

# WORKING TOWARDS A PLURALISTIC FUTURE

NEWSLETTER BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE SIKH HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP  
NGO WITH SPECIAL CONSULTATIVE STATUS AT THE UNITED NATIONS

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# WELCOME TO OUR JANUARY 2022 NEWSLETTER

## DIRECTORS NOTE

BY DR JASDEV SINGH RAI (SHRG DIRECTOR) (LONDON OFFICE)

We start 2022 with great hopes and big plans. Whether we achieve them will of course depend on the cooperation and support of our many members, affiliates, and supporters. The projects are ambitious and big. The common theme among our projects is the principles of pluralism, dignity, and sustainability based on Sikhi. We have affiliates from several countries working on various projects of their own that share these common principles.

This year we are developing a volunteer project offering young people an opportunity to go and work with any of our affiliates, do fieldwork, give the benefit of their own expertise and gain from experience working in different parts of the world. This will be rolled out soon.

We remain committed to our flagship projects. We continue with our campaign to encourage the United Nations to adopt a Declaration on Diversity. The Sikh Human Rights Group (SHRG) feels that to compliment the rights-based approach to diversity, inclusion, and equality of minorities, cultural communities, people with disabilities, and different lifestyles as well as age and gender, a set of policies that countries can implement themselves to make diversity a norm could make people comfortable with diversity. Instead of people having to wage campaigns for inclusion and acceptance, a Declaration will inspire countries to promote diversity themselves. While raising the proposal for a few years, SHRG is particularly committed to this project during the 550th anniversary birth year of Guru Nanak. Guru Nanak Dev Ji promoted the concept of pluralism and taught that diversity was natural.

Our second campaign is to push for accountability at an international level of Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises for their impacts on human rights, climate change, and poverty and encourage them to commit to human rights principles. SHRG regularly participates and interacts at the Open-Ended Inter-Governmental Working Group on Transnational Corporations and other Business Enterprises with Respect to Human Rights. SHRG has started to create a network of academics, businesses, and NGOs to work together.

Dignity and Respect for all and removing gender-based discrimination and inequalities are becoming significant projects within the SHRG along with its affiliates. SHRG takes the position that no one should have to fight to gain equality, dignity, and respect. Health care and economic policies should be gender-sensitive. These should be considered fundamental and State Governments have to enact policies to ensure that.

We have been promoting a pluralist approach to environment and climate change issues. SHRG is of the opinion that every culture and civilization has concepts, rituals, and practices that strengthen human bonds with nature and other creatures. Given the climate crises we face, we feel civilizations and cultures should be encouraged to work together but through their own strengths.

In 2021, SHRG started taking a wider look at the issue of small farms when the farmers' protest in India continued to gain strength. SHRG feels that small farming is under threat all over the world from the agri-corporate sector. SHRG also feels that international institutions such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) may have unwittingly added to the predicament of small farming. SHRG is now engaged in setting up an international coalition to campaign for changes at the WTO and encourage countries to protect small farming as a way of life.

In 2021, SHRG also started taking interest in ethics around Artificial Intelligence as well as private military enterprises that avoid accountability for human rights violations. SHRG believes that private armies also need to commit to human rights in the same way that State armies do. Further, the field of Artificial Intelligence is expanding fast without adequate ethical frameworks. SHRG is engaged in the attempts by many NGOs and international institutions to work on this.

These are only some of the many projects that SHRG is embarked on. We have started January running as we prepare for the forthcoming 49th Regular Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. We always welcome participation from interested groups and we hope we can raise the resources to continue with these projects.

Yours sincerely,

*Dr Jasdev Singh Rai*

# WELCOME TO OUR JANUARY 2022 NEWSLETTER

## EDITORS NOTE

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)

(HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICER & PROJECT COORDINATOR AT THE SHRG)

Welcome to the January 2022 edition of the Sikh Human Rights Group's monthly newsletter informing you of our ongoing work. Unfortunately, we are not able to cover everything that we do in this brief newsletter. Nevertheless, and as you will see we are engaged in a wide variety of international human rights issues to promote our founding doctrine of Pluralism.

We have also taken on a number of interns and volunteers who take up research, take notes during United Nations conferences and events and write reports. Consequently, we always try to encourage them to contribute to our newsletter.

If you would like to get involved in any of our ongoing projects or for anything else then please contact us via email at [info@shrg.ngo](mailto:info@shrg.ngo)

I very much hope that you enjoy the contents of this month's edition.

