the neighbourhood was transformed in the period from the early 80s to the end of the 90s. After that, I analyse the forms of support that were extended to asylum-seekers, fleshing out that account from interviews with asylum-seekers, lawyers, community workers and ordinary folk. Finally, I focus on interviews with 'false' asylum-seekers, who are

well known within the community and, quite frankly, maintain the distinction between themselves and 'others', whom they classify as *khargku* or militant freedom fighters. I address this category of the 'false' primarily because they bring to the surface the depth of support and sense of a traumatised and altered homeland. Partly, however, their presence and narratives demonstrate the effects of the violence of the period on each one of them, even though they do not place themselves within the category of Khalistani fighters or militants. They can, of course, be viewed as cynically piggybacking on the general wave of political uncertainty and asylum politics; but to me, their stories reflect the sending away strategies Punjabi families adopted towards their young men (discussed in the previous chapters). Their narratives additionally point towards the brief period of openness of the UK toward political migrants, one that needs to be contrasted with the stringency towards 'normal' migrants who moved for marriage, family reunification or employment, and the subsequent crackdown on all political migrations out of Punjab.

Nomadic Passions: Sikh Diasporas and Homeland Politics

Political linkages, including protest movements, between the Diaspora community and Punjab stretch across time and national boundaries. While writings on political connection are an organisational or associational history in the main, they provide a sense of the deeply felt orientations toward home, right up to the end of the 90s, after which *political* linkages became more diffuse and threadbare. The Sikh Diaspora in Canada and the US established Khalsa Diwan Societies in British Columbia (BC) and California, inspired primarily by the Khalsa Diwan Society in Amritsar. Almost immediately, religious assemblies or Diwans became funnels of information from Amritsar. Media sources (Khalsa Advocate, Khalsa Samachar and Pardesi Khalsa) reported the current political climate of and from the homeland (Razavy 2006).

The Ghadar movement is, of course, the historical exemplar of Sikh protest movements, emerging in response to political events in India. In the early 20th century, migrant Indians (primarily Sikh) settled in the US demanded an end to colonial rule in India. Their newspaper, *Ghadar*, was circulated to other Indian Diasporas around the world, including in the UK. Post 1984, the movement has been

frequently framed as an early militant movement of the Diaspora (Razavy 2006).

Delineating political connections between the UK Sikh Diaspora and homeland politics, some scholars argue that virtually every Sikh organisation has its *raison d'etre* in Punjab, or Indian, politics (Singh and Tatla 2006: 94–125), mimetically replicating the 'Punjabi' organisational principles of horizontal networks, factionalism, multiple reincarnations, and so on (ibid.: 96). Post war, the Indian Workers Association (IWA) was set up in Southall. While primarily addressing workers rights in the UK, the IWA split along Indian political party lines, with the leadership of the Southall branch supporting the Congress in India, and the Midland branch associated more closely with the Communist Party of India, with strong inclinations toward the Naxalite movement that was spreading in post-green revolution Punjab (ibid.: 97–98).

By the late 70s, the UK 'chapters' of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), the Sikh political party of Punjab, emerged as significant political and cultural organisations in the UK. Just prior to this formation, the visit of Sant Fateh Singh, a leader and proponent of the Punjabi Suba movement (that demanded a separate Punjabi-speaking territory), was greeted by a 5,000-strong delegation of enthusiastic Sikhs. The Sant's visit propelled subsequent visits of Punjabi leaders of the Suba movement, who gave shape and substance to Diasporic politics. By the late 60s and early 70s, the SAD in Britain closely followed the agenda of Punjab politics. The divides between the Congress party and the Akalis were reflected in rampant factionalism that divided the UK organisations, particularly in the control over Diaspora gurdwaras (Singh and Tatla 2006: 100–102).

Movements for autonomy in Punjab (Longowal's Dharm Yudh Morcha of 1982, for example, and the Khalistan movement) were closely followed by different Sikh Diasporas. Post 1984, members of Sikh militant movements mobilised around their opposition to the Indian government, which they saw as an enemy of Sikhism, but also mounted protests against '*patit*' or non-observing Sikhs of the Diaspora and those characterised as secularised 'traitors'. At a convention held at the 'Select and Save' site of Park Avenue in Southall, 'over 3000 delegates showed overwhelming support for Khalistan'.[1] University chairs of Sikh studies became the focus of virulent debate and politics (Oberoi 2001) about 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' members of the faith. The Southall office of *Sandesh*

International, a small weekly publication in the neighbourhood that supported the Indian government and interrogated the claim to Khalistan, was burnt by 'unknown' assailants, and its co-editor, Kartar Singh Tar, died of burns.[2] Supporters and opponents of Khalistan and the Congress party clashed frequently, sometimes fatally (Singh and Tatla 2006: 113), while five Sikh men were accused of arson and charged with damaging the display cases of the Indian High Commission in Aldwych on 5 June 1984.[3]

The overwhelmingly emotional connection with homeland politics came hard on the heels of Operation Bluestar. The storming of the Golden Temple in Amritsar by the Indian Army in June 1984 evoked intense reaction in Southall. Strong editorials and advertising material appeared in *Punjabi Times* and *Des Pardes,* widely read by the Punjabi community in Southall. One advertisement in *Des Pardes,* headlined 'Wanted for Murder', called upon the Diaspora to follow the lead of Sikh martyrs of the past and avenge the military action in the Golden Temple.[4] Another advertisement in *Punjabi Times* listed a series of atrocities, and invited a response to the killings at the Golden Temple. A 20-year-old student, Roy Daddar, fired shots from an air rifle near the Hindu temple on King Street. Extra police were called in when shots were fired from a nearby apartment.[5]

The Council of Khalistan was formed, led by Jagjit Singh Chohan; a local businessman donated a house in Bayswater for the headquarters of the Khalistan government-in-exile. Southall resident Bir Singh Parmar, whom a local newspaper reported as speaking with 'upper class English accent', was elected as the press secretary. Bir Singh declared that his occasional beard and turban 'were also here to stay'.[6] A painting of the Golden Temple made by the MP from Southall, Syd Bidwell, was displayed at an annual exhibition of paintings by Lords and MPs in the Palace of Westminster. Talking about the way the gold of the Harmandir dome reflected the light in the lake, Bidwell commented that in storming the temple, 'it may well turn out that Mrs Gandhi has made a big mistake, the scars (of which) will run deep for many years to come'.[7]

Political passions provoked by the attack on the Golden Temple complex materialised on the landscape of Southall. By 1984, signs of political networks inspired by the Khalistan movement were apparent, and the neighbourhood landscape presented a political face to outsiders. Southall's local newspapers and shop-signs carried

reports and advertisements supporting the conflict in Punjab. The *Southall Gazette* (29 June 1984), for instance, reported: 'Guns are being openly advertised for sale by some travel agents and a television shop. The sales are being linked to disturbances in the Punjab where hundreds have been killed'. Shop signage of Regal Travel Agencies on The Green, reproduced in fuzzy black and white newspaper photos of the *Southall Gazette* (22 June 1984), showed a picture of a revolver, captioned in Gurmukhi (the Punjabi script): 'India *leh jan vasthe sabton sasteh* revolver…*hor kitheh nahin milange*' (Cheapest revolvers to take to India…not available anywhere else). It was, however, a palpable advertising untruth, since down the street, on Southall Broadway, Saggersons Travel and Electricals, as well as Japan Imports (which primarily sold videos, colour TVs, watches and cameras, the customary commodities of migrant desire) also freely advertised the sale of revolvers in Gurmukhi, clearly signalling that the sale was intended for the politically energised supporters of Khalistan. A *Gazette* reporter was offered a Smith and Weston for £250 to be sent to a licence-holder in India. A woman at Japan Imports helpfully offered the reporter 'as many as you want' (ibid.). A spokesman for the Indian High Commission was reported to have carefully studied the *Gazette* report; the Home Office also acquired copies of the *Southall Gazette* to study the implications of the report and see 'if any specific offence has been committed', and copies were sent to Scotland Yard (ibid.). Southall as a source and site of political connection and involvement with homeland politics, an attenuated version of Derrida's '*Ville refuge*' (2001: 3–5) to incoming asylum-seekers and families of martyrs (or those killed or imprisoned by state forces), as well as a political trouble spot 'investigated' by the Indian High Commission and Scotland Yard, became deeply inflected by the politics of asylum.

Placing Political Asylum

Within the contradictory discourses of Southall and the complexities in the legal status of its inhabitants, the quest for asylum emerged as unpredictable. The Khalistan movement generated the *lehar* (wave) of migrants who entered the UK (and Southall) as asylum-seekers. How asylum was constituted and, therefore, how asylum-seekers were framed by the state, the community and by individual applicants, varied. What emerges from interviews

with refugees recalling the time when they were still applicants, is the alteration of their status and identity across time. What comes through clearly is that individual requests for political asylum were supported by the 'local' community in Southall. At the time of my fieldwork, they were running their own businesses, merging into the general populace of Southall entrepreneurs, but still known in the neighbourhood as men who had fled Punjab during the decades of militancy.

Asylum-seekers were highly valourised in community representations. A newspaper report described Jaswant Singh Thekedar of Beaconsfield Road, Southall, as a Sikh freedom fighter. Thekedar, who fled Punjab and sought asylum in the UK, was, and remains, a known figure in the Southall community.[8] He is reported as having refused to shed a single tear when he heard the news of the death of seven friends, members of the Dal Khalsa party, with whom he stayed at the Golden Temple for a year. He said all these men were martyrs who died for their religion, and claimed that 'unless thousands of people die we will not achieve anything'.[9] Along with four others, including Manmohan Singh (whom I met and interviewed), he formed the Dal Khalsa of Southall, one of the organisations that campaigned extensively for Khalistan in the UK (Singh and Tatla 2006: 109).

