

Sikh Heritage Month Podcast

Episode 2: Oneness: Equity and Justice For All featuring guest Harnam Singh Pannu

Introduction

Thank you for tuning in to the Sikh Heritage Month podcast presented by the Toronto District School Board. In this student led podcast series, we will explore concepts, themes and ideas prevalent in the Sikh religion and discuss how they fit in with the fabric of our learning communities. We're so happy you have joined us and we hope you take away some important nuggets to talk about within your learning space.

Interlude 1 [00:01:08.130]

My name is Prabhleen Kaur. I'm a Sikh, and in my religion, the name Kaur, which is given to every Sikh female, means Lioness. And Singh, which is given to every male Sikh signifies lion. A lion stands for bravery, dignity and courage. As Sikhs were given the last name Singh or Kaur, not only to be initiated into the Khalsa, but also to remove the harsh caste system. Hence, the line may also stand for equality. This caste system would grant privileges according to the family you are born into. In addition, corps can be utilized to encourage women's independence and individualism. When you hear Kaur and Singh in a name, it can make you think of all the Sikh martyrs and brave warriors who sacrificed their life for justice and equality.

I'm Maahi and I'm in junior kindergarten at John D Parker.

Speaker 1

Mahi, can you tell us what a Gurdwara is?

Maahi

It's where you do *mathaa tek* and where you think that Babaji gives you all these things.

Speaker 1

Okay, Maahi, when you go to the gurdwara, how do you do seva?

Maahi

By washing the dishes and cleaning the dishes.

Speaker 1

By washing and cleaning the dishes. That's so nice. So that's the volunteer work that you do at the gurdwara. And you're four years old and you do seva at the gurdwara. Wow. Do you know what Singh and Kaur means?

Maahi

Kaur means that you're a princess and a lion and you're strong and brave.

Speaker 1

And who gets to have the name Kaur and who gets to have the name Singh?

Maahi

Mahnak and Milin gets the name Singh, and I have Kaur

Speaker 1

And Mahnak and Milin are your brothers? Oh, wow. Are they little?

Maahi

Yeah.

Speaker 1

Okay, Thank you, Maahi! You did such a good job.

Maahi

Thank you.

Bumper: And you're listening to the Sikh Heritage Month podcast. A TDSB production.

Interview with Harnam Singh Pannu [00:03:26.360]

Samrath

Hi. My name is Samrath Singh Kang. I will be one of your hosts on the Sikh Heritage Month podcast. I am from Thistletown Collegiate Institute and I can't wait to interview you.

Gursimran

Hi. My name is Gursiman Chera. I am in grade eight and I study at Beaumonde Heights Junior Middle School.

Angel

Hello. My name is Angel Kaur Kang. I'm a grade eight student at Beaumonde Heights Junior Middle School.

Samrath

And we're really excited to interview Mr. Harnam Singh for today's topic Oneness: Equity and Justice. So let's start. Tell us about yourself, who you are. What are your experiences as a Sikh Canadian?

Harnam Singh

First and foremost, I just want to say thank you, all of you, for letting me join and speak on the topic of oneness, obviously, it's such a huge, pivotal part of the Sikh faith, which is a story just a bit about myself. I'm 35 years young, which probably to the three of you seems like light years. I'm a chartered accountant. I went to Wilfred Laurier University. I currently work as the COO of a law firm in Toronto, but then just a little bit more about myself and kind of my background. So, born in England, moved to Canada when I was one. So, I mean, pretty much Canadian my whole life and just like many Sikh Canadians in kind of my generation in Ontario, I am a first generation Canadian. So parents born in Punjab moved kind of England and then here. Just in regards to Sikhi Sikh, it was always a part of my family. Not necessarily a dominant part, but I mean, you're typical going to the Gurdwara on Sundays type of family. So Sikhi was definitely always a part of our family. My experience growing up, unfortunately, probably very typical from someone kind of like myself, who I'm a visible Sikh, so I keep my hair, my kes uncut.

So obviously you have your ups and downs through kind of your young age in school, bullying, experiencing racism. So obviously a big reason for this topic is really trying to mitigate all that and eliminating those things kind of

in the schools and bringing this oneness. It's so important to spread this amongst kind of schools just so people hopefully don't have the same experience as I did. But one thing I would like to say is when we talk about bullying, I mean, I'm just thankful that I don't carry those types of scars from my childhood. And a big part of that really is because of my faith. I just want to say to kind of everyone listening, I mean, words and actions, they can hurt, they can last kind of a lifetime. So this really, this importance of oneness and treating everyone equal and sticking up to those who may not be treated equally or being bullied, et cetera, I mean, it really is for the betterment of you and all the people around you. So, I mean, a huge pivotal part of Sikhi and also something just really important to implement in the schools.