Yours sincerely,

*Mr Carlos Arbuthnott*



(Mr Carlos Arbuthnott)



# GURDWARA SRI GURU SINGH SABHA SOUTHALL

## SEN ENGAGEMENT EVENT

This event is an opportunity for those with lifelong neurodiversity characteristics (SEN) of any age and those who care for them to come together to discuss how **Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall** can best support them and their families.

The Sikh Neurodiversity Network is currently establishing a network of children and adults with lifelong neurological characteristics, such as Autism, and listening to their experiences and the experiences of those who care for them. Specifically, regarding the problems they may have encountered whilst accessing Gurdwaras and other Sikh community institutions.

After we have completed this step we will establish a network of experts within Gurdwaras and other Sikh community institutions who will be charged with increasing Sangat understanding, engagement and support for those with lifelong neurological characteristics.

There will be:

- Food and drink
- Music
- Arts and crafts
- Toys



**Date:** 19 February 2022 (Saturday)

**Time:** 13:00 - 16:00 (GMT)

**Address:** Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall (Upstairs Hall), 2-8 Park Avenue, Southall, UB1 3AG

**To book your FREE ticket or for more information about this event and the Sikh Neurodiversity Network please scan the QR code below.**

**N.B. Wheelchair access is available**



# MS BETHAN WALTERS REFLECTIONS ON 2021, AND AN INSIGHT INTO 2022

BY MS BETHAN WALTERS (HUMAN RIGHTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA OFFICER AT THE SHRG) (LONDON OFFICE)

2021 was a very successful year for the SHRG across the board. We saw a huge growth in involvement as we took on 15 volunteers and interns, held dozens of webinars with audiences across the globe, made connections with various NGOs and activists at international events such as COP26, the UN Human Rights Council Regular Sessions, and at many other UN and non-UN events and conferences.

## Declaration on Diversity

With regards to the work on diversity, in 2021 we continued to push the need for a Declaration on Diversity at the United Nations. We made statements at the UN Human Rights Councils Regular Sessions, at the review of the Durban Declaration and Program of Action 2001, and the Human Rights on Minorities Forum. We made significant leeway on this Declaration and have gained support from dozens of organisations who believe that we need a Declaration on Diversity, as well as support from the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues.

The United Nations and the world community have made great strides in reducing discrimination of various kinds, such as race, gender, disability, lifestyles, beliefs, etc... These have been achieved through the enactment of many Conventions, such as the ICCPR, the ICERD, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and so on... They have also been achieved through the activities of various UN institutions such as the OHCHR, UNICEF, UNESCO, and UN Women. Whom all work incredibly hard to reduce discrimination in all of its various forms. However, discrimination persists!

The Declaration will promote many of the sentiments of the Durban Declaration and bring together proposals for positive programs to strengthen the rights-based approach to ending discrimination. Those States who sign up for this Declaration on Diversity will adopt positive programs targeted at bringing greater awareness to diversity issues, promoting inclusion within State and non- State institutions, and encouraging society to be comfortable with diversity so that people do not feel marginalised or discriminated against.

The Declaration will encourage States to bring the United Nations attention to the positive actions that they have taken such as the programs they have adopted to make their population comfortable with diversity. However, our global community must work together in order to take forward the work of the United Nations and its many agencies in the field of Diversity.

## Our goal for 2022

We are truly excited to see what 2022 has in store for the SHRG and our Declaration on Diversity. We are looking to network further with NGOs at the United Nations and to connect with a UN Member State Government to help push this declaration through the United Nations. We aim to hold a side event at the United Nations 50th Human Rights Council in June-July 2022, with the intention to include speakers from various NGOs to share their views on why there is a need for a Declaration on Diversity and how and why existing Declarations need to be transformed.



# MS BETHAN WALTERS REFLECTIONS ON 2021, AND AN INSIGHT INTO 2022

BY MS BETHAN WALTERS (HUMAN RIGHTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA OFFICER AT THE SHRG) (LONDON OFFICE)

## Female Empowerment

2021 was an incredible year for our Female Empowerment project. In March 2021 the SHRG started its Female Empowerment department whereby we have been engaging with civil society locally and lobbying globally to push for better education on menstruation and female reproductive health, within that ensuring that we are pushing for public places to have free and accessible period products for people who menstruate and encouraging the push for sustainable period products for those who can.

Within this movement we started an Instagram lives female empowerment series that allowed us to interview inspiring women from the Sikh community about the work they do and the importance of female representation. We ensured the interviews also touched on intersectional feminism and the need to recognise in many cultures and institutions feminism is purely viewed as successful once the white woman is around the table.

On top of these Instagram lives we also made many statements at the United Nations to showcase the negative effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the social and economic status of women and how it has increased the gender pay gap.