For many migrants, the news of the destruction of a sacred site of Sikhism was matched by an acute worry about family and kin in Punjab. Gurdev Singh Sahra of Park Avenue in Southall said he was extremely worried about the safety of his son in Jalandhar. Sarwan Singh Johal of Orchard Road said he had many members of his family in the troubled state of Punjab, and he believed they were all in danger. Another man interviewed by reporters said he did not want his name revealed because he feared for his safety.[10] Despite the worry, the frenetic tenor of newspaper reports, and speeches that asked Sikhs to take revenge for the death of Bhindranwale and form martyr squads,[11] was an indication of an intensely felt need for political involvement with homeland politics. Till the early 1990s, the presence of the asylum-seekers and their forceful claims to be recognised as rights-bearing individuals, literally and metaphorically unsettled the settled community, shattering its legendary introversion. The arrival of the asylum-seekers heralded a sense of cultural and political revival. In an interview, Ajit Khera of *Desi Radio* recalled the intense passion. '*Dhol vajje*', he said, describing

the excitement of drumbeats that cast an aural and metaphoric canopy over the neighbourhood, its rituals and performances, and everyday life.

Khargkus (militant/freedom fighter) and their families became known as *shaheedi parivar* (martyr families). Accounts assembled from newspaper reports, magazines interviews and secondary sources testify to the outpourings of support for the *shaheed* in Southall. There seemed to be an enthralment and fascination with *shaheedi* and *shaheedi parivar*. Talk of hosting martyr families, sending money for them, or setting them up, circulated within the neighbourhood (*Shaheedan de parivararn nuh magaon; Shaheedan deh parivaran nuh paise bhejo)*.[12] *Des Pardes* and *Satkar*, two major news magazines published in Southall, held *shaheedi* conferences, where new migrants with stories to narrate about their experiences were invited and honoured at well attended public functions, valourised as *khargku-shaheed*. The clamour for *shaheedi* fuelled further legends. Migration and martyrdom were interlocked; *shaheedi* and *shaheed* had huge value, and became a flattering construction of migrant.[13] Heroic stories, anecdotes and narratives about real and imaginary killings circulated with vigour, told and retold at private dinners and public gurdwara assemblies. Even if someone had a small instance that had either happened to them or someone they knew, they purveyed these treasured tales to a fascinated community of people for whom these become narratives of identity. With the *khargkus* and the *shaheedi parivars*, came the *ragis* and the *dhadis* (singers and bards), who were invited to give *pravachans* (religious discourses and interpretations of the text) and recite poetry and songs of *shaheedi* (Singh and Tatla 2006: 110).[14] 'Several Punjabi writers published creative works that celebrated Sikh martyrs' sacrifices (ibid.: 110). Anyone who could tell a tale and sing a song was invited to the *shaheedi* conferences. Southall became an Anandpur Sahib for the recreation of community.[15] The *khargku-shaheed* possessed an exalted status, and added a frisson to a mundane, humdrum landscape of work and council housing.

Asylum-seekers who generated this celebratory wave broke the assumptions of subordinated charity cases on welfare. They injected a political energy to their claims for residence and demands for recognition as political actors of a new nation (of Khalistan). Most of all, the Diaspora support for Khalistan compelled the 'settled' community to enter negotiations between the host state and asylum-seekers, becoming key players in fostering asylum claims.

At the height of militancy and violence in Punjab, enormous support was mustered within Southall to assist asylum (Fair 2005; Singh and Tatla 2006). Kashminder Bhogall, a lawyer who argued cases for asylum, said that though people in Southall did not finance or enable the journeys of asylum-seekers, once they arrived, money and provisions were generated to sustain them. High street lawyers and private solicitors in Southall detailed and argued cases.[16] Gurdwaras were the primary centres where money was collected to fight cases. In fact, the gurdwaras of the Diaspora became the moral and material hubs for promoting support for Khalistan (Fair 2005; Singh and Tatla 2006) and guiding asylum applicants through the labyrinthine process of appeal. In the UK, part of the *raison d'etre* behind gurdwaras as key centres for provisioning might be attributed to the shifts introduced by policies of multiculturalism, which led to the withdrawal of the state, and the institutionalisation of ethnic associations like gurdwaras becoming 'welfare' centres (Singh and Tatla 2006: 87). State-funded local community institutions were charged with the primary responsibility for disbursing 'care' activity to members of the ethnic community. In Southall, legal and welfare measures were routed through institutions like the Southall Day Centre, The Monitoring Group, Southall Black Sisters, as well as the local gurdwara on Havelock Road, at the heart of Southall. Recalling the period of the late 80s, Krishna Dhillon, Senior Welfare Officer interviewed at the Southall Day Centre, said that before cutbacks in the 1990s, weekly advice centres played a critical role in guiding people through immigration laws and policy. Enabled by a policy of multiculturalism, voluntary organisations funded by national and local authorities and local 'care centres' like gurdwaras, held special evening sessions for advice and assistance for asylum seekers and incoming migrants alike, walking them through their assorted problems.

Families in neighbourhoods like Southall provided critical resources to individual asylum-seekers, though the support and provisioning were attributed to 'family obligation', or likened to '*kar sewa*' (voluntary work), rather than be interpreted as humanitarian aid. In an early interview in 2005, a Sikh woman told me that while every family in Southall had housed an incoming relative or two, during the 'troubles' (as she called them), unrelated men were given shelter as an expression of *vand chakkna* (to share), one of the three basic requirements of the Sikh faith.[17]

The involvement of community members in provisioning asylum-seekers catapulted them into becoming political actors almost by default. The frame of hospitality within which the politics of asylum is located (Derrida 2001; Ichilov 2004) needs to address this other set of hosts as it were, for they were critical players in the process of creating and ensuring sanctuary. Though narratives of asylum-seekers interviewed in 2006 move across a number of issues, including their representation of themselves as victims, as well as the immigrant policies of the host nation at different periods of its own history, one aspect that emerges is that a great deal depended on their reception by immigrant communities.[18] Manmohan Singh and another asylum-seeker, Mahinder Pal, initially had their applications rejected. Mahinder finally needed to produce documents from the *sarpanch* (head of the village council) in his village and his communist party comrades, as well as Punjab newspaper reports, validating the threat he was subject to. The production of documentation was a complicated affair, since he, like other asylum-seekers, had fled home, and any hint that they were still alive would endanger their families (or themselves).[19] Mahinder Pal, interviewed in November 2006 at the Southall Day Center, claimed that lawyers and communist 'comrades' in Southall helped him build his case and interpret procedures.

Most importantly, though, the provisioning of migrants by migrants lays bare the ruthless rationality of the state, which, while extending political sanctuary, simultaneously divests the grant of asylum of economic rights to work or welfare. Following Ichilov (2004), the narratives outlined further in this chapter raise the question: 'what form of hospitality welcomes someone on the condition that they can expect no economic gain from their stay' (ibid.: 204).

Political Asylum: Manmohan Singh

I interviewed Manmohan Singh in the first floor office of the World Muslim Sikh Federation, of which is he one of the key organisers.[20] He was in the midst of arranging a pilgrimage to gurdwaras and sites of historic importance in Pakistan as part of the activities of the Pakistan Gurdham Yatra Committee (Pilgrimage to Sacred Sites Committee). In its pamphlet, the PGYC describes itself as not a travel agency, but as 'an organisation promoting goodwill, friendship, closeness and peace among the communities'. For Manmohan, who fled his home during the height of militancy, Southall is his *garh* (fortified sanctuary) and Pakistan Punjab his *ghar* (home).

While his case was under consideration, his wife and sons changed their names and identities and fled to Southall. They travelled on false passports and assumed false identities to escape. I learnt later that the pressure of those years has extracted a terrible toll on his wife. In 1991, she suffered a stroke and brain damage, and lies in coma in hospital.

The following section is based on extracts of my interview with him.

> *Main* 1980 *ich ghar chaddiaya* (I left my home in Chandigarh in 1980); for a whole year I was in hiding, escaping to Delhi, from there to Assam, Manipur, Nagaland (in north-eastern India). From Siliguri, I entered Nepal, hiding in Kathmandu for six months along with some of my party colleagues of the Dal Khalsa.[21] DIG Atwal came to Kathmandu in search of us; it was a desperate moment.[22] We couldn't come out of hiding and realised we had to flee to safer shores. There was just one purpose to emigrate — saving our lives.
>
> I changed my name, my identity, everything. All the while my wife and family were under house arrest. The *dhobi* (laundry man) was interrogated and asked to identify the clothes he ironed. They thought the milkman was me in disguise. Four jeeps continuously encircled our home. My wife got high blood pressure. They accused my younger brother of murder and took him away. We didn't know where he was for a year. Family friends and acquaintances were tortured.
>
> I landed alone in Dover in 1984. News about me had travelled ahead of me — even before I arrived, I was well known. Five Sikh brothers came to meet me at Dover. Someone brought me clothes, some brought shoes for me to wear. I never stayed a single day in a hotel, only in people's homes. The Sikh barrister who took my case didn't take a single penny from me. *Kharcha, roti, kuch nahin* (all expenses, food were taken care of; I spent nothing), insisting in animated Punjabi that he scarcely ever put his hand in his own pocket (*hath jeb'ich pan di lor kadi nahi si*).
>
> I worked for some time in *Des Pardes* ('*uthe vi hello kitti*'). I set up a stall on Broadway, and in one year, I had a shop. It's worth half a million pounds now. Now I run the WMS council.
>
> Jethmalani[23] offered amnesty; *mafinama puch sakdeh ho*. But all of us who had to flee refused. We're not criminals. The government should beg pardon for the murder they have committed. The state is trying to drown us. Do you know that to migrate you have to register your marriage under the Hindu Marriage Act? We have our own martyrs, our own religion, *nishan* (flag/symbol), code of conduct, language.

> We have our own way of defining our *Quom* (community/nation) *Punjab di dharti nuh gulam rakna mushkil hai* (you can't enslave the land of Punjab)
>
> Initially I did not get political asylum. But my case went up for adjudication to a Single Judge Tribunal. I was the first Sikh in the UK to be granted full political asylum. The Indian government calls me a terrorist. I say I am. I, Terror Resist.

