Land as Memory: Dialogues with Salish Memory for Re-Interpreting Sikh Memory in the Diaspora[1]

I offer this ardās[2], or manglācharan[3], to ੧ਓ (Ik Oa(n)kār[4]):

ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ॥ ਸ੍ਰੀਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂਜੀਕੀਫਤਿਹ॥

The One who is the Original Sound[5] that Expands and Creates without end. Realized through the True Gurū[6]'s blessings/mercy/gift. All victories belong to the Wonderous Gurū, the One who is Original Sound that Expands and Creates without end.

The following poem is written by myself to the Gurū. It is inspired by the referenced shabads below, but obviously cannot compare to the expression of Gurū Sāhib themselves. Thus, I would prefer that the reader prioritizes the shabads referenced as the original source of this manglācharan:

I am willing to blind myself to witness the brilliance of the sun,

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[1] Italicized interpretations/translations in this paper for Gurbānī references will be written from my interpretations of Gurmat that I am attempting to assemble and incorporate from the lessons/interpretations of sources like Sant Singh Khālsā's English translation, Professor Sāhib Singh's Gurū Granth Darpan, Sant Attar Singh's Farīdkot Tīkā, Bhāī Vīr Singh's Gurbānī Kosh, and Bhāī Kāhn Singh Nābhā's Mahān Kosh, to name a few, to provide context on history, word-for-word translations, and other important cultural competencies related to Gurbānī interpretation. While I am not a language expert, I can read Gurmukhī, discuss interpretations in community spaces with other Sikhs, and engage with Sikh exegesis. I do not claim to have the best interpretation, but am more interested in ensuring critical engagement with readers in the narrative of the paper. Please forgive me for any mistakes, and please understand that these interpretations should not be taken as definitive or generalizable, as I'm sure others, whether individual or sampardā (school of thought), will be able to make up other important historical, personal, and traditional interpretations as well.

[2] **Ardās**: a supplication to the One Creator.

[3] **Manglācharan**: at the beginning of a poem or book, or other literary work, to invoke and remember the One. In Kīrtan, the manglācharan is sung as an ardās as well to ask for permission and grace to engage in that form of devotion. Kīrtan will play an important role in the discussions of this paper. Overall, these terms are a plea for 'grace', it is asking for permission and strength to act through Gurmat.

[4] The 'n' is placed in the parentheses to highlight that it is a nasal sound that connects the 'a' and 'kā' sounds together. Phonetically written, the word might be pronounced close to 'ick oh-u(nn)-kaar'.

[5] "Memory serves. Once we understood order, natural order. First comes the crying, and then comes the laughter. Babies cry for months after birth. Babies' tears are their first language. This language was understood by grandmothers who were proud of their grandchildren's capacity to create language of the original voice creation gave us - crying. Original sound," (Maracle, *Memory Serves: Oratories*; 20). I borrow the phrase, 'original sound', from Maracle because of the subtle ways that this passage teaches around even the act of crying as 'first language.' Language is a very interesting topic with Sikh philosophy, and is addressed very directly in Gurū Nānak Mahārāj's *Japjī Sāhib*, in the fourth paurī. I am interested in what it implies and how it can deepen our understanding of sound and language.

[6] **Gurū**: the master/teacher who transforms ignorance to awareness; literally, the one brings darkness to light; the one who brings illumination. In the Sikh context, 'Gurū refers to Oneness or ੧ਓ; the ten human Gurūs from Gurū Nānak Dev jī to Gurū Gobind Singh jī; Gurū Granth Sāhib jī''; Gurū Khālsā Panth.

And willing to lose my sanity to witness every night that is covered with the presence of a million more stars.

I have been given a millisecond of the Sight of your Radiance -

That View has exceeded any spectacle I've seen of the sky[7].

"I exist" dies in your Radiance, "I am" dies in your Presence,

"I am" is nothing now but a dog, beckoned to bark, bite, or yelp[8].

My Master has put me into Their orbit, I am caught in this loving Revolution.

Japjyot, do not forget where the Center lies.

This life was never yours; it is just a ray of light -

you will rise and shine in the East,

And you will eventually set and dissipate in the West[9].

The following is a translation I completed of the end 'stanza' of Japjī Sāhib, it is how I connected to Gurū Nānak Dev jī's message:

> *We are sustained by the air; we call them our Enlightener. We are nourished by water; we call them our Father. We are birthed by the earth; we call them our Mother. We play with day and night; they are the Nurses that nurture us. All the good and bad actions we do, they come to be faced in the presence of the One who upholds Righteousness and the Nature of the world. The Gift of our agency drives us closer or further away from the presence of the One. The ones who are able to bring their awareness to Naam, the One who is Truth, they are the ones who will see their efforts bear fruit. Gurū Nānak sees their faces radiate within the presence of the One who is Righteousness, and they bring many others along with them![10]*

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[7] Guru Angad Dev ji. "ਜੇ ਸਉ ਚੰਦਾ ਉਗਵਹਿ ਸੂਰਜ ਚੜਹਿ ਹਜਾਰ ॥." https://www.igurbani.com/shabad/hzm9.

[8] Bhagat Kabir ji. "ਹਮ ਕੂਕਰ ਤੇਰੇ ਦਰਬਾਰਿ ॥." https://www.igurbani.com/shabad/ie1p?verse=le45.

[9] Guru Arjan Dev ji. "ਜਲ ਤਰੰਗੁ ਜਿਉ ਜਲਹਿ ਸਮਾਇਆ ॥." https://www.igurbani.com/shabad/h9c8?verse=opwk.

[10] Guru Nanak Dev ji. "ਪਵਣੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਪਾਣੀ ਪਿਤਾ ਮਾਤਾ ਧਰਤਿ ਮਹਤੁ ॥." https://www.igurbani.com/shabad/cily?verse=jkxm. The following explanation provided by Bhāī Gurdās Jī is the golden standard, and was helpful in my consideration of other lessons from this paurrī: Bhai Gurdās ji. "ਪ: ਜਪੁਜੀ ਅੰਤਲੇ ਸਲੋਕ 'ਪਵਣ ਗੁਰੂ' ਦਾ ਅਰਥ." https://www.igurbani.com/shabad/gmt3.

The purpose of this paper is not to *parse* through history[11], but it is to explore, question, and engage with our current understanding of the role of the Khālsā; engage the Sikh diaspora to talk about ideas of land, sovereignty, and belonging through the rejection of coloniality; lastly, contend with our participation in settler colonialism and move differently in our struggles towards justice. Sikh discourse in the diaspora has spent many decades focused on outlining our philosophy, history, and traditions with the intention of making it legible within Western academia; subsequently, we have become entrenched in debates of the 'right or best' ways to practice Sikh values and traditions. While I am also interested in the impacts of that discourse overall, this paper will hopefully pull on a different approach towards discussing land, belonging, and sovereignty that is aware of previous discourse but seeks to overcome it as well. I intend to structure this paper in the following ways.

My primary discussion will be about: (1) what is the Khālsā and what are some of the origins of Sikh praxis; (2) what are some of the mainstream approaches towards conducting advocacy work in the diaspora; (3) how does this all begin to formulate our early understanding of Khālsā, especially with land relations and responsibilities. After establishing this background, I will turn first to the work of Lee Maracle's *Memory Serves: Oratories* to analyze and begin a dialogue with Salish formations of memory and understand how a Salish thinker has articulated the purpose of memory, and thus what types of responsibilities emerge then related to land, sovereignty, and belonging/story. This dialectic will then be used to help frame approaches Sikhs could apply to conversations around land particularly. While there is ongoing research in pre-colonial Sikh literatures, spiritual and political, that encourages the reframing of diasporic translations of Gurbani outside of colonial paradigms and philosophies, I hope that this will add to that discourse by considering the contexts of the land that we have currently participated in settled on. In the final section of this paper, I will outline my hopes to continue to use this analysis and framing towards sovereignty and belonging, and the unique ways this can also be tied directly towards the development of curriculum or actions through another analysis of an

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[11] I would recommend reading the following English works: *Percussions of History: The Sikh Revolution in the Caravan of Revolutions* by Jagjīt Singh; *Patshahi Mehima: Revisiting Sikh Sovereignty* by Ranveer Singh; lastly, *A Short of the Sikhs* by Teja Singh and Ganda Singh. These works will provide an English reader with critical accounts of Sikh history, while keeping those moments in context of Sikh philosophy. If you can read in Gurmukhi (and, if needed, are adept at finding language support), I would recommend works like *Srī Gur Sôbhā* by Sainpati; *Srī Gur Panth Prakāsh* by Rattan Singh Bhangū; *Tvārīkh Gurū Khālsā* by Giānī Giān Singh; *Bandigīnāmā* and *Tankhāhnāmā* by Bhāī Nand Lāl jī; *Sikhān dī Bhagat Mālā* by Bhāī Manī Singh; lastly, *Srī Gur Partāp Sūraj Granth* by Kavī Santôkh Singh as major, influential Gurmukhi (multi-lingual) works that have largely shaped information about the Gurū-period.

unique anthology edited and written by Dr. Nesha Haniff, *Pedagogy of Action: Small Axe Fall Big Tree*[12].

When thinking about the purpose of this dialogue, I want to clarify that I do not aim to 'reinvent' Sikhī, but rather reframe our current approaches that ultimately devalue our own philosophical, spiritual, and temporal traditions[13]. Rather, I believe that developing this conversation between cultures and peoples, can help us in our efforts of contending with diasporic politics that are often operating through a preservationist attitude and thus not adequately engaging with marginalized communities that are also facing oppressive and subjugating institutions. By doing so, I believe this continued dialogue can ground Khālsā-centric moves towards liberation and decolonization, in the diaspora, Panjāb, and amidst other nation-states.

I would like to also clarify that I do not believe I am the first to write about these relationships, in a Sikh or a diasporic Sikh context[14]. I feel that most of the discussion around Sikhs and land has been primarily engaged within our relationship to Panjāb; which is understandable given that most Sikhs are strongly aware of the relevance of diaspora and homeland in conversations around Sikh sovereignty today. These are still powerful movements today that continue to decry and organize against the continued state violence faced by Sikhs in Panjāb. The concept of homeland then is used in diasporic politics to talk about issues, such as the pervasiveness of drugs and alcohol, lack of economic opportunities, separatist movements, etc.[15]. Particularly in the latter point, advocacy for a self-governing Sikh homeland, popularly

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[12] This work was written in collaboration with her former students and delves into the pedagogy she implements for education programs that began in Guyana (South America) and then were used for work and research in South Africa, Jamaica, and Michigan. This component will help us to eventually ground future analysis towards applications of these frameworks because it is speaking to a process of implementing a liberatory education model that can be utilized globally or across various environments.

[13] I see this as a natural condition that occurred when the British finally lay claim to Panjāb. This tension has not disappeared within the contexts of many diasporas around the world, especially as Islamophobia has become an increasingly used tactic to elicit and maintain divisiveness and discrimination. As of the time of writing this paper, England is experiencing what many brown and black peoples are calling race riots (Greig, "Britain's Race Riots."). When this level of violence becomes visible, it becomes a natural response to see how one can become permeable or invisible towards the aggressors. In the Sikh tradition, this is difficult as the construction of identity was purposefully created as an opposite reaction to communal violence - it does not allow any individual to hide behind any other person.

[14] See the following: Kaur and Kehal, "Epistemic Wounded Attachments."; sahiba, "Unsettling Complicities: An Autoethnographic Mapping."; sahiba, "Mapping Complicities in Brahmin Supremacy to White Supremacy."

[15] In my personal experience, I have been privy to many conversations with people who claim Panjābīyat (Panjābī-ness) and at the same time degrade the people who live there, especially from lower-class or lower-caste backgrounds. Thus, my ultimate point here is that in the diasporic circles that I have had the opportunity to pass

termed Khālistān, is a topic that draws increased scrutiny and surveillance, but is a source of deep-rooted, passionate activism amongst many Panjabi Sikhs[16]. Those discussions are usually about freeing Panjāb from its tether to the nation-states of India and Pakistan because we believe that by doing so, it will rectify and alleviate the injustices inflicted upon us under the current systems of governance. I acknowledge and am also invested in the Khālistān movement because it is *why* I began thinking about relationships with land and Sikhs in the first place, but, in this project, I ultimately wish to also approach, and really confront, the underlying relationship that many diasporic Sikhs have with settler-states - whether or not they are connected to the Khālistān movement.

It is imperative to understand the relationships that Sikh organizing plays amidst movements for justice in settler-nations like the United States. It is imperative that in tandem with the rich conversations about Panjāb within Sikh discourse, that we also engage in the question of asking about diasporic Sikh responsibilities to marginalized communities in settler-states. This is why I am looking at Lee Maracle, as I will further analyze and delineate later in this paper, because although many Indigenous peoples have been fractured from their lands, their governance, and their freedoms, there is an powerful understanding that that this erasure does not erase original responsibilities, instructions, intentions, and guiding actions[17]. This view, to me, is resonant with the model of the Khālsā that asks for expanding beyond 'just' serving Panjāb, but as a revolution towards worldwide phenomenon. For this project, I will

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through, I see the conversations around 'homeland', while seemingly mixed with ironic pride, trend towards discussing its 'demerits' or its political landscapes, and the more extreme end of them as well.

[16] The Khālistān movement has been a sore point for some Sikhs in the diaspora who have had to contend with continued discrimination and violence since escaping/leaving India during the peak of the guerilla movement. The trauma from this movement stems from what is considered the most recent genocide in Sikh memory - 1984's Battle of Amritsar. The Indian government named these moments as Operation Bluestar and Operation Woodrose. In June 1984, Bluestar commenced the government's planned attack on Srī Darbār Sāhib and numerous other Sikh centers of education and knowledge preservation. After this moment, the government waged Woodrose which targeted and disappeared many young boys and men, particularly those that appeared to have been members of the Khālsā, and who were considered intellectuals or leaders amongst the community. In addition to men, women were often assaulted by police members and threatened with violence if associated with Khālsā Sikhs engaged in guerilla combat with the government. Amongst many Khālsā Sikhs, these types of historical moments have been seen as re-declarations of the right to rule. In fact, the Akāl Takht (the Seat of the Deathless, one of the most important Sikh places of power) considered Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindrānwāle the greatest Sikh of the 20th century - a figure that was at the center of much of the conflict. Overall, while debates and discussions around 1984's genocide are ongoing, I mention its impact like for most young Sikhs who have heard stories of their parents and other elders share the ways they escaped the violence or witnessed it. It plays as a powerful factor within the political considerations of Sikhs within the diaspora today. See Axel, "The Context of Diaspora."; Guarasci, "Axel, Brian. The Nation's Tortured Body."; Mandair, Violence and the Sikhs; Singh and Shani, Sikh Nationalism, for deeper analysis and discussion on this subject.

[17] Maracle, Memory Serves: Oratories.

attempt to engage in this conversation and intricacies by connecting formations of Sikh memory with Salish memory, as shared by Lee Maracle, and other contributions of Indigenous scholars and peoples. However, again, I will begin with understanding what are the types of bedrock that are fundamental to our understanding of Sikh history and memory.

Introducing Sikhī through the Khālsā

In 1699[18], during the festival of Vaisakhi[19], Gurū Gobind Rāi asked Sikhs from various regions to appear before them at Anandpur, and, as the thousands of Sikhs arrived, there was an air of excitement and a buzz of tension as people found their place to sit in the sangat[20]. In place of the usual area that the sangat expected to witness Gurū Gobind Rāi, the kīrtanīs, and Ād(i) Granth Sāhib jī, there was a large tent and a raised dais in front of it.

Suddenly, Gurū Gobind Rāi exited the tent and made his way up to the dais, he slowly unsheathed his kirpān on his waist and there was a sudden rush of silence, as if a mighty storm had arrived but had not broken into its downpour. The Gurū, in a thunderous voice, pronounced to the sangat that he desired the head of any one of the congregants in attendance.

His voice reverberated across the vast sea of face and the earlier feelings of tension began to spread amongst the people. Some were shocked, some were in complete disbelief, some were quiet. Again, Gurū Gobind Rāi beckoned that he required a congregant to come up and give up their head to his sword. The statement was repeated a few times, and each time the sangat's fear increased, with many beginning to flee from the diwān. How could the Gurū be asking his beloved Sikhs, his beloved disciples, to be killed by him? To willingly walk forward and offer themselves to the sharp edge of his sword?

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[18] I considered accounts or references from the following sources when re-telling this sākhī: Bhangū and Singh, Sri Gur Panth Prakash: 82-88; Kaur-Singh, "The Birth of Khalsa."; Singh, Patshahi Mehima: Revisiting Sikh Sovereignty. Generally, I have heard this told in some variation in some Sikh youth camps, special 'services' in the gurdwārā, or other general community space - this is a re-telling that mixes all of those moments together and is how it is currently preserved in my memory.

[19] Since Gurū Amar Dās jī, the 3rd Gurū, Sikhs have been meeting together for four specific days throughout the year - this was to help Sikhs and other devotees that lived further away from Gurū Sāhib to have ample time to plan and prepare for their journeys to meet Gurū jī. The four days were traditionally Maghi, Holi, Vaisakhi, and Diwali. These important days have expanded over the course of Sikh history, and are now inclusive of other important milestones in Sikh memory. I learned this within my childhood attending youth summer camps held for Sikh children in Maryland - we were given introductions to Sikh history, praxis, and tools to interact with the Gurū's teachings, i.e. Gurmath.

[20] **Sangat**: 'community', 'congregation', or group of people. It is usually referred in general Sikh parlance as referring to those in attendance in the presence of the Gurū. It can also refer to those who associate with and generally are in community with as well.

However, after a few minutes that seemed like hours, Bhāī Dayā Rām[21] slowly stood up amongst the listeners and made his way towards Gurū jī, and, as he reached the dais, he bowed his head in shame. Gurū Gobind Rai, noticing Dayā Rām's forlorn mood, asked, was he afraid of offering his life? Bhāī Dayā Rām looked up and responded, "I am ashamed, Gurū jī, that it took me so many calls to come to you. I should have walked to you, the moment you asked[22]." Gurū Gobind Rai, satisfied with his response, beckoned him to follow to the large tent behind them. As they both entered, the sangat held their breath in anticipation - would the Gurū truly take his Sikh's head?

THUD! After a few moments…those seated close to the tent began to notice a slow, scarlet stream of blood had begun to make its way out of the bottom of the tent. Surprised screams and yelps filled the air, more stood up and fled, and a chill seemed to cut through the spines of every person. And amidst this shock, all of a sudden, Gurū Sāhib stepped out once again, bloodied kirpān in their hands, and made their way up the dais again. The sangat quieted again hoping to receive an explanation, but, with the same bellow, Gurū jī demanded again for another head to meet his sword.

However, contrary to the first round, and to the surprise of many that felt fear radiate within the pits of their stomach, Bhāī Dharam Dās stood up after the first call, bowed his head, and joined Gurū jī on the dais. Another slow march commenced back to the tent with the Gurū continuing to look pleased.

THUD! Again, Gurū Gobind Rāi emerged with a fresh, bloody kirpān calling for another head. The Gurū made these calls three more times, and each time his call was answered, after the first time. THUD! THUD! THUD! Bhāī Mokham Chand, Bhāī Himmat Rai, and Bhāī Sāhib Chand were the three who stepped forward to join their preceding Sikh siblings in what could only be considered a kind of march to death.

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[21] While this will be revealed over the course of this development in Sikh history, I wished to mention the documentation of Sikh literatures, from the 17th-18th centuries, completed by Dr. Louis Fenech's, *The Cherished Five*. This book brings to bear important points around the historical accounts of Sikh development, and the role that literature played in crystallizing narrative and tradition. As Fenech discusses and why I mention it here, the institution of the Panj Pyāre is actually mentioned in its specificity, such as the names of the five who stand before Gurū Gobind Singh jī, many years after the initial Amrit Sanchār (1699) took place. Interestingly, he says that sources that are from the early years of the Khālsā's formalization do not mention the Panj explicitly or implicitly at all. This question intrigues me, particularly the way that the Khālsā chose to remember the Amrit Sanchār, in what seems like, a creation of figures to represent five Sikhs that demonstrated the power of the Khālsā.

[22] Guru Nanak Dev ji. "ਹਉ ਕੁਰਬਾਨੈ ਜਾਉ ਮਿਹਰਵਾਨਾ ਹਉ ਕੁਰਬਾਨੈ ਜਾਉ ॥."
https://www.igurbani.com/shabad/j6js?verse=a4ke.