In November, we started our Female Reproductive Health webinars, whereby, monthly, we interview several women who are experts in the various stages of female reproductive health and menstrual health.

Our message and what we are carrying into 2022 is that: **We are determined to eliminate the shame attached to female reproductive health, unpick the question of why we feel embarrassed and ashamed to talk about our periods, our miscarriages, our experiences with postpartum depression, breastfeeding publicly or our menopause.**

These webinars will be interactive and open to everyone, of any gender, from all ages and communities to learn more about each topic. We want to empower women and the first step to empower is to educate the masses on what is happening to women's bodies over their lifetime and take away the shame and embarrassment that is too frequently attached to one of life's most natural occurrences.

If we fail to talk about what is going on in our own bodies with our friends and loved ones, then we might miss the warning signs that our bodies are trying to give us. Our periods are an insight into our health. Therefore, it is extremely important that all women feel comfortable talking about them.

Together let us eliminate the shame attached to women's reproductive health and learn more about how incredible and strong the female body is. Let's empower our females!



# MS BETHAN WALTERS REFLECTIONS ON 2021, AND AN INSIGHT INTO 2022

BY MS BETHAN WALTERS (HUMAN RIGHTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA OFFICER AT THE SHRG) (LONDON OFFICE)

## Our goal for 2022

We have an ever so exciting 2022: Along with our monthly webinars, we are hosting:

- A seminar called **'The Secret Period: The political, the environmental, the professional, the gaslighting, and the Empowerment'**, at Brunel University on International Women's Day (08 March 2022), with four incredible panelists.
- A workshop at Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall (2-8 Park Avenue, Southall, UB1 3AG) on **women and the environment** in order to celebrate World Sikh Environment Day (12 March 2022).
- A side event at the sixty-sixth session of the Commission of the Status of Women (CSW66) on **'Allowing women to be environmentally mindful throughout the whole month'** (21 March 2022 at 17:00-19:00 GMT).

## What is CSW66?

The sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women will take place from 14th to the 25th of March 2022. Due to the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, CSW66 will take place in a hybrid format. All side events and parallel events will be fully virtual. SHRGs event will be held on the 21st of March 2022 at 19:00 (GMT)/ 14:00 (EST) for up to 2 hours via Zoom.

Themes of CSW66:

- Priority theme: Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies, and programs.
- Review theme: Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work (agreed conclusions of the sixty-first session).

The title of our side event is **'Allowing Women to be Environmentally Mindful Throughout the Whole Month'**, on the 21st of March 2022 we will be focusing on how better education on female reproductive health, with a particular focus on menstrual health, is crucial for Female Empowerment. To ensure this agenda we have focused on the need for better access and understanding of sustainable period products and how they are better for the environment and humanity and more financially sustainable for the consumer.

Description: **'Allowing Women to be Environmentally Mindful throughout the Whole Month'** will be an invigorating discussion between women in the NGO, activists, and corporate sphere discussing why menstrual products are dismissed in conversation around climate change in Government and how it speaks to the wider issue around lack of education on menstruation and the stigma it carries. We will be addressing the global lack of access to any menstruation products and how each country will have different requirements for a product depending on their access to clean water, toilets, privacy, and remind people that one size does not fit all. In this discussion, we will be speaking to entrepreneurs who have created their own sustainable menstrual products, in The Gambia and India to name a few, that accommodate women with a similar lifestyle, and allow women to be environmentally mindful, learn from their period and feel safe and dignified when their time of the month hits.



# MS BETHAN WALTERS REFLECTIONS ON 2021, AND AN INSIGHT INTO 2022

BY MS BETHAN WALTERS (HUMAN RIGHTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA OFFICER AT THE SHRG) (LONDON OFFICE)

We are hoping to have four experts on the panel:

- **Manjit K Gill MBE**; CEO of Binti Period, Period Advisor to the UK Government, working in the UK, India, and The Gambia - Confirmed.
- **Ella Daish**; UK Environmental Activist, founder of the #EndPeriodPlastic campaign, awarded the Climate Coalitions Green Heart Hero 2020 Award for Individual Inspiration, included on The Big Issue's Top 100 Changemakers of 2020, and BBC Woman's Hour Power List - Confirmed.
- **Megan White Mukuria**; Founder Zana Africa (Kenya) working on equipping adolescent girls in East Africa, specifically Kenya, with the tools they need to safely navigate puberty and unlock their potential.
- The CEO of a leading sustainable period product company and/or an economist who can provide us with a business or economic insight into the tampon tax and how and why it should be eradicated globally.