Manmohan Singh, even by his own ironic admission, was classified as a terrorist by the Indian state. He literally wandered the world without documents since they would have incriminated him, sometimes adopting false identities, but just as often arriving at different national border as a non-person (Auge 1995), a *sans papiers*, an experience of transience that refugees and asylum seekers share with 'twice or thrice migrants' (Bhachu 1985), creating contexts of affinity between asylum-seekers and prior migrants. Manmohan Singh was granted asylum in the UK only after he could establish that he was persecuted for his political beliefs and unlikely to get a fair trail under the justice system of his homeland.

For earlier migrants, who literally 'carry home' with them, the place of origin is a moral centre (Olwig 1997; Rapport and Dawson 1998; Webner 1999). Asylum-seekers, on the other hand, deliberately distance themselves from the homeland, representing it as a place transformed by trauma to an alien, unrecognisable space. Imageries of dangerous homeland and safe sanctuary imbue narratives of escape, amplified by representations of the host nation as enabling unconditional expressions of cultural identity. The spatialised vocabulary of 'here' and 'there', 'freedom' and 'danger', produces the sanctuary state as a moral centre that twin sanctuary with bus passes for asylum-grantees, reshaping the sense of home.

Appropriating the Political

Political asylum was a possibility for the period from the late 80s through the end of the 90s, and still continues in sporadic applications, though the British High Commission in India rejects many such applications as invalid.[24] The Country Reports on India compiled by the UK Home Office of the period noted the political uncertainty and violence prevalent specifically in Punjab. Citing fear of threat

or violence was critical for asylum applications, and as violence in Punjab escalated and the death toll rose, applications for asylum no longer needed to be substantiated with anything other than a citation of an explicit 'incident' of threat to establish a case of asylum, an aspect that comes through in the appeals submitted.

Precisely because of this open ended quality of ambient fear — and a generalised threat perception that was recorded and noted officially by the host state — many migrants now openly acknowledge that they piggybacked on the stream of political asylum-seekers coming from Punjab. Migrants pilfered the narratives and stories of danger and threat, stole identities to serve various purposes, but most of all, to apply for residence as asylum-seekers. Appropriation of narratives and identities as a form of 'passing' may be an established strategy for migration. It also is a way of inserting the individual self into the grand narrative of militancy and resistance. The issue of 'genuine' and 'false' cases of political asylum are evidence of this latter aspect. Spoken of quite widely in Southall, 'false' claimants are not censured. Older residents who have achieved the status of 'permanent resident' or citizen didn't grudge incoming migrants the right to use any strategy that worked. Nevertheless, the distinctions between genuine and false cases were well known and indicated to me by long-term residents through a series of subtle gestures. An unenthusiastic recommendation to interview a particular person, accompanied by a shrug or half a smile, cast an unspoken doubt over a claim to asylum; at other times, the scepticism was verbalised. But any reservation was hastily countered by assertions of '*vela aukha si*' (those were terrible times), inscribing every case with a trace of legitimacy.

Despite the seemingly purposive and cynical nature of the appropriations, interviews with 'fake' asylum-seekers were revelatory. For example, Sukhvinder Singh, one of the 'fake' cases I met and interviewed, narrated incidents that had happened to him or to people he knew. At the time he applied for asylum, the cases being considered were of severe threat or acute danger. Evidence of bodily torture or citations in newspaper reports was necessary evidence to confirm political threat.[25] Sukhvinder's experience of being detained and interrogated wasn't enough for the 'authority', as he called them, to classify him as a convincing asylum-seeker, since there was just one instance he could cite. Despite being a freelance journalist and photographer for local Punjabi dailies, there was no

written report he could offer to corroborate his story. As he frankly admitted in an interview, he 'passed' as another Sukhvinder, who had a sponsorship letter, whose passport he 'bought' and on whose identity he travelled — '*Mian kisse hor Sukhvinder Singh de naa te aya si; usdeh* passport *te. Usnuh rahdari* (sponsorship letter) *mili si. Saddi* understanding *si; paise de kar sub kuch honda hai*'.

False Case Asylum: Sukhvinder Singh

I met and interviewed Sukhvinder Singh at the offices of the community radio station on Merrick Road. He told me that he had worked in a series of the local radio station, including the well-known Sunrise radio. In 2001, he applied for a licence for his own radio station. Since he had left Punjab, he had not managed to go back home for almost 16 years, declaring that he had been 'illegal' for a long time. He declared that he knew his case for permanent residency was weak, but he also knew that once his file came up he would stand a good chance.

Extract from interview:

> In Punjab, I was a journalist and an independent photographer (freelancer). From 1987 to the mid-1990s, when I left my village to come to the UK, I went from village to village and gathered the stories that people had to tell. Everyone's story was different. Some had daughters or sisters raped in front of them; some saw their fathers or elders strung out on combine harvesters and shot. Others just heard that their sons had been shot and their bodies were seen in the fields.[26]
>
> *Meri ma de nal hoya. Auh kinna di viya te gayi si. Auh munda nai hai. Nai de ghar viya si te aunah de baithi si. Bharon bande aiye* Baggi *nuh puchan. Lokkan neh keya — aih munda naai da hai, ainuh chadddo*. (It happened with my mother. She had gone to attend a wedding at the home of a barber. Some men came and asked for Baggi, the barber's son. People told them, he's only the barber's boy, let him off).
>
> The men passed themselves off as *khargku* (freedom fighters) and they threatened Baggi with AK-47s (Baggi *nuh* AK-47 *dikhayiyan*). But his brother was a police inspector — he's also dead now — so Baggi recognised them. He said, 'you're police. I know'. He recognised them. My mother was sitting inside, in the next room. She heard all this with her own ears — the entire exchange (*apne kanni suniya*). They took him and he's dead, my class fellow. No one became a militant

> just like that. There was always an incident, a reason. I interviewed many such people.

Despite the fact that nothing major happened to Sukhvinder Singh, and he piggybacked on the terror of the time, hearing his stories was a chilling experience. I got no sense that they were rehearsed, and his particular phrasing imparted a sense of immediacy to his account of own interrogation and loss of consciousness as well as the other incidents he narrated. At the time of the interview, Sukhvinder Singh had not been granted citizenship; though he said he had a file 'that thick' (indicating a stack with his hand gesture). Both Sukhvinder Singh and Gurmail Singh, another 'false' case, were quite frank about how they managed to stay without the grant of full citizenship.[27] But 'falseness' however publicly known and acknowledged is not the only import of their stories. What emerges unmistakably is the sense of danger zones and unstable times, and young men as targets of violence. This is exactly the sense of fear that each asylum-seeker embodied for Southall residents, many of whom had kin in Punjab. I think each felt a visceral connection with asylum-seekers, seeing them as heroic but also 'in danger', representing family strategies of sending young men away. An eclipse of the false is manifestly a demonstration of political involvement with home; but the eclipse also seems to suggest a diffuse identity with family value that asserts 'protection' of everyone's sons.

When looked at together, asylum-seekers by their very presence transformed and activated political identities of prior settled migrant communities. The intensity of the involvement with homeland politics generated by Operation Bluestar is continued and sustained by the actions of these asylum-seekers and grantees. Sukhvinder, for example, runs a community radio station where he holds weekly political discussions with a phone-in audience.

Extract from interview:

> I have run programs for two weeks on my radio station questioning the movement to achieve Khalistan. I pose questions for a debate, like should we forget and move on? Is celebrating Ghallughara Diwas, the *shaheedi dihara*[28] in June, something we should do or not?
>
> It's true that for some people they can't even hear this question, they can't talk about compromise, especially those who've lost family members … I had a worldwide audience participating, calling from different time zones, *kisse da amritvela, kisse di dopahar; kisse di rat*

> *the kisse da* midnight. *Loki* Sydney *toh* phone-in *kiteya,* USA *toh,* Canada, Norway, Germany, Patiala*, har kone toh sanoo* phone *aiye, lokan neh* debate *kitti'* (It was somebody's dawn, midnight for some. People called in from all corners of the world to debate).

On the other hand, deliberately observed body styles of asylum-seekers like Manmohan Singh, who continually stressed his *choga-tung pyjama* (long shirt and pleated pyjamas), and the style and colour of his turban, are part of a politics of dissent visible on the Southall landscape, and a particular way of projecting the right to identity. Flowing beards and blue or saffron turbans are an embodiment of protest, oriented toward the home state on the one hand *and* towards the host state as marks of injustice borne by the repressed.[29]

In the same way as personal body styles, the expansion of rituals into public spaces of neighbourhood and city streets of host nation, are an affirmation of rights to cultural expression within the host sanctuary. Ritual enactments are a performative presentation of the denial of rights of cultural practice by the home state. Understood as publicly enacted denunciations of repressive homeland politics, performances are oriented towards globally constituted audiences, evoking the discourse of human rights through a strategic collapse of ritual and political space. Expressive political styles take us beyond what the literature on cultural practices suggests. The deliberate adoption (or continuance) of culturally marked bodily styles and observance of ritual practices is not merely a sign of multicultural practice, but also perhaps of political critique. It is the visually marked body of the dissenter that is so critical in the transformation of neighbourhoods like Southall. If the earlier direction of 'provisioning' was from migrant host to incoming asylum applicant, it might be fair to say that by the turn of the century, ideological and political 'provisioning' have reversed directions, from refugee to resident, which mutually reinforce transformations of community.

Notes

1. *Southall Gazette*, 29 June 1984.
2. *Southall Gazette*, 27 July 1984 and 2 August 1984.