[00:06:35.480] - Speaker 3

Thank you for that great introduction and sharing your experiences as a Sikh Canadian. So the number and the concept of one is very important in Sikhism. How would you describe the importance of one or oneness as it relates to the Sikh faith?

[00:06:51.210] – Harnam Singh

That's a great question. And I mean, I think it's so important that our Sikh scriptures known as Sri Guru Granth Sahib with the number one and it starts off with IK Onkar. And when we talk about the one, what that one is referring to is the creator, the One, the same creator we've all come from. And then it says Ik ong is referring to the sound, which is also known as Nam. Nam is a sound of God's voice. And then a God is essentially the creation, every being, every living being, kind of everything we see with our eyes. So it is really just our six scriptures start off by telling us that one source, which we will all eventually go back to, that one source is within

Allah. So why do we treat each other differently? Why do we act as if one person is better than the other? The beautiful part about Sikhi is this concept of oneness. And the message is universal about seeing the same one creator in everyone and about seeing everyone, this one and same. So really, oneness is just so pivotal. And it's really about seeing God, that creator, the one in everyone.

[00:08:08.640] - Speaker 6

Equity and justice for all is a huge system priority in the Toronto District School Board, and it is also a major value and important aspect of Sikhism. Can you tell us a bit about why equity and justice for all came to be such a big part of the Sikh faith and how it embodies what we strive for within our school boards?

Harnam

Definitely. Before I start with kind of respond to that, I want to ask just the three of you. It's been a long time since I've been out of school, but when you talk about equity or let's say oppression and injustice, what are the three of you seeing? Kind of as you walk through the hallways, as you're sitting in? Classic. What is it that either you yourself or other students are facing? I mean, it might be the same as what I saw 20 years ago, but if you can just shed some light on that before kind of I touch on kind of equity and injustice.

[00:09:04.350] - Samrath

One of the things I see, especially in the hallways during lunchtime, are people saying racial slurs to each other. And sometimes there's no

teachers there, so they just get away with it. So that's one inequity that I see.

[00:09:17.940] - Gursimran

A lot when I'm in class, the teacher doesn't really realize what people are saying because sometimes they don't focus on what they're saying. And when you go to that teacher and complain on it, it's not really heard, it's not really expected from a teacher to you to say that. And they don't really judge people from what they say. And it's not really voiced out of people say anything bad about another person.

[00:09:49.310] – Harnam Singh

So, I mean, I definitely think that the issues I saw back in my day, not to age myself, are similar to what you're seeing today. And I mean Guru Nanak Dev Ji saw these same issues. So before I talk about equity and justice and kind of how it all came about and let me, I guess, set the landscape for when Guru Nanak Dev Ji came into this world, what he saw. So, I mean, if we take a step back, Guru Nanak, born in 1469, the religious landscape at the time in India, it was really all about ritualistic. Beliefs were very kind of a commonplace when religion was being used. It was more so being used as kind of a tool for power and control rather than a tool for freedom and justice. So the marketplace of religion was kind of inundated with con artists running schemes to defraud people of both kind of their money and more importantly, this precious opportunity to meet God in this life. So, I mean, played upon people's religious beliefs to justify social and economic oppression. So religion was really a tool for oppression, a tool for kind of controlling others. And similar to like the three of you said, where there's racial slurs, people looking down on others, using words and

actions negatively against others, this is exactly what Guru Nanak Dev Ji saw.

And again, Guru Nanak Dev Ji being the first Sikh Guru of the time. So Guru Nanak really told the world that we're all, one, said men aren't greater than women, one faith isn't higher than the other. And this whole hierarchy of the caste system, it really should be abandoned. And the reason for this is, I mean, so Sikhism, Guru Granth Sahib and a lot of other faiths, they all talk to the mind. So we are the mind. The mind is a light of the one creator. There's an example of a drop of water and the ocean. They are one and the same. Obviously, the ocean is so big and so vast, but the ocean is water, and the mind is also a drop of water. So it's just an example. So we are one and the same. So our mind is really a light, a light of God, and that light is a part of the creator. So when we talk about who are we, we are the mind. So all these things we talk about, you hear bullying in the hallways or in the classroom, racial slurs. But if we think about it, that person's color, their race, their background, their gender.