## Outcome of CSW66

The outcome of the Commission's consideration of the priority theme during its sixty-sixth session will take the form of agreed conclusions, to be negotiated by all Member State Governments.

The Commission will review, as appropriate, its methods of work, taking into consideration the outcome of the process of alignment of the agendas of the UN General Assembly and the UN Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies, with a view to further enhancing the impact of the work of the Commission. The Commission will make a recommendation on how best to utilise the year 2025, on the thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

## Our Overall Goal

Wider than CSW66 we want to work with experts including but not limited to those sitting on our side event panel in order to:

- Push for the United Nations to categorise period products as an item that cannot be taxed in any country with fellow NGOs in ECOSOC Status, the Centre of Public Health based in Nigeria
- Push for the United Nations Population Fund to ensure education on menstruation is compulsory globally and to ensure that it is not being taught as reproductive health/sex education so that independent schools and faith schools cannot opt-out.
- With the contacts we have made and continue to make, we want to create a network of organisations to create a governing body for menstrual health.
- Ensure Gurdwaras and county councils around the UK have period products in their public bathrooms.



# SHRGS ENVIRONMENTAL AND DIVERSITY SPEAKER SERIES

## MR DANIEL WINTER

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)



To watch the full video please click [here](#)

Recorded live on the 19th of January 2022 this is the 13th podcast in Sikh Human Rights Groups Environmental and Diversity Speaker Series.

**Topic:** *'Addressing climate change through the lens of environmental physics'*

**Panellist:**

Today you will be listening to Mr Daniel Winter. Mr Winter's background is as multifaceted as his viewpoint. Graduating with Honours from the University of Detroit, Daniel pursued graduate studies in psychophysiology and the origin of languages. In addition to his academic background, he has worked as a Systems Analyst with IBM, an industrial metallurgist and crystallographer. He has undertaken many diverse studies, from quantum physics to modelling at the MIT space lab to developing the early biofeedback prototype equipment as Dr Albert Axe's protégé.

In the 1980s, he founded an alternative newspaper entitled the 'Network of Light'. He established a learning centre experiment in collective bio-harmony called 'Crystal Hill Farm'. At Crystal Hill, Dan's extensive network grew as he hosted conferences with a prolific list of presenters on varied topics from sacred geometry to sustainable ecosystems. He maintained an elaborate computer/music/video facility where his computer animated videos on sacred geometry and 'new age' physics evolved. While directing Crystal Hill, Dan was Vice-President and Technical Director of S-S Electric, Inc. in Buffalo, which markets his engineered 3 Phase Conversion motor technology around the USA.

Through the years, Dan has lectured on the evolution of consciousness, sacred geometry and coherent emotion at many national and international conferences. His theories in coherent emotion inspired the notable research at Millard Fillmore Hospital in Buffalo and the Heart Maths Institute in California in the mid-nineties. Results published by Dr Glen Rein provided conclusive evidence supporting Dan's heart entrainment theories.

Dan draws on many sources, including science, mythology, popular culture, and even channelled information, looking for ideas about the deep connectedness of all things and how the profound nature of our oneness can be approached from architecture or art, maths or biology, electronics/computers or myth.

# SHRGS ENVIRONMENTAL AND DIVERSITY SPEAKER SERIES

## MR DANIEL WINTER

BY MR CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT (LONDON OFFICE)

### Sikh Human Rights Group Panellist:

Dr Jasdev Rai (Director)

### Sikh Human Rights Group Hosts:

Mr Carlos Arbuthnott (Human Rights Officer and Project Coordinator)

Ms Bethan Walters (Human Rights, Communications and Media Officer)

### Questions include but are by no means not limited to:

Daniel, you have been teaching the physics of consciousness for many decades. Therefore, I was wondering if it would be at all possible for you to provide our audience with an insight into precisely what this term means and to give us a few examples of it in practice?

What lessons have you taken away from your research that can inform us about the most effective methods to mitigate and adapt to the negative impacts of climate change? Both in terms of the physical effects and the governance gaps that are currently persisting around the globe.

Do you believe that there are enough experts globally in your field to bring your field to the United Nations or do you feel that more funded research is needed before people become engaged in or further convinced of this stand of science?

Do you believe that your research and findings should be taught in educational establishments globally or is it a school of thought that should stay at a more advanced level? If so, how do you envisage your research and findings being taught at that level and how do you anticipate it being received by various populations around the globe?



