

# **SIKH***lens*

**ANNUAL**

**ACTIVITIES**

**REPORT**

**2020-2021**





SikhLens is a non-profit (501.3c) organization that was founded over twenty-five years ago in Southern California. Its mission was to increase awareness of Sikhs amongst mainstream Americans by exposing them to our unique heritage. Our goals and objectives have been to change the narrative surrounding Sikhs in the mainstream, a goal we continually work toward. We have created an organization that is self-sustaining with strong contributions from both within and without the Sikh community. SikhLens' presence is well known, not only by the local community and universities, but also around the United States. Through our many programs, particularly those related to creating and screening Sikh centric films such as *"Project S"*, *"Destination S"* and *"SikhLens Digital Voices"*, we have been able to promote an awareness of the Sikh community. Post 9/11 SikhLens inaugurated a film festival to increase the awareness of Sikhs amongst mainstream Americans. For the last ten years the foundation has collaborated extensively with Chapman University. Our first involvement was with the Dodge College of Film and Media Arts.

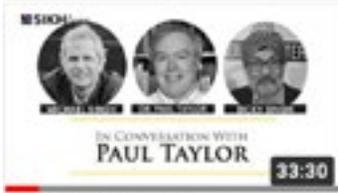
Through *"Project S"* undergraduate film students travel abroad to film five to eight Sikh-themed films. *"Project S"* is a two-semester course. The Summer Semester is focused on pre-production and on-site filming, and Fall Semester involves postproduction. The *"Project S"* courses are taught by Dodge faculty and provide the student with course credit. It is a unique program – no other campus has anything like it. The classes have previously gone to Thailand, Malawi, the UK, Australia, France, and Belgium. This past year's program, and trip to Vancouver, Canada was cancelled due to the Covid pandemic, but Chapman hopes to resume their international travel programs and filming January 2022.

An ancillary program to *"Project S"* is *"Destination S"*. *"Destination S"* program provides Chapman graduate students and alumni the opportunity to also travel to make Sikh-themed films. They have traveled to the UK, India, Canada, Africa, Nepal, Malaysia, and various European locations. In 2020-2021 these alumni were critical to the launch and implementation of our SikhLens Virtual Programs.





The Soul of Sikhism: Volume 9



Dr. Paul Michael Taylor: Behind the Scenes: Sikh...



The Duleep Singh Conspiracy with Christy...



The Comic Art of Vishavjit Singh

## SIKHLENS VIRTUAL PROGRAM 2020-2021

Our first virtual lecture and book launch in July featured Karen Dosanjh. She discussed her book 'Untold Stories: The South Asian Pioneer Experience in BC' about the history of early Sikh settlers who came to British Columbia, Canada. This talk was followed by talks by the Sikh Twins, Paul Taylor, Jessi Kaur, Vishavjit Singh, Christy Campbell and others.

Our talks were interspersed with the **Sikhlens Virtual Concert** featuring Himmat Singh, Sonny Singh, Jas & Kamaljeet Ahluwalia, King Gurcharan Mall, Jaspreet Kaur, Neelajmit Dhillon, Jaspreet Kaur, Dhananjay Chauhan, Ramneek Singh, L-Fresh the Lion, Rubin Paul Singh, Pavan Mudhar, Jaspreet Kaur, Tanveer Arora, Sangeeta Jain, Lily Swarn and Kiran and Rez Ahluwalia.

We then screened **Joining Hands** with **Hargun Kaur** of **India's Got Talent** and **The Voice**.

 [YouTube.com/Sikhlens](https://www.youtube.com/Sikhlens)





#### Going Virtual – November 19-22, 2020

It's almost that time of the year again... time for our annual **SIKhlens Arts and Film Festival**. This year will be a little different. Although most of the events will be virtual, we have some exciting programming planned for you. In addition to our usual films, art exhibition, and book launches, this year our schedule will include several lectures by some very interesting Sikh personalities. We will also have virtual musical performances by Sikh artists and even a couple comedians.

Keep an eye out for our **SIKhlens** newsletters [click to subscribe](#), and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#). Lots more to follow [gukhans](#)

#### Festival Schedule

[Thursday](#)   [Friday](#)   [Saturday](#)   [Sunday](#)

If you missed our live streams, you can watch on YouTube now...