3. *Southall Gazette*, 17 August 1984.
4. References in newspapers evoked Sikh martyrs who died defending the Golden Temple against medieval Afghan and Mughal armies.
5. *Southall Gazette,* 22 June 1984.
6. *Southall Gazette*, 26 June 1984.
7. *Southall Gazette*, 29 June 1984.
8. My efforts to meet Thekedar and interview him were unsuccessful. He was away visiting India during the period of my fieldwork in October–November 2006. But news and stories about him circulated in Southall, including an assassination attempt on him and his alleged encouragement of assaults on weddings where alcohol was served and shoes worn in the same wedding hall where the the Guru Granth Sahib was kept. The primary accused in the case, however, was Joginder Singh Ubbi (Interview, S. Grover, *The Monitoring Group*, Southall, October 2006).
9. *Southall Gazette* 15 June 1984.
10. *Southall Gazette*, 8 June 1984.
11. *Southall Gazette*, 6 July 1984.
12. Interview, Ajit Khera, October 2006.
13. '*Shaheedi teh* migration *de nal sambandh*', Interview, Ajit Khera, October 2006.
14. *Vars*, ballads of valour, were sung by *dhadi jathas* (bands of bards) at religious functions.
15. Interview, Ajit Khera, October 2006.
16. Interview, Kashminder Bhogall, *Southall Rights,* October 2006.
17. Interview, March, 2005. This part of the exploratory fieldwork was done in March and September 2005. I am indebted to Sukhwant Dhaliwal for her help and insights, and for introducing me to different families in Southall.
18. Brah discusses the implications of successive Immigration Acts and policies of the UK, including publicised deportations (Brah 1996: 26–39).
19. Though documents were critical in the grant process, and could not be avoided, some literally had to be gathered in stealth and through deception, putting those who sought the papers, and those who helped obtain them, at risk.
20. World Muslim Sikh Federation, 90A, The Broadway, Southall. The importance of the Federation draws from its 'official' location in the UK, and from the alleged links between Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) and Sikh militant organisations like the Dal Khalsa and the Babbar Khalsa. A bomb blast in a cinema hall in the Punjabi town of Ludhiana on 15 October 2007, and blasts in Delhi on 22 May 2005 were viewed as evidence of ISI support for Sikh militants, and confirmation of 'sleeper cells' of erstwhile militant organisations.

21. The Dal Khalsa, based in the city of Amritsar, supported the claim for a separate state of Khalistan. Banned by the Indian state in 1982, the Dal and its members went underground.
22. Avtar Singh Atwal was Deputy Inspector General of Police in the 80s; in April 1983, he was shot allegedly in retaliation for the death of a militant follower of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, himself a key political figure of the Khalistan movement.
23. Ram Jethmalani was Law Minister in A.B. Vajpayee's government at the Centre from 1999 to 2000.
24. Migrants continue to apply for asylum to this day, despite the refutation by the English state of the plea that violence is a condition of life in contemporary Punjab. In June 2007, the UK High Commissioner to India, Sir Michael Arthur, confirmed that at least 10 or 12 applications for political asylum from Punjab were sent back every year (*The Tribune*, 14 June 2007) since Country Reports of the UK Home Office have declared India a safe and 'friendly' country. It is the status of the Home Office Country Reports that makes it possible for migrants to seek political asylum or claim that their lives are in danger in a context of conflict.
25. In the course of fieldwork in Southall in November 2006, I interviewed an Afghan Sikh woman, an asylum-seeker who had been tortured in Kabul by the Taliban; during the interview, in what was clearly a rehearsed gesture for substantiating and establishing her torture, she lifted her shirt to show me the marks of injury inflicted on her. Her gesture confirms the likelihood of body searches conducted by the host state to verify signs of torture and categorise each asylum applicant as a genuine or fraudulent case. It is important to recall that bodily searches to establish the veracity of migrant claims are intrinsic to immigration policies. Virginity tests conducted on incoming brides of the South Asian community in the late 70s created a furore about the racist state.
26. The primarily rural contexts of violence have been noted in a host of accounts (Mahmood 1996; Pettigrew 1995; Puri et al. 1999) and Sukhvinder's narrative substantiates this aspect.
27. At the time of the interview, Gurmail Singh Malli had just been accorded rights of residence (October 2006). He had left his village in Moga, one of the districts badly affected by violence. By 2006, he ran a successful wedding banquet and party hall, well known in the neighbourhood.
28. These are commemorative rituals recalling the destruction of the Sikh sacred shrine, the Golden Temple in the city of Amritsar, by the Indian Army, and the 'martyrdom' of some of the key leaders of Khalistan who had taken sanctuary in the temple complex.
29. The allusion to politics of home in masculine bodily stylistics is critical in the discourse of political asylum, but we need to extract the strands of critique offered by asylum-seekers in the 1990s from the sense of connection that is suggested by adoptions of ritual or cultural styles by

earlier Sikh migrants. The turban debate in Britain is a particular case in point, of the disjunction between the arguments of 'dignity versus state regulations on safety' proffered by Punjabi Sikh migrants in the 1970s, asserting the right to wear turbans in the UK (Beetham 1970; Thompson 1973), and turban-wearing as a symbol of continued involvement in, and critique of, the politics of the Indian state by asylum-seekers in the closing decades of the 20th century.

6

Descent to Illegality

> The first time Mela placed a bet on a horse at the corner betting shop he won money. Now the betting shop appeared to Mela in a new light. The notes he handed in at the window were like a skylark, which soars out of sight and later reappears bringing its whole brood with it. If the *kalghi vala*[1] looks kindly upon him, he can earn in a few days all he came to England for … To Mela the window in the betting shop really did seem a window through which he could see paradise.
>
> (Extract from short story 'The Destitute's Bottle'. Surjit Hans, translated by Joginder Shamsher, 1979: 235)

Risk, hope and folly: the story of Mela the migrant has them all. Rich sources to appreciate the *longue duree* of migration, folktales circulating within the Diaspora reflect the uncertainties and ironies of migrant life. Punjabi literature on migration, both folktales and short stories, became available in print from about 1963–64, when a Punjabi newspaper and popular magazines created opportunities for the publication of Punjabi short stories in the UK (Shamsher 1979: 233–46). From the mid-60s, increased circulation of Punjabi news magazines and journals denoted a growing community of settlers, for whom these were stories of hope, but also tales of caution. South Asian migration to the UK, however, stretches much further back than the stories do. From the beginning of the East India Company, Indians (and Africans) were brought as servants to England by officers of the East India Company to serve in white households, and that is a history going back almost 400 years. Transnational movements connected different classes of people and disparate social groups across space and time, with widely different consequences for all of them (Fisher 2004). The presence of *ayahs* (nannies) or coloured pages, for instance, enhanced the status of their white employers. On the other hand, seamen or *lascars* jumped ship at

Liverpool or other docks, ended up as peddlers, road sweepers and street hawkers. 'Many came ashore to escape from particularly brutal officers but there was also an economic incentive: a man who signed on in London got higher European rates of pay, as opposed to the Asiatic rate he would have earned if he had taken the same job in Bombay … Although all Asians in London were ex-seamen they did not sit back passively waiting for a ship. They took up a variety of shore based occupations; some ran lodging houses, others worked for circuses and many … were professional beggars' (Ballard and Ballard 1977: 23) In an early 1873 tract, *The Asiatic in London,* Joseph Salter wrote that 'Asiatics', as he called them, visited autumn retreats at the seaside or in watering holes to 'come in contact with the English Sahib and extract a *backshish'* (Salter 1873: 221). From the 17th century, some of these servants and sailors formed the earliest Indian working class settlements in Britain (Visram 2002: 2). By the 19th century, Asian seamen settled primarily in London's East End (Raull 2006).

Wandering the bylanes of labour histories, we realise the range of spheres that need to be explored to get a sense of migration experiences. It is a complicated traverse, because the records are disparate and not always accessible in a seamless way. Often, there are no records worth the name. We might need to juxtapose novels and short stories with borough statistics, or balance documentary films against newspaper reports. The traces of passage need to be pieced together from a range of documents. The scarcity of traces are felt even more acutely in tracking transnational labour movements of the late 20th and early 21st century, because so much of it is clandestine and illegal. Boat people are a visible embodiment of the increasing stringency of immigration laws that occasion perilous journeys. We learn of them through reports of their deaths, or when a few wash up on a shore, starved, emaciated and willing to work.

Most official views of migration dwell on the 'stream' of migration, recording its directional flow or its statistically measured 'arrival'. The view of the 'stream' presents movement as an achieved event, with a beginning and an end, concluded once and for all. But we know from recent work based on ethnography and everyday practice (Gamburd 2000; Ballard 2004; Watson 2004) that transnational migration is a continuous process, and needs to be addressed over a period of time. Some work has examined the networks that migrants maintain (Mitchell 1969b; Watson 1977; Gidwani and

Sivaramakrishnan 2004) to argue that migration is not only a one-way move from village to metropolis, but is a circular process, and points to the continual movement of migrants between and within social spaces of difference.

Migration is most often statistically recorded as the journey of an individual, a risk, even a gamble, undertaken by individuals apparently 'haphazard, spontaneous and opportunistic' (Parry 2004: 220). But, in fact, migration-as-event points to the complex play between different categories of individuals who migrate at various points of time. *Families* strategise to enable emigration, taking loans to finance migrant journeys, for example, activating networks to acquire travel papers, and, most of all, activating transnational family networks. Thus, even if only one member migrates, many family members are intrinsic to the process and event of the migration of individuals. Further, when looking at family and migration, we need to understand that migration, especially without the safety net of institutional support (Amit-Talai 1998), is an event in two families: the sending family and the receiving family. There needs to be a continuous connection between transnational and local families if migration is to be accomplished. The ideology of family love and the fostering of kin ties are critical in enabling migration as an event and as a process, crucial to the process of becoming and being migrants. For rural migrants from villages who move to cities in other countries, the absence of institutional support makes them deeply vulnerable and far more in need of transnational kin support. Migration is, therefore, a process that fosters and nourishes kinship links, while creating new ones through marriage, work, even child care.

From this dual-sited perspective of at least two families, or perhaps more accurately, a transnational joint family, the migrant is clearly not the same person at all. From the standpoint of sending families, for example, young male migrants are represented as risk-takers or gamblers (to use Parry's argument of contingent, spontaneous, highly individualised movements), but they are simultaneously represented as people who do what is required of them to sustain their families as well as to achieve an autonomous, independent masculine self. On the other side of the border, young male migrants are in a position of dependency vis-a-vis transnational kin, needing financial and social support for a long period of time, reverting almost to the position of children. The experience of migration, therefore, is clearly fractured and inconsistent.

In earlier chapters, I addressed the aspect of migration as a 'process' from the perspective of family biographies in the 'sending sites', to ask 'who migrates?' I also argued that continual and circular movements stretch across time, and that a family biography reflects the journeys of many members within and across generations as well as from different locations. In this chapter, while retaining the view that migration is simultaneously part of the sending and receiving sites, I move toward situating migrants at the site of their destination.