After the last of the five entered the tent and received the blow, Gurū Gobind Rāi did not return. The sangat's confusion, worry, and apprehension about what had happened to the Gurū had already been slowly increasing, but the long silence began to weigh on their minds as their thoughts raced even more freely. Many continued to flee, many sat frozen in fear, and a few sat expectantly with, instead, curiosity welling in their minds. Time stretched and stretched with expectation. However, the tent entrance flapped open, and now look at the drama the Gurū has played out!

Gurū Gobind Rāi emerged from the tent in a completely new garb. In his hands he held a bowl of water, and the five Sikhs who had come up to die also slowly emerged in the same clothing as the Gurū. The sangat sat in shock and silence! They could not believe that the men who had just seemingly had their heads chopped off, who now stood before them[23]. As they all reached the dais together, Gurū Gobind Rai began to explain that these five were to be the first initiates into, what he called, the Khālsā Panth. The Khālsā would be a group that committed themselves completely to Gurmat and would be unique in their temporal identity, their worldly discipline, and their allegiance. Calling them his Panj Pyāre, his Five Beloved Ones, he asked that they stand in front of him and the bowl of water. Gurū Gobind Rāi brought out a khandā, a double-edged sword, and placing the point of the blade in the middle of the bowl, he began to recite the Nitnem, five bānīs that would be recited daily by the Khālsā.

As he sang and concentrated completely on the water within the bowl, Mātā Sāhib Devān[24] came forward and placed patāse, clumps of crystallized sugar, into the water. After the completion of the Nitnem and the addition of the patāse, Gurū Gobind Rāi jī shared that the water had transformed into Amrit[25], and asked the five Sikhs to step forward. They each had Amrit sprinkled into their hair and eyes, and then each drank it from the same bowl until it was

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[23] In some versions, they assert that the Gurū did behead the Panj and re-attach their head to their bodies. Similarly to the stories of Gurū Nānak Dev jī, miraculous powers or magic are depicted, but have become very taboo within Sikh discourse. Jvala Singh does a wonderful lecture on the usage of myth and wonder within Panthic discourses and literatures (The Merit of Myth.).

[24] Mata Sāhib Devan is considered the Mother of the Khālsā. Conflicting reports are given on whether they were actually wedded to Gurū Gobind Singh jī, but most understand her as the mother of the Khālsā because of the introduction of the patāse and the future leadership roles she played within the Panth.

[25] **Amrit**:'not-death', so is another way of saying immortal, eternal, undying, deathless. In Sikh parlance, Amrit is the 'blessing' or bestowing of the power or force of Gurbani upon water mixed with patāse to make the water into a 'nectar' that transforms. There is a mystical element of having the khandā rest within the Amrit and using it as a conduit that is channeling energy and vibration from the Panj Pyāre into the water to transform its meaning and power.

completely emptied. Gurū Gobind Rāi then had them stand together and declared that they now represented the will and body of the Gurū themself!

It was a massive declaration, and, to demonstrate his seriousness even further, Gurū jī turned and begged the Khālsā Sikhs to have him receive Amrit as well. The sangat was shocked that the Gurū had now begged to be given the power that he already possessed, to join what he himself had made!

The Panj Pyāre, as if perfect mirrors to the Gurū, each held on to the bowl of Amrit in one hand and the khandā in the other. They mixed in the patāse and recited the five bānīs themselves. Once complete, they sprinkled the Amrit into the eyes and hair of Gurū Gobind Rāi, and had Gurū jī drink the Amrit until it was emptied. After completing the initiation, Gurū jī turned to the sangat and proclaimed that he now had joined the Khālsā as well! Gurū Gobind Rāi became Gurū Gobind Singh, and the five Khālsā Sikhs became Singhs as well – they had completely abandoned their caste and familial ties. The Gurū again asserted that the power of the Khālsā reflected himself, and that any five Khālsās that gathered could now provide Amrit to any and all that wished to join this new order[26].

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The birth of Sikhī is considered to be within the land of Panjāb[27], the land of five rivers, and its current iteration is considered a state within India. I begin here to provide a brief glimpse of the land's current condition. Nestled between Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, it is often referred to as the "breadbasket" of India[28], and was known to be the home of five rivers, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and the Satluj. However, since the relatively recent signing of the 1960 Indus Waters treaty[29], most of its rivers have been diverted/dammed into the jurisdiction of neighboring states or placed in control of the central government of India. As has been made clear throughout the world today, the damming and diverting of sources of water can be linked to

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[26] **Gurū-shishyā**: teacher-student; master-disciple. Usually, these relationships are often seen as hierarchical, in that the Gurū or teacher is not abdicating their seat of power/authority, especially while alive. However, what is truly spectacular about Gurū Gobind Singh's declaration was both the destruction of boundaries between the conventional teacher-student relationship and that the disciples/students had the authority to initiate others into the Sikh tradition themselves, "outside" of even the Gurū's permission. This is a significant change in a dynamic that has been the norm for thousands of years in South Asia. Bhai Satta and Bhai Balvand. "ਨਾਨਕਿ ਰਾਜੁ ਚਲਾਇਆ ਸਚੁ ਕੋਟੁ ਸਤਾਣੀ ਨੀਵ ਦੈ ॥." https://www.igurbani.com/shabad/hosq?verse=sgzn; Bhai Gurdas Singh. "ਵਾਹ ਵਾਹ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਆਪੇ ਗੁਰੁ ਚੇਲਾ ॥੧॥." https://www.igurbani.com/shabad/lq0w?verse=r0dn.

[27] Kaur, "An Apologue Guru Nanak: Globetrotter or a Pioneer."; Singh, Patshahi Mehima: Revisiting Sikh Sovereignty.

[28] Upmanu Lall, "Punjab."

[29] "Indus Waters Treaty | History, Provisions, & Facts | Britannica."

issues of climate change, misappropriation and theft of access to natural resources, and as a continued practice of systems of coloniality[30]. The current state of Panjāb is about one-third of its 'original' size[31] from the times of Sikh rule of Rājā Ranjīt Singh (1780-1839) and faced (and faces) extreme degrees of violence during British colonialism and after India and Pakistan gained independence, i.e. 1947 Partition. The trauma of this period, the establishment of borders (dividing Panjāb) and the diversion of minerals, waters, agricultural products, and other natural resources, has played a major role in the lives of contemporary Panjābī peoples[32]. Many of these issues, for Sikhs especially, are causes for intense resistance movements, i.e. Dharam Yudh Morchā, The Khālistān Movement, the recent Farmer's protests, and more. Demographically in the current make-up of the state, Sikhs make up a little less than 60% of the population, with Hindu communities making up less than 40%, and small populations of Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Jain communities also residing throughout the state. When accounting for the marker of 'Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes', "Panjāb is home to the highest concentration of [Scheduled Caste] communities in India…[with them constituting] almost 32 percent of its total population[33]". These demographics are important, as the division of Panjāb's lands now are also influenced by nationalism and identity politics, tied to Brahmanized narratives of Indian histories.

I have outlined a brief, contemporary account of Panjāb that reflects its condition and some major issues of consideration. I share this with the reader first because this is what Panjāb is often known for, at first glance. While Panjāb finds itself in a complex web of nationalist and identity politics, it also carries a powerful history of the Sikh Gurūs that is hard to ignore or undermine. I now wish to outline the beginning elements of Sikhī that still reverberate throughout the region, and thus roots itself to a lineage of justice-making that will inform our further conversations about the Sikh diaspora.

The Sikh tradition is considered to have emerged with the birth of Gurū Nānak Dev jī, in 1469, in the lands of Panjāb. The progression of Sikhī was shaped by Gurū Nānak Sāhib and

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[30] One of the most powerful movements in Panjāb found great unity through a declaration called the Anandpur Sāhib Resolution, which directly spoke to Sikh sovereignty and the relationships with the lands of Panjāb (Shiromani Akali Dal and Sirdar Kapūr Singh, Anandpur Sahib Resolution.).
[31] "Sikh Empire Map."; "Punjab Map | Map of Punjab - State, Districts Information and Facts."
[32] Prashant Bharadwaj and Saumitra Jha, "Drawing the Line."; Singh, Patshahi Mehima: Revisiting Sikh Sovereignty.
[33] Harmeet Shah Singh, "Understanding the Dalit Demography of Punjab, Caste by Caste."

nine successive Gurūs, with the tenth, Gurū Gobind Singh jī, passing on the gurgadī[34] to two entities – Gurū Granth Sāhib jī and the Gurū Khālsā Panth. Gurū Granth Sāhib jī is a reservoir of poetic, spiritual, political, and devotional reflections, brought forth from ੴ, by six of the Sikh Gurūs, a number of Bhagats[35], and specific court poets, or Bhatts, of the Sikh Gurūs. Gurū Granth Sāhib jī is considered the beating heart and 'jot[36]' of all Sikh praxis, pedagogy, and philosophy, and is also strongly considered a *universal* discipline for attaining ੴ for all and any traditions and peoples.

Under a model that presupposes a unified partnership, the Gurū Khālsā Panth are considered the co-inheritors of the vision, legacy, and powers of the gurgadī. The Gurū Panth (Gurū Khālsā Panth, Khālsā, Khālsā Panth) acts as the collective body that brings the jot of the Gurū into actionable reality[37]. As shared through the sākhī[38] in the previous section, the Khālsā was formalized by the tenth Gurū, but Sikh memory has helped to preserve a longstanding practice of viewing 'the community' as the joint pillar of authority. The Gurū Granth-Gurū Panth model has in fact been based on centuries (1469-1699) of careful cultivation, by each successive Gurū, through the establishment of praxis around Bānī-Sangat[39] and Mīrī-Pīrī[40]. Just as the first

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[34] **Gurgadī**: The authority of Gurū; the seat of the Gurū; the title of Gurū. This tradition was started with Gurū Nānak Dev jī transferring the power and authority of Gurū to Gurū Angad Dev jī.

[35] **Bhagat**: 'devotee'. These were individuals who were influential in the history and development of South Asia, before and during the time of the Sikh Gurūs, and were popular figures that demonstrated a connection to Oneness. Their stories and life histories were essentially worshiped and expounded upon in regular exegesis, and were sources of inspiration for those on the path of achieving Oneness. Many of their devotional poetry or 'divinely' inspired/sourced reflections have been preserved through the Sikh Gurūs within the Ād(i) Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib jī.

[36] **Jot**: 'light', 'illuminated', and metaphorically used as a term for 'soul'/'spirit'. Jot as a term is also used extensively to describe the passage of Gurgadī between the Gurūs. It is a part of Sikh tradition that each Gurū is the next manifestation of the 'Jot' of Gurū Nānak Dev jī and is thus the authority on how the philosophy and praxis of the 'house of Nānak' would develop over centuries of time. Guru Ramdas Ji. "ਬਾਣੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ ਬਾਣੀ ਵਿਚਿ ਬਾਣੀ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਸਾਰੇ ॥." https://www.igurbani.com/shabad/gd9f?verse=xs4g.

[37] Guru Gobind Singh ji. "ਖ਼ਾਲਸਾ ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਕੀ ਫ਼ੌਜ ॥." https://www.igurbani.com/shabad/miwi?verse=aamg.

[38] **Sākhī**: 'story', and also carries connotations of 'evidence', 'testimony', or 'witness'. Typically, even though it is a "story", sākhīs stem from oral tradition that was preserved through written literature over the 17th-18th centuries of Sikh development. In other words, the stories referred to, about Sikh history, are made *real*, it is made to be a historical event. There is plenty of evidence to detail that Sikh figures existed, but it is through the practice of sharing sākhīs that Sikh are told history in ways that make it deeply personal, pass on values, and make each person a holder of knowledge.

[39] **Bānī**, in Sikh parlance, used to refer to 'Gurbānī': means utterance or speech, and in the full context is referring to the words, utterance, and/or speech of the Gurūs. Typically, this is used as direct reference to the teaching and shabads within the Ād(i) Gurū Granth Sāhib jī. Shabad is another term to refer to bānī and is also used as a way to talk about the individual poems or reflections in Gurū Granth Sāhib jī. In general, bānī is also used in reference to the works of Gurū Gobind Singh jī as well, in what is referred to as Srī Dasam Granth Sāhib jī and, the more controversial, Srī Sarabloh Granth.

[40] **Mīrī-Pīrī**: Officially, these terms are associated with the sixth Gurū, Gurū Hargobind Sāhib jī. They are terms to refer to two realms of Sikh praxis. Mīrī is in reference to temporal spheres of power, which are often associated with worldly power and politics, war and warrior traditions, culture, governance, etc. Pīrī is in reference to spiritual,

Gurū submitted themselves to their disciple, Bhāī Lehnā jī, and made them the 2nd Master, Gurū Angad Dev jī, so too did Gurū Gobind Singh submit himself to his devoted Sikhs and made them 'Master's' as well.

The Khālsā is revolutionary and radical not because it makes warriors; not because it fights for justice; and, not because it has a distinct uniform/identity - those are the natural processes of manifesting temporality through the Gurmat path. The Khālsā is revolutionary and radical because it also prioritizes two specific things (specifically, *within* the temporal markers listed above): (1) it transcends the borders between master and disciple and unites them continuously as 'One' and (2) it explicitly destroys hierarchies and rejects hegemony as modes of rule and lifeways. At risk of belaboring the point, Gurū Gobind Singh jī continued the tradition of transferring power and control to the hands of the disciple(s). In their case, they handed over all authority, all wealth, and all tools of power to the Khālsā. The process of doing so was the Amrit Sanchār[41], and it is important because the order of the Khālsā, over time, became a people who rejected their familial attachments and names, shared Amrit from the same bowl, and sat and deliberated together, regardless of their caste or class affiliations. These practices are an explicit rejection of hierarchy because it requires that the Khālsā commits to the praxis of the Gurū which worked to eliminate personal bias and discrimination of all individuals, especially the ones that chose to also join the Khālsā[42]. The idea of sharing a bowl with a group of people from which there might be "low caste" peoples in attendance was not (and is not) a norm in the broader social custom. Even today, there are many spaces that have difficulty in including people who are considered the "lowest of the low" members of that society.

The Gurūs have made lasting impacts in many spaces in South Asia, and beyond. Specifically, the people of Panjāb are surrounded by this history and a strong message of inherent

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mystical power and essentially is the domain of the spirit/soul/energy that resides in and beyond the temporal domains of life. The Gurū is referred to as the 'True Sovereign' or Sache Pātshāh because they have mastered and rule over both of those domains. This is also a mandate that comes from the first Gurū, Gurū Nānak Dev ji, as the powers and spheres of life that the Sikhs, or students/disciples, are responsible for also living within and balancing.

[41] The Amrit Sanchār has gone through various iterations, from a historical perspective, before its codification in the official 1954 publication of the Shiromanī Gurdwārā Parbandhak Committee's endorsed Rehat Maryādā. These iterations and discussions amongst various jathās (delineated groups) of Sikhs regarding the Amrit Sanchār are covered in other substantial sources. Regardless, the Amrit Sanchār can be defined as the ceremony that is the official initiation of the person into the fold of the Khālsā Panth and its expected discipline, lifestyle, and allegiance.

[42] In *Sri Gur Panth Prakāsh* by Bhangū, he talks about how many groups of people within what people considered established Sikh groups or holders of power were shocked at the decision Gurū Gobind Singh ji made. Essentially because it allowed any one who was of socially and politically considered lower status to join and wield power that was approved by the Gurū themselves. (Bhangū and Singh, *Sri Gur Panth Prakash*)

sovereignty in which the Gurū relinquished his own status to the Khālsā Panth. This is continuously illustrated by the stories of heroism and bravery, of respect and honor, of sacrifice and steadfastness that surround any mention of the Khālsā within the people of South Asia. We see that the Khālsā play a vital role in considering the formation of a just world, in the past, present, and future.

The creation of the Khālsā is one of the most recognizable moments in Sikh memory, and it has been memorized by almost any Sikh that you can ask. We can see that for most storytelling or recall of historical events, it can usually vary in its re-telling from person to person. Thus, naturally, it can illuminate what may be the values, practices, and interpretations that are given more emphasis or importance by that person as well. I'm sure that in my recounting of the creation of the Khālsā, there will be many that see a stitched together account that points to different messages or details that they prioritize differently, and thus the taste/flavor of that story appears differently. What informed the recounting I did was developed over the years of listening about Vaisākhī in Sikh divāns, reading various accounts and analyses by scholars, and discussing it within youth camp spaces with other young Sikhs and mentors. It is perhaps not the most 'accurate', but it is because I also chose to rely on my memory to construct how my mind had come to remember that moment. I chose to engage in and share that process with you, the reader, to make clear my understanding and personal biases in retelling that moment in Sikh memory.

I bring this up as a mirror to the diaspora. There has been a constant negotiation of how we choose to tell our stories and what we believe to drive those stories, which makes clear what drives the ways we wish to *connect* with and *use* history. Primarily, within some of the most mainstream Sikh diaspora organizations, I have seen that it is often then used to talk about a few of the following issues: why Sikhs should serve in military or police forces, why Sikhs should participate in elections or run for office, and why the importance of 'community service' is to show Sikh values of equality and generosity. In seeing these types of issues take the limelight of how we were choosing to engage within the nation-state, two questions emerged from me, especially in relation to the topic of this paper: (1) where is the Khālsā in our understanding of these modes of engagement *and* (2) does this actually reflect the ways the Gurūs talked about belonging or participating in society(ies)?

What became clear for me was that, in the diaspora, many of our institutions, traditions, and practices are more about 'inspiring values' that still can align with the dominant culture (in

this case the nation-state), rather than 'practicing values,' *regardless* of alignment within the culture. In other words, I saw that there seemed to be a lack of how to prioritize an advocacy that is concerned with bringing forth 'original intentions' of our own institutions, traditions, and/or practices into the forefront of how we interact within the nation-state, especially around issues of land, sovereignty, and belonging.

For the Sikh diaspora, I believe that this lack of conversation around settler-colonialism, and its current material realities in the diaspora, is the biggest impediment in our fight for justice and freedom, especially in consideration for safety, belonging, and homeland[43]. Based on the strategies that I see organizations post and implement in their work, there is a serious need to critically reflect on what many organizations believe they are doing to help Sikhs *integrate* into the national cultures of spaces like the United States or Canada. To the contrary, I believe that there is a veil that has not been lifted; specifically, I believe that these strategies are actually leading us to being *assimilated* to fit within the logics of the nation. If we do not return to the methods and pursuit of responsibilities, lifestyle, and radical choice-making that Gurmat is weaving into our very beings, then we may find ourselves off the path in ways we never expected.

As an example of exactly what I'm speaking towards, I would invite us to consider the work of The Sikh Coalition[44]. They work on a broad variety of issues, ranging from school curriculum development, equal employment, addressing hate/discrimination, community empowerment programming, legal support, and legislation advocacy. These all serve the purpose of "...working towards a world where Sikhs, and other religious minorities in America, may freely practice their faith without bias and discrimination."[45]A well-meaning approach, Sikh Co.'s *intentions* seem to align with some of the aforementioned motivations of why Sikhī was developed. However, I would like to hone in and focus on the *work* of one of Sikh Co. 's campaigns: advocacy for Sikhs in law enforcement and the military, framed within the larger

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[43] Kaur, "Crossroads of Belonging, Safety, and Sovereignty."
[44] Sikh Coalition. "About Us."
To be clear, the following feedback is not explicitly a conversation of 'good or evil,' or diminishing the overall intentions of the organization. Particularly, in the case of Sikh Coalition, they were formed as an emergency response for Sikhs after an increase in hate crimes following 9/11 in the United States. As an emergency organization, they were operating out of a sense of urgency and survival - they wished for Sikhs to be free from both the threat of and enacting of violence, but, while the context of Sikh Coalition is important, it does not absolve anyone of analysis and critique. We should be careful to believe that criticism is *wholly* on the side of canceling or condemning a person or organization - let us afford a bit more nuance to the conversation at hand.
[45] Ibid.

umbrella of working to address employment discrimination and miseducation about Sikh identity markers. Particularly, under their explanation of the campaign to have Sikhs join military/militarized institutions, Sikh Co. explains that the Department of Defense is the "nation's largest employer" and that by addressing workplace discrimination within the agency, it will "make it harder for employers everywhere to discriminate against our community."[46] What I found critically missing in Sikh Co.'s framing of this type of work was that Sikhs joining the military is seen as an integral strategy of ensuring rights within the nation-state, but this strategy does not acknowledge the ongoing violence perpetuated by those institutions, i.e. military, police, agents, etc., which often participate in building hegemonic, colonial control over its own citizenry and other countries globally[47]. There is no reference, at least in my perusal of Sikh Coalition's campaigns about these institutions, as to how the United States military industrial complex is responsible for ongoing violence against many of the most marginalized communities in the world today. There is continued, documented evidence that shows how many surveillance agencies, law enforcement, and military institutions, have been responsible for manipulating events towards attempted (and successful) coup d'etats, political assassinations, and economic sanctions, to say the least[48]. In addition, because the DoD is seen as the largest employer in the United States, they believe that by having the military and law enforcement sign off on Sikh participation, and that this will help mitigating other cases of discrimination. Perhaps. However, the question then becomes, is it *worth* fighting for our own belonging in that empire if it means that we can now have 'access' to also participate in the advance of colonial hegemony?