#### Day 1: Opening Night (Thursday)



Day 2: Red Carpet Night (Friday) is no longer available.

#### Day 3: SIKhlens Talks I (Saturday)



#### Day 3: Creative Sikhs I & II (Saturday)



Day 3: Saturday Night at the Movies is no longer available.

#### Day 4: SIKhlens Talks II (Sunday)



## SIKHLENS: SIKH ARTS & FILM FESTIVAL

The **SikhLens Arts and Films Festival**, our premier event, was also virtual last November. It had been held in the Southern California area for the last twenty-five years and on the campus of Chapman University for the last ten years. This past year the festival was held November 19-22 on our **SikhLens YouTube channel**. Our channel still has most of the talks, and the SikhLens Virtual Concert posted. Speakers included Vishavjit Singh, Jessie Kaur, Rabindra and Amrit Singh, Christy Campbell, Dr. Jasbir Kang, Navkiran Kaur, Professor Santanu Das, Dr. Paul Taylor and Renee Singh. We also had virtual interviews with many creative Sikhs such as Bhajneet Singh, Harman Pandher, Simran Jeet Singh, Jasmeet Kaur, Priyanka Mac, Sareena Sandhu, Harjus Singh, Hansjeet Duggal, Satinder Kaur, and Waris Ahluwalia. Additional performers Tarlok Chugh, Manika Kaur, Ramneek Singh, Gurcharan Mall, Pavan Mudhar, Himmat Singh and Sangeeta Jain joined our original SikhLens Virtual Concert as we expanded that program.

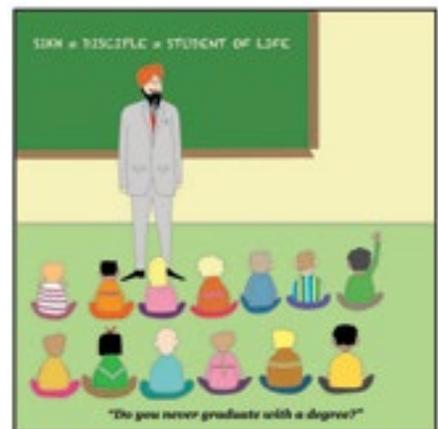
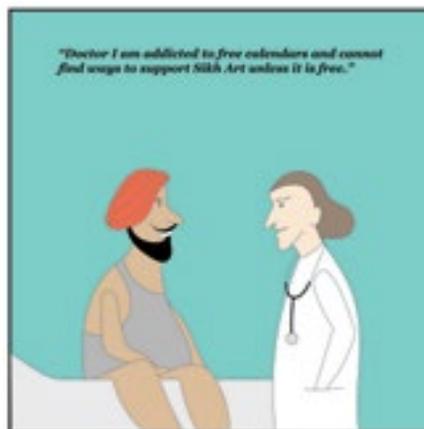
 [YouTube.com/SikhLens](https://www.youtube.com/SikhLens)





## SIKH ART EXHIBIT

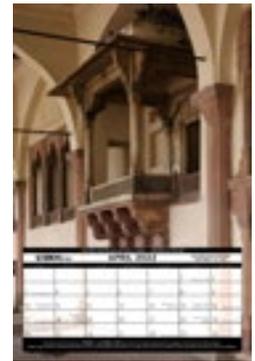
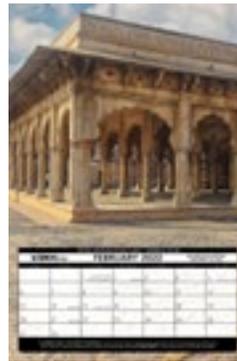
Our annual film festivals also previously launched a 60-day Sikh art exhibition in the Leatherby Libraries. This year, due to the pandemic, the art exhibit **"The Comic Art of Vishavjit Singh"** was debuted virtually, following a talk by Vishavjit. Books, paintings, artifacts, and historical anecdotes are often included in these fascinating annual exhibits. After its conclusion at the Chapman University Leatherby Libraries, the exhibit is put on display at their Rinker Campus in Irvine, California. After several months on display there, the exhibit can travel on loan to other institutions before returning to the Library's permanent collection. We are working to expand permanent Sikh collections with books, artifacts, and private, and antiquarian collections.