I hope to ask if political asylum-seekers, a new category of migrants, were a beacon for future migrations in the closing decade of the 20th century. I suggest that for migrants of the 'third phase', the sense of trauma expressed by asylum-seekers of the 80s and 90s is not seen as belonging to them alone. In fact, sending families in Punjab do not see an end of trauma. To them, the residues of violence are apparent in the devastation wrought on the lives and futures of all young men of 'post-Khalistan' generation, for whom sanctuary is still necessary.[2] In their minds, political asylum is a vital condition, not a successful sending strategy — a process for young men to salvage a minimal future in the village. The family view of the necessity to retain the category 'political migrant', presents a critique of the officially held divide between 'migrants for economic reasons' and 'political refugees', and of those who claim that the violence of Khalistan has disappeared from the global map.

In this chapter I relook at the issue of labour migration from Punjab villages to one specific destination, Southall, against a background of increasingly difficult and hazardous migrations, the face-off between international law on human rights, and national policies that restrict immigration. I contrast the labour migrations of the immediately post-colonial period from the late1950s and early 1960s, with the conditions and contexts of labour migrations at the turn of the 20th century and the early years of the 21st century. Despite the fact that the flows from village to multicultural neighbourhood look identical, the fact that these two periods of labour migration were 'interrupted' by a period of political uncertainty has altered the experience and the views of migrating labour. The starkness of the contrast between the two points in time impels us to ask if the 'political' and the 'economic' can be completely segregated when we try to understand and plot migrations.

One aspect that crucially distinguishes the 'earlier' and 'later' labour migrations to Southall, is the existence of state-generated

records in the former instance, and the paucity, if not the virtual absence, of such records of later, 21st century migrants. State-generated records that outline the conditions of migrant life are not merely an important source of knowledge of migrant movements; written records are scriptural texts that enable the formation of collective and 'multicultural' identity, and locate individuals within state-generated discourses. The descent to illegality, into the position of non-person (Auge 1995), is underwritten by the absence of formal records.

How then do we 'know' the migrant? How do we know especially those who have been rendered invisible by a lack of documents? The methods of anthropology encapsulated in the amorphous term 'fieldwork' are one way to enter an otherwise indistinct domain. Fieldwork that runs the gamut of hanging around street corners, documenting folk narratives and songs, photographing visual landscapes and other colourful methods, needs to serve an acutely political function of 'seeing' the invisibles without 'disclosure'. It is a peculiar position, because anthropology must combat the despair that invisibility imposes, producing its own documentation of lives to provide 'recognition' of a place in the world, while fully alive to the fact that documents become available for a different authoring. The arc of understanding and counter readings of texts provide us a way of thinking of our texts as simultaneously subversive and open to usurpation.[3]

Recording Migrants

Folklore, like the story of the destitute migrant Mela, portrays a sense of different stages of settling and creating community. It is, in some sense, an affirmative record of hope mired by risk, but also reclaimed by creative spirit. But the history of north Indian labour in the UK can also be traced through local history records produced by the state. These records are particularly important testament of state practice, and are a testament to transnational movement of labour that arrived without the guarantee of rights or security. In its dying days, colonialism revitalised itself through a huge transfer of labouring men from plantations in colonies to factories in the metropole, to power an economy still recovering from the ravages of the War. Migration was represented as a chivalric offer of sanctuary towards the post-colony; in fact, that chivalry was a way

of stimulating the economy of the host state through such transnational labour transfers.

Over the decades, from the late 50s on, labour migrants in Britain became visible as numbers in state censuses. The statistic itself is an inscription of state practice, incorporating and re-categorising individuals as 'workers' into the broader economy. The nature of the statistical profile had a substantive effect on everyday life. Numerically acknowledged in employment statistics, labour migrants became subject to state regulation as 'workers'.

Employment and unemployment statistics, housing statistics, migration statistics, and so on, were underwritten by an acutely sensitive barometer for racial distinctions. Diverse 'originary' statistics[4] seem to resurrect racial assumptions so familiar to 19th century colonial discourses. The 'area of origin' tables of the census marked out migrants who came from the New Commonwealth, a geographical and political terrain that included India and Pakistan and later Bangladesh, but excluded Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The racial segregation inherent in the term distinguished the non-white from the white Commonwealth, distinctions that were substantiated by the meticulous collection of data about specific attributes of migrants from the New Commonwealth. In the Census of Population for Ealing, for example, the statistics on 'Origin of Population' had four fascinating columns under 'Ward Population Totals and Annual Migration, 1981, Census of Population for Ealing, Central Policy Unit London, Borough of Ealing':

- Persons born outside the UK
- Persons born in the New Commonwealth
- Household heads born in the New Commonwealth
- Persons in households with heads born in the New Commonwealth

By 1980, Indians were the largest group among the New Commonwealth residents of Ealing when classified by country of birth; only 35 per cent of Indians of Ealing were born in the UK. The statistics of origin produced a history of the migrant household and its composition, creating fine distinctions in its computing columns between the household as a unit and different members within it. Who, we might ask, was entitled to pensions as 'worker'? Did some people acquire the right to appeal to a wage board, while others of the same household remained invisible in the eyes of the state?

The fact that many different household members were working, was insufficient reason to provide employee benefits to all, or bring every one of them within the purview of labour laws. It is possible to argue that this kind of distinction is not necessarily 'racial', but part of the proverbial process of transformation of migrant to citizens, and should really be seen as a part of the 'life cycle stage' of early migrant households composed simultaneously of first and second generation migrants. It is when the census record is looped out towards other commentaries about migrants, and juxtaposed vis-a-vis other kinds of records, that we can decipher the extent and depth of racism that underlay some of these statistical categorisations.

It is difficult to say whether the census record was the inspiration for, or merely a statistical confirmation of, local public opinion against migrants. In the 1960s, for example, local residents of the west London borough of Southall complained to the Ministry of Education that children of immigrants were attending the local Featherstone Road School, outnumbering white children (Oates 2003: 105–6). Increasingly, Southall began to be described as an undesirable neighbourhood by property agents (Oates 2003: 105). It is the juxtaposition of the accounts produced by written complaints, property advertisements and census categories that make legible the racism that entered census categories and shaped migrant lives.

However, it seems to me that the acute sensitivity of the 'origin' numerical accomplished more than a racial function. It was purposively intentional in marking out specific geographic spaces as problem ghettoes — in the example cited above, the five wards of the borough of Southall were deemed as 'areas suffering from social stress'.[5] These areas were judged to be in urgent need of active interventions by state agencies, to produce an ordered settlement of workers who could be properly regulated. Census statistics signify a reanimated 'colonialism', now located within the political boundaries of the metropolis, but carrying some of the assumptions of 19th century prejudice. Areas of migrant settlement were categorised as culturally troublesome and composed of socially backward populations, especially those who were economically unassimilated. Juxtaposed with statistics of household size, were statistics that mapped the percentage of households where no one was economically active, as well as the percentage of those defined as economically active who remained unemployed, and clearly unproductive. The census noted that in the 'five wards of Southall

Borough … the unemployed aged between 16–24 were between 15–20% ... unemployed with dependents were also among the highest in the four wards… (of Southall)'.[6] The migrant 'fixed' into working class categories was also produced as economically and politically unstable.

The politics of the state record on migrants reveal their racist underpinnings. However, subsequent interpretations make legible a different 'record'. Perhaps unintentionally, the numerical inscription was a process of incorporating migrants into the body of the state. Statistical records collected and maintained by municipalities, electoral registers and borough and council records, housed in borough record offices, council libraries and local history archives, underscored the *political* incorporation of migrants into a legal category of person, creating a population to be 'governed'. If population statistics were 'knowledge in numerical form' (Curtis 2002: 15) then that knowledge was also about a set of people who were clearly being transformed from foreigner to citizen (however incomplete that citizenship may have proved to be). Even where they were thought of and written of as politically troublesome, they nevertheless existed in the eyes of the state as a governed, recognised community, composed of legally recognised individuals. The record then is a process of making visible the migrant worker, and continuously conferring a political status of citizen. The standardising tendency of statistics submerged immigrants into an impenetrable mass, but it also produced a place for them within the official record as People of the British Isle.

What the record does not say, but oral history narratives illustrate, is that despite the acquisition of citizenship rights, continuing conditions of dispossession haunted migrant labour throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. The gesturing towards political personhood made by state and census records was made incomplete by the actual conditions of labour and the refusal to acknowledge such a grant or transfer of rights. Oral history records open out what the census does not say — that much of the 'recognition' of migrant as worker was met with resistance and violence by employers in local factories. The process of transformation of the outsider to an entitled citizen was a complicated negotiation between the state, communities from the New Commonwealth and the shop floor that shaped the experience of work.

Labour and Community: Southall's Early Days

Mass migration from the subcontinent occurred between the two world wars. Single migrant men came as unskilled manual workers and lived in densely packed all-male households in inner city areas (Ballard and Ballard 1977). 'Usually a new migrant had a contact (perhaps only an address), but if not, he would soon discover the location of established South Asian households in the city. In the 1950s a particular pub was patronized by the Sikhs who lived in Leeds and all new arrivals would find their way there … before long chain migration began in earnest so that instead of arriving in a random scatter migrants increasingly came to, or were called to join, kinsmen who had already established themselves' (ibid.: 31) though home was still Punjab and migrants counted themselves members of their village families primarily because complete families had still to emigrate in large numbers (ibid.: 27).

The scatter of migrants from the north Indian state of Punjab swelled to settled communities in culturally distinct localities around the UK, like Birmingham or Southall. 'Arrival legends of Punjabi Sikh migrants in Southall often began with narratives of one Indian ex-soldier seeking and obtaining work from his former British officer' (Kirwan 1965: 49), and then playing 'host' for subsequent immigrants. 'There had been virtually no non-European immigration into Southall prior to 1945 … [so] perhaps if one has to single out one of the most important aspects of Southall's post war history, it would have to be large scale immigration from the Commonwealth' (Oates 2003: 103).[7] Immigration statistics gave evidence of this groundswell. The 1951 census of the borough records less than one per cent of the population as people born in the Commonwealth, its colonies and protectorates. By 1957, however, numbers had increased, as many young men began being employed in local factories such as Woolf's Rubber Factory, which manufactured tyres for Ford automobiles, Associated Equipment Company (AEC) that made the ubiquitous London buses, Arrow Switches and the Gasworks. Woolf's in Southall was a major employer of skilled and unskilled migrant men, acquiring almost a legendary status.

