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Senior Thesis Proposal

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Understanding the Sikh Ideal(s) Through Cultural Performance

Cultural performances, such as films, plays, music, parades, festivals, etc., serve as mediums of social evaluation. These modes of communication serve to not only reflect society and societal views, but also influence them. In this paper, I aim to investigate how Sikhs are portrayed in different modes of cultural performance, specifically film, music, and parades. By investigating these forms of performance, this paper will try to bring forth themes that have developed into key traits within an ideal Sikh.

Furthermore, the paper will explore the similarities and differences between performances produced internally and those that are produced externally. By doing so, this paper will investigate ideals inside and outside the Sikh tradition and some of the factors that influence these ideals. In order to gain a better understanding of internal performances, this paper will examine if and how historical developments have influenced these performances. In addition to this, the paper will also dive into how performance has influenced the construction of a Sikh ideal, both internally and externally, and its ramifications. Furthermore, this paper hopes to examine if the medium of performance effects the portrayal of the ideal. With this in mind, the paper hopes to analyze how the concept of the ideal Sikh comes forth in politics and media. Moreover, I hope to evaluate the ways in which the idea of a quintessential Sikh is challenged and/or reconciled by modern society.

Specifically, this paper will focus on the ideal of the *sardar*, the turbaned Sikh man. In order to examine how the ideal is presented in performance, this paper will bring performances in conversation with texts that detail the Sikh code of conduct among other things. If there are clashes within the ideal presented by each medium, this paper will try to understand the cause of these differences.

Sources

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