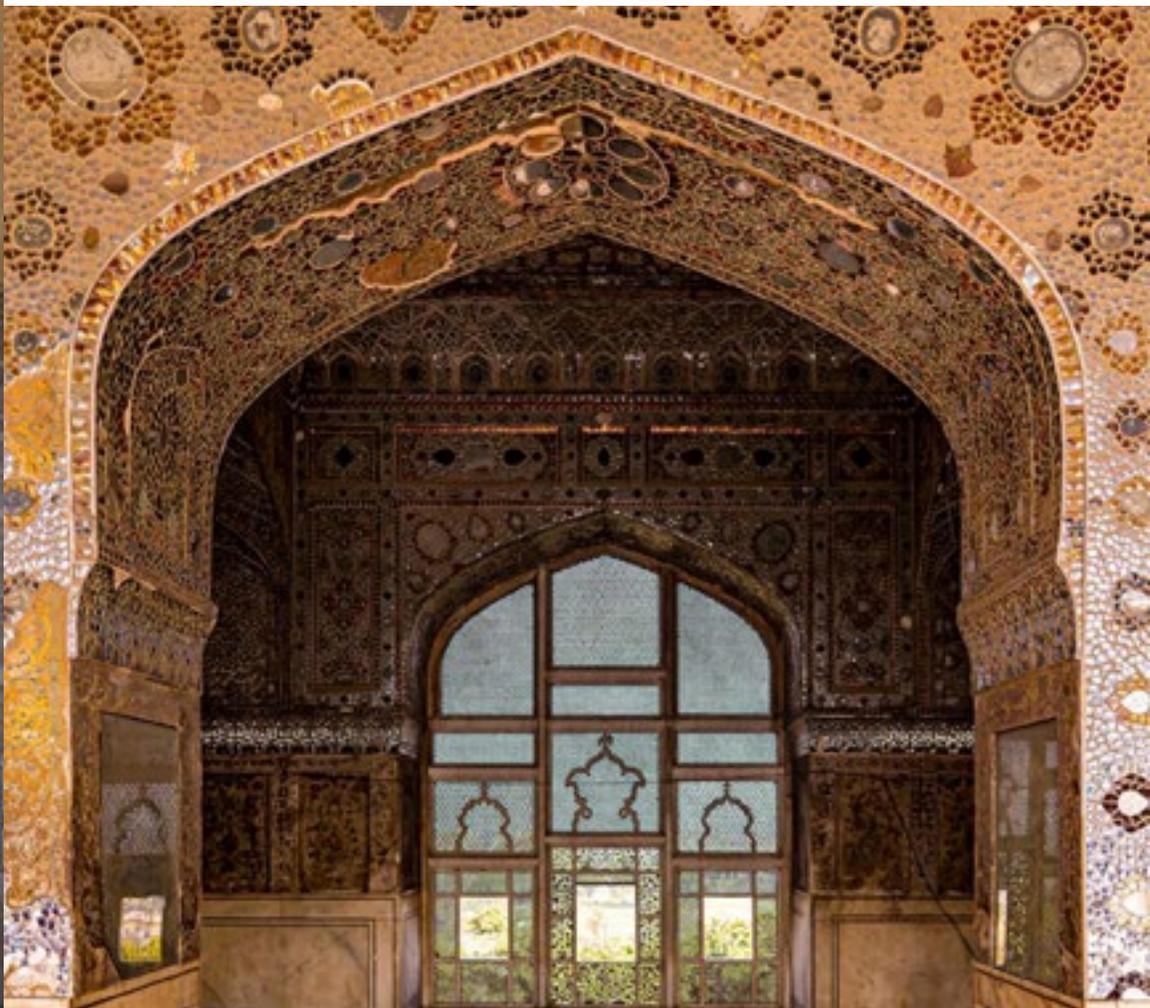
# THE FORT & Ranjit EMPEROR

## SIKH ART CALENDAR

The Sikh Art Calendar is a Sikh community tradition with many members of the community collecting them each year for the beautiful artwork they contain. The 2021 calendar featured the comic art of Vishavjit Singh. The 2022 calendar is now in its final planning stage and will feature the fort and palace of Ranjit Singh in Lahore, Pakistan and highlight photos from the collection of Jag Reyatt taken during the Sikh community tours of Pakistan in 2019 and 2020. Free copies of the 2021 calendar are still available for download or order at [SikhLens.com](http://SikhLens.com)