> A story has arisen that it was Woolf's Rubber Factory which was responsible for the large scale settlement of Indians in Southall … the story has been in print since 1963 but its authenticity is hard to verify. The grandson of a former director of the firm told me that it

was a doubtful tale and was racist in origin, having been originally put about in order to blame someone (i.e. Woolf's directors) for Indian immigration into the district (ibid.).

Oral history archives and narratives stand testimony to the racism that underwrote working conditions in factories like Woolf's Rubber Factory.[8]

Ajit Rai :… horrible working conditions, where not any human being can stand, all over dirt, no rules, no unions, no facilities, no rights to the workers. It was the rule of the jungle. The foremen, charge hand, were behaving as if they were shepherding, you know, other people, *Oi*! *Oi*! So rude, so indecent … no decent person can stand. But our people had to stand that type of treatment simply because they were fearing if they would object or retaliate to their language or behaviour they might be chucked out and they couldn't find the job anywhere else and that was the fear in their minds which was stopping them reacting to the treatment (Ajit Rai Oral History Record/No. 77).

Q: Tell me about what it was like working there (at Woolf's)?

Resham Samara: Physically people had to work so hard. It was difficult … difficult to explain … Woolfs was one of the worst … It was terrible. People … it was dirty, some people had TB over there because there was powder.

Q: TB?

RS: TB, yes. They developed TB because there was powder they put in the tyre, you know the rubber factories...And sometimes even their faces there was this powder on their face. They had to go bath everyday … They were given overalls but even the overall became so dirty, a lot of powder. They were always very dirty (Resham Samara Oral History Record/No. 219).

For almost two decades after WW-II, signs saying 'No, Irish, No blacks, No children' were legally exhibited by landlords to exclude the incoming Asian population. The exclusion was unsuccessfully managed. 'No blacks' signs could not prevent the influx of migrant labour for a post-war economy in urgent need of low-paid workers from former colonies, who became vital to the rebuilding of the British nation. The 1961 census figures record 1,200 male Indians residents in Southall (Oates 2001: 101), but by 1965, immigrants had swelled to almost 11 per cent of the population of Southall, concentrated in the wards of Glebe, Northcote and Mount Pleasant.

'Property prices rose because immigrants were in urgent need of accommodation' (Oates 2003: 105), and they could no longer depend on being the lodgers of reluctant and racist landlords.

As settlements grew, migrants from the New Commonwealth began to buy houses; though right upto the mid-60s, the all-male household was the predominant form of housing and a characteristic institution among labour migrants. Members thought of themselves belonging to a *biraderi* — a coparcenary group of property owners, linked by ties of quasi brotherhood. Sometimes, a house was jointly owned by its members, but more usually a single landlord assumed a kind of patriarchal authority (Ballard and Ballard 1977: 32). Housing statistics note that by 1989, 70 per cent of Asians in Southall were owner occupiers (Oates 2003: 105). Houses purchased during this period were cheap, including and large decaying Victorian and Edwardian terrace houses that were cheaply renovated and then jointly shared (Ballard and Ballard 1977: 52). Southall became a choice for immigrants partly because it was an industrial borough,[9] but later its proximity to Heathrow airport, a major employer of immigrant labour, especially for labour intensive but low skilled and menial tasks.[10] By 2005, a curious set of statistics collated homeownership and religious affiliation. The statistics showed eight out of 10 Sikhs owned a house (82 per cent Sikhs, 77 per cent Jews and 52 per cent Muslims were homeowners). 'Their success is a tribute to the hard work of the first generation and then the ever-growing economic success and educational achievement of subsequent generations'.[11]

Symbols of the unprotected, decaying houses and dirty work heightened the sense of dispossession, and naturalised the abuse, deprivation and outright violence directed toward migrants. In 1958, there were numerous reports of hooligans attacking property and making threats. It was reported that young men threw bottles and stones through windows of houses on Hammond Road, made abusive phone calls, set fire to an Indian restaurant in the neighbourhood and gathered as an armed crowd outside Woolf's. The murder of a young Punjabi Sikh, Gurdip Singh Chaggar, by skinheads, resulted in a huge political protest, brutally squashed by police action. Commenting on the riot and protests of 1979, Parminder Dhillon, a resident of Southall and a founder of the Southall Black Sisters, described the neighbourhood at the time: [12]

> Coming into the station from Leister was an absolute shock. There were police vans, police everywhere. It was like a town under siege. I went up Park Avenue to 46 High Street and it was like walking through Northern Ireland. That's how it felt, inundated by police presence... But I remember that we came out and I was with a group of older women and I had my little camera, taking pictures and a police officer came, took my camera, took out the reel and smashed it on the floor. And I remember this older woman, her name is Mrs. Bains, and if you can, do actually … she's part of history … she needs to be interviewed … and she was saying 'How dare you do this!' You know … and you know … he said, and really he was really derogatory and to the effect of 'you shut your mouth otherwise I'm going to arrest you!' And so she said 'okay- arrest me!' and she just stood there defiantly. And of course they did not touch the women. But what I had got on camera … and I think I salvaged the film, and I've still got the pictures somewhere … were police just going and knocking peoples turbans off, really being ruthless. It was the first time I thought to myself 'How can this actually happen in a country called civilised world?' (Parminder Dhillon Oral History Record/No. 318)

A political organisation called The Monitoring Group (TMG) was formed at the time, to counter the violent racism against New Commonwealth migrants. TMG was followed by the Southall Black Sisters, the Southall Day Centre, and the Dominion Arts and Education Centre, institutional signs of a community caring for itself. What is significant about these organisations is that they became outposts of a politically energised community that received state funding, creating channels through which the state reached out to the members of the migrant community to simultaneously regulate and provision its 'backward' citizens, whose welfare, however troublesome, needed to be managed.

By the time I did my fieldwork in 2005–06, Southall became the literal and metaphoric ground for discerning the *lehers* (waves) of migration. Incoming migrants left their imprint on the landscape, layering it with their versions of home. Signs of distinct cultural practice are evident in shop fronts, signage, and foods sold in local supermarkets, evidence of the transformation of unfamiliar space to 'home' (Plates 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3). Traces of multiple *lehers* enable residents and outsiders to discern difference — 'that's a *fauji* area' (the area of ex-army men), 'those are *freshies*' (new 'uns), 'see how they dress, in suits and sports shoes, they've just come from the village', comments expressive of the multiple identities circulating

within the neighbourhood. A heterotopia of not-quite-home, Southall is a hub and crossing point, simultaneously spoken of as a ghetto, a sanctuary, a place of transition, an archetype of volatile space, but also perhaps an attenuated version of Derrida's *Ville Refuge*. By the time of my fieldwork, the 'troublesome migrant' had transformed the face of an undesirable neighbourhood, to convert it into sanctuary.

Invisible Immigrants

Half a century separates the labour migrations discussed in the previous section, and the later migrations at the end of the 20th century and the turn of the 21st. The half century interregnum was configured by two separate migration movements, the expulsion of Asians from East Africa and the arrival of asylum-seekers (discussed in the previous chapter). In the 70s, the significant immigration was a result of the expulsion of Indians from Uganda that led to a huge exodus of East African Indians to Southall. They became the twice and thrice migrants (Bhachu 1986), who settled and resettled in more than one country during the course of a single lifespan. Families and households were a muddle of differently entitled individuals. East African Asian immigrants created their own particular cultural nodes within Southall. In part, their primarily Ramgarhia caste origins distinguished them from earlier Jat Sikh settlers, and, in part, their more meticulous and strict observances of Sikh tenets, foreswearing tobacco and alcohol, set them apart from the more freewheeling style of earlier, primarily rural-origin Sikhs of Southall (Ballard and Ballard 1977: 38). But while establishing their own network of institutions like a gurdwara and the Dominion Centre for art and culture, there is little record of the transformations on *subsequent* migrations occasioned by the initial exodus from Africa.

The effects of militant violence in Punjab, on the other hand, travelled across boundaries, and were felt in Southall. Support for the militant fighters from the Sikh community, corresponded with the intense resistance to Khalistan among the Hindu Punjabis. Homeland politics widely reported in local newspapers and news magazines (*Southall Gazette*, *Des Pardes* and *Sandesh International)* contoured the social and political landscape of the immigrant community. Southall Sikhs foregathered to provision them in multiple ways, legally, financially and morally. Extensive community

support was equated with *kar sewa* (voluntary work) rather than humanitarian aid, and the neighbourhood community created material and ethical-political contexts of sanctuary. On their part, asylum-seekers injected political energy to their claims for residence and demands for recognition as political actors of a new nation of Khalistan, shattering analogies with charity cases on welfare.

It is this latter aspect of community support that, in my view, propelled subsequent migrations at the turn of the century. From the perspective of sending families, 'community' support was likened to 'family provisioners', who enabled immigrants to be successfully incorporated.[13] It is possible to argue, even speculatively, that the first *leher* (wave) of labour migration of the late 50s and 60s were successfully established, and created a sanctuary home for asylum-seekers. Critical to the process of becoming refugee were neighbourhoods like Southall, which offered refuge, and their inhabitants, who offered sustenance. The absorption of asylum-seekers into the spaces of sanctuary became the narrative of hope that travelled back to the homeland. The fact that even those who were 'ordinary', not necessarily *khargku*, even 'false', were successfully able to claim a place in Southall, was inspirational for later migrants. The political migrants imprint was transnational appearing on the landscape of Southall and of their homeland, generating subsequent *lehers* of migrants who sought to follow in the successful footsteps of *khargku*-turned-citizen.