To be brief, Sikh Coalition is moving on a path that they believe will best help Sikhs in avoiding issues of employment discrimination, but this limited interpretation, of how, where, and

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[46] Sikh Coalition. "Sikhs in the U.S. Armed Forces."

[47] I will be providing a brief explanation of the main points of contention that I have about Sikh advocacy work in the diaspora, but one source that contextualizes and provides far more detail is Dr. Harleen Kaur's work entitled, *Crossroads of Belonging, Safety, and Sovereignty: Sikh Punjabi Negotiations of Statecraft and Racecraft from Colonial Punjab to Imperial United States*. Dr. Kaur comprehensively discusses the crafting of 'martial race' by the British on the Sikhs, and how this was used as a tool over time to recruit and enlist Sikhs within the British imperial forces. Her work also shows the ways that Sikh practices were limited by the British to create a sense of belonging within the army, but also have Sikhs be tied to what they thought were their own indigenous traditions. This practice seems to be called upon wherever Sikhs reside and are aiming to be within a nation-states army.

[48] Here are a few references that consider empire and coloniality in the contemporary. Go, "Reverberations of Empire."; Walker, Struggle Without End.; Whyte, "Indigeneity and US Settler Colonialism.". In addition to these resources, it would be disingenuous to not mention the impacts and continuation of the project of coloniality on Palestine, right now. This paper is being written while the world continues to watch one of the most well documented and blatant genocides in the world. The United States continues to participate in the establishment of a colonial regime that does not care to hide its determination to advance its nationalist, racist agenda.

how this can and *should* happen, allows us to now gain belonging on the blood, backs, and lands of other marginalized peoples. For the sake of clarity, I am aware of many of the contexts and circumstances that birthed Sikh organizations (like the Sikh Coalition, Sikh-American Legal Defense Fund, United Sikhs, National Sikh Campaign, etc.). I understand that there is a genuine belief that they are responding to an emergency situation and hoping to shift public/private norms, policy, and politics to address violence and bigotry against Sikhs. At the same time, Gurmat does not believe that intentions are enough[49]. Whether it is aiming to reform institutions like the military and law enforcement, trying to educate agencies like ICE to better treat Panjabi migrants, or something else, these are not avenues that have been shown to decrease violence or address misuses of power against marginalized peoples[50]. Can we begin to see that our allies are outside of hegemonies that have lied, cheated, enslaved, and imprisoned people to build their power? These are the types of campaigns, individual, non-profit, or otherwise, that I am hoping to address within the discussion of this project.

I began with a brief origin of the Khālsā, a brief overview of Sikhī's beginnings from Gurū Nānak Dev jī, and have now completed a brief introduction of some of the considerations a diasporic organization may make towards achieving belonging in settler-states. At this stage, I wish to also introduce some of the methods that I will begin to answer the second question I posed at the beginning of this paper: how does this all begin to formulate our early understanding of Khālsā, especially when looking at land relations and responsibilities? I am transitioning to this question here because I believe that by clearly understanding the origin of ourselves, especially in the most temporal form that Sikhs are known for, we can begin to consider suggestions for advocacy work in spaces like the U.S. and Canada that align with and are driven by Gurmat.

Beginning to Think About the Khālsā's relationship to Land

As mentioned previously, Sikhs have intimate relationships with the lands of Panjāb because it is the origin space for Gurū Nānak Dev jī, and has been where Sikhī has been cultivated, for a majority of its development, since 1469 and beyond. There have been countless compilations, poems, treatises, and more that have been shared across South Asia, and Panjāb is

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[49] Guru Amardas Ji. "ਜੀਅਹੁ ਮੈਲੇ ਬਾਹਰਹੁ ਨਿਰਮਲ ॥." https://www.igurbani.com/shabad/xqdh?verse=dfit.; Guru Arjan Dev ji. "ਦੋਸੁ ਦੇਤ ਆਗਹ ਕਉ ਅੰਧਾ ॥." https://www.igurbani.com/shabad/moxn?verse=fd33.; Guru Nanak Dev ji. "ਗਲੀ ਅਸੀ ਚੰਗੀਆ ਆਚਾਰੀ ਬੁਰੀਆਹ ॥." https://www.igurbani.com/shabad/f78o?verse=g7tv.
[50] Root, "Why More Police Funding Is No Route to Public Safety | Human Rights Watch."

fortunate because the development of literature and art was highly encouraged by the Gurūs as well.

There are many works that I will then point towards when discussing Sikh memory, and will begin with introducing one of the most referenced and revered sources of pre-colonial accounts of Sikh history, *Sri Gur Panth Prakash* by Shahīd Rattan Singh Bhangū. Written in Brajbāshā, an older language that was popular in the late 18th to 19th century, it is a poetic treatise "[that] concentrates on Gurū Nānak Dev and Gurū Gobind Singh, following the *Janamsakhi*[51] tradition for the former and *Bachittar Natak*[52] for the latter…[and] his narration of the origin and rise of the Khālsā during [the] eighteenth century.[53]" Bhangu is writing the epic partly as a response to a Muslim historian, Būteh Shāh, who was believed to be presenting a skewed and derogatory narrative of the Sikhs to the British. In addition to responding to Būteh Shāh, Bhangū is doing this for a British officer, Captain David Murray, because that is who this misleading narrative was being presented too. As shared in the beginning of the epic, he is framing the impetus for storytelling as a response to a question that Murray poses to him: "how did the Sikhs establish their rule, and who gave them their sovereignty?"[54] The fact that this narrative is in response to an alternative account of Sikh history *and* it is being narrated to ensure that British interests in Panjāb are not misaligned against the Sikhs, is important when viewing this account[55].

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[51] **Janamsākhīs:**'birth stories' or 'life stories', and are usually referring to a collection of stories about the life and travels of the first Gurū, Gurū Nānak Dev jī. The Janamsākhī tradition is a rich archive of some of the most well known stories about Gurū Sāhib's travels and associates the Gurū's bānī with its origin point. It is a rich narrative that also finds some controversy based on various iterations that have appeared over time. However, the most cited and trusted sources of Gurū Nānak Dev jī's life comes from the following sources: Bhāī Gurdās jī's vārs, Bhāī Manī Singh jī's compilation, and the 1926 compilation done by Bhāī Vīr Singh ji called the *Purātan Janamsākhī.* These are mostly trusted sources, but one more compilation faces much more controversy, but is still considered one of the most influential sources, is the Bhāī Bālā Janamsākhī - where a Bhāī Bālā himself claims to be the second companion amidst the Gurū's travels across South Asia.
[52] **Bachittar Nātak**: "wonderous drama"; is an autobiographical account of Gurū Gobind Singh jī narrating his important life events. It is one of the most important sources and primary texts that shares the history of Gurū Gobind Singh from his own perspective.
[53] Bhangū and Singh, Sri Gur Panth Prakash: 15
[54] Ibid: 15
[55] In my approach to the work of Bhangū, I believe it is important to be critical of the translation of the original text. This was written by one translator, and so I have not engaged in a deep comparative study with other translations. The reality is that I currently cannot make translations myself, and so must rely on other author's translations and exegesis of the text by prominent kathākārs, or 'experts on Sikh discourse and interpretation'. I say all of this to be clear that I do believe that Kulwant Singh has done the Panth a massive service to allow the *Sri Gur Panth Prakash* to become more accessible to a massive audience, but I am hoping to continue to be careful in the language used and whether other context clues or concepts can be used to help deepen our engagement with this canon of work..

Now that we have a short introduction to the work, I turn now to a translated excerpt from pages 90-93[56] where Bhaṅgū talks about the central themes of this project (land, sovereignty, and belonging) in a discussion between the Khālsā Sikhs and Gurū Gobind Singh jī:

Dohra:

Sometimes, the Singhs would play a game of Sonchi,

OR engage themselves in boxing and wrestling bouts.

Gurū Gobind Singh felt so much delighted at these adventurous bouts,

That he wished to confer landed property awards on his brave Singhs. (13)

Chaupai:

The Gurū asked his Singhs to ask for any kinds of territorial awards,

He would grant them possession of vast territories and meadows.

Whatever kinds of material assets they aspired to possess,

He would ensure to make those assets available to them. (14)

However, Singhs' limited imagination could not grasp the extent of Gurū's assurances,

They aspired to possess territorial rights over the Panjāb alone.

The Gurū asked them to aspire for territorial rights over the superior Southern region,

As well as the mountainous regions of the East and the West. (15)

The Singhs retorted why should they leave for far off regions,

Instead of living and ruling over their homeland of Panjāb.

They asked repeatedly for their sovereignty over Panjāb alone,

Although this limited territory might lead to fratricidal wars among them. (16)

While the Gurū exhorted them to aspire for a very large territory,

And exhorted them to occupy as much territory as they wished,

But the nit-witted Singhs preferred to remain confined amongst their own kin,

And aspired to settle scores with their own fraternal adversaries. (17)

They preferred to settle in the vicinity of their own home,

And wished to occupy the homeland territory alone.

These Singhs being the offsprings of the poor impoverished parents,

How could they envision a large vision and imagination? (18)

Dohra:

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[56] Ibid: 90-93

Since narrow fraternal ties keep people confined to their own fraternity,

The Singhs demanded to get settled in the vicinity of Panjāb.

Although the Gurū, wished to grant them sovereignty over distant lands,

They lacked the imagination to aspire for greater sovereignty. (19)

Chaupai:

Finally, the Gurū told them in clear unmistakable terms,

That they would remain confined to Panjāb in fratricidal brawls.

But the Singhs who had joined the ranks a little later,

They were directed to settle in other distant lands. (20)

This sākhī comprehensively summarizes much of the early understandings of Sikh sovereignty. The Khālsā at this point was rapidly evolving, and the Gurū was pleased in seeing their Sikhs participating in all types of martial practice - wrestling, boxing, mock duels, etc. In this joy, the Gurū asks the Khālsā Sikhs to tell him which jagīrs they wished to acquire. He wished to provide them with as much territory as they would like, promising to make those lands available for their stewardship. However, Bhangū goes on to explain that the Sikhs did not comprehend the full weight of Gurū Sāhib's assurances - they only wished to ensure their rights, their rule, over the lands of Panjāb. Gurū Gobind Singh jī debates with them, saying that they were limiting themselves and that, as a result, they would become entangled within territorial disputes and wars between themselves instead. However, the Singhs, at that time, could not imagine a different way of life and only wished to remain in Panjāb.

In the sākhī, Bhangū is sharing the mentality of Gurū Gobind Singh towards the Khālsā experiencing an exponential rate of growth, not just in numbers, but primarily in knowledge around martial arts and (in sections prior) in prioritizing the shabad as essential to their sovereignty[57]. For the Gurū, this makes the Khālsā uniquely qualified in being rewarded with territories and powers because it is intimately tied to a governance and management style that prioritizes defending Dharam[58] and encouraging Nām[59]. Since colonialism reached the lands of

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[57] Ibid; 86-87

[58] Guru Nanak Dev ji. "ਧੌਲੁ ਧਰਮੁ ਦਇਆ ਕਾ ਪੂਤੁ ॥." https://www.igurbani.com/shabad/nyqr?verse=brps; Guru Arjan Dev ji. "ਸਰਬ ਧਰਮ ਮਹਿ ਸ੍ਰੇਸਟ ਧਰਮ ॥." https://www.igurbani.com/shabad/pp85?verse=iz0r.l; Singh, "Brahm Kavach Translation."

[59] Singh, "Naam - Translation."; Singh, "Everything Is Akaal (Translation)."; Guru Arjan Dev ji. "ਨਾਮ ਬਿਨਾ ਮਾਟੀ ਸੰਗਿ ਰਲੀਆ ॥੧॥." https://www.igurbani.com/shabad/ghc2?verse=iner.

Panjāb, Sikhs have been cognizant of the influence of the British and their encroachment on Sikh governance and institutions, and also well aware that some of its effects would be difficult to curtail or avoid completely[60].

I believe that ultimately, Gurū Gobind Singh jī is trying to have the Khālsā realize that Gurmat can exist everywhere, which means that sovereignty can be established anywhere.[61] When establishing the Khālsā, I interpret Gurū jī's actions as highly aware and intentional in building upon the previous commitments made throughout Sikh history to eradicating casteist ideologies that are enacted through hegemony and hierarchy. It was clear that becoming a member of the Khālsā could be made by any person, of *any* standing or background, which is also one of the reasons the Khālsā was known to be a safe haven for some of the most marginalized members of society. In addition, Gurū jī materialized the praxis of Gurmat through gifting the gurgadī to the community itself. This ability, ideology, and power, had now manifested as a widespread, base-building movement, and resulted in uplifting thousands of peoples that resided all across South Asia. However, Bhangū also shares his lamentations of the Sikhs of this time because they wished to only remain in Panjāb and not make clear the sovereignty of the Khālsā outside of that land. This is, as he says, an eventual cause of fraternal dispute, as land becomes an object to *only* conquer, rule, and own, instead of being made accessible by any who wish to lay claim as Khālsā. I focus on this particular sākhī because it is one way in which the Khālsā is depicted thinking of their relationship with land, territory, and Panjāb.

I also point towards this reading of this sākhī because it highlights the current state of affairs for Sikhs in the diaspora. As Western paradigms of nationalism[62] continue to grip our

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[60] Brunner, "The Politics of Education."; Guarasci, "Axel, Brian. The Nation's Tortured Body."; Judge, "Reform in Fragments."; Kaur, "Crossroads of Belonging, Safety, and Sovereignty."; Kaur and Kehal, "Epistemic Wounded Attachments."; Mandair, Religion and the Specter of the West.; Mandair, Violence and the Sikhs.; Oberoi, The Construction of Religious Boundaries.; Singh and Shani, Sikh Nationalism.; Singh, Patshahi Mehima: Revisiting Sikh Sovereignty.

[61] Bhai Satta and Bhai Balvand, "ਨਾਨਕਿ ਰਾਜੁ ਚਲਾਇਆ ਸਚੁ ਕੋਟੁ ਸਤਾਣੀ ਨੀਵ ਦੈ ॥."; Guru Ramdas Ji. "ਗੁਰੂ ਸਿਖੁ ਸਿਖੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ ਏਕੋ ਗੁਰ ਉਪਦੇਸੁ ਚਲਾਏ ॥." https://www.igurbani.com/shabad/jrpz?verse=qcnk; Guru Amardas Ji. "ਗੁਰ ਕੈ ਸਬਦਿ ਜਗਤ ਮਾਹਿ ਸਮਾਈ ॥." https://www.igurbani.com/shabad/e1xo?verse=j1nk; Guru Gobind Singh ji, "ਖਾਲਸਾ ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਕੀ ਫੌਜ ॥."

[62] A comprehensive study of contemporary Sikh history, through the paradigm of nationalism, has been completed by Giorgio Shani and Gurharpal Singh in their book, *Sikh Nationalism*. Using a chronological approach, they detail various political moments, events, and figures that play key roles throughout the development of Sikh sovereignty movements. Their analysis is approached through what could be broadly considered as an 'objective view,' which I find problematic. Particularly, for me, it takes history away from subjectivity - which, in the Sikh case, makes it difficult to articulate movements through their original intentions and passions. Regardless, it is a good introduction to viewing Sikh movements in India and the ways that travels to the diaspora.

attention and approaches to politics, we too are now, within these settled states, satisfied with preserving, maintaining, and expanding Sikh lifeways as separate to marginalized communities. What I believe this does is take considerations around gender, caste, class, identity, and religiosity, and it turns them into sites of conflict that prioritize the "maintenance of traditions" and rejection of anything associated with "outside culture." In my interactions with various Sikh spaces throughout the United States, casteist politics, fixation on establishing secularity, and 'neutrality' towards 'other' communities are the ways we are choosing to develop our politics. These concerns are not limited to Sikhs, but this is a conversation in which I am choosing to highlight the Sikh situation that is developing these issues and mentalities as an ongoing process.

Building Dialogue in Service of Expanding Sikh Memory

The question of this paper then, of memory (or what is Sikh memory), I believe, should be considered in tandem with conversations of memory in other cultures and peoples. To preface this carefully, Sikhī's main struggle since the colonial period has been to assert its own 'individuality', to assert its own self-determination as a group, as a 'path', as a people. That was the primary driving force and reason behind the Singh Sabha movement, questions of citizenship in empire and settler nations, and in the post-9/11 era that we have grown up within. Thus, I am moving into discussions of memory not because I believe Sikh memory must be proven to exist or that the Sikhs must prove they are 'unique', but rather that we have always been sovereign and 'separate' from many other traditions and paths - as much of early Sikh literature spends its time asserting (and in that context, was needed). Thus, we do not need to establish what is already a reality for Sikhs. I hope that the introduction provided helps us to see that 'closed-off' mindsets are not new to Sikh conversations, but are ongoing processes that I believe should continue to be addressed now in our contemporary contexts as well.

Returning to what I mean by dialogue with other cultures/peoples, particularly when I look to my khoj[63] of Gurū Granth Sāhib jī and Srī Dasam Granth Sāhib jī, I believe that they were highly aware of the cultures, peoples, practices, traditions, literatures, myths, heroes, etc. around them[64], not just the ones that were from what we might understand now as 'their canon.' I believe this is one of many reasons that Gurbānī shines so brilliantly, because it catalogs the political, temporal, spiritual, and intensely internal experiences of the Bhagats, Bhatts, and Gurū

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[63] **Khoj**: search, exploration, to go about finding/searching

[64] Guru Gobind Singh ji. "ਅਕਾਲ ਉਸਤਤ, ਬੰਗ ਕੇ ਬੰਗਾਲੀ ਫਿਰਹੰਗ ਕੇ ਫਿਰੰਗਾ ਵਾਲੀ ਦਿਲੀ ਕੇ ਦਿਲਵਾਲੀ ਤੇਰੀ ਆਗਿਆ ਮੈ ਚਲਤ ਹੈਂ ॥." https://www.igurbani.com/shabad/wlne?verse=v17r.

Sāhibs themselves, but also does so with various references that continue to expand as the world of the Gurūs interacts with other peoples that make their way to their presence. These are essentially firsthand accounts of 'Divine' pedagogy and praxis from the 12th to 17th centuries, and have been completed through a systematized process that preserved languages and dialects, relationships to a vast pool of literature, and contemporary realities of communities. Thus, building dialogue on a land that we have not continued that literature of dialogue, I believe, is an equally needed investigation.

This is my approach to the importance of dialogue, of conversation, between peoples. In order to try and continue this dialectic and reflective immersion, as begun by my Gurū, Gurū Nānak Dev jī, I wish to bring Sikh memory into conversation with Salish memory, as articulated by activist, writer, feminist scholar, Lee Maracle, of the Stô:lō nation, Salish peoples, and of the Métis peoples. In her book, *Memory Serves: Oratories*, Maracle crucially re-presents memory through a Salish perspective that is grounded in her tradition, but also for the purpose of this dialogue, will hone in on her ability articulate how to think about Indigenous origin and responsibility; considering Indigenous women's roles in building sovereignty; lastly, the foundations of belonging resting on the oral tradition of Indigenous peoples. This representation I believe is important for Sikh organizing in Turtle Island (North America) to contend with because of our ongoing struggles with practicing sovereignty.

Understanding Memory through Lee Maracle's *Memory Serves: Oratories*

"Memory serves. It is directed by condition, culture, and objective. It is conjured by systemic practice. It is shaped by results. By the time humans are seven years old, the commitment to remember is shaped, and they remember from the point of view of their social milieu,"[65]

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[65] Maracle, Memory Serves: Oratories: 18.

Lee Maracle was a member of the Stó:lō nation and a genius writer that spoke to a vast range of topics and issues about Indigenous peoples. Her work is monumental in her capacity to reflect spiritual, political, and artistic traditions of Salish peoples, but also ensure a welcoming paradigm that encourages the uplifting of other Indigenous traditions and philosophies. In 2015, Maracle published a book called *Memory Serves: Oratories*, which is essentially a compilation of her speeches and lectures[66]. She is connecting the praxis of orality through a literary medium that captures, in essence, the importance of understanding the bearing of memory and its impact on Indigenous traditions. This book is the primary source that I will be in dialogue with due to the central theme of memory and addressing relationships to land. I was introduced to this book by my advisor, Dr. Kyle Whyte, who encouraged me to understand the parallels in which Maracle is shaping her understanding with Salish memory, as I begin this project of understanding Sikh memory.