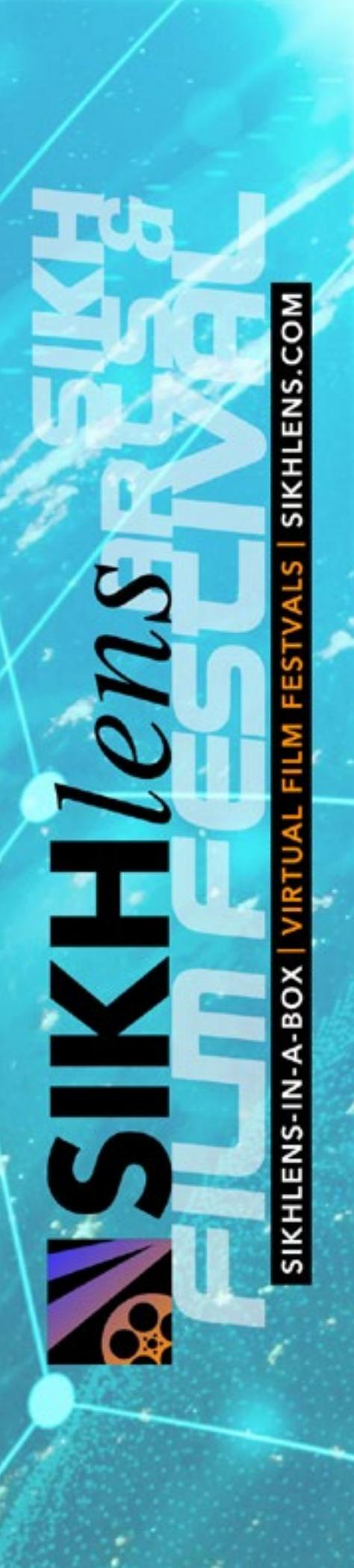


A few pages from the 2022 Sikh community calendar.



## SIKHLENS-IN-A-BOX

For the last couple of years, we have been sponsoring abbreviated versions of our premier Southern California film festival at venues around the US and the world. These shorter festivals usually run from a couple hours to a half day or even one full day. The “*remote*” location handles the logistics of booking a theater and inviting the local community, and we provide everything else. We have a large catalog of Sikh films they can choose from. They can customize their program around a particular Sikh theme or elect to screen our recommendations from other recent film festivals. We also help with the marketing—posters, e-mails, etc. We usually then fly our team to the location to serve as projectionists, and filmmakers (when available) so they can have a “*Hollywood style*” Q&A session during the screenings. We have had these in-person festivals in Seattle, Bellevue, UC Davis, San Antonio, Princeton, Tampa, Chicago, New York City, London, and Chandigarh. This past year we held **Virtual SikhLens-in-a-Box** events via our SikhLens YouTube channel for the Sikh communities in Toronto and Tampa. The virtual format also permitted a broader reach as Sikhs from around the world viewed the content of these events.





# **SIKHLens** DIGITAL VOICES PROGRAM

## **SIKHLens DIGITAL VOICE PROGRAM (SDVP)**

SDVP is a training program for Sikh youth to learn filmmaking. It was launched in 2014 with the help of **Chapman University's Dodge College of Film and Media Arts**, and in partnership with the **Sri Hemkunt Foundation** ([www.hemkunt2.org](http://www.hemkunt2.org)). For the past five years SIKHLens and the Sri Hemkunt Foundation have trained Sikh children in the gurdwaras of California, New Jersey, and London. These workshops have trained over 1000 children, from ages six to eighteen, and have resulted in the production of over 125 shorts films. SIKHLens has now expanded its training program (**SDVP**) to San Antonio, Seattle, Tampa and New Delhi. We need to create storytellers and prepare children for the next generation of digital frontiers—virtual reality, digital distribution, and artificial intelligence. Our program consists of a two day in-person training (3-4 hours each day). Physical workshops are supplemented by online workshops at **Khan Academy**. Our trainers are graduates of leading film schools and donate their services to our program. During the past year, all training was done virtually.