There is, however, one critical difference — latter day migrants continue to seek asylum, but their claims are no longer considered politically valid and they are increasingly reclassified by state and immigration policies as 'refugees for economic reasons', an oxymoron that works successfully in categorising 21st century migrants as primarily 'labour' migrants, and legally permitting their repatriation.[14] Global conflicts have strengthened the metaphor of obligatory chivalry, but simultaneously heightened the anxiety around the huge numbers of migrants who cross international borders.[15] Refugees of the 21st century are the ones least likely to be granted asylum, or permission to stay; their applications are most likely to be rejected, for they are deemed to have no case in the legal sense of the word 'asylum', particularly from the perspective of the host state. 'Under the pretext of combating economic immigrants purporting to be exiles from political persecution, the states reject applications for the right to asylum more often than ever' (Derrida 2001: 13),

successfully converting asylum-seekers into illegal migrants. The anxiety created by the transnational movement are apparent everywhere. One report headlined, 'UK concerned over Punjabi immigrants', is typical of the efforts to stem the migration flows. During a visit to Chandigarh, British Minister for Immigration Tony McNulty, claimed that 1,000–1,200 people from Punjab try to sneak into UK illegally every year, and termed them 'a painful menace' for the UK.[16] In the same report, Punjab was listed as one of the most problematic states for the British government.

Placing the onus for stemming the flow on the state of origin, is one in a series of measures undertaken by destination states. There are others. Along the routes travelled by Punjabi migrants, for example, national governments have found different ways of dealing with the politics of increasing numbers. The creation of hybrid institutions along migration routes are a measure of the ambivalence toward migrants. On the overland route to the UK, which begins from Russia,[17] and goes via Slovakia to Austria (undertaken clandestinely by Punjabi male migrants), institutions that are a cross between prisons and welfare homes have mushroomed, where migrants are consigned for indefinite periods of time with varying political status and fewer legal rights. The terms for these institutions suggest protective guardianship — in Vienna, for example, it is *Volksheim* or people's home/asylum, or more the indeterminate *Behorden* or *Dienstzimmer* that connote impersonal bureaucratic 'agencies' or 'office'. The linguistically evoked guardianship of *Volksheim*, or the bland detachment of *Behorden* 'agency', are countered by surveillance techniques common to prisons or institutions of incarceration: mounted cameras, muzzled dogs and gun-toting guards who patrol the perimeters of the walled *anstalt* establishments, which architecturally incline toward disciplinary panopticans; the walls suggest the deep irresolution that lies at the heart of protective custody of liminal migrant men. What is visually most striking is the secrecy that is inherent in the structure and architecture of these grey-walled *anstalt*. It suggests a clandestine operation of the state against the incoming, whose fate will be left to the unknown decisions of a set of ill-defined authorities, who nevertheless exercise immense power.

Leaving aside for the moment the issue of whether the claims for asylum by 21st century Punjabi migrants are legitimate (though I will return to this later), the point I wish to make is that neither the state nor the community officially acknowledge the existence of these new

migrants as labour or political refugees. No clear systematic records exist in the public domain. Varying estimates can be gleaned from sources other than the authorised. For example, an Austrian official interviewed by documentary film maker Savyasaachi Jain[18] said he had met 'countless hundreds of Indians' whose ultimate destination was England, whom he classified as 'refugees for economic reasons', whose claims for 'stay' or 'asylum' were very likely to be rejected as non-political and therefore illegal.[19] In June 2007, the UK High Commissioner to India, Sir Michael Arthur, confirmed that 'at least ten or twelve applications for political asylum' from Punjab are sent back every year.[20] A UK government report estimated a population of 430,000, illegal immigrants 'and possibly up to 570,000'.[21] The same report suggested that the figures relate to data gathered in April 2001. The 'new estimates were calculated by a complex equation', though the Immigration Minister, Tony McNulty, warned: 'No government has ever been able to produce an accurate figure for the number of people who may be in the country illegally. By its very nature, it is impossible to quantify accurately, and that remains the case'. In October 2008, the police raided 19 properties, including a gurdwara in the Brussels suburbs of Vilvorde and Tubize, in connection with an investigation into an illegal immigration racket, and found 200 illegal immigrants, mostly Punjabis. A news report claimed the raid and the protests that followed cast a shadow on the visit of King Albert II of Belgium to India.[22]

Illegal migrants or the ill-documented are the missing statistic on the global landscape of movement. It is clear that they are part of invisible global transactions to reinforce grey area economies of their host nations, powering an unrecorded, but valued, global growth. Their labour is critical, but exists without the burden of welfare provisions. The challenge is how to simultaneously attract and repel the migrants, a double movement, suggests Balibar, which is managed by 'installing them in a state of permanent insecurity. There is indeed no question of *suppressing the flow of migrants* towards Europe. These flows are absolutely needed, to reproduce the old 'capitalist reserve army' in a period when a significant part of the 'national' labour force is still (although less and less effectively) protected by social rights and regulations which have been partly 'constitutionalised' (Balibar 2004: 15; italics in text). This means the expenditure of effort is directed towards creating a non-person, a category without political status or rights, forever foreign.

It is precisely this descent towards non-personhood and illegality that is the defining condition of the new labour migrant of Southall. In neighbourhoods like Southall, migrant businesses depend on continued immigration; incomers of recent origin perform the work rejected or unacceptable even to earlier migrants and residents. The host economy still depends on the grey labour market, but without acknowledging this dependence in any formal way.

If working conditions at factories like Woolf's, or the degradation of cleaning toilets at Heathrow, have become part of the legends of a labouring community, accounts of young men working as illegal labour are far worse, because there is no recourse to labour laws or welfare. Deep, a young migrant, told me he's been 'working his ass off' doing a host of different kinds of work, most of it backbreaking. He has plastered homes, worked in a laundry, as a restaurant bartender, in a bathroom and kitchen fittings business, as a window fitter. He did *kheti bari* (agricultural labour) working on Dartmouth farms. The worst work that he's done, he said, is pouring concrete. '*Jaan sukali*. *Suvere char baje toh ratti das-bara baje tak; mere hath akar jande san. Garam pani vich pa ke phir chalde si*. *Meri* waist 36 *inchi di si- hun* 32 *inchi di hai; ainah phrak hai* (I just dried up. From 4 am to 10 at night I worked. My hands and fingers were swollen. I used to soak them in hot water every night before I could get my fingers moving again. I had a 36-inch waist; now I'm 32 inches; that's how much my body's lost). Though they are not legally permitted to work, all 'unlegals', as they are known in local Southall parlance, are employed as wage labour by local small businesses that literally provide them 'cover', but also use their uncertain status for profit. Deep's description of the 'loss' of his body is a particularly evocative account of the way young men position themselves in the history of migrant labour. Accounts of an earlier generation of migrants stress the shame of cleaning toilets or the abuse by racist employers. Migrants like Deep, on the other hand, view the uncertainty of their labour as 'leaching' their bodies and selves of substance and honour.

Despite the fact that their labour is necessary, their conditions of existence are dire. The recognition of necessity transforms the fear of discovery into a hopeful optimism about being able to stay on in Southall. They are fully aware that grey markets within global economies create a demand for unaccounted and unsupported cheap labour. Deep and others like him work on the assumption

that it costs the UK government too much to send the person back. Almost £10,000 or £12,000, Deep told me.[23] If not the folklore, then certainly the general understanding is that constables run into difficulty if they pick someone up as an illegal migrant. They have to do the paperwork and then justify the cost that needs to be incurred for repatriation to their superior officers, a cost that must be borne by the state. As long as someone doesn't commit a crime or cause a nuisance, or demands nor needs, welfare, he just stays on. Interviews with 'unlegals' reveal that their main concern is not the threat of deportation — though that exists — but rather how to send money home. Survival is a matter of balancing earnings for remunerations and daily living without welfare (Amit-Talai 1998).

Risky journeys are fundamental in labour narratives. Manjit Singh of Thinda village of Hoshiarpur district in Punjab is a typical example of the 21st century global army of reserve labour, who paid his way in search of work. I interviewed him in November 2006. Not conversant with English, the interview was primarily in Punjabi. Manjit admits that he is confined to one neighbourhood and circulates primarily among others like himself, with whom he feels at ease.

> I came to the UK 11 years ago; I wasn't legal. All those who are educated leave Punjab. Everyone. All five sons of my neighbours in Thinda have migrated. *Ghaha toh gaha gal kitti* (word spread from one place/person to another and further). In 1992–93, the route was Russia. All you needed was a simple visa. No problem about getting to Moscow. It's after Moscow that the journey really begins. We crossed rivers into Romania and Bulgaria. *Therah mudian da crop si* (we were a 'crop' [batch] of 13 boys) and we were caught. Jail *vich ruledeh raiyae* (we rotted in their jails). One of the Brahmin boys with us got TB. There was nothing we could do. For the rest of us, we had to write back home and our relatives sent money to bribe policemen and for our tickets. Two at a time, we got out and started again, after six months of rotting in jail.

Manjit came through 'agents'. He is a *donki bandah* — an illegal migrant sold by agents down the routes of migration that begin in villages of Punjab and cross through Russia, Eastern Europe and then into the UK, hidden in lift vans used for transporting goods across the channel. Migrants are handed over from one agent to another, who force them to travel through the night, to stay in the outskirts

of villages of Eastern Europe hidden in copses or goat huts, and make them wade through streams or cross fields of snow. They walk traversing Yugoslavia, Lithuania, Prague, *luk luk ke* (hiding and walking). Some don't make it; if they fall sick on the way, they are either left behind if none of the others can help them, or shot by the agents, who fear that a lingering sick man will slow down the process and lead to discovery. Manjit envies the Poles, who 'have entry, not like us'; being an illegal immigrant, he cannot even go back to his home and has to do the most menial and hard labour in the neighbourhood. But there is nothing for him at home, he says, and if he doesn't send money regularly, his father, a retired bus driver, sends a query about the delay.