# GENDER THEORY AND EMPOWERMENT

BY MS RHEA SOMAIYA (INTERN AT THE SHRG) (LONDON OFFICE)



Recently, I had the pleasure of hosting a lecture at my old girls' school that aimed to centralise women of colour in the feminist movement. Growing up, feminism had been painted, not only as a white fight but as an exponential movement that completed its mission. Women could vote, women could go to school, women could own property, women could go to work. Women became... equal.

However, there was a problem, the term 'women' solely encapsulated white women with some reference to class disparities thanks to Karl Marx. Although Marxism revolutionised class theory by explaining how exploitation allowed businesses to flourish, what it failed to do was incorporate the role of colonisation. And consequently, how women of colour are, too, a part of the feminist movement.

Therefore, during the lecture, I took the students back to the beginning and re-wrote the story for them. In this journey, I started by acknowledging that we must be 'comfortable being uncomfortable when having conversations that incorporate privilege and race. In foreshadowing Intersectionality, I explained how one can be privileged in one way but discriminated in another whereby I positioned myself as a character palatable for the entire audience; in one way I have class and able-bodied privilege, but on the other, I face discrimination due to my race and gender. In displaying myself as a case study in this complex world, I broke down some defensive barriers.

I continued this conversation by inserting the role colonisation played to formulate our current world. Simply, I utilised Marx's theme of exploitation and engaged with it further to demonstrate how colonisers exploited people in the Global South through brute force and violence to maximise production in the Global North. Re-writing how industrialisation, previously recognised as a sign of powerful, positive, and rapid development should be seen as a phenomenon aided by colonisation. In showcasing how global exploitation increased the Global North's development whilst dismembering the Global South, I presented the illogical thought patterns behind the stereotyped underdeveloped and ill-progressive Global South.

In presenting the way people of colour are perceived to the white body, it was important to explain that the justification for colonisation was based on racial supremacy. Consequently, I explained the racialised element to colonisation and the collective idea that people of colour are primitive and barbaric compared to their white counterparts. Which in turn creates furthered notions of underdeveloped vs developed and ill-progressive vs progressive in today's contemporary societies.

This was the pinnacle of the lecture as it circled back to the issue of the white feminist movement. Women of colour are not seen as women. Women are dainty, women need protecting, women are feminised. White women that is. Women of colour on the other hand had to do heavy labour, they were forced sexual objects, they were seen as victims to their coloured male counterparts during the...

# GENDER THEORY AND EMPOWERMENT

BY MS RHEA SOMAIYA (INTERN AT THE SHRG) (LONDON OFFICE)

colonial era. Their identity is now homogenised into a pit of oppression due to the uncivilised nature of their culture but used as economic products to rapidly produce.

Women of colour and particularly black women have been pigeonholed to a tight circumference of stereotypes which has forced them to exist outside the white lines of femininity and as a result, the dominating feminist movements. By explaining this, I had the ability to re-insert women of colour into the movement, destabilising dominant theories and thoughts regarding what it means to fight for equality, what it means to fight for every woman.

Kimberle Crenshaw's *Intersectionality* was obviously placed at the centre allowing the students to use it as a methodology to interpret and analyse the way women of colour are discriminated against. In interpreting and analysing the discrimination, I gave the students the tools to insert themselves into the movement breaking down racial barriers aiming to de-colonise feminism. Additionally, it allowed a lot of students to see their women of colour counterparts in the reality of history rather than the sugar-coated, simplistic versions of western histories.

At the end of the lecture, I was asked interesting thought-provoking questions highlighting the high engagement from the students which included: **what does equality look like to you?** and **how do we actively use intersectionality?** This was followed by genuine questions about how to tackle hateful and distasteful comments.

Therefore, although my lecture was a small drop in the ocean in an effort to decolonise the curriculum and particularly feminist movements, I believe that it is possible to build and sustain momentum for a revolutionised feminism!



# United Nations Engagement Opportunities 2022

A large, faint watermark of the United Nations logo is centered in the background. It features a world map within a circular frame, surrounded by a laurel wreath.

Want to contribute to a written and oral  
statement at the United Nations  
Human Rights Council?



We are currently searching for secondary school and undergraduate students to help us prepare our written and oral statements on climate change adaptation and mitigation for the United Nations Human Rights Councils 2022 Regular Sessions:

We want to empower you to have your say, at a truly international event, on how every member of our global society can overcome the many challenge and issues of climate change

Through online presentations and simple practical projects you will learn more about the United Nations and how you can become involved

Enhance your CV and UCAS applications whilst simultaneously learning more about climate change and how it can be overcome

To apply please send an expression of interest statement to:

[carlos.arbuthnott@shrg.ngo](mailto:carlos.arbuthnott@shrg.ngo)