In her first chapter, Maracle sets the stage of approaching practice, creation, recall, and shaping memory in a way that is mindful of destination. She explains that memory is shaped by our environment, and it is also a natural function of retaining information, events, and other details by our brains. When we remember something, we engage in a natural process of retrieving that information, but we are also engaging in a nurtured process that is choosing how, what, and why the information or event is going to be processed. As Maracle further explains about 're-membering',

> "to re-member is, first, directional. Indigenous people commit to memory those events and the aspects of those events that suit the direction we are moving in or the direction we want to move in if a shift is occurring…We re-member events; we reconstruct them because we are aware that they have already ended, are dis-membered, gone forever…We may wish to achieve a new direction, secure an old direction, or mark the path travelled so that others may find the path easier to follow. Our memories serve the foregoing. Who or what is important does not figure into it."[67]

Maracle begins to discuss Salish memory as a particular process of using memory as a map first. As it undergoes processing, it ultimately is categorized by what should be recalled and forgotten, and this is our mind's ability to make sense of the world and respond to information that protects

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[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.: 18

us, harms us, or ultimately feels priceless or worthless. We must be careful then to understand what forms influence our memories and then choose to discover and reshape them differently afterwards.

Who reshapes and who socializes us to understand what memories to keep becomes a larger question than what we anticipate. Maracle addresses this by speaking to the consequences of living in hierarchical systems that prioritize different approaches to 'bearing memory':

"People are expected to obey the decision or be punished for their disobedience. The proof then returns full circle as the basis for conviction or alienation of the dissident. Memory does not exist for any other social purpose. Facts are defined as objective memory. The rememberers strive to record evidence and achieve objectivity. Recorded objective memory is embraced as the only valid memory. The realm of spiritual intent, creative motive or human emotion is relegated to subjectivity and persuasion; the art of engaging others in dialogue, embracing their emotional spiritual and intellectual sensibility, has no place."[68]

In other words, Maracle is commenting on the current systems that are prioritized by the Western nation-state, which rely on a factual, objective, and evidential method to discern what is valid and what is imagination. Even the act of 'imagining' memory (what we see in controversies around eye-witness accounts) are taken for granted and erased within understanding narrative and development of traditions and peoples. This an important state of affairs that we must grapple with because it speaks to Maracle's earlier emphasis on looking at memory as both being directed and then subsequently directing future action.

As Maracle continues, she answers a simple question that arises: what is it that we should listen to, if the world we are in operates through inferior-superior paradigms? "Wind, breath, and voice are about where you want to end up, not about what happened or what facts you have assimilated to bolster your thoughts…The winds breathed life into our bodies. We share the winds, and reflect their directional qualities. It is our breath, our spirit, and our heart that are articulated when we open our mouth."[69]There what Maracle also addresses as "songs of law and being" that are shared by stone[70], and what she also insinuates refers to one's own skeleton, our bones, as holding instruction and guiding qualities. This idea is not just Maracle hammering on

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[68] Ibid.: 18
[69] Ibid.: 19
[70] Ibid.: 19

her question of mindfulness around the narratives and perspectives that shape you, but also a reminder to the individual to bring awareness to the actual ways in which your senses are being shaped and how to take responsibility for this. There is a way to wake up, a way to remove oneself from the destruction of our 'original' responsibilities, and it requires us to become connected and conscious of the forces that actually animate our ability to be in the world.

Naming this more directly, Maracle talks about Salish remembering and how it is embodied. She speaks to the idea of 'original sound', specifically that it is connected to the moment of birth, of a baby leaving their mother's womb. In that moment, "first comes the crying, and then comes the laughter. Babies cry for months after birth. Babies' tears are their first language. This language was understood…[as] the original voice creation gave us – crying…Laughter is conjured from relationship. Crying is natural."[71] The idea of 'original sound' as crying and the formation then of laughter teaches Salish peoples of how to move between and beyond responsibilities to one another. A baby crying as it enters the world is its ability to communicate fully for the first time that they can breathe, that they are beginning the journey of life. As Maracle describes, for many days and months afterwards, family members and friends will do all that they can do to implore the baby to laugh, to be silly, and thus they are then teaching relationship to the child and building upon the ways in which relationship, or kinship, is a grounded ability to shape how we choose to recreate that in our future actions[72]. These ideas of wind, stone, crying, and laughter, as both song, language, and sound reflect, to me, the commitment that Maracle is saying Salish peoples are making towards understanding their roles, responsibilities, relationships, and 'jobs' towards life, community, and land.

As Maracle states earlier, children's commitment to remember is concretized by the age of seven and that it is most impacted and shaped by their environments and experiences until that time. This is an important point to return to because the experiences that children can endure can also be highly impacted by trauma, stress, and abuse, and, no matter the size or amount of those burdens, and that thus shapes what types of memory we choose to carry forward. However, all is not lost in this process, because the songs of stone and wind urge us to reconsider and re-member the deep traces of spiritual and ancestral responsibility that linger within us, that tell us these negative experiences are always able to be destroyed through the process of intimate reflection.

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[71] Ibid.: 20
[72] Ibid.: 20

"In the process we become intimate with both the difficulty and ourselves in the context of this difficulty…We have a spiritual memory of the processes that became ceremonies that we inherited to heal the spirit and restore our fire so we could return to our path. In our spiritual memory, we come to recognize those with whom we share a spiritual journey. This is felt. We recognize kindred spirits…we hold up the knowledge that keeps us from falling off our path. However, we are not afraid to fall."[73] The act of re-membering, of remembering both our kindred spirits of the past and the present, allows the opportunity to re-weave ourselves with the 'best threads of our past' - ancestral memory, relationships to earth, and our fellow kin (human beings and animal beings),[74] To be aware of this community, both internally and externally, and to understand that they must be engaged with is what Maracle calls the methodology of the si'yams, or the chiefs or respected elders, of the Salish[75]. Here, Maracle also weaves together a seamless understanding of how time is viewed through child and elder. There are lessons that are, at their core, immovable from human experience, but even if one was manipulated or indoctrinated into forgetfulness, the wisdom of the ones who choose to hold what has been carried (that rely on remembering original sound) help us to return to what is deeply ingrained and embedded within us.

Thus, grounded in this methodology and definition of memory, Maracle is very clear in stating that memory is a carrier and shaper of the innate self that impacts expression. It is inherently accessing the very nature that brought it about in the first place, and while it is colored with biases over time, it cannot lose its 'original sound'. She then explains two other tools that allow for the full use of memory, or at least tools that help to further delineate Salish approaches to memory: fear and listening. Both terms are defined uniquely within the Salish context, but approach both acts in very 'universal' or 'accessible' methods.

When talking about fear, Maracle says, "I have feared these foreigners before, but this fear has never silenced me, it has never paralyzed me because I remember that the dead are more powerful than the living (Chief Seattle, oratory)...My fear is a warning to myself to be careful, full of care, not so much for myself but for our ways"[76] In this, there is an acknowledgement that emotion of fear has been in a constant entanglement with colonialism, with oppression, with

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[73] Ibid.: 22-23
[74] Ibid.: 25
[75] Ibid.: 25
[76] Ibid.: 27

natural disaster, etc. In those moments, Maracle asserts that there has been such an accumulation of wisdom that there is always a story, a history, to share and to show that any obstacle is surmountable. To accept that, to remember that is crucial to the process of protection of one's community, one's self, and thus the memory of all. Fear is again another natural process that Maracle is understood to have been transformed in the face of Salish directing of memory. By being grounded in all that has come before, by understanding that even the harshness of colonialism can be weathered because there is access to original sound, there is always access to original instruction, that cannot be severed, erased, or destroyed because it goes beyond just our temporal understandings of individual responsibility.

She ties this new approach to transforming and re-defining fear to a sacred art of listening.

> "Listening is an emotional, spiritual, and physical act. It takes a huge emotional commitment to listen, to sort, to imagine the intent, to evaluate, to process and to seek the connection to the words offered so that remembering can be fair and just. Spiritually, words are sacred; this makes listening a ceremony. And because it engages our imagination it is also an art form. Our best selves, the oldest thread of our remembering processes, are invoked and we seek connection with a will…Remembering begins with listening like a lover, listening like a mother, listening like a child, listening like this may be the very last thing I ever hear. Like speaking, listening is a brook of words streaming from ancestors for generations."[77]

Learning to listen may be different from each person based on their own styles and approaches to listening, but it does not make this act any less powerful or important.[78] In Maracle's eyes, she continues the definition and approach to listening by explaining that it means to imprint it onto one's body, heart, and mind in ways that actively understand its impact on thoughts, actions, and beliefs for the future. A future that considers the origin, what many consider 'old' or 'past', within a contemporary, what most consider as 'modernity' or 'present', and for Maracle this is the only understanding of a remembering that is properly informed, it must be through listening.

In terms of praxis, this is how Maracle then helps us to understand why memory is spiritual, why it is much more than just recounting or a collection of 'facts'. Salish traditions see

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[77] Ibid.: 28-29
[78] Ibid.: 29

through wisdom to understand, over thousands of years, that fish, bear, mountains, berries, mosquitoes, swamps, birds, bats, animal waste, are all participating in an important cycle that allows each to sustain, feed, grow, and survive with one another. Even amongst moments of death and decay, life and birth are constantly recreating themselves through those processes. What is memory's role in witnessing and growing through these types of observations, and thus transform and 'become' shaped anew through refocusing attention? There is a power towards understanding relationships and seeing the ways in which we are responsible for another.

The role of imagination is then taken up within the development of memory. As a kind of contradictory approach to Western ideas of memory, imagination is deeply connected to memory - whereas a more empirical, discernible approach would not think of both as conjoined.

"Memory and imagination are not disconnected. We imagine memory, we remember what we imagine. Events occur, we see them, engage them, and they dissipate into disconnected corners of our mind. The images file themselves in disconnected parts of our brain. Some memories sink into our very cells. We hold parts of the images from these events in cells, in the body, in the mind, in the spaces between our cells. But it is our imagined direction that calls us to re-conjure old events, redraft them, pull the parts together from their disconnected places in our mind and our bodies and decide which ones are connected to the thread of direction we are determined to travel in. In so doing, the imagination reshapes reality and it becomes purposeful fiction. Salish people endured a terrible flood. We could have remembered the horrific death, the horror of mammalian destruction, the loss of millions of relatives, the hunger, the horrific struggle to eat, to live. Instead, we remember three women, seducing the same man and having him give us all children, build us a longhouse, so that we could begin again. We recall what we need to know to travel in the direction we choose or do not choose. This is the work of conscious remembering…Memory is powerful. It can twist us in knots, but the imagination can untwist the knots, unravel the memory, rework it into blankets that protect, designs that promote, carry, and create new being. […] The imagination can transform memory from depression to a simple incident, from a substandard normal to an impotent string of events, from perverse to natural or from failure to opportunity if you are moving toward the good life. It can inspire us to re-evaluate our intervention, alter our

course, and create a new beginning…Our memory serves to reflect on the path. The imagination exists to serve this memory."[79]

Imagination is not just a tool then, but unlike fear and listening, it is the way in which we give memory power in reality. It is the process through which we actualize memory and enact its essence, and thus it is the compass to help in traveling to the destination. Thus, we can see that imagination is also a word that is holding ideas like bias, context, heritage, image, and praxis because it mixes those concepts together to present a vision that allows the practitioner to enact the path that memory is dedicated towards. As I understand, Maracle is also practically helping us understand, even within collective wisdom, we are witnessing the various threads of recounting both natural processes but also the threads that are made up of nurtured decisions that must be woven into the natural. It is a careful consideration of which knots are tied, of which braids contain a few strands extra of that particular memory, such that wisdom can also create discernment and creativity.

Finally, as the cornerstone to Maracle's framework of memory, she completes her discussion of 'song' through the relevance of poetry. She explains that song, as alluded to previously, is about vibrations that reside within the body and that thus to engage in song is to engage in an act of healing within oneself.[80]

"How we remember affects the body as well. Song is lyricism, and poetry is its main expression. Utilitarian language…is disdained by the body, but if we visualize…the memory becomes poetry replete with the lesson to be learned. That makes the memory work on our behalf. Poetry as images that are lyrical actually strengthens the body when we read it out loud…In our bodies live the original instructions we received when we came to this earth: go out and about in the world and create oneness with creation. When we live in contradiction to this instruction a kind of madness (the split mind) overtakes us; our bodies weaken (autoimmune disease develops), our hearts become saddened and our spirits become overly cautious. [...] The body will make us hesitate if we do not release the memories holding us back."[81]

Poetry, as through imagination, is a form that encourages us to materialize truth from our memory that recognizes connections of healing and oneness. In order to engage with this

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[79] Ibid.: 33-35, emphasis added.
[80] Ibid.: 36
[81] Ibid,: 36-37, emphasis added.

'original' practice or deeply embedded tradition, we must also understand what it means to, as alluded to earlier, overcome the obstacles and roadblocks that have thrown us off our paths. Here, Maracle also refers to an idea called colonial hesitation from Jim Dumont. Essentially, Maracle is clear that in addition to the memories of oneness and creation that are held on by long standing wisdom, there are the traumatic memories that we discussed before. "We need to transform them into lessons that will free our bodies, but many of us are unaware that these memories live inside us."[82]. The tools to undergo transformation are all there, but as much as there is access to them, there is also a need by the holder to come to terms with what hinders their usage - there is a need to submit and accept. Thus, Maracle is stating that we can become free of being held still, of being absorbed in spiritual death - this is the idea of song and poetry[83]. For Salish peoples, the importance of song and poetry is not actually about self-expression, but rather it is 'spiritual concatenation', which is more so about the dialogue that occurs through both the self and the listeners which prioritizes the importance of community, context, circumstance, wisdom, 'the good life', and praxis[84]. This holistic approach can help each individual member of the community engage in practice that is grounded in both tradition and imagination, and thus makes ancestral memory a compass that helps to show where to travel while allowing for creativity for the future. "Even as we return to the good life ways, we will need to study the stories that will guide us in our concatenation with the newcomers. Our stories and poems will show us how to create oneness between ourselves and the world."[85]

Salish memory then is directional and purposeful when it is able to connect to an origin that is nurtured through relationality. This relationality can help instill an understanding of what it means to 'walk the path' or traverse life, regardless of circumstance, because there is connection between the individual's memory with the guidance and memories of the group or community. To further understand this embodiment, and learn how to imbibe it, requires the transformation of one's fear from prioritizing the preservation of the self (exclusively), but then prioritizing the preservation of the community, both living and non-living kin. This is marked by a deep practice and commitment to listen and understand that words are sacred. They are invoking a stream of consciousness that beckons us to remember our generational wisdom and

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[82] Ibid.: 37
[83] Ibid.: 36
[84] Ibid.: 43
[85] Ibid.: 43

responsibility to one another. This also transforms the bodily response of fear into one that abhors self-centeredness and chooses to not attach itself to respond through fight, flight, or freeze. Fear becomes a tool of remembrance and weaving that prioritizes the fear of forgetting where one's origin lies. This helps to reconfigure the way we think, believe, and judge the world, which allows for the praxis of imagination and creativity to meld with the expression of song and poetry. These 'ideas' meld with 'action' which create a praxis through which we are using memory to animate ourselves beyond trauma and coloniality. It is a Salish way of being that constantly reasserts the relationality of each being with each other, and thus recognizes roles and responsibilities that each carries to the other.

Moving through Memory: Conversations about Land

Now that we have an understanding of how Salish peoples approach memory and its importance in grounding praxis, we can see how it is rooted in Maracle's discussions and interpretations about land. In chapter 2, Salmon is the Hub of Salish Memory, Maracle begins by clearly outlining how responsibility is thought about. She says that, about Salish relation with sockeye salmon, "We were told that if we take the sockeye or their habitat or the women for granted, they would not return. The story does not say that if we lose our fishing rights, we are not responsible for caretaking the fish or the women. It does not say that if we allow the newcomers to desecrate the waters, we are relieved of responsibility. It says that if we don't take care, they will not return."[86] This idea is likely one of the most important themes of Maracle's entire work. She is clear that while the materiality of land ownership, wealth, and management of resources are important to consider and understand, she ultimately does not believe that a lack of those powers relieve responsibility from Salish peoples. Here power is not just about 'power over' another, but rather that power is an internalized form that drives responsibility without need of the 'right' external circumstances. In other words, just because Salish peoples do not have the same sovereignty or rights that they had prior to colonization, does not erase their responsibility to the salmon, the water, and the land.

This idea is the core of this book. Indigenous memory is sought out to be suppressed and erased because it inherently defies the West's approaches to sovereignty, rule, and power. Here, in this paradigm, it shows that the origins of Indigenous peoples take more priority than following systems that operate under origins that do not understand kinship. Colonial powers do

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[86] Ibid.: 45

not, and really cannot, accept that because if they did it would mean to truly accept that other peoples have powers that can supersede their own.

By grounding this discussion of land as an inherent responsibility that attends to both story, origin, and responsibility, Maracle engages in an interesting example of how she sees issues of violence, like the war in Afghanistan, 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, and sockeye salmon.

> "It was in the summer of 2001 that a run of sockeye committed suicide. It was after the 9-11 attack of the World Trade Center Towers in New York City. Humans in Canada and the United States were still reeling from that horror when thousands of mating sockeye pairs swam to their death too soon, leaving behind no progeny, in effect killing themselves and the future of their species. Although it was recorded in the media as an unheard-of event, this phenomenon had been recurring since 1995 in one form or another. Scientists have been dissecting and testing salmon since this phenomenon began in the hope of discovering what toxin or illness inspired sockete to to do this…At the time that the salmon were committing social suicide, Afghanistan was the object of international invasion. Salish people know that the homelands of the salmon have been the object of chronic invasion by fisheries, pulp and paper mills, the forestry industry, and all manner of toxic dumping. Are these events connected? *Is there a connection between Western society's devaluation of the lives of Afghanis and the devaluation of salmon, the degradation of their life conditions such that suicide seems their only option?* Are the Afghani people and the sockeye of equal value? Is there a connection between suicidal salmon and suicidal warriors."[87]

Salish worldviews take these instances, of human and animal worlds, as interconnected and deeply entangled. It is clear for Maracle that these issues are related because the way that Salish peoples engage in land, with other living and non-living beings, and then with the study of these processes is one that takes both the remembered and occurring reality into account. "In the oral records of Indigenous people, animal, flora, and the business of war and mass suicide tend to travel in tandem. They are connected to each other, and so are their habitats."[88] For many, this approach to the war in Afghanistan and the suicide of salmon are too far opposed and spatially

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[87] Ibid.: 45, emphasis added.
[88] Ibid.: 46.

distant to consider in tandem. However, for Salish science, it is the "connection [between] earth rape, the dehumanization of Afghanis, the invasion of Afghanistan, and salmon suicide."[89] that are so clearly intertwined with a reflection of how the world is seen and approached. If animals, plants, and insects are constantly devalued or brought under the realm of xenophobic logic, then it becomes a natural process to build an approach to other human beings that devalue their roles, responsibilities, and relationships to lands that a colonizer already sees as not worthy of stewardship or preservation.

The land is not about conquering and ownership, but about the health of these animal, flora, and non-living beings becomes essential for the health of humans, in Salish worldviews[90]. When you can see the interconnectedness of each actor in the world - no matter how small like an ant or bee to an elephant or bear - then you approach the world in a way that is aware of the impact actions have upon it. In the following chapter, Who Gets to Draw the Maps: In and Out of Place in British Columbia, Maracle sinks into the primary way we in the West approach land, through maps that mark boundaries and borders. The current maps we engage in do not admit to the insights and impacts of Indigenous peoples in their development, but rather enforce views on land that "...delineate the boundaries of a nation's entitlement and thus demarcate the boundaries and entitlement of citizens as opposed to non-citizens."[91] There is not really a development of care and compassion to all of the different ecosystems, sacred spaces, or openness to engage with different peoples in traditional maps. Rather, maps, as stated, reflect only what belongs to whom and thus who is 'deserving' of free access to those spaces - even if it is only perceived as 'free' access.