When we talk about the mind, the mind has no gender. The mind isn't black. The mind isn't white. The mind isn't Indian. The mind isn't Chinese. The mind is none of these things. The mind is just light of God. So when we talk about oneness, if you really begin to understand this message that Sikhi talks about, that we are the mind and the mind is a light or a joy of God, then we begin to see everyone as one. And this is what Sikhism and Guru Nanak Dev Ji came into the world to teach, because the practices at the time and throughout the years to follow were all about talking about the body and who you are as a person. Guru Nanak kind of uprooted these injustices that were always being referred to based on your caste, based on your religion, based on your gender, in order to stop the oppression so that everyone was equal and shared the same message that each person in

this human form had the opportunity to meet God in this lifetime. Because if you have a mind in this human body, you are one and the same. And then the belief is that you also have the opportunity to meet God.

So it didn't matter about caste, it didn't matter about religion, it didn't matter about gender, because these were the injustices that God and I did, you saw. So now when we talk about the school system, I mean, at the end of the day, we're all looking for happiness. So when we see injustices, when we see bullying, when we see name calling, so on and so forth, at the end of the day, we all really want happiness. So when you talk about sticking up for others, when you talk about equality for one another, when we talk about justice for one another, it's really about making sure the school system and schools are really a place so everyone can thrive both from an education standpoint, but also be happy. Because at the end of the day, whatever you do when you go to work and you earn a living, when you go to school to gain an education, so on and so forth, the root and the goal at the end of the day is happiness. We want to make sure we are all happy. So that's why we go to school, we get an education, so we can get a job, so we can provide for ourselves, have a shelter, et cetera.

But the root of it all is we're all striving for happiness. So as a peer with your schoolmates, it really comes down to sticking up for one another, so they can also experience that happiness. And I'm sure we've all experienced times where we've been sad in school, et cetera, and it might have been that person who saw the injustice, who saw the inequality, just that voice to stick up for you or stick up for someone else, so they can also have that happiness. I mean, that's really what it all comes down to when we talk about the school system.

Samrath

Yeah, I totally agree. True happiness is what we truly need, and I don't think some of us really realize that. We think of greed, our ego, our passions, but it's just happiness that we need. So who are some of the key players in Sikhism that fought against oppression, oppression towards Sikhs and oppressions toward people of other faiths? Can you tell us a little bit about them?

Harnam Singh

Yeah, definitely. So, I mean, let me take a step back in history to kind of just set the landscape. So back in the 14 hundreds, kind of when we think about South Asia at the time, it was very diverse, it was extremely rich. I mean, it was a prize for invaders. So when people would come in, they would invade a land, et cetera. I mean, Punjab specifically was kind of one of the most valued possessions due to both its intellectual, economic and social merits. So although India was an economic powerhouse, at the same time, there was constant turmoil with invasions and political instability, it really left people both psychologically frail and both physically vulnerable. So, I mean, there was a lot of oppression coming into India at the time from invaders. And I mean, most invaders use religion as kind of a pretext for invasion, for control of the native population. So this ultimately resulted in destruction of both local religious temples and institutions. So people were forced to accept a new religion because whether it was education or government positions or just their own safety, if they weren't converted to this new religion, all these were at risk.

So that was really the oppression that was seen at the time of our Gurus and really when Sikhi kind of came to the forefront. So obviously, in such tyrannical times, people were dire for kind of the need of some spiritual support and guidance. And, I mean, here is where enters Guru Nanak and

from Guru Nanak Dev Ji to Guru Gobind Singh during these times, there were a number of religious institutes that were made. So, I mean, these times of the Gurus is when we saw whether it was Islamic Mosques, Hindu Mandirs or Sikh Gurdwaras being kind of made in every sort of city, every sort of village. And, I mean, it was really thriving. Religion was thriving during this time because the fight against oppression was at an all time high, because it wasn't about my religion. It was just about loving the Creator. So it didn't matter if you were Sikh, Hindu or Muslim at the time, which were the predominant religions in India. And this sort of oppression and the message of Sikhi and the message of oneness really came to the forefront to kind of fight against oppression. So when we talk about kind of who are the key leaders, I mean, I've spoken about Guru Nanak when we talk about our 10th Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, I mean, Guru Gobind Singh was a prime example.