If the host state works to 'attract and repel', then it does this by constantly harking on the fear of a foreign invasion, but also rendering an entire category invisible by the sheer absence of any consistent record available in the public domain. There is a literal veiling of this reserve army of rejected asylum-seekers and transnational workers. But it seems to me that the process of veiling and invisibility are only partial. Evidence of existence is not hidden at all. It is merely enabled to exist *as if* it is hidden, rather like the veiled woman who is enabled to enter the public domain as if she is invisible. Beginning from the shores of home that are studded with 'signs of travel', from the advertising boards of 'agents' — a cross between labour recruiters, travel agents and traffickers — to snaking queues at passport and visa offices, the new reserve army makes itself available for view. Down from the rail station bridge at the crossing between 'old' and 'new' Southall, is a junction where labouring men stand, waiting to be 'picked up' by drive-by employers, who come with their pick-up trucks to hire masons, bricklayers, plumbers and window fitters for the day. It's a familiar practice of daily-wage hiring, common to Punjabi cities of Jalandhar, Chandigarh and Amritsar, which have their own labour junctions (the Labour Chowk of Chandigarh is a flowered and sculpted roundabout, part of the City Beautiful crusade). In Southall, the men stand, looking into the middle distant, avoiding eye contact, coming forward gingerly as a truck draws up. And that's how one knows them. 'Decent', but clearly provincial, ill-fitting suits and imitation sports shoes mark the recent migrant. Body postures and sartorial styles are practices of the street enacted by the visible 'illegals'. New folk songs composed in detention centres flesh out their journeys into illegality, but

also suggest the collusion between traffickers and faceless state agencies.

> *Dunki* Russia *di*
> *Dunki* Russia *di*
> *Rakkh di addh vickar eh…*
> *… Jo donnkeran de bas pai gayeh*
> *Osdeh kapreh vi lah leyah sareh*
> *Ghar bar chaddah ke*
> *Russia vich rul gayeh …*[24]

The secret war that is meant to render the labour of the 21st century invisible without status or recognition, a war that blurs the 'distinction between police actions and war' (Balibar 2003: 5), exceeds its domains — it enters back into the world of prior migrants who counted themselves 'safe' as citizens belonging to the new host nation. Creating the category of status-less and unacknowledged labour, state-invented regulatory practices reopen the question of the political status of prior migrants, extending the taint of illegality. Discourses of unassimilated communities find expression in new laws that restrict everything from transnational marriage to student visas and visits. The newest measure holds an earlier migrant responsible for 'housing' a relative who has overstayed, and is now considered 'illegal', a taint that spreads through the host household and reopens the threat of deportation. A household in a neighbourhood like Southall, composed of members with variegated migration statuses, can be converted into a site at which the meaning of being foreign is re-inscribed. The household becomes a borderland between the less and more foreign. The fact that an entire neighbourhood routinely consists of transnationally diverse households, frames Southall as a territorial puzzle, and once more, as an arena of volatility to be regulated.

'I don't know what's going on there' a policewoman told me late in October 2006, while she looked suspiciously at a procession winding its way towards the main gurdwara of Southall. 'But there won't be any buses here for a while,' she added. Her suspicion is not hers alone.

In the final analysis, we need to interrogate the seemingly tenuous claims to political asylum made by 21st century Punjabi migrants, and ask if the designation 'migrants for economic reasons' is, in fact, accurate. Economists like Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum

and other have argued that freedom, though a political idea, needs to be rooted in material conditions that enable the fullest expression and experience of freedom. Indices of well-being and human development consistently point our attention towards the interlocking of the economic and the developmental, to achieve freedom. These writings compel our attention towards the decades of violence that underwrote the political history of contemporary Punjab. Young men like Deep and Manjit are the inheritors of a desolate history, growing up in the devastation wrought by state repression and militant violence. Figures collected and collated by various organisations like the Movement Against State Repression (MASR), detail the enormity of the tragedy of the militant decades, meticulously recording the deaths in a few districts covered by the MASR surveys. The high rates of suicides by young men, below the ages of 30 (Gill and Singh 2006), are a residue of the decades of violence. Most of the recorded deaths are suicides for reasons of debt taken to restore family futures and agriculture destroyed during the violent decades. Suicides signal the futile task of trying to save agrarian land, livelihood and lives, which clearly cannot be salvaged. Economic reason and political consequence combine in intricate ways to produce these new migrants. In their own way, these undistinguished 21st century political migrants interrogate our understanding of how political personhood can be grasped or denied.

Many more policies circumscribe the movement of labour in the 21st century than ever before, either by defining the preferred category of migrant or simply by not acknowledging their existence. In 2001, 44 per cent of developed countries had policies aiming to lower immigration levels (UN 2002:14). Levels of education, language skills, income, likelihood of return, and so on, are some of the filtering measures that create and then sift through ‘unwanted’ and ‘preferred’ categories. The sifting happens across a series of different boundaries, from visa consulates in countries of origin to airline staff, and finally to immigration officials who can override every one of their administrative counterparts by denying final entry to the incoming.

None of these efforts at restriction or invisibility hinder Deep. He has got a game plan, he tells me (game *banni hui hai*) while gently flirting with the receptionist at the community radio station where he comes every afternoon to deliver sandwiches and win over the station director to play the music of his choice. Deep followed his

cousin's footsteps to Southall, and he isn't about to go anywhere; except perhaps to Canada, if he can. Escaping from India was the difficult part, he said. In Southall, regardless of the law, he melts into the landscape where no one can spot him.

Notes

1. The reference is to the egret feather (*kalgi*) in the turban of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh guru, also sometimes referred to as *Kalgidhar,* whose patrician lineage was signalled by the plumed turban. The protagonist Mela's citing of the guru indicates his origin as a Sikh from Punjab.
2. It is widely held that Khalistan is not actively demanded any longer; the movement for Khalistan is also thought to have ended. Post 1995 is thought of as one end point of the movement. However, given the tenor of protest against the Dera Sacha Sauda and the Ramgarhia gurdwara in Vienna, it is debatable whether there is, at the moment, a 'post-Khalistan' period.
3. As anthropologists, we ourselves have usurped the texts of the state, subjecting them to a different reading, enabling other 'texts' and interpretations to surface. Records of the state are such texts. Precisely because they are in the public domain, the state text is widely read and understood with different intentionalities.
4. The 1981 census table, *Area of Origin of Population: Southall*, continues to be one such example. (Ethnic Origin of Population [by Ward], 1981, Census of Population for Ealing, Central Policy Unit, London, Borough of Ealing).
5. Social stress measures could include anything from the number of single parent household, to large families without a car. Three of the five wards of Southall were judged to have seriously overcrowded housing, more than four times the national average. (*Key Population Statistics*, Southall, Census of Population for Ealing, Central Policy Unit London, Borough of Ealing, 1981).
6. Borough Residents in Employment. Southall, Employment, Census of Ealing, Central Policy Unit London, Borough of Ealing, 1981.
7. Oates does not label these immigrants as people of the New Commonwealth. But at various points in his text, he indicates the composition of the immigrant community as South Asian, and in the main, Indian. His writings are among the more detailed accounts of the changing physical and social landscape of Southall in post-War Britain.

8. *Meri Zindagi*, Oral History Project, Oral History Archive, Gunnersbury Park Museum, London.
9. While Woolf's was well known, acquiring almost a legendary status among the incoming migrants, who often appeared at the gate and were taken on rolls, other factories became important employers of migrant labour. Nestle's, T. Waltz, Kraft, Bechnal and Bealy, Roth and Glass and United Biscuits in Southall, are cited in the recollections by members of the migrant community.
10. Surjit Hans, a prolific short story writer and folklorist, wrote of the horror of a Punjabi migrant landing at Heathrow and seeing his Indian compatriot cleaning toilets, work that revolted against all his notions of inappropriate and polluting work. The protagonist, Lahori Ram, of the short story *Toilet Attendant* cannot bear to think about doing this. But as the days go by and he continues to live as a dependant on other migrants, he begins to see the Heathrow toilet attendants as 'better than him'. Shame is a heavier burden to bear than hunger or imprisonment. Lahori Ram no longer felt contempt for the lavatory attendants. They, at any rate, had some status. He had none. (*Toilet Attendant*, Surjit Hans; translated by Joginder Shamsher, 1979: 234).
11. Vijay Dutt 2004. 'Letter from London', *Hindustan Times,* 12 October.
12. *Meri Zindagi*, Oral History Project, Oral History Archive, Gunnersbury Park Museum, London.
13. Interview, J. S. Singh, Chandigarh, March 2007.
14. Refugee is a clearly defined political term in international law and conventions. The 1951 Geneva Convention and the later Dublin Convention, recognise the refugee as primarily displaced by political turmoil and violence.
15. In the year 2000, migrants who lived in countries other than their own had reached 175 million. The last three decades of the 20th century witnessed the major transnational relocations (Benhabib 2007: 53).
16. *Hindustan Times*, 17 November 2005.
17. Visa requirements for Indians to Russia are minimal; Moscow airport, therefore, becomes the staging post for arduous clandestine journeys over land through Europe to the UK.
18. *Dur Kinara* (Shores Far Away), Director, Savyasaachi Jain, 2007.
19. Some official estimates of Indians with illegal status in Austria are two and a half thousand in 2006. www.workpermit.com/news (accessed 3 April 2007).
20. *The Tribune*, 14 June 2007.
21. '430,000 Illegal Immigrants in UK'. 30 June 2005. http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2005/jun/30/immigration.immigrationandpublicservices (accessed 3 April 2007).
22. *IANS,* 2 November 2008. http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/tag/belgian.companies (accessed 3 April 2007).

23. A UK government calculation estimated the average cost was £815 for each failed asylum-seeker. In comparison, forcibly returning each person costs £1,890, or up to nearly £13,000 if they have been detained (guardian.co.uk, 30 June 2005). www.guardian.co.uk/2005/jun/30/iimigration.immigrationandpublicservices (accessed 3 April 2007).
24. Donkis# of Russia
    Donkis of Russia
    Rotting halfway…
    …Entrapped by donkers*
    Without a shirt
    Left home behind
    Lost in Russia
    (Song recorded in the documentary film '*Dur Kinara*' (2007) directed by Savyasaachi Jain; translated by author for this volume)
    # *Donkis*: A reference to illegal migrants; also a term 'translated' from drug carriers or 'mules'
    * *Donkers*: human traffickers

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