Again, stories come up in this discussion because for Maracle these are types of maps as well. As further defined and clarified, Maracle adds to her discussion of story by sharing:

> "Whether in written form as literature or in oral form, *stories clarify humanity and articulate social meaning*. They also invoke emotional responses from the reader and inspire transformation. *They are internal maps illustrating conduct, direction, governance, and possible future being*. They point out obstacles to the realization of humanity and unfold the dramatic direction that the removal of these obstacles may or may not take; they map the impact of successful or failed removal through the actions of

[89] Ibid.: 46
[90] Ibid.: 48
[91] Ibid.: 54

characters. *In much the same way that land maps illustrate physical travel, stories map the emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual travel of characters within the socio-economic and cultural parameters from which the author writes.*"[92]

Stories as maps have different legends that mark things like culture, behavior, entitlements, etc. and are often more honest and clear of what informs and drives their narrative. We must be careful then of what narratives begin to influence us, as many perspectives today rely on the ways our current physical maps approach others. For example, like telling Indigenous people and immigrant communities to erase themselves and their cultural roots to be considered within the boundaries and borders that have been chosen for them.

For Maracle, the relationship between maps and stories carries the weight of not only just borders and boundaries, but also of what claims to land are given more weight or more power. She then clarifies that, "I am not advocating disinheriting anyone who owns a home. Rather, I want to draw attention to how the colonial word maps obliterate the capacity for reasoned thinking between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people."[93] In other words, in addition to her discussion of maps earlier, she is making clear that building a home is different from 'owning' or holding dominion over land. She is not advocating for a colonial solution to the question of land and sovereignty, that colonial powers often choose to employ against Indigenous people, but she is saying that there is a serious need to ensure that each side must be well aware of the stories that they carry, and be prepared to learn from one another to understand how to co-exist and belong to land rather than belonging to power. She acknowledges the complexity in this when she says, "The determination of direction, distance, and space between the settlers and us must occur with the consent of First Nations people. What complicates this is that some of us have become like the others. We do not assign ourselves permission to be, to direct or to manage. Instead, we chronically seek permission from others."[94] Approaches to belonging and sovereignty are still weighed by the baggage of trauma, rule of law, and violence that can have enormous consequences on how negotiation occurs, and so a natural question is asked, where do we go from here?

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[92] Ibid.: 52, emphasis added
[93] Ibid.: 59
[94] Ibid.: 60

In a Salish story, there is a fight between two men over a woman that lived among the Stó:lō[95]. In this fight between the men, the woman makes it clear that she wants to *choose* her own partner, but the men don't listen to her and continue to argue and fight over who should receive her love. The woman eventually makes a plea to the lake, named Cultus, to help her navigate this situation. The lake suggests that the men should participate in a canoe race to win her love. The woman is pleased by this idea and tells the men, and they prepare for the race for a year. A year later, they arrive at Cutlus, and they paddle mightily against each other, vying for love. However, once they reach the center of the lake, the lake swallows them up. The woman, filled with shock, asks why the lake did that! Cultus responds: "Sometimes to go forward you have to go back to the beginning."[96] What is the lesson? Maracle explains that the lake forced them to return to the spirit world to take another chance at returning to life. Cultus did this because they actually forgot their responsibilities to the woman and thus their own love. In other words, Cultus took them to restart their lives of story and origin so that they may always remember that women have the right to choose their own partners and thus decide the direction, the path to travel, and the trajectory of their life. This story then maps the ways in which there must be awareness of action, there must be awareness of choice, and there must be awareness of how it is all respected.

However, amidst this discussion of Salish understandings of land relationships, what I hope I am not doing is making these discussions seem ungrounded or that Maracle is taking an exclusively 'mystical' approach. What I understand from these discussions is that the philosophical and spiritual underpinnings are as crucial to the actions that one takes to enact changes in reality, and that these processes are constantly happening in parallel moments. In other words, while Maracle is speaking to ideals and origin as guideposts, she is also choosing to reassert that these are not intangible practices that happen in the mind alone, but that there is a constant process of materializing those narratives and memories in real time. Thus, she is carefully explaining that while this discussion must happen, it cannot be considered real until it is considered in relation to the material world. In another chapter titled Post-Colonial Imagination, Maracle asks us to learn how to traverse to the "place between the sandbank and the river where silver streaks are born."[97] Here again, she is reminding us that while the real must always be

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[95] Ibid.: 56
[96] Ibid.: 56
[97] Ibid.: 74

considered, that our colonial condition has not suddenly exited from our situations, we also must keep in mind an imagination of the place that is aware of an abundance of freedom[98]. That the awareness of the staggering death that people like the Salish have endured can feel immense and overwhelm that imagination, but that even reality cannot hide the groundedness that can be found within the commitment to original memory that forms love, responsibility, and community.

What belongs to who? Perhaps what Indigenous peoples are trying to say instead is that we are not trying to propagate colonial understandings of property through movements like Landback, but rather that they deserve and are also entitled to access and development of their own time and space to be able to ensure their own freedom and movement. It is a simple thing to find the hypocrisy that reverberates throughout systems like the United States and Canada for the freedoms of movement, citizenship, and land towards Indigenous peoples.

> "The slicing and dicing of the nations and the legal removal of territorial integrity and connection among our villages have secured our confinement. *Confinement opposes space, which, in turn, precludes freedom. Only in a free state can time be utilized to effect nationhood.* The state justifies the concretized slicing and dicing of a First Nation's territory by pretending that Indigenous people were Neolithic, tribal, and had no original confederacy, and thus had to be saved from themselves. *The Canadian state has been busy deluding each village into believing it is a nation*; it urges them to make real estate and governance deals *as individual entities separate from the nation as a whole. The villagizing of our nations is a curtailment of space.*"[99]

Salish memory rejects division on the basis of limiting time and space for each person and community's development. This is not to say that Salish peoples have not experienced divisive politics or violence in between themselves and others prior to the current colonial hegemony, but rather that those stories and memories are helping to ensure that approaches to finding a way out of coloniality is still rooted in the oneness that pervades understandings of ownership, or really stewardship, with one another and with land.

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[98] Ibid.: 75
[99] Ibid.: 79

Weaving Reflections on Feminism and Sovereignty through Origin

"We are not feminists; we are gender complementary. *Panel Presentation, Indigenous Feminisms conference, Edmonton, 2006*. I hear these words and I want to roll off my chair, gnash my teeth, and pound my fists. Although I believe the term gender complementary, coupled with the term governance, describes many societies of the past, it does not address our situation today. It unashamedly suggests that because we were gender complementary in the past we should not be feminists today. A different past does not form the foundation for opposition to feminism."[100]

In this section, I would like to explore Maracle's articulation of sovereignty, but particularly her assertion of that sovereignty through a feminist lens. In the beginning of her chapter titled 'Indigenous Women and Power', Maracle mentions three things that center her discussions of women's empowerment: gender complementary, governance, and feminism. Here Maracle helps the reader to understand that she is not centering her discussion of women's status or roles as a historical process, but as a contemporary reality. She is not attached to the idea of women's power as a nebulous idea, but she is interested in the current reality that women face in relation to how her nation chooses to exercise its governance power. Gender complementary systems that were invoked both in governing and household dynamics were systems that, as Maracle states above, were predominant within pre-colonial spaces across the world, but that have been corrupted or mostly erased through the process of colonialism and domination. Thus, while perhaps a return to that system may seem like the natural place to "return" to, Maracle is clear that this is not possible because most advocates of reinstating gender complementary norms do not actually practice it through modifying their own access to power, control, and governance.

The problem is twofold. On one hand, you have the settler state enact a patriarchal governance system over Indigenous nations that limit power based on their own political standing[101]. On the other hand, because of this assertion of Western models of government, Indigenous men are placed at a higher level and erase the abilities for Indigenous women to fully exercise control over their own sovereignty[102]. "The issues facing women are ignored at both tribal and government levels. The authority of Indigenous women is not gender complementary in our communities. Family violence is about violence against women and children, but gender

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[100] Ibid.: 85
[101] Ibid.: 85
[102] Ibid.: 85

complementary advocates rarely address this phenomenon."[103] As I understood it, Maracle means here as well is that because gender complementary advocates are solely for reinstituting responsibilities between men and women based on traditional lifestyles prior to colonization, they do not actually care to reinstate *roles* - women as chiefs, women choosing chiefs, responsibility and stewardship of land, etc.[104]. This type of superficial claim to equality or respect actually does not allow for the ending of gender-based violence and for women to take equitable share of the direction of their nations and families, but reasserts the Western paradigm that prioritizes understanding power as inherently masculine, as inherently belonging to the masculine.

This problematic view, that views identity as a marker of power and position, is challenged by Maracle, "Chiefs are not selected based on our original world view."[105] In other words, the integrity, spiritual commitment, and capacity to address harms, especially towards women and children, are not determinants of leadership and governability[106]. Here, Maracle shares a very sharp critique that often, in the general pursuit of maintaining communal norms or transforming governing structures to something that is more based in Indigenous governance, women have to place the harms that they experience as a non-primary concern or issue[107]. That to do so would mean to derail the movements and momentum that communities have been able to traverse to secure current means of sovereignty. Just as marginalized groups in settler states like the United States, are often told that this is not the right time to address their concerns about systemic oppression and 'malpractice', Indigenous women are told to place issues of family, sexual, and domestic abuse/violence as secondary to ensure the continuance and building of the nation. This 'ask' is done with no guarantee that issues of violence will be addressed in the future, nor with an option to discuss or restore women's original *power* in nation-building.

There are a few avenues that are pursued to consider ways to address this power differential or changing of norms that occur through the colonial process. Firstly, Maracle mentions the pursuit of applying human rights laws and approaches to Indigenous women's rights.

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[103] Ibid.: 85
[104] Ibid.: 85-86
[105] Ibid.: 86
[106] Ibid.: 86
[107] Ibid.: 86

"In the vacuum of protection afforded I understand why women call for human rights to end the violence against them. I do not agree with the women who advocate equal rights for native women under Western laws, not because women do not deserve protection and equality but because human rights legislation will not give us that. *Human rights laws mask the consolidation of sub-normative conditions for Indigenous people, just as they mask the entrenchment of substandard conditions for Canadian women.* We must be protected. That is the bottom line. I am not in favour of throwing in the towel on matriarchal restoration. The least we can expect is to end, one way or another, the violent conditions under which we and our children live."[108]

In a sense then, human rights law does not build protection for Indigenous peoples, nor then Indigenous women, because it still imposes an 'other' law that minimizes and limits the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples to self-determine how protections should be considered and social norms be established. On top of that, reliance on human rights law does not build trust in Maracle's eyes because it does not change the material conditions that elevate women's ability to self-determine and ensure safety. Human rights law establishes basic rights, but many countries around the world continue to break and ignore those rights because its application would not serve the nation's interest of control over land and property (i.e. sovereignty in Palestine, Scheduled Tribes within India, the treatment of Africa and its resources by the West, etc.). For Maracle, this type of assertion, that human rights will be the boon to eradicate this inequality and abuse, is dangerous because it means "to request something less than what we need."[109]

Suddenly, Maracle seemingly moves the conversation to begin to speak more philosophically around the transitory state of reality. Specifically, she says that she asks her grandfather about the unfairness of being told by others of practicing kindness even towards white folk that decided to enact violence against her peoples[110]. In that question, she reflects on what she learned then from her elders, "I believed our elders when they said *reality is always false*…[My grandfather told me,] 'The truth is everyone is born with a great ability to connect; they are curious; they are creative, and they are capable of great consciousness. Imperfections and poison fed to them resulted in this reality…The truth remains the same, no matter the

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[108] Ibid.: 87, emphasis added
[109] Ibid.: 88
[110] Ibid.: 89

condition of the people."[111] In other words, her grandfather was clear with her that the innate human condition is one that is about connection, but due to circumstance and context can become dampened and poisoned. This does not change the truth, no matter how much someone may hide from or ignore it, and thus the wisdom she receives is one that shapes a response to apathy, death, and harm to be action that is informed by truth and kindness. As Maracle reflects on her own experiences of trauma (sexual and physical violence), she is also clear that action must happen because as the stories and culture of the West continue to invade themselves into the homes of people. This action must happen because this now has expanded from "only" white male violence but violence perpetrated by men of color as well to become entangled within experiences of sexual violence.[112] This belief of lack of value in women, specifically Indigenous women, is one that Maracle is clear is a belief that is riddled with falsehood because it is not built upon perceptions that come from origin, relationality, and truth[113]. By understanding this, by seeing and breaking down the cultural, political, and temporal realities that plague people's ability to enact truth in the world, through the praxis mentioned previously, it allows for an original set of relations to be reinstituted into the worlds of Indigenous nation-building.

In a re-telling then of Salish origin story, Maracle frames the process and responsibility of nationhood - of nation-making/building - through understanding that external, worldly beliefs do not build integrity nor are they ever able to remain rooted, but that spiritual belief or governance is the core component that allows for serious transformation:

> "Turtle Island supported a number of nations whose cultures varied. In the Stó:lō origin story, *opportunism is seen as unconscious*. Flora, fauna, and humans begin as energy. *Thought/power/hidden being/emotion came with our physical being*. As energy, we were causing problems in the sky world for one another. Eventually, things came to such a pass that raven and eagle called the sky world to the first great gathering. A conscious decision to take on physical being was made. From this came our transformation from energy to human, animal, plant, water, and stone. Stone alone was innocent in all of this and so it alone does not have to go through the life/death transformation process. Stone just is.

[111] Ibid.: 89
[112] Ibid.: 89
[113] Ibid.: 89

This story is told without judgment. We as humans were creating the most havoc therefore we were seen as the most opportunistic, thus *we had a greater responsibility to come to grips with the impact and effect of consequences…*This kind of opportunism is seen as neutral most of the time; sometimes it is positive, other times negative, and so it is hard to judge it. It is a constant, not a variable…*Humans can temper this inherent opportunism in any direction.*"[114]

When Maracle shares this origin story, amidst her discussion of the usurpation of women's roles, responsibilities, and power within the governance of Indigenous nations, I believe that she is weaving two powerful points together. Firstly, she is highly aware, as shared in the past few paragraphs, of the breadth, depth, and material experiences that women experience - namely, in the committing of trauma through familial, sexual, physical, and domestic violence. She does not lessen those experiences by speaking of origin or philosophy as a solution, but rather she continues to make clear that origin, value, and truth must be at the center of solution-making for women's issues. Secondly, it is important that Maracle is clear that the perspective she is taking is not one that must dampen or lessen the real concerns of Indigenous sovereignty building and making within battles against Western hegemony, but that truth is a powerful weapon that cuts through superficial considerations - such as foregoing the resolving of violence against women as potentially detrimental to the building of a nation. She is making it clear that until these types of issues are addressed with the urgency and clarity they deserve, that the development of any Indigenous nation will remain incomplete and subject to total failure.

As a reaffirming move, Maracle highlights then the importance of rematriation and decolonization as grounded not just in understanding of land, but as highly intertwined with the restoration of Indigenous women's power and authority. She mentions powers like caretaking of the nation, motherhood, and access to land[115] as some of the most important abilities that women were able to exercise freely. Caretaking of the nation meant a real, substantive hand within decision making of who would and could be considered for leadership or guidance in Indigenous governance. The right to be a mother is a right that would be fully afforded to ensure the development, safety, and praxis of conduct for familial space without the imposition or threat of physical or financial safety by the male figure. Access to land meant to understand that women

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[114] Ibid.: 90-91, emphasis added
[115] Ibid.: 94

actually were the ones primarily cultivating and stewarding land for the village, tribe, and nation, and thus had full authority and ability to access and negotiate land free from modern understandings of property or boundary. These ideas, rooted in rematriation and decoloniality, are directly tied to uplifting solutions as tied directly to women's sovereignty in the fight for movements like Landback that aim to restore land, power, and governance to Indigenous peoples.

In closing this brief analysis, I'd like to share some closing excerpts Maracle makes at the end of this chapter on Indigenous Women and Power:

> "Human beings cannot live without self-determination…Humans cannot live without choice and jurisdiction, and we lack that…Jurisdiction over the quality of our common life was the singular most powerful usurpation of power by the colonizer…Unlike those who dismiss Indigenous feminists for being influenced from outside our world (as though men were not), I believe feminism is a response to the Canadian-state orchestrated invasion of our areas of jurisdiction by Indigenous men. The establishment of the chief electoral system that initially did not allow women to participate is not connected to community, but rather it is connected to the federal government. *Unlike those who condemn women for operating outside our culture, I understand that they are operating from within the current reality. Indigenous feminism seeks the restoration of matriarchal authority and the restoration of male responsibility to these matriarchal structures to reinstate respect and support for the women within them*. The dismissal of Indigenous feminists silences the whole.
>
> …
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> Reviving original male power without restoring original female power leads to a distortion of who we once were, and thus to an imbalance of power. *Men may know a lot about negotiation, politics, war and land struggle, but without access to female knowledge of conduct, they run the risk of dragging their bundles of knowledge into intra-personal familial relations that are outside their bounds of original authority*."[116]

Maracle is ending by re-affirming that feminist responses to current subjugation can be as rooted in origin and tradition as any response that is claimed by anyone else. Perhaps, it may be even more radical or 'original' because it seeks to remedy imbalance of power through complete

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[116] Ibid.: 95

reclamation of memory that guides Salish tradition. There is no world for Maracle that can separate a truly free or self-determining nation without this being applied to the nation's internal politics towards women. Violence against women, amongst the colonizer's culture and thus subsequently the colonized cultures, is an issue that must be resolved to even claim a molecule of what could be 'original' or pre-colonial. The only way to bring the past, bring origin, bring truth into contemporary being requires Indigenous memory to be also be honest in its efforts to establish its sovereignty that includes and uplifts the issue that women deeply care about: violence against them and children, loss of authority/power, and access to land and property.

Oral Tradition Builds the Foundations of Belonging

"I do not apologize for having little or no confidence in the law, politics and democratic tradition of a country that murdered 20 million people to establish itself, enslaved 50 million people to birth itself, and denied democracy to over half its population until 80 years ago."[117]

In my final piece of analysis of *Memory Serves*, I bring your attention to Maracle's discussion of understanding and centering the vastness of Indigenous orality. Based on my reading, Maracle explores the praxis of orality, or oral tradition, extensively in the latter half of her collection of essays/lectures. While I do not have the ability to analyze every offering Maracle shares with the reader, I did choose to center her discussions of oral tradition as the foundation that is laid to bring the past into the present.

It may seem confusing to some why I might pair 'belonging[118]' and oral tradition. However, I believe that Maracle's discussion of orality inherently is tied to it being a methodology that, in addition to many other points, helps people understand their place or sense of connection with tradition, communal responsibilities, and thus each other. In other words, for Indigenous peoples, the oral tradition is the method through which the praxis of belonging is transmitted generation-to-generation, elder-to-elder, and what might eventually culminate as community-to-community. In a chapter prior to Maracle's first discussion of oratory, Globalization and Indigenous Writing, she actually begins with talking about story through the mode of writing or literature. Here I believe that Maracle is priming us to understand the *means* of oratory by seeing the ways Western approaches to literature have colored our way of receiving

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[117] Ibid.: 98
[118] Belonging, as defined by the Cambridge Dictionary, is "a feeling of being happy or comfortable as part of a particular group *and* having a good relationship with the other members of the group because they welcome you and accept you," (Belonging," https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/belonging, emphasis added).

and creating stories. "Most Western stories must have a beginning, middle and end; a protagonist and an antagonist; and a plot that contains conflict. Further, tragedy requires that a person of the upper class must fall to the lower class. In this tradition, hierarchy is perpetuated and maintained…"[119] In tandem with the quote that is shared in the beginning of this section on orality, Maracle is helping the reader understand that her approach to conveying anything - be it story, literature, tradition that is concretized through memory - is transmitted through a radically different paradigm than what Western approaches to literature and story are structured and nurtured to become. For Maracle, the foundation through which Western storytelling, particularly in the United States and Canada, evolves from is not able to hold what Salish tradition is conveying. At its core, coloniality is about the erasure of other's stories and methodologies because fear of difference outweighs the courage of plurality.