Guru Gobind Singh fought countless wars. And it wasn't just Guru Gobind Singh, but also the Sikhs. And not just the Sikhs, but it was the Sikhs, it was the Hindus, it was the Muslims at the time. They all came together to fight against this oppression. So there were various battles. Many may know the story about Guru Gobind Singh Ji and his four sons. Guru Gobind Singh Ji had four sons who all gave their lives not for themselves, but to fight against oppression, to fight for the person to the left and to the right of them, not just for six, but to fight for people of all different legends, all different backgrounds. And just to take a step back, to kind of put it in probably the audience who's listening to this podcast, their shoes, their sons were history tell us were 7914 and 18. So really probably the same age as many of those listening to this podcast. And they stood up against injustice, they stood up against inequality to really fight for, as you may see, people who don't look like you, people who are from a different background. So, I mean, they are just a great hero to really look up to.

Angel

When we talk about those who stood up for injustice and those who stood. Against inequality, many of my friends are surprised when they learn the reason that we use the names Singh and Kaur. These often become our middle names, but that was not the intention. Could you tell us what the reason behind six being given the last name Singh and Kaur?

Harnam Singh

Definitely. Today, and I mean definitely in this Western world, when people have a last name, it might talk about kind of which family they're from. But back at Punjab, it was related to kind of the type of work you did. So there were different caste systems and each caste system was essentially a type of job that you did. And really, people use your last name to identify which caste you belong to. And I alluded to this a bit previously, but the Gurus came into this world and they told us that this hierarchy of someone being of high caste versus someone being of low caste, people of high caste, they're the only people who can meet God, whereas people of a lower caste cannot. The reason of Singh at Kaur was to create kind of a uniformity to eliminate that identification of which cast you're in, and really to identify that when you're at Kaur, it relates to being a princess, it's an identification of royalty. When you talk about Singh, it's talking about being related to a lion. Essentially, you're the king of the jungle. You are there to fight against oppression, to fight injustices, and really fight for kind of those who are in a lesser position than you.

[00:21:48.930] - Speaker 4

So that was really what the name Kaur and Singh was meant for, to create kind of a uniformity for all six that one isn't higher than the other. You don't

belong to one cast over the other. The caste that you really belong to is this caste known as Truth or as Gurbani talks about such and that such is all about the Creator, the one seeing the one in everyone and standing up for those because the one is within everyone.

[00:22:20.510] - Speaker 5

Yeah, I agree with that. Using the name Singh and Kaur do stop caste and it shows equality. So there is a verse in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Holy Book, which is considered to be the Living Guru. On page 1349, verse 19.

Aval Allah Noor upaya kodrath ke sabh bande.

First Allah created the light, then by his creative power, he made all mortal beings.

Ik nur te sub jag upJAI kaun pale ko munday.

From one light, the entire universe welled up. So who is good and who is bad?

So what do you think about this verse. How does it connect to our conversation so far about oneness equity and justice?

Harnam Singh

I mean, it's a beautiful verse. I mean, it's all encompassing. And before I talk on that, I just want to highlight that. If you notice, it said of *Allah*, the name that Bhagat Kabir Ji used here is *Allah*. And this is in the Sikh Holy Scripture. Because at the end of the day, when we talk about God, I mean God, you can call God Gobind, Hari, God, Allah, Waheguru. It's a universal message. If we look at like I'll use myself as an example. My name is

Harnam. My mom might call me Puth. My dad might call me son. My wife might call me Hubby. My son will call me dad. I have all these different names, but at the end of the day, I'm still the one and the same. And it's the same thing when we talk about God, there's all these different names which we can all use for God. But at the end of the day it's that same one God. But then really this verse brings it back full circle because it says the one Creator, that light is within everyone. And that comes back when I talk about Ik Onkar, that one who through the Nam, which is also the light burkash created the world, created every living being.