## SIKHLENS SCHOLAR PROGRAM

The **SikhLens Scholar Program** assists aspiring filmmakers with counseling and admission into film schools, as well as providing them with financial and moral support. Although most students come to us as they are ready to enter film school, we try to encourage younger students through the **SikhLens Digital Voices Program (SDVP)**. In recent years, we have helped over a dozen students. This level of interest indicates that there is still a lot of work to be done to expose the community to filmmaking, and careers in film. We are creating an ecosystem of Sikh scholars to make our community aware of the opportunities in filmmaking and other creative arts. SikhLens has also provided funding to filmmakers in India. While in-person classes have been moved to virtual, the program continues.



## SIKHLENS EQUIPMENT GRANT

SikhLens recently acquired over \$250,000 of state-of-the-art film-making equipment. The purpose of the grant is to loan equipment (worth approximately \$50,00 in rental value) to undergraduate and graduate film students in the United States for two to three weeks. The only stipulation is that the student must create a Sikh-centric film. Notification of the grant program has been submitted to all local film schools and it has gathered significant attention. The grant has already provided the equipment for *"The Cheez that Binds Us"* about Sikh cheese making in Italy, which was premiered at our November film festival.



## FISH INTERFAITH CENTER

SikhLens also has a strong relationship with the Fish Interfaith Center on the Chapman campus. We assist in funding the World Religion Travel class to India as well as sponsoring students to attend the World Religions Conference held annually in Canada. The center also hosts our annual Vaisakhi Celebration in April, which was held virtually this year. The center also typically hosts the Patron's Dinner for the annual SikhLens Arts and Film Festival and occasional speakers from our Sikh Speaker Series. Students at the center are also involved in providing Langar twice a year. Although these events were not held this year due to the pandemic, several lectures, and the Vaisakhi event, were held virtually.



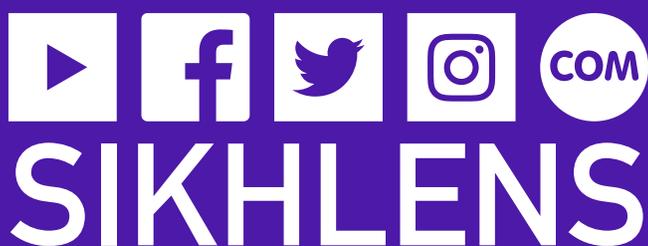
## VAISAKHI VIRTUAL WEEKEND CELEBRATION

Our usual Vaisakhi celebration at the Fish Interfaith Center was expanded to a week-end event and went virtual. The three-day program included films, and talks by Teresa Singh; Kirtan Singh; Jasjit Singh and Kamal Kaur; and Simran Jeet and Baljinder Kaur. The celebration concluded with a virtual concert with performances by Absolute Focus, Sonny Singh, and Manika Kaur.



## PERMANENT SIKHLENS ENDOWMENTS

The following endowments exist through the generosity of their donors, and the assistance of SikhLens. The **Sikh Story Room**, in high demand in the **Leatherby Libraries**, was endowed by **Mr. Gurvendra S. Suri**. **Sikh** artifacts inside the Sikh story room were endowed by the SikhLens Foundation. The **Sikh Sculptural Cabinet** in the **Fish Interfaith Center** was endowed by **Dr. Piara Singh** and the **Sikh symbol** inside the prayer room was endowed by the SikhLens Foundation. The **Jusdeep Sethi Legacy Scholarship** at the **Chapman School of Pharmacy** was endowed by **Gurjit and Mohinder Sethi**. The **Digital Commons** in the **Leatherby Libraries** archives raw footage and films of Sikh heritage for posterity and has been endowed by the SikhLens Foundation.



YouTube: [youtube.com/sikhLens](https://www.youtube.com/sikhLens)

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Twitter: [twitter.com/sikhLens](https://www.twitter.com/sikhLens)

Instagram: [instagram.com/sikhLens](https://www.instagram.com/sikhLens)

Website: [www.sikhLens.com](https://www.sikhLens.com)

Film Submission: [filmfreeway.com/sikhLens](https://www.filmfreeway.com/sikhLens)