Following this emphasis on how Indigenous storytelling is rooted in something else, Maracle shares a story. She describes that at a conference on the importance of trees in the environment, European environmentalists spoke at length about the importance of collecting, measuring, and reporting scientific data (chloroform counts, soil erosion, etc.) and witnessing how most of those talks went over the heads of the many Indigenous people in attendance[120]. In response to this, although all of the Indigenous people in attendance spoke English very well, an older man asked to share Indigenous wisdom on stage, and proceeded to speak for three hours using his language[121]. As he ended his talk and sat back down, all of the Indigenous people began to laugh at the situation, but mostly every scientist was left feeling confused and bewildered[122]. Maracle shifts then bring clarity on what exactly is an orator's responsibilities,

> "Our orators know that *words governing human direction are sacred, prayerful presentations of the human experience*, its direction and the need for transformation in the human condition that arises from time to time… An orator is someone who has come to grips with the human condition, humanity's relationship to creation and the need for a human direction that will guarantee the peaceful coexistence of human beings with all things under creation and who can present this as story in ordinary and entertaining

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[119] Maracle, Memory Serves: Oratories: 98-99
[120] Ibid.: 103-104
[121] Ibid.: 104
[122] Ibid.: 104

language. *The point of oratory is to create a passionate feeling for life and help people understand the need for change or preservation as the case may be.*"[123]

Oratory then is the transmission of words that carry memory because the usage of them is to ensure that each person is able to connect with origin and responsibility, such that they can learn to convey it within and towards the self that yearns for direction and passion. This is the Salish method through which each member sees and experiences a practice from their elders or memory-keepers and earns knowledge over time. This knowledge, in addition to being created and instilled consistently and lovingly, is also taught accessibly. Maracle makes this theory on oratory as clear as possible because she understands that if anyone is given any idea, concept, or movement in a language that they do not understand or have access too, then, not only does it become inaccessible, but it also reinforces hierarchy[124]. Only the practitioners and students of that language will have the ability to access and ability to *shape* what governs and influences the understanding of approaching that subject. Maracle makes clear that this method is also an act of resistance to the current ways we have been socialized to impart and absorb knowledge: "By talking to my readers as though they were truly there in my heart, both the point of victimization and the value of resistance become clear. *The value of resistance is the reclaiming of the sacred and significant self.*[125] In other words, this process is a re-commitment, within Salish understandings of orality and praxis, to empower people to resist modes of logic and thought that diminish and erase the sacredness that lies within and outside the self.

Subsequently, Maracle uses her chapter, Oral Poetry, to bring her discussion to what makes up the practice of orality. She is clear in these discussions that oftentimes 'oral tradition' is used by many to mean a kind of empty term, that there is a lack of nuance when it comes to passing knowledge down through just 'speaking'[126]. This is a reductive approach to understanding what it means to be pedagogically attuned to committing story and action to memory. The power of oral poetry, the power of story, has been one that has been responsible to help guide those who have lost or fallen from the path; who join the 'ones who remain' with 'those have moved on' to bring transformation to social governance; and thus, make consensus *the* artform through which to act *within*[127]. Maracle is clear that when oral tradition is practiced in

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[123] Ibid.: 104, emphasis added
[124] Ibid.: 103-104
[125] Ibid.: 105
[126] Ibid.: 107
[127] Ibid.: 106

such a form, that it has the ability to push through the historical tendency to swallow the 'minority' voice into the status quo, and thus create "orally remembered word [...] that each story, each poem, builds upon the original song and original story, and serves to deepen the values of the people."[128] Even dissent finds its way to be considered and remembered within Salish memory. This is only possible when the listener is also just as important as the rememberer! "Personal response to language art was connected to concepts of choice and tempered by the social value of cooperation. *The listener then became central to the story or poem and was engaged in the process of imagining, building, constructing and responding to the speaker's art.* The presence of the speaker was as much a part of the poem as the words spoken."[129] This is a practice that is given to children, that is the method through which conduct and guidance are shared with young folk; this is a practice that holds "discipline, choice, cooperation, and individual obligation in high esteem."[130]

This idea, that is so cognizant and particular of how to pass on memory, how to pass on knowledge, then takes into it a whole host of things:

> "Voice, choice of words, sound, tone, diction, style and rhythm characterize both the poem and the speaker. A huge array of physical metaphors has developed out of the experience of the collective and its relationship to the environment. The concepts and metaphors employed in oral poetry are thus instantly understood and interpreted by the listener. Because our art is community-based, the use of physical metaphor is understood in the context of the wellness of the whole; *personal interpretation, then, becomes the way in which individuals can use the poetry as a guide to their contribution to the wellness of the whole.*"[131]

One of the other often misunderstood things about what we can see as Indigenous philosophy, and really most community based philosophies, is that because the community is at the center that 'individuality' is removed and almost destroyed from the equation. This approach adopts individuality as the focal point instead. However, what I believe Maracle is pointing towards is that by making the community the center and cultivating choice in conjunction with that, the individual realizes that it *cannot* operate by itself. In other words, it recognizes its fate, its health,

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[128] Ibid.: 106
[129] Ibid.: 106, emphasis added
[130] Ibid.: 106
[131] Ibid.: 106, emphasis added

and its security is intimately bound by its environment and its community. Thus, individuality is actually made anew, such that the individual recognizes that it was never separate from the whole - they always were the whole. This is the stamp of belonging that Maracle is alluding to, that oral tradition itself cultivates within the person. It is a careful process of ensuring that each member of the community is welcomed not just by each other but by a profound sense of community that shares its wealth of knowledge and resources to ensure that every person can cultivate choice that 'shows' them where they belong.

The richness Maracle shares in this discussion of oral poetry is deep, and she goes on to touch on another aspect of the development and methodology of this tradition:

"The teaching power of the poem lies as much in its aesthetic beauty as in the poet's philosophical and socio-spiritual logic and her or his ability to achieve oneness with the listeners. *Spiritual concatenation between poet and listener is quintessential to the articulation of oral poetry,* and the poem's achievement of this concatenation rests on the spirit.

…

The fact that all things possess spirit, creation is sacred, the human experiences oneness with all creation, and the transformation is integral to being alive — all this was simplistically applied to all circumstances, rather than explored in the context of the body politic and culture of Indigenous people. If all creation is sacred, then words as created entities for facilitating oneness are also sacred. *If oneness with all creation is valued, then words are intended to achieve oneness.* Thus the speaker seeks oneness with her/his audience. Through artistic presentation of thought, emotions, law, philosophy, and spirit, the speaker orchestrates the community process of concatenation. Voice, diction, tone, style, rhythm, and physical metaphor express the spirit of the poet, elicit response from the listener's spirit, and conjoin all into a single and powerful sense of oneness with creation. Thus *the sound of language, the choice and meaning of words, and the attitude of the poet must all be carefully considered* before the poetry achieves its goal.

…

The object of Western poetry is not concatenation between the self and listener but rather self-expression. *Concatenation cannot be understood mechanically…it cannot be*

achieved outside the context of community, though it can be discussed within a wedge of understanding.

…

In order to understand original poetry, Indigenous speakers gather together to engage the oratory around the poem and the circumstances that birthed it, but also to engage each other in discovering the poem's old and newly accrued meanings.

…

The poet elicits the imagination of the community, the heart of the nation, and the spirit of the present, the past and the future…Both oral poetry and written poetry are word art forms. One need not be privileged over the other. Both are examinable, able to be studied, and understandable. Both have value."[132]

These excerpts are some of the final pieces of insight that I wish to highlight from Maracle's discussion of oral poetry. Here she discusses the concept of 'spiritual concatenation', which when put literally could mean 'a series of moments or events that develop spiritual connection'. Maracle is pointing to the power that runs through the orality, which highlights a need to achieve 'oneness' between the listeners and the poets. When sharing this wisdom, it is not what Maracle describes as a need to 'self-express', but rather it is an intimate need to have the listener realize that the poet and poem are actually one, with them! The poem is the experience of all things. That is why a study of each aspect of its recitation, of its musicality, of its grammar, and all of the tools that Maracle lists is a part of tradition. This is not to guess at the mind of the author, which Maracle shares more about in a different chapter, but to consider context and meaning means to learn to embody intention and interpretation. This is also why community is the backbone of this process. There is not a single tradition or practice that can convey the depth of itself through the discussions or reflections of just one person. Specifically, one person who also claims sole authority or expertise in the subject matter. That is why Salish oratory is powerful because it does not claim ownership over a method that has been carefully cultivated by countless members of peoples that brought them to where they are now.

In conjunction with discussing the tradition of orality and oral poetry, Maracle takes time to bring to the reader's attention events and realities that promoted the erasure of Indigenous peoples through colonialism. In her chapter, Toward a National Literature: "A body of writing,"

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[132] Ibid.: 106-108, emphasis added

she speaks to trauma and consequences endured by the kidnapping of children, and thus causing a breakage in the process of teaching orality and developing a sense of belonging:

> "The removal of children by the state, first to residential schools and now as apprehended wards of the state, continues. *No children meant no cultural transmission and no cultural development*. This all had to occur before the child was six, and so many of the children grew up not having a scholarly sense of the nature or substantive experience of the knowledge they held. *Because the children were disconnected from other children, these bodies of knowledge became scattered and separated*. A narrow sense of what constituted knowledge in the individual keepers was often the result. Because the articulation of knowledge associated with understanding and creating story was not recorded by those who chose to document original story, the process of story creation and the theoretical foundations of story creation are not well known."[133]

This is trauma, this is violent. The settler state has, even with the preservation of methods of oral tradition, enacted a significant destruction to the lives of Indigenous children. This again in addition to Western modes of storytelling and logics becoming the norm through which knowledge is socialized into young ones. Knowledge becomes something then that is not tied to building rich relationality between the self and the subject matter, but rather about building a sense of 'worthiness' for whether someone can actually take in information that can be as objective as possible. However, there are of course powerful movements of reclamation and, amidst calls for justice and accountability, a strong sense of reconnecting those survivors with the wisdom that they were always deserving of receiving.

We as the reader can clearly see that Indigenous knowledge has not been destroyed, but, as Maracle writes, it has been scattered instead[134]. For Salish peoples, and many Indigenous peoples, the development of knowledge has always been in relation to their specific region and land and thus prioritizes the importance of context to the development of narratives, past, present and future[135].

> "The systematization of knowledge is required before writers can write from within their culture. Unless we write from within our culture and from our original knowledge, we cannot grow culturally, and the current problems of social anomie will continue unabated.

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[133] Ibid.: 122
[134] Ibid.: 123
[135] Ibid.: 123

Further, the systems of transmission have been destroyed, and the conditions that made this knowledge viable have changed…We need to understand the difference between oratory as knowledge and oratory as story."[136]

From my understanding, what I believe Maracle is cognizant of is that Indigenous people have been severed from systems that can effectively help each individual connect to their traditions and ways of life, but, as mentioned in previous sections, this does not decrease or eliminate the responsibilities that still exist within the community. Instead, the natural 'evolution' of this process comes from understanding this breakage, and re-applying oneself to re-learning those processes and contexts. There is a deep reverence and respect given to being able to operate through context and thus a lineage - a presence that has continuously helped to inform that context.

In other words, Maracle is additionally helping to recenter discourse within Indigenous philosophy and pedagogy:

"Indigenous thinkers tend to evaluate stories in connection with their specific historical continuum, which is a very different kind of discourse…All understanding, all critical thinking, no matter the subject is achieved through continuous study and discourse within the cultural context of the student…Canada, in its arrogance, continues to apply pressure on non-Western writers to master the inherited canon and to abide by the Euro-traditional models of story."[137]

She is rejecting the demand by Western institutions, onto Indigenous writers and thinkers, to include Eurocentric ideas into interpretations and analyses of Indigenous philosophies, oral traditions, and relationality to land, memory, and origin. I also do think that Maracle is clear that she is not necessarily against learning or picking up pieces of knowledge that the West offers, but rather that the issue at hand is that the knowledge is hoarded in Western traditions and thus creates a system that is happy to operate through hierarchical narratives of what knowledge matters or does not. This is explicitly rejected. Also, this process of Indigenous knowledge-making and storytelling is not one that is free from critique or discourse, but rather that she is helping the reader understand that again, the standards and objectives of discourses are re-defined and re-clarified in Indigenous praxis. "In my society, story creates discourse around

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[136] Ibid.: 123
[137] Ibid.: 124

healthy communal doubt, *which inspires us to face ourselves, to grow and transform ourselves through the augmentation of the house by adding rafters to it*; it calls us to create myth from new and transformed beings. The process of gathering together to find what is new and what is being born, learning as an ensemble, is the appropriate process of learning for Indigenous people."[138] Doubt and critique are encouraged, insofar it is aware of itself as a method to add to and not 'throw away' or diminish ourselves. In other words, questioning is a sacred act of facing the self and asking what it has chosen to attach itself too. If it clings to a sense of strong individuality, then it is fundamentally looking to better its own circumstances at the *expense* of others. Rather, Salish method is saying that by undergoing a process of transformation that is aware of its current context and milieu, but also then aware of the lineage that centers certain values, beliefs, and origins - you are able to learn how to build upon or add to praxis. This is rooted in something different, this is a *building upon* something that is developing on a different way of being, a different way of understanding how to cultivate belonging.

Taking a moment here, I would like to hopefully address a potential comment on my reading of Maracle. Specifically, I believe that reader's of this paper might assume that I'm interpreting that Maracle is perhaps saying that the colonizer is not aware of itself and its system, that they do not engage in creating systems of violence knowingly. Far from that, I believe Maracle is highly aware that colonial institutions have stolen certain modes of social and cultural development, institutional governance ideas, and crucial pieces of Indigenous sciences to build a parallel, but opposite, system that exerts its will through the threat and use of violence. That is why I also believe that Maracle is saying that those colonial institutions even though colonizers might 'mirror or parrot' these methods (with a different value structure and with different intentions), it is that much more empowering and important to understand how these methods have been corrupted and going through an active process of reclaiming them. This is not about "imagining" an enemy that is actually acting from a state of ignorance or 'non-knowing', but rather acknowledging that colonial actors are *cultivating choices* to make ignorance and erasure the driving forces of their institutions. Maracle is careful in her understanding of how to approach coloniality:

"We are operating from a diminished capacity to imagine the future not because we are not capable of brilliance but because the knowledge we were to inherit has been seriously

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[138] Ibid.: 125, emphasis added

diminished, scattered, or altered. The result is that we gaze continuously at colonization and its encumbrances and engage in its criticism in the hope that somehow the means by which we can decolonize ourselves from ourselves will show itself to us or in the hope that the colonizer will see the error of his ways and pave the road to decolonization with some magic program."[139]

Thus, what I hope the reader will be able to realize is that Maracle is not trying to obfuscate these actors and powers, but I believe that she is presenting a method, a way of life for Salish peoples, that is for preservation, reclamation, *and* resistance against a culture that does not and cannot advocate for such modes of being. I make a note of this because I wish to be clear that I believe Maracle is always taking metaphysical or abstract ideas and conversations but always wanting to make them feel and be real, make them be practicable, such that this is a way of life that is not just theory.

Returning now to the discussion of method, I wish to highlight Maracle's final discussions on oratory through her two chapters, Dancing My Way to Orality and Oratory on Oratory. Much has been said about Maracle's approach and understanding of oral tradition or oratory. She deepens the reader's understanding of it by carefully helping us understand that it is more than a practice being a listener. It is a complex method of remembering and committing things to memory that have profound importance and implication for future generations of people, particularly for Salish peoples (in Maracle's writing). In the chapter, Dancing My Way to Orality, one of the main ideas that she speaks to is about 'religion', which she sees as a way that is labeling purpose:

"Religions invite traditionalism, be they Christian, Muslim, Pagan, Dalai Lama Buddhists or any other religion. *Religions often hold up tradition as though this were their goal.* For me this is a shortsighted goal. *The goal is self-governed conduct that values all life as sacred. To this end, I let go of tradition when it calls for slaves, polygamy, unequal treatment of women, homophobia, race-based emotionality and retention of colonial structures, but this letting go does not require me to switch my allegiance from Stó:lō to some other paradigm.* We have added many new rafters to our houses. All of the transformations that took place over the thousands of years of our story have added a rafter or two to our houses. Each calamity or disaster or falling out we endured led to the

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[139] Ibid.: 128

need for change, for a new rafter, a new song, dance, ceremony, new sets of teachings and stories."[140]

For Maracle, the way that religion is approached and defined invites lifeways to be tied to 'tradition' as the end point, versus an approach that sees tradition as a means to a different goalpost. By doing this, sacredness is seemingly tied to an object or specific action that does not necessarily encourage transformation or self-reflection. This is not what she would understand as the way for Salish belief systems. For her, because conduct is the thing that is cultivated through orality and memory, there is less attachment to tradition as constant, but more adaptability and awareness brought to tradition as contextual. There is a freshness that can be approached when you are not limited by religiosity as the scale, but rather when you can approach teachings through a process of constant creation - that reflects the world, actual 'creation' - then you can preserve and respect and be responsible to historical methods while moving in a contemporary time. Modernity and technology became irrelevant, because now these are transportable modes that can be met with a rooted understanding of governance and being.

This inherently also negates our understanding of an 'other'. In other words, Maracle, through this process, is able to engage in story-making that can take coloniality, and those privileged by it, and weave them into new story that chooses to make the attempt of bringing as many people as they can along on the journey of transformation because of understanding the commitment to relationality[141]. However, there is also a sense of acceptance that the inclusion of characters that are tied to coloniality and its paradigm do not need to be told 'successfully,' but that their inclusion in story is to help cultivate choice that can help wither the wounds of violence and erasure and offer an alternative to choose relation instead[142]. "Storiers are aware that choice is sacred, that story creation, while hooked to social origins, is a uniquely personal ceremony and the product, the story, will be always different if some other crafts it…Stories arise from the cultural base of the storiers' origins, but the individuality of the storier personalizes and alters the presentation of each story. Freedom of expression and the sacredness of choice bind all stories, European and Indigenous, together[143]. This does not contradict Maracle's awareness of the power and narrative of colonialism, but rather her commitment from Salish storytelling to at least make

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[140] Ibid.: 136, emphasis added
[141] Ibid.: 137
[142] Ibid.: 137
[143] Ibid.: 138

an effort to provide an opportunity to transform opportunism, individuality, and hierarchy to responsibility, communalism, and egalitarian ideals.

In Maracle's final chapter, Oratory on Oratory, she uses two key terms that she has spoken to through previous chapters, but makes clear to delineate and ensure the reader understands their ability to expand, preserve, and deepen oratory. Firstly, she refers to a method called See:

> "When studying a subject, we first face our attitudes, our beliefs, and our agendas. We face the filters through which our specific cultural and personal origins affect clear and clean vision…These blinders, masks, and filters pervert the attention we pay or don't pay to the condition or being of others. Attention is a device driving us to implode — or explode or desire — transformation, or to exchange desire for the mundane and the old, driving us to plod along blind to the new and different in the world…These masks are not at all that useful in establishing new relationships. Unless we bend the light in the direction of our attitudes, beliefs, and agendas, we will not be able to drop the mask, let go of our original vision, and expand it to 'include' the vision of others in our scope of see…See has a methodology that is emotive, spiritual, intellectual, and physical."[144]

Seeing is adding on to the previous ways Maracle has described as the power of oratory, but she is also importantly reflecting it onto the process of oratory itself. Here, See becomes a careful practice of bringing attention to the various attachments and perspectives of the individual self, and then examines vulnerability, circumstance, and intent to advocate for the shedding of them in moving to choose a direction[145].

The second method that Maracle mentions is about Study, which is important because it sprouts from vision and requires, likely, the most effort on the part of the individual:

> "The object of study from a Salish perspective is ultimately the creation of oratory that will lead us onto a path of continuous growth and transformation, and that will enable us to engage all life in the type of spirit-to-spirit relationship that leads all parties to the good life…We study from the perspective that, as the variable beings on earth, it is humans that need to transform and alter their conduct to engage in relationship with other beings and

[144] Ibid.: 140-141
[145] Ibid.: 141

phenomena…This requires that we study the life of beings and phenomena in our world from their perspective, and not from the perspective of our needs.

The goal of study is to see a being or phenomenon in and of itself and for itself with the purpose of engaging it in a relationship that is mutually beneficial. First, we need to know *who we are* and the possible obstacles to understanding that our history may present. In the course of study, we deliberately engage people with different kinds of knowledge, points of view, and different understandings, people whose journeys are dissimilar to ours, who may have witnessed the phenomena under study from their own perspective."[146]

Study is the ability to take See and understand that all things bring awareness, some lesson, that will inform story. This is undeniable. Salish oratory is understanding that all things have a relationship with each other, and weaving the threads together to figure out the best ways to build an ecosystem of beings that understand each other as kin. There is no need to erase or diminish culture, and there is no need to engage in any fake dialogue or conversation between people; rather, it becomes a process that values the interconnectedness of each and every being that will help the individual realize the value and importance of the good life. "Discourse, theory, cognizance, and the transference of knowledge are parts of a creative, oratorical, dramatic, process through which our narrative history and story – oratory– were crafted, understood, and transferred systematically, both locally and nationally…Oratory has ensured continuous growth and transformation; a powerful sense of justice, a broad framework for seeing, and a method of study and representation. Holistic thinking and being are the result."[147]

What are the Lessons of *Memory Serves: Oratories*

To briefly summarize the analysis completed on Lee Maracle's work, Memory Serves, I'd like to touch on the major points covered in each theme I've covered in three sessions. Firstly, Maracle establishes a framework for seeing Salish memory that is cognizant of its role in establishing direction and purpose for both individuals and communities. How human beings remember something is important because it is how we then shape our contemporary environments and act towards a vision. Salish peoples are very cognizant then of how language

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[146] Ibid.: 141-142
[147] Ibid.: 149

and sound interact towards first building and establishing memory. Learning to identify our natural processes of interacting with the world as babies to adulthood is explored through a powerful narrative.