So Ik Onkar really identifies this bumpy because it's really that the one Creator is within all. And then what this bumpy goes on to say is because God created every single individual. How can we judge someone to be good? How can we judge someone to be bad? Because God is within them. How can we bully one person? How can we call someone names? How can we think we're better than someone else? How can we not share something which we were blessed with with someone else? Because God is in all. And then a beautiful further in the scripture, it gives an example and it talks about the clay. And it says the clay is the same, but the potter just fashioned every pot differently. So when we talk about this clay, it's talking about each human. When you think about a clay pot, the pot is made of the same thing, clay. The same way. When we talk about each individual, each human being, each student in your classroom, each student was made by God. So the clay is made of the same thing. Each student in the classroom is the light of God. The only difference is that the Creator made each person different.

Some of us are tall, some of us are skinny, some of us are white, some of us are black, some of us have a mustache, some of us don't. Some of us wear a size six shoe, some of us wear a size twelve. So how we were

fashioned was different, but the core is the same. This mind, this being that we all are that is the same and that is that one light, which in this verse it says Allah created. So the beautiful thing that this is saying is it encompasses oneness that we all look different from the outside, from the inside, we're the same. We came from that same creator, we're going to go back to that same creator, so we should treat everyone equally with that same love. So it's definitely a beautiful verse and it really encompasses everything that city guru Granth Sahib talks about, that we're all one and we came from the one and how to get back to the one.

Gursimran

This is very well said. And you've deeply talked about oneness in this. So how would you embody oneness in your life? How do you live a life where you fight for equality and justice daily? How can students practice these components in their lives?

Harnam Singh

Great question. When we talk about fighting for equality, fighting for equity, fighting for justice, I mean, if it's not done, if it is not done from within, if it is not something organic, it's only going to be temporary. I mean, think about if you do something which you don't like. Let's say it's broccoli. You have to eat your broccoli every day, but you hate it. I mean, when you have a moment that your parents aren't forcing you to eat broccoli, you're not going to eat it because it's not something from within you. It's not something you love, it's not something that's just organic, that you love to eat broccoli, that you're going to eat it. And in the same way, when we talk about fighting for equality, fighting for justice, if it's not something within you, then it's not something you're just going to do. You might try to do it, but then it's going to fade away. Today you stick up for someone, oh, that

was too hard, I'm not going to do it tomorrow. But I mean, it really all comes down to changing the way the mind thinks. The mind processes things.

And then once you change yourself internally and change your mind, that's how you'll begin to organically stand and fight for equity and justice. So I'm just going to take a moment and I know we've talked about the mind, but this mind is so important. When we talk about, let's talk about anger, let's talk about when you're happy, when you're sad, et cetera. And I'm going to bring it back to full circle to really talk about it all. But when you get angry, for example, someone bullies someone and you see injustice, someone treats someone bad and they get mad at someone. So when you're happy, when you're sad, when you're mad, when you're depressed, et cetera, what is the root of these things? So this is my question to the three of you. Someone picks on someone, they get mad and they treat someone bad. What was the root of that?

Samrath

There could be many routes. The two that I'm thinking is, one, that they just might be insecure about themselves and they might be jealous about the other person. Or the second thing is that they might think they're just better than everybody else just because of their position, maybe their race, their culture, their age, et cetera.

Harnam Singh

Great answer, but can you go a little deeper? Like in that moment, let's say, and I mean, you guys are too young to probably drive, but someone cuts you off on the road and you get mad. Why did you get mad? Someone pushes you in the hallway, you get mad or you get sad. Someone bullies you, you get sad. What is this feeling of sadness? What is this feeling of anger when someone pushes someone? What is this feeling of I'm greater

than you, so I'm going to bully you. What is that feeling? Where does it stem from?

Gursimran

This feeling could come from you not knowing what you can do to help someone or what you can do to help yourself.

Harnam Singh

So if you get sad, why do you get sad? The root of that is a thought. Someone gets angry at someone else. That anger. It starts from a thought. Everything starts from a thought. Someone gets is depressed. It's a collection of negative, sad thoughts. And when you think about the mind, what does the mind do? The mind thinks. So if you can begin to change the mind, begin to change your thought process and your thought patterns, and begin to control your thoughts and even eliminate your thoughts, then that's the first step. But really, when it comes to standing up and the fight for equity and the fight for justice, it comes to changing your mind and the way to change your mind. There are some mindfulness techniques, which, I mean, I'm sure we'll talk about as we get further through the podcast.

Angel

How can we use mindfulness strategies to achieve a state of oneness?

