



Press Release

50 Years of the Sikh Foundation: *The Pride and Promise*

Magnificent Maharajahs and simple saints, intricate jewelry and lofty pavilions, fine miniatures and elegant portraiture – Sikh heritage is full of marvelous contrasts that have withstood the test of time. A religion that teaches simple living and service to the fellow man, Sikhism has nevertheless inspired beautiful art and architecture, both classical and contemporary.

Sikhism is the fifth largest and the youngest of the major world religions. Its founder, Guru Nanak, emphasized the humanistic principles of equality, social justice, and selfless service, and the nine spiritual leaders who followed him built on his legacy to create a robust, activist faith that has thrived and survived persecution, emigration, and societal drift away from organized religion.

Sikh kings carried on this legacy, with the most successful and dynamic of those being Maharaja Ranjit Singh, during whose reign classical Sikh art reached its pinnacle.

After Britain annexed the Punjab in 1849, Sikh soldiers and explorers travelled widely across the world. In the Western hemisphere, they settled mainly in Canada and the Western United States, keeping their faith and customs alive.

Established on Dec. 27th 1967, the Sikh Foundation is dedicated to passing on this rich heritage to the diaspora in the West, and to create the space and resources for the academic and artistic study of the culture. For 50 years, the Foundation has been a champion for the recognition of Sikh heritage and values among audiences around the world.

Among its many achievements have been the display and creation of galleries and exhibits of Sikh art at prestigious museums, endowment of several chairs at California universities for Sikh and Punjabi language studies, and publications aimed at both Sikhs and non-Sikhs.

The Sikh Foundation begins its 50th anniversary celebrations in 2017 with an exhibition at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco titled "*Saints and Kings: Arts, Culture, and Legacy of the*

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Sikhs” from March 10th to June 4th, 2017. It features treasures like the ornate helmets and armor worn by the Sikh royals, miniatures carried out in various Indian styles, and art created by artists of various religions and ethnicities featuring Sikh personages and court life.

During this period, the Foundation has planned *Golden Gala-The Pride & Promise* – an elegant evening of fine dining featuring global leaders, awards and performing arts by Sikh artists – classical & contemporary. The evening also features the launch of “*Sikh Arts from the Kapany Collection*,” a joint publication with the Smithsonian Institute.

Education is a very important part of the Sikh Foundation’s mission, and the 50th anniversary celebrations also feature a conference titled “*Advancing Sikhs with Education*” at Stanford University in May. Attendees at the conference can look forward to talks on a wide range of topics such as Innovation, Public Service, Entrepreneurship, Arts and Literature by distinguished authors, artists, entrepreneurs, and business and political leaders from around the world.

The Sikh Foundation invites you to be a part of introducing an entire generation of young Americans to Sikh Art and heritage. For more information on attending events or becoming a sponsor visit www.sikhfoundation.org/50years or contact Sonia Dhami at sonia@sikhfoundation.org

Events:

- **Golden Gala:** *The Pride & Promise* at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, CA, on May 5th, 2017.
- **Conference:** *Advancing Sikhs through Education* at Stanford University, CA, on May 6th & 7th, 2017.
- **Art Exhibit:** *Saints and Kings: Arts, Culture, and Legacy of the Sikhs* at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco from March 10th to June 4th, 2017.