As Maracle establishes her approach to Salish memory, and the effects of colonial impact, I move to her discussions on land and property. Primarily, the most important point that I took away from her discussion was that, for Salish understandings of relationship, responsibility does not become erased because land has been taken away or diminished. In fact, responsibility to earth and water and air are deeply ingrained inside Salish memory, such that the impacts of colonial parceling are of course felt through the practical sense, but Maracle is also clear that conflict regarding land has been a part of their stories for centuries. Thus, coloniality becomes another obstacle in the imagination and implementation of a decolonized world that reconfigures peoples relationships to land and decimates the belief that human beings should and could have dominion or proper control over land.

Thirdly, I speak to Maracle's ongoing discussion of the power and sovereignty held by Indigenous peoples, but specifically she also is clear that articulations of sovereignty must address the inclusion of patriarchal and hegemonic ways of being into the governance of Indigenous peoples and their nations. This point makes it clear that Maracle approaches Indigeneity with a contemporary awareness of the importance of feminist lens and perspectives in the decolonization movements of her people. She speaks elegantly that it is a massive indignity to push past the real issues of Indigenous women – such as domestic and sexual abuse/violence – in an effort to preserve some reputation of a decolonial movement. It is not decolonial to advocate for the eradication of extreme forms of violence upon the community, but not prioritize the destruction of the perpetuation of violence internally.

Lastly, Maracle speaks a large portion of her discussions upon a commonly termed method, known as 'oral tradition.' She spends a lengthy time discussing and deconstructing the ways in which orality is far more than just memorization or an artform of simple, active listening. Rather, it is a profound commitment to re-member origin, through original sound and instruction, and thus ensure the preservation and perpetuation of Indigenous traditions, languages, and customs through dedicated focus, determination, and effort. She explores its origins and development, but also makes a point to emphasize the development of Indigenous written literature that must also retain its oral methodologies, even amidst entering into a new

form of preserving and propagating knowledge through writing. This discussion is primarily also enlightening to show how Salish peoples are cultivating feelings and root desires to belong to something that is beyond just their individual needs or desires. Nevertheless, because Salish peoples understand the impact that oratory can have upon young children, we also are given further background on how the handling of things, like residential schools, severed the artform of orality. It did not die, but the consequences of such blatantly racist action are still felt and parts of it are preserved and intimately woven within Indigenous storytelling to help the listener mark the paths that have led or will surely lead to catastrophe.

In conclusion, Maracle's book is a fascinating set of works that give the reader a powerful introduction into Salish ways of being. In addition, she does an expert job of ordering and organizing her essays to help the reader gain a trajectory that led to the practice of orality. We are shown a clear understanding of how and why Maracle is concerned with a possible future that does not provide spirit-to-spirit relationships and prioritizes a culture that continues to exploit the earth that raised us. All in all, Maracle provides critical threads for me to help articulate answers or suggestions to Sikh considerations of land, sovereignty, and belonging, as discussed in the beginning of this project.

Specters in Sikh Memory: Where do we Begin the Dialogue?

Perhaps many Sikh readers have been able to realize that the ways that Maracle articulates many of the underlying points of Salish memory and tradition are rooted in similar conceptions of Oneness that Sikhī also discusses and emphasizes. These similarities are what I will be leveraging as bridges towards different interpretations and articulations of Sikh memory, particularly in English.[148] Thus far, we have briefly introduced the Guru Khālsā Panth's development and origins; shared Bhangū jī's telling of a sākhī that helped us gain a basic insight of how early Sikhs considered their relationship to land, especially Panjāb; lastly, we discussed how these mentalities and approaches to in historical moments are now reminiscent of politics in the diaspora, in that they are hyper-influenced by threats of violence and pressure towards

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[148]The following discussions of Indigeneity and Sikhī are not intended to be one-to-one or advocate for Sikhs as Indigenous. I do not take that argument as a priority or as even a consideration in this project, but still wish to address potential misconceptions that may arise from my insistence of engaging with Indigenous literature in the ways that I am. Given that, I would encourage readers to view some of these other resources that help to build a contextualization around how the contemporary marker, "Indigenous" came to be in the context that it exists today, and the pivotal sources that have helped grow the concepts of what we understand to be Indigenous rights: Singh, "It's Time to Rethink the Idea of the 'Indigenous.'"; Åhrén, "Classical International Law and Early Philosophy Theory on Peoples' Rights."; Deskaheh, The Redman's Appeal for Justice.

adopting nationalist or patriot paradigms. We have established an introduction towards Sikh philosophy and have explored Lee Maracle's *Memory Serves*, so I now wish to discuss *how* we can consider dialogue. I move to begin considering some reflections by Dr. Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair, a Sikh philosopher and professor within the University of Michigan, in his book, *Sikh Philosophy: Exploring gurmat Concepts in a Decolonizing World*.

Dr. Mandair begins his analysis by clarifying his approach to gurmat, i.e. the thinking, instruction, and/or way of the Gurūs. He reviews the machinations of colonial influence that pressured many cultures and peoples to undergo processes of, what he terms as, religion-making, which in turn manipulated people's temporal and political attitudes towards creating rigid, communalized identities; by doing so, colonized communities were being forced into adopting Western-nationalist schemas that prioritized a strictly externalized connection by the propagation, instead of destruction, of the self[149]. This entire process is violent because it must negotiate with colonial institutions that were, at the time, arbiters of power, so it would be important to highlight and not underestimate the pressure upon communities to conform to Western logics. Mandair also reminds the reader to be prudent of intellectualized, native elites that are trained in the methodologies and culture of the colonizers[150]. This is where Mandair discusses the concept of gurmat as having been translated to fall within either the 'religion,' 'theology,' and/or 'philosophy' paradigms. However, for this book, he is clear that he is choosing to approach gurmat through the category of philosophy, and moves to discuss the question then: what is Sikh philosophy for?

Navigating through multiple purposes, he states that Sikh philosophy should be taken as an antidote that allows Sikhs to escape and reclaim themselves from the colonial frameworks placed upon them[151]. The method of doing so, he believes, is that Sikh philosophy can engage in a process of 'thinking-between', which he describes as:

 "...[Sikh philosophy] doesn't simply translate between two different worlds but more importantly reconfigures translation into a process of *thinking-between* the two worlds. Thinking-between is much more than just an act of linguistic translation. It is

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[149] Singh Mandair, Sikh Philosophy: 9

[150] I am very aware of my positionality in making this statement, where and how this statement is reaching your eyes, and that my analysis may continue to feel steeped deeply within understandings that are not many consider "wholly Sikh." However, I still must make them because of the gift of commitment I have received towards the Panth. This may not be a paper many read, but I hope it will at least provide enough opportunities to engage in an alternative analysis of contemporary Sikh understandings of our spiritual-temporal responsibilities.

[151] Ibid.: 14

synonymous with the process of subjectivity itself. In this way, Sikh philosophy not only explores Sikh ways of knowing and exist; perhaps more importantly, it equips Sikh concepts with wings so that they can travel much further than the ethno-cultural milieu which birthed them, find new places to settle and develop new connections to other societies and different thought systems in an increasingly complex world that we all share."[152]

Two things stick out to me in his first assertion of the purpose of Sikh philosophy. Firstly, Mandair looks toward a method that I hope to assert as well in this discussion of Sikh memory, which is that Sikhī offers a *natural* framework that is able to converse with the knowledge, ways of life, and spiritualities of various peoples and cultures. This is primarily because there is a rich tradition of engagement that I believe the Gurū themselves practiced and implemented when compiling Ād Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib jī, and many other important granths of the time. In general, pre-colonial Sikhs were highly aware of not just their local and regional traditions, belief systems, ways of life, and literature, but, as active peoples themselves, were also very involved in trade and commerce with the various types of travelers that made their way to many of the Gurūs cities throughout Panjāb. In other words, as Sikh literature was given time to develop, Sikhs were also able to utilize the richness of various traditional literature to help others understand how pervasive the Oneness or One Force is, in any and all traditions. If we were able to dive deeper within the vast literary development found within the Anandpur Darbār of Gurū Gobind Singh jī, we would see that each and every granth was not just making mythologies, knowledge, and skills available/accessible to people, but was also involved in organizing active debates and discussions with other Sikhs and non-Sikhs, such that the critical thinking abilities of the Panth could continue to rise and envelop considerations of Sikh actions and praxis.

The second piece that stuck out to me in Mandair's language was: "...find new places to settle and develop new connections…". This may be a more semantic point, but I will still make it because, for me, it was an interesting choice to use the word 'settle' when writing about *decolonizing* Sikh philosophy. In the context of our earlier discussion of Bhangū's sharing of the sākhī of the Khālsā and the Gurū, the translations there also used concepts like property, territory, and 'rule over' as very potent in describing the aspirations the Gurū wished the Khālsā to achieve. As we begin to dive into questions of Sikh memory, I am re-approaching this particular

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[152] Ibid.: 14

subject matter because I actually am not sure that the way we have come to understand the concept of rāj, or rule/governance, is the same conceptions that the Gurūs or Khālsā Sikhs were referring to when it was spoken about. I hope that this can be clarified and brought out further in our discussion of sovereignty.

In analyzing Mandair's second point, he describes Sikh philosophy's ability to promote a journey of transformation and self-realization that significantly and creatively shifts engagement in natural, social, and political affairs[153]. He is arguing that the inclusion of Sikh philosophy within the emergence of other "subaltern philosophies or systems of indigenous thinking, knowing and existing" can provide important resistance against "white-epistemologies - which constitutes the core of 'white supremacy' in its religio-secular, racial, casteist and political forms."[154] Here, I believe, Mandair is highlighting an offering that makes Sikhī's vision of political and spiritual engagement particularly compelling. He is saying that the internal world of the individual is also in need of a type of growth/transformation, that should be expected within the creative ways we prepare to understand our relationship with the external, i.e. what exists outside our mind. Within Sikh attitudes of politics then, the internal and external world of the person are ultimately reflections of one another, and it is then through the defeat of the self, and in our case, the self that has been socialized to *see* the world through the colonial interpretations of knowledge, that allows for a shifting of the modes of dominance that are imposed upon marginalized peoples.

In the next point, Mandair shares that he views the basic concepts of Sikh philosophy as components, or an assemblage, and by understanding the amalgamation of those components can allow for a different type of engagement towards heterogeneous concepts, such as the logics of modernity, capitalism, nationhood, etc.[155] This allows Sikhī, as hinted at previously by Mandair, to become an 'activist philosophy,' which is essentially able to move between, or unseals itself from, its ethno-cultural milieu[156]. In what I take to be an important piece of this approach to how Mandair thinks about the assemblage of Sikh thought in this way, is that he then states that it can allow Sikh philosophy to diasporize its host cultures:

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[153] Ibid.: 15
[154] Ibid.: 15
[155] Ibid.: 15
[156] Ibid.: 15

"To diasporize the host culture is to simultaneously distort the conception matrix of the dominant social field *and* lay claim to it as one's very own. The work of diasporizing a host culture lays the groundwork for dialogue between philosophical traditions and concepts. There is a tendency to assume that 'dialogue' is a process of communication that can be simply plucked off the shelf. True intercultural dialogue happens only when the self corresponding to the host and guest culture *becomes other to itself*. Otherwise dialogue is simply a schema imposed from above by the dominant culture…It is an invitation to explore and experiment with *gurmat* concepts with the aim of connecting with and making positive changes to the world rather than being hermetically sealed from it."[157]

I shall try to use an example of how I believe he is referring to this method. Essentially, I am a Sikh born within the United States of America, and so I am also, now tied to the identity of being an American. When the individual then chooses to 'diasporize' their host culture, like if I chose to diasporize the culture of the United States in relationship to Panjābī and/or Sikh culture, I am now engaged in a process of making my American identity contend with the actual philosophy and values espoused by 'my' culture, which in this process is completely changing American culture instead. In other words, instead of American culture being the filter through which I interact with Sikhī, the Sikh tradition and its philosophies are the filter through which I am now interacting with the idea of 'how' to be American. In this example, I believe Mandair is essentially asserting that *true* dialogue cannot happen until the self is able to engage in this process of 'othering itself,' especially in relationships to the cultures that surround it, which would allow it to stop a process of ego creation.

In Mandair's next point, he highlights that "Sikh philosophy re-imagined as a mode of 'lived abstraction'...grounded in everyday life *and at the same time* a practice of forming and reforming Sikh concepts in relation to whatever one's life encounters."[158] In other words, he is saying that Sikh philosophy allows us the ability to view the process of living our day-to-day life as a process that requires a consistent commitment to reforming the self, which engages in an "ongoing attendant negotiation of identity and difference."[159] There is no interpretation of Sikh

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[157] Ibid.: 15-16
[158] Ibid.: 16
[159] Ibid.: 16

philosophy, in this case, that is separate from the ways the self needs to be reconceptualized to meet our new formations of Sikh thought.

In his final point towards what Sikh philosophy is able to do, he is clear that it can lead to "the decolonization of the knowledge system."[160] In comparison, he sees that the 'task' of critical and cultural theory have been towards addressing decoloniality, but that a major critique of these forms of knowledge is that criticality is often tied really only to Eurocentric conceptions and models of how to go about the practice of analysis[161]. Mandair then goes onto describe exactly how Sikh concepts can be used to help move beyond this limitation:

> "By operationalizing Sikh concepts and rethinking the model of critical and cross-cultural thinking, it may be possible to develop a 'post-Western' system of knowledge which is able to internally pluralize the epistemic machinery of the humanities, social and natural sciences. This in turn would allow the knowledge system to recognize and deploy the concepts of different cultures to solve social, political and spiritual problems."[162]

Overall, Mandair's claims of the relevance of Sikh philosophy towards aspirations of decolonization are important, especially in the overall discussion of this paper. Decolonization of philosophy or thought systems allows marginalized peoples to reassert their own knowledge systems as worthy, in of themselves, and can allow for expansive, creative options to address pressing issues around the ways we think about things like governance, production, relationality, economics, and more. However, what I do believe is important to be critical of is that Mandair's discussion of the purposes of Sikh philosophy is not explicitly about the *decolonization of land*, it does not deal with materiality in its analysis of epistemic decolonization. While 'decolonizing knowledge systems' is an important practice and certainly plays a role within reclaiming culture and praxis, decolonization itself is a paradigm which is inherently tied to the question of land and wresting control from an occupying force. This is important to not lose in our understanding of the *act* of decolonizing - it is always inherently tied to the land. It is why I also engaged in the question of how Sikhs should think about our own conceptions of land, because we have to face, head-on, our past participation in the British empire and our contemporary participation in settler-states like the United States and Canada. These are unavoidable questions, especially if

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[160] Ibid.: 16
[161] Ibid.: 16
[162] Ibid.: 16

we wish to also engage in decolonial theory towards our own knowledge systems and ways of being.

This is part-and-parcel of the critique that I mentioned earlier about the state of Sikh advocacy today. The more we engage with Sikh origin and aim to reclaim the gifts of our Gurūs is also a call through which we can realize that 'true dialogue,' as Mandair refers to it, is intimately as tied to the *practical* questions of land, sovereignty, and belonging, which contend with the physical nature of the colonial regime as well. While I do not believe that Mandair is avoiding this connection completely, I do think that the way his analysis is framed overall does not engage in what I, and many other decolonial scholars, may understand as decolonization, because it must center the question of land that undergirds the systems of empire and settler-colonization.

This I believe is a natural place to move to the next step of our dialogue with Maracle's work, *Memory Serves*, and other Indigenous considerations of land, sovereignty, and belonging. Mirroring Maracle's approach to storytelling, I ask, what is Sikh memory, how is it constructed, and what direction is it asking us to take. In my consideration of this, I wish to ask for continued forgiveness in the shortcomings of my analysis, as I may have not yet explored or experienced literature that could continue to help deepen and enrich my interpretations towards this question. Nevertheless, I endeavor to present a perspective that will demand my own growth and transformation, as it will re-signify my commitment towards a praxis that absorbs Sikh written and oral literatures, and is thus working for the Panth's upliftment towards the ultimate commands and aspirations of our Gurūs, our Spiritual-Sovereigns.

Diving into Sikh Memory

ਪੂਜਾ ਅਕਾਲ ਕੀ ਪਰਚਾ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਦਾ ਦੀਦਾਰ ਖ਼ਾਲਸੇ ਦਾ[163]

We worship the Deathless One! The Sabad is our only study! Our aim is this View of the Khālsā!

Out of the many nāre[164] that I have grown up listening to within Sikh spaces, this one has stuck with me in its succinct approach to outlining Sikhī's belief and pedagogical structure. In my discussion of Sikh memory then, I will use these three phrases to describe the framework that I believe Sikh praxis is established upon.

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[163]This is one of the many slogans of the Khālsā Sikhs. I've grown up hearing these phrases, but am not aware of the original source of their development.

[164] **Nāre**: slogan, motto, catchphrase of a group

Sikh memory is dedicated to the 'worship of the Timeless/Deathless Oneness that pervades and expands continuously.' This is the basic premise behind Gurū Nānak Dev jī's message to the world. As shared briefly in the beginning of this paper, the beginning of Gurū Granth Sāhib jī is known as the *Japjī Sāhib,* and it is considered the 'thesis' of Sikh thought. Its structure is the following: (1) Mūl Mantra, (2) Title, (3) Salok, (4) 38 Paur(r)īs, (4) Salok[165]. The Mūl Mantra, also known in other variations as the Bīj or Māhā Mantra[166] and often referred to as the Manglācharan[167], is the starting point that the Gurū is asking Sikhs, or any student of Oneness, to keep in their awareness. It begins with the word that I have written a few different times: ੧ੴ, or Ik Oa(n)kār, which represents two words, two manifestations of Oneness joined together to eliminate duality, and thus manifest as the third form of 'Sabad' or 'the Word'[168]. The first part, 'ik', is the actual number '1' within Panjābī, and other languages, and is representative of what is called the nirgun rūp, or the form that has no qualities, of Oneness. Essentially, it is referring to the intangible, things like what we term as force, energy, life, breath/wind, spirit/soul, etc., and making clear that this all is referring to 'the One'. Joined with it is the term 'oa(n)kār' which is often broken down into 'oa(n)' and 'akār'. The first term is often interpreted to refer to the concept of "Om", that most are often introduced to through meditation and postures of the yogic tradition. It represents the manifestation of the sargun rūp, the form that is of qualities/characteristics, of Oneness. In other words, this means to refer to the tangible reality that we experience through our senses, bodies, minds, etc. Within in the many exegesis of the Mūl Mantra of Gurū Nānak,[169] I particularly connected to the idea that the power of 'oa(n)gkār'

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[165] Guru Nanak Dev ji et al., "Guru Granth Sahib Ji.": 1-8

[166] **Mūl**: 'origin', 'original'; Bīj means 'seed' or 'origin'; **Māhā**:'greatest' or 'highest'. Each word when paired with mantra is referring to the Mūl mantra at the beginning of Gurū Granth Sāhib jī, but in varying lengths. I will not get into the various usage meanings, but the point is that the most consistent part of each mantra is ੴ. We will further explore that as this discussion continues.

[167]Manglācharan, according to the Mahān Kosh, 'the great encyclopedia' by Kāhn Singh Nābhā, translates it is 'ਉਤਸਵ ਦਾ ਰਸਮ', or the rite needed to proceed with the celebration/ceremony/festival. It was defined in the beginning of this paper, but I am sharing a bit more information/meaning. In other words, it is the primary benediction done prior to proceeding with the task at hand. The concept of Manglācharan is deep, and can be particularly felt through the tradition of Gurbānī Sangīt or Kīrtan, which is essentially the musical praxis that accompanies the sharing of Gurbānī. Kīrtan plays a massive role in the progression and foundation of SIkh memory, and will be discussed extensively as well. Had I had more opportunity, I would have properly shared important quotes and citations from the work of Bhāī Baldeep Singh, specifically his article, *What is Kīrtan?*, which is a trove of knowledge and insight into the realm of kīrtan.