Harnam Singh

Okay, great timing for this question, because it really gets into where I left off. So when we talk about mindfulness, again, if we shorten that, we take that first syllable, it's the mind. So mindfulness is all about training the mind. So Guru Granth Sahib gives us a technique, and it's a technique that

anyone can use. It doesn't matter if you look like me with a turban and a beard or you look completely different. There's a technique that Guru Guru Granth Sahib gives, and that technique is called *Simran*. And really, this is a technique to control the mind. So the technique is I'll just go into what *Simran* is. It's a remembrance of the Creator. When you remember that one creator, I mean, that's the first way to start bringing oneness into the schools and as a student and as an individual yourself. So the practice of *Simran* is you start by chanting and listening. So what can you chant? Like we talked about earlier, there's various names for God, whether. It's VA Guru. Whether it's Go Bind whether it's Jesus, whether it's Allah So you chant the name of God in two syllables. So as a Sikh, I say WA guru, and it's a repeated practice.

So the purpose of this is for your mind to listen. So you can repeat and do *Simran* and repeat whatever mantra you want as many times as you want. But if only your body does it, but your mind is not present, then it was really fruitless, because the whole point of chanting is for your mind. The whole point of mindfulness is for your mind. So as you chant, if you listen to your voice, then you are present, and your voice might and your mind might wander. You'll start thinking about homework, or you'll start thinking about basketball practice. You might think about how someone was bullied, and maybe you did or did not stick up for them. But the whole purpose is to bring your mind back to your voice. And as you listen to your voice and practice this practice of *Simran*, as you do this mindfulness technique, Gurbani tells you that you will slowly begin to bring all your thoughts down to one thought. And what that one thought is, is whatever mantra you're using in the case of a Sikh, it is WA. And then eventually you begin to eliminate your thoughts. As you begin to eliminate your thoughts, you can begin to control your mind.

And that is when, when you see someone being bullied in the hallway, your mind might say, hey, this isn't my problem. I'm not going to take care of it. But once you begin to control your mind and you see, hey, that person is in a position where they need help and you have control of your mind, where you can say as a Sikh, as a Christian, as someone who practices Islam, Hinduism, Buddhist, et cetera. Or no practice whatsoever, once you have control over your mind, you can begin to say, hey, that is wrong. I'm going to stick up for that person. Hey, that is injustice. Let me stick up and fight for justice. So this is where the practice and a mindfulness strategy that Gurbani talks about of Simran will help bring equity and justice into the classrooms.

Gursimran

If you could describe your relationship to Sikhism in one word, what would it be and why?

Harnam Singh

I think really the answer to that question is love. When I think about Sikhism, I think about love. If you can't love yourself, and I mean when we talk about loving yourself, I mean loving where you came from, the essence of yourself, which is God. Once you begin to love yourself and love that God within you, you begin to love everyone else. When you can begin to see God within yourself, which your body talks about is an actual practice, then you can begin to see God in everyone. When you begin to see the Creator in everyone, like the verse that some Ruth said earlier. How can you judge someone to be bad? How can you judge someone to be good? And a great test to see if you love yourself. Have you ever listened to a recording of yourself and you hear your voice, you're like, that doesn't sound good. You don't like the sound of your voice? Why don't you like the

sound of your voice? Because you haven't learned to love yourself yet. And the way do you love yourself? And I go back to that mindfulness technique of Simran. The more you do Simran, the more you fall in love with God, the more you'll begin to fall in love with yourself.

Once you love yourself, you will love every single being on this earth as well. And that is when, as a student, you'll begin to see injustice and inequality removed from the school, from the workplace, from your families, and just from the world in general. So the spirit of Sikh, he starts and ends with love. Love yourself. By loving yourself, you love the Creator and begin to love everyone else.

Samrath

Love is something that helps us a lot and shapes us to be a better person. So I just want to say thank you so much again for coming, for agreeing to do the podcast for the Sikh Heritage Committee. The conversations that we had were really deep and thoughtful, and it gave me a new perspective of Sikhi. So I just want to say thank you so much on the behalf of three of us.

Harnam Singh

Again, my pleasure. Just want to thank Waheguru for giving me this opportunity for doing this, and thank you to the Toronto District School Board and three of you for obviously taking the time to do this podcast. But again, I appreciate it. And just to the three of you, to everyone listening to this, I just hope everyone implements some of these practices, begin to really stand up for injustice and inequality in the classrooms, because it will really make it a better dwelling place for yourself and for everyone else in your school. So again, thank you humbly I appreciate it. And thank you everyone for the opportunity.

Bumper: And you're listening to the Sikh Heritage Month podcast.

[00:37:55.510] – Interlude 2

My name is Kurzimran and I'm in grade eight. Oneness, or the concept of ikumkar, is the foundation of Sikhism because it represents the core belief that there is only one Divine reality that pervades everything in the universe. This concept is central to the Sikh teachings and is reflected in the opening line of the Sikh scripture, the Guru Grandsai Ikumgar Satnam Karthapur, which means there is only one God whose name is Truth, the Creator. The belief in Oneness represents the fundamental unity of all things and reflects the interconnectedness of all beings. It emphasizes that there is no distinction between humans based on caste, creed, race or gender, and that everyone is equal in the eyes of the Divine. This concept is also closely linked to the practice of meditation and self reflection, which are the key elements of Sikhism. By focusing on the oneness of all things, sikh seek to cultivate a deeper understanding of the divine nature of the universe and to align their actions with the divine will. Overall, the belief in Oneness represents the foundational principle of Sikhism, and it reflects the core values of unity, equality and spiritual connection that are central to the Sikh faith.

[00:39:17.370] - Speaker 3

By upholding this principle, Sikh seek to create a more harmonious and compassionate world for all. Overall, the belief in Oneness represents the foundational principle of Sikhism, and it reflects the core values of unity, equality and spiritual connection to all central to the Sikh faith. By upholding this principle, Sikh seek truth create a more harmonious and compassionate world for all.

[00:39:47.850] - Speaker 7

My name is Pranay and I'm in grade eight. Equity and justice are fundamental principles in Sikhism because they reflect the core teachings and values of Sikh faith. Sikhism teaches that all human beings are equal in the eye of God, and that everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their caste, gender, race or social status. The Sikh Gurus were spiritual leaders and teachers of Sikh faith, emphasized the importance of social justice and standing up against oppression and inequality. They spoke out against practices like the caste system, gender discrimination, religious intolerance, and encouraged their followers to work towards creating a more just and equitable society. In Sikhism, the concept of seva or selfless service is also closely linked to the principles of equity and justice. Sikhs are encouraged to serve others and work towards the betterment of the society as a whole, as a way of promoting social harmony and addressing the needs of the less fortunate. Overall, equity and justice are considered essential components of Sikh faith as they reflect the values of equality, compassion and social responsibility that are at the heart of Sikh teaching. By upholding these principles, Sikhs seek to create a more just and equitable world for all.

[00:41:19.430] - Speaker 8

My name is Harshdita I'm in grade eight. In Sikhism, the names Singh and Kaur are used as a way of signifying equality and breaking down social barriers. Singh is a name that is given to Sikh men, while Kaur is given to a Sikh woman. These names were introduced by the Sikh guru Gobind Singh Ji in the late 17th century as a way of eradicating the caste system and promoting equality among all people. During that time period in India, caste distinctions were deeply ingrained in society and people were often judged

and treated unfairly based on their social status. By introducing the name Singh and core guru Gobin Singh, G created a new identity that was not based on caste or social status, but rather on a shared commitment to the Sikh faith in the values of equality and justice. The name Singh means line, which represents cords, strength and bravery. The name Corps means princess, which represents dignity, grace and equality. By using these names, Siks are minded to embody these values and to treat others with respect, equality, regardless of their social status and background.

[00:42:44.770] - Speaker 3

My name is Gerphy and I'm from Smithfield Middle School. The word Sikh means disciple of a Guru. A Guru is another way of saying teacher. There have been ten human Gurus in Sikhism, and only one holy Scripture called Guantin.

[00:43:13.850] - Speaker 8

Hello, my my name is Manuspir, and I attend Is School in grade seven. Sikhism has a lot of teachings that can be incorporated to address the challenges in our society. Some examples can be that Sikhism has many examples of throwing equality across genders, race and caste, which breaks social barriers and helps treat everyone equally, including giving free food to the homeless people, which prevents people from starving, which is equality for all.

[00:44:09.970] - Speaker 1

You've been listening to the Sikh Heritage Month podcast presented by the Toronto District School Board. Thank you to all the students and staff that helped to make this production possible. We'd love to hear about how

students have connected with the content and discussions in these three episodes. If you're sharing on Twitter, use the hashtag Sikhheritage TDSB and you can also tag the handle at dsb. Shm.