[168] Bhai Nand Lal ji. "ਤੀਨ ਰੂਪ ਹੈ ਮੋਹਿ ਕੇ ਸੁਨਹੁ ਨੰਦ ਚਿਤੁ ਲਾਇ ॥.https://www.igurbani.com/shabad/khuv?verse=m2zb; Brahm Bichar - Sant Giani Inderjeet Singh Raqbewale.

[169] I would particularly recommend the translation of Japjī Sāhib compiled by Kamalprīt Singh Pardeshī, who listened to the katha from individiuals like Sant Giānī Gurbachan Singh Bhindrānwāle and Sant Harī Singh Randhāwāvāle and translated it to English for more accessible reading, especially for Sikhs in the diaspora.

is that it is referring to the propagation of reality through sound and how intimately that is tied through experience. In addition, no matter what the state of one's body may be, the idea of 'vibration' is inherent to the way sound also occurs. Thus, the human body can never be separated from sound or vibration, even if one was to lose sensory capabilities, because it is a sound that springs forth from the consciousness that does not need to be attached to any of the five senses.

When you examine these two forms of Oneness, the formless and formed, you have a complete reality that is then referred to as the form of sabad, or shabad. As stated earlier, sabad literally means 'the Word,' and colloquially is often used as a term of reverence for the particular writings of within Gurū Granth Sāhib jī, and Sri Dasam Granth Sāhib jī. The reason why this is now often referred to as the third form of the One, is because of a similar reasoning that Maracle too shares about the 'sacredness of words', but of course rooted in a different canon. Specifically, by understanding that the non-dual Oneness is constantly present within and without reality, the Word, or the shabad, helps one to understand the sacredness and mystery of the reality that is both beyond and within the realm of human sense. It is a reality that is immediately accessible to the body and mind, but it is also inaccessible in that the only aspect that can connect with a non-tangible reality is the non-tangible consciousness that exists behind the individual.

This perhaps is a bit confusing to non-Sikh readers, and so I will move to employ specific examples of how these ideas are conceptualized, not necessarily formulaically (i.e. this is the 'ik' part of this example, this is the 'oa(n)kār' part, etc.), but to help us dive deeper into Gurū Nānak Dev jī's discussion of experience. One widely used metaphor is that of the droplet of water merging within the ocean[170]. The premise is that we, human beings, are like droplets of water stranded within a mountaintop. As life begins we begin to descend, winding our ways down and trying to find the ways through which we can let gravity work to bring us closer to the foot of the mountain. As the water droplet goes through this journey, it begins to believe that it is unique. It

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[170] Guru Arjan Dev ji, "ਜਲ ਤਰੰਗੁ ਜਿਉ ਜਲਹਿ ਸਮਾਇਆ ॥." In addition, please consider the following passage from Bhāī Nand Lal jī, which carries the metaphor above: ਹਮਚੂ ਕਤਰਾ ਕੂ ਬਦਰਿਆ ਦਰ ਫ਼ਤਾਦ ਐਨ ਦਰਿਆ ਗਸ਼ਤੋ ਵਸਲਸ਼ ਦਸਤਦਾਦ ॥ ੨੮੮ ॥ ਕਤਰਾ ਚੂੰ ਸ਼ੁਦ ਬਦਰਿਆ ਆਸ਼ਨਾ ਬਾ�ਦ ਅਜ਼ਾਂ ਤਫ਼ਰੀਕ ਨਤਵਾਂ ਸ਼ੁਦ ਜ ਜਾ ॥ ੨੮੯ ॥ਕਤਰਾ ਚੂੰ ਜਾਨਿਬਿ ਦਰਿਆ ਸ਼ਤਾਫ਼ਤ ਅਜ਼ ਰਹਿ ਤਫ਼ਰੀਕ ਖ਼ੁਦ ਰਾ ਕਤਰਾ ਯਾਫ਼ਤ ॥ ੨੯੦ ॥ ਕਤਰਾ ਰਾ ਈ ਦੌਲਤਿ ਚੂੰ ਦਸਤਦਾਦ ਕਤਰਾ ਸ਼ੁਦ ਅੰਦਰੂੰ ਹਕੀਕਤ ਬਾ-ਮੁਰਾਦ ॥ ੨੯੧ ॥ ਗੁਫ਼ਤ ਮਨ ਯੱਕ ਕਤਰਾ ਆਬੀ ਬੂਦਾ ਅਮ ਪੈਹਨਿ ਦਰਿਆ ਰਾ ਚੁਨਾਂ ਪੈਮੂਦਾ ਅੰਮ ॥ ੨੯੨ ॥ ਗਰ ਮਰਾ ਦਰ ਬਾਜ਼ ਰਾਹਿ ਲੁਤਫ਼ਿ ਖ਼ੇਸ਼ ਵਾਸਿਲ ਖ਼ੁਦ ਕਰਦ ਅਜ਼ ਅੰਦਾਜ਼ਾ ਬੇਸ਼ ॥ ੨੯੩ ॥ ਹਮਚੂ ਮੌਜ ਅਜ਼ ਪੈਹਨਿ ਦਰਿਆ ਰੂ ਨਮੂਦ ਮੌਜ ਗਸ਼ਤ ਵਾ ਕਰਦ ਦਰਿਆ ਰਾ ਸਜੂਦ ॥ ੨੯੪ ॥ ਹਮ ਚੁਨਾਂ ਹਰ ਬੰਦਾ ਕੂ ਵਾਸਿਲ ਅਸਤ ਦਰ ਤਰੀਕਿ ਬੰਦਗੀ ਬਸ ਕਾਮਿਲ ਅਸਤ ॥ ੨੯੫ ॥ ਮੌਜੇ ਦਰਿਆ ਗਰ ਚਿ ਦਰ ਮਾਅਨੀ ਯਕੇਸਤ ਲੇਕ ਅੰਦਰ ਈਨੇ ਆਂ ਫ਼ਰਕੇ ਬਸੇਸਤ ॥ ੨੯੬ ॥ ਮਨ ਯਕੇ ਮੌਜਮ ਤੁ ਬਹਿਰਿ ਬੇਕਰਾਂ ਫ਼ਰਕ ਬਾਸ਼ਦ ਅਜ਼ ਜ਼ਮੀਨੇ ਆਸਮਾਂ ॥ ੨੯੭ ॥ ਮਨ ਨੀਅੰਮ ਈ ਜੁਮਲਾ ਅਜ਼ ਅਲਤਾਫ਼ਿ ਤੁ ਮਨ ਯੱਕ ਮੌਜਮ ਜ ਤਬਆਇ ਸਾਫ਼ਿ ਤੁ ॥ ੨੯੮ ॥ (Bhai Nand Lal ji. "Zindaginama," https://www.igurbani.com/shabad/zzw2?verse=mfam)

believes that its form, its journey, and thus its hardships and its successes are completely unique to itself - it develops an ego. The Gurū describes this water droplet as our minds, and that by reaching a state of yearning and awareness, we can help our minds see that once the water reaches the true end of its journey, and it is swept away to reach the ocean, that once it merges within it, there is no way to merge back out. In other words, you cannot place water back into water and believe that you will get that exact same water droplet back out! The water droplet does not realize that it always was the ocean and that once it also returns to it that it will become it again. Similarly, another metaphor uses sunlight to describe the rays of light merging to become what they all always were, but because we perceive a ray as smaller or less bright than when we 'see' a sunrise or the light from a bright day, we subconsciously view that light as separate or weaker or not necessarily the same as the rays of light that have merged to form the sunrise we see[171].

All in all, this is the core premise of all Sikh thought, and what we believe that every single word in Gurū Granth Sāhib jī is choosing to expand and explain upon, over each of its a(n)gs[172]. The remaining words of the Mūl mantra[173] are further descriptors of the core attributes that Gurū Nānak Dev jī has realized about the Oneness, and here is that list below[174]:

1. ਸਤਿਨਾਮੁ **(Satnām)**: 'sat' is 'truth' or 'reality'; nām is '(the) name' or 'force'. The Name of Reality is 'Ik Oa(n)kār'; Truth is its Name; the signifier, i.e. the label, is Truth/Reality.

2. ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ **(Kartā Purakh)**: 'kartā' is 'doer' or 'does/acts' or 'cares for'; 'purakh' is 'being' or 'form'. The Form is always doing and acting; the One is the Caretaker/Doer; the One Being that is Acting/Doing; the Form/Being that exists through doing/implementing.

3. ਨਿਰਭਉ **(Nirbhau)**: 'nir' is 'without' or 'a prefix denoting emptiness'; 'bhau' is 'fear'. Without fear; fearlessness; the One that is empty of fear.

4. ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ **(Nirvair)**: 'vair' is 'enmity' or 'hatred' or 'enemy' or 'hostility'. Without enmity/hate; the One is empty of hatred; To be without any enemy.

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[171] Guru Arjan Dev ji. "ਸੂਰਜ ਕਿਰਣਿ ਮਿਲੇ ਜਲ ਕਾ ਜਲੁ ਹੂਆ ਰਾਮ ॥." https://www.igurbani.com/shabad/om0y?verse=h3vo.

[172] **A(n)g**: 'limb' or 'part'. Colloquially, a(n)g is used as replacement for the term 'page' for Gurū Granth Sāhib jī out reverence. The Gurū-shabad is manifest through Gurbānī, and its importance within Sikh consciousness is reflected in how the Gurū is referred to then.

[173] Guru Nanak Dev ji et al., "Guru Granth Sahib Ji.": 1

[174] In addition to the sources listed in the beginning of this paper, I extensively used the Mahān Kosh as a guide towards translating word-for-word (Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, ਮਹਾਨ ਕੋਸ਼.).

5. ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ **(Akāl Mūrat)**: 'akāl' is 'opposite of time' or 'outside of time' or 'without time' or 'timeless' or 'immortal' or 'deathless' or 'without an end'; 'mūrat' is 'form' or 'idol'. The Form of Immortality; the Deathless one; the Idol of Deathlessness; the One whose Form is Beyond Time; the One whose Form is without Time.

6. ਅਜੂਨੀ **(Ajūnī)**: 'a-' is a 'prefix denoting without' or 'prefix denoting negation'; 'jūnī' is 'the cycle of reincarnation' or 'life and death' or 'this life'. To be without a cycle of life and death; the One is not subjected to birth and death; the One is not within reincarnation; the One is not the life that is stuck in living and dying.

7. ਸੈਭੰ **(Saibha(n))**: 'sai' is 'denoting self-'; 'bha(n)' is 'illuminate'. Self-illuminated; self-illuminating; self-sustaining; to be without the need for external sustenance; to be complete without reliance on any other being.

8. ਗੁਰਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ **(Gurp(r)asād)**: 'gur' is 'gurū - the one who takes a student from darkness to light'; 'p(r)sād' is 'blessing' or 'mercy' or 'gift'. The gift of the Gurū; Blessings of the Gurū; Mercy of the Gurū; the One is shared by the Power of the Gurū.

These are the core components of reality that shape our experience, and yet, because we become attached to the 'version of the world' that is transitory or always set to fade, we do not manifest these qualities. In other words, this is not about cultivating a state of fearlessness or hatelessness, but rather understanding that these forms/attributes are naturally *already you*. There is no cultivating something that exists as an infinite force within you. By approaching this mantra as if these are qualities that can be increased, you are actually inserting your own self and attaching temporal versions to yourself as an object.

This is where an important idea also comes into play that I have mentioned a few times: ego. In Sikh parlance, this ideas is reflected specifically through the word ਹਉਮੈ, or haumai, which means literally to be "I me", or 'I am me'. The development of a self that attaches itself to temporality is a natural process in most societies, but the Gurū is arguing that this is the exact reason why this process must be stopped and broken. Instead of focusing on a force that compels life forward, you begin to attach yourself to the object of life itself. This can also be confusing in that we just spoke about the sargun form of the One. It is true that the One who Creates is also manifest in its own Creation, but the difference in this is the quality of ego that cultivates its

connections and responses to this Creation as linked to its own individuation. Here it would be prudent to mention then what is commonly referred to as the 'five thieves' of the mind[175]:

1. ਕਾਮ **(Kām)**: excessive desire or lust or, plainly, desire.
2. ਕ੍ਰੋਧ **(Krodh)**: anger or deep frustration.
3. ਲੋਭ **(Lobh)**: greed or overconsumption or pursuing the things of others.
4. ਮੋਹ **(Moh)**: worldly attachment or being in a state of unconsciousness towards reality or being unaware towards the transitory nature of the world.
5. ਅਹੰਕਾਰ **(Aha(n)kār)**: excessive pride or a state of pride towards what you believe are your accomplishments or arrogance

These five qualities are considered the servants of the ego, and this is why they are described as thieves who steal the states of contentment, peace, and acceptance from the individual, constantly. In one particularly powerful bānī of Gurū Gobind Singh, within Srī Sarabloh Granth jī, there is a metaphorical battle between two generals Bibek (Discernment) and Abibek (Ignorance)[176]. In this battle, Kām faces 'restraint', 'celibacy', and 'critical thinking of the world/reality'; Krodh faces 'forgiveness', 'softness', and 'humility'; lastly, Lobh faces 'contentment' and 'forbearance'[177]. In another section of Srī Sarabloh Granth, Gurū jī specifically talks about the types of qualities that the Khālsā is expected to manifest and the ones to avoid. This list is much longer, essentially ten on each side of the list. For qualities to adhere towards they are: (1) compassion, (2) charity, (3) forgiveness, (4) bathing, (5) pure of character, (6) faith in truthfulness, (7) accomplished in practice, (8) a warrior, (9) embrace devotion, (10) faithfulness[178]. In contrast, Gurū jī tells that the following must be avoided: (1) harsh hostility, (2) a practice of violence, (3) arrogance, (4) laziness, (5) frugality, (6) cold-heartedness, (7) foolishness, (8) wearing dirty clothes, (9) impurity, (10) eating Halāl meat[179]. There are many qualities that we have mentioned here, but there is also an expansion of what the Khālsā is asked to approach and inculcate in their lifestyles towards to fulfill the mission of the Gurū.

Sikh memory then is constructed in ways that pursues Oneness not just in devotional practice but also considers the means and temporal ways that those qualities interact with the world. Many often assume that the message is that devotion to Oneness is primarily

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[175] Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, ਮਹਾਨ ਕੋਸ਼.
[176] Singh, "Virtues vs Vices in Sarbloh."
[177] Ibid.
[178] Singh, "Khalsa in Sarbloh - Qualities of a Khalsa."
[179] Ibid.

'non-worldly', that it is the development of a state of apathy that is a sign of Oneness, but I believe that Gurū Sāhib is very careful, in many ways, about avoiding such a message. Particularly, in the fact that the cultivation of qualities that break individuality as the driving force behind one's life, in of itself, pushes the person to pursue relationality with everything and everyone around them. This in addition, because the individual is seeking to erase themselves as an ego, there is a priority to also cultivate environments that can help others learn to access and stabilize towards a discerning disposition that also keeps them from building attachment to the world. When one is detached from something, it does not mean that care, love, and empathy dissipate, but rather that once the individual can understand that all things come to an end, we can recognize the force or energy that will always remain and connect to every being around us in a completely creative awareness. The Gurū was particularly against traditional spiritual approaches that chose to separate themselves from the world, because, in my interpretation, it seems impossible to believe that you are separate when you still exist in the same body, in the same environments, and general sameness that each being interacts with and effects through their own actions. Contemporarily, this is a very strong reason that is often propagated by environmental movements that the actions that each individual to each nation does in one part of the world can inherently create negative consequences for other peoples and countries in a completely different region. Thus, again, the question that the Gurū poses to the Sikhs is a question that, at its heart, is about understanding that Oneness is inseparable from materializing action by understanding the responsibilities, actions, and praxis that we contextualize throughout any and all cultures.

Where do we choose to go when we understand this idea? That, at its core, Sikh memory begins with ੧ਓ and moves towards building a way of life that can best help us to reach it. In another very contentious and debated portion of Sikh praxis is the development of plurality. In other words, there are many different jathās (group, sects, etc.), sampardāe (schools of thought), and offshoots that have appeared within Sikh history - emphasizing devotion towards various qualities and thus to different modes of sevā (selfless service). Before I enter this short discussion of the various manifestations of Sikh practice, I would like to establish that the primary discussion that occurred can be understood through a very simple 'binary': Simran-Sevā. Simran is essentially to 'embody the mantra'. It is to the practice of constantly realizing that the mantra can be embodied and lived through every breath, and every action. That

is the foundation of everything Sikhī offers, and on the other hand we see the idea of sevā. Sevā as I said is service, but it is particularly engaging in the sargun qualities/form and engaging in selflessness as action. Often, this is often interpreted as acts like volunteering at a soup kitchen, donating to a charity, cleaning a place of worship, etc. However, Gurū Sāhib interestingly transforms our understanding of this idea by making it clear that the purpose of sevā is to break the ego, to break the Haumai. In this understanding, acts of service are not inherently good, in of themselves, until the mind orients itself to understand why and how this is lessening its pride and attachment to the world. As an example, it can feel like a good act to participate in a soup kitchen or food pantry and volunteer even just ten percent of your time every week to being at the kitchen/pantry to help out. However, what happens when the mind is not keeping itself aware of what it is doing, then it could create sudden manifestations of the worst forms of the five thieves than we could imagine. Instead of serving those who need a different type of support and understanding that everyone is an equal, regardless of access, one can begin to develop a fear towards the loss of your own access to food and groceries. Inherently, this fear comes about because the truth is that you do not see an equal vision between yourself and the one who you serve. In fact, you see yourself as superior because it subconsciously means that you saw the act of coming to a food pantry for support as something that you could never want to do or engage in. In this way, one loses the 'profits' of committing an action of service because they have attached themselves to an expression of ego that cannot accept the nature or ways of life. This is just one example of how ego develops in these situations, and while it may not be the way you might see this situation develop, it nevertheless is a consideration to reflect upon when we see something as an act of service.

We go towards the One then because we understand that death, transition, and change are all natural processes, are all inevitable pieces of an experience that develops the mind to react and be within a state of discontent, fear, and duality. The Sikhs see this state of living and understand that the Gurū is advocating for this path because it allows the person to bring the heroes, the divine characters, the personalities that we see in story and history into a personal, practical, and possible experience! There are various moments in Sikh history that have been immortalized through story and reflect the types of states of Oneness that we are trying to also embody in the world today. This is the view of the Khālsā.

Returning, 'choosing directionality' has seen plural manifestations within the Sikh Panth. I will again try to be brief due to the limited scope of this project. In how I am viewing this plurality within the Sikhs, there are two major groups within the Panth: the Sehajdhārīs and the Khālsā. Within these two groups we see many smaller groups propagate and practice Sikhī in unique ways. Firstly, Sehajdhārī literally means 'the ones who engage in praxis through equipoise or calm'. In other words, it is usually a term that is associated with Sikhs who have not made a commitment to the Khālsā and are committed to the model of Simran-Sevā, but, generally, these are also groups that recognize and support the role and status of the Khālsā within the grander tradition of the Sikhs. Within the Khālsā, there are various groups that emphasize various aspects of Simran-Sevā depending on certain interpretations, like which of the various Indic granths are explored as the canon that forms their approach to understanding Gurū Granth Sāhib jī, the status and reverence given to weaponry, and disposition towards sevā. In a YouTube documentary series, the channel Khālsānāmā is exploring the development of Sikhī over the course of the Singh Sabhā movement and also diving deeply into the effects this movement, as a response to the colonial regime, had in terms of the discourse and acceptance around diverse non-Khālsā groups as well as what the Khālsā should look like as well[180].

Overall, we have explored that Sikh memory is rooted in Gurū Nānak Dev jī's exploration and re-declaration of the praxis of ੧ੳ, as expounded upon through the Mūl Mantra and the rest of the *Japjī Sāhib* (which we will return too for continued reference and analysis). From this understanding, we also discussed the qualities that the Sikh, and particularly the Khālsā, are told to avoid and the ones they should shape themselves towards. The purpose behind this is once again is to cultivate a praxis that allows the mind to defeat its "I"-ness, thus embodying the Oneness that endlessly exists within them. This system can also be described as the realm of Simran, or the practice of repetition which intends to embody the One, and in tandem is the system of Sevā, that seeks to erase the ego through approaching service as ego-destroying. The ways Sevā manifests is could also be seen as inclusive to a pluralistic, or diverse, approach that, while often thought of as service exclusively, I am expanding to use as a way to understand the formation of different groups of Sikhs, which historically have fallen

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[180] There have been many other writers and scholars that have explored the impact of the Singh Sabhā movement on the crystallization of Sikhī, especially given the pressures to understand Sikhī within the label of religion. I would recommend readers pursue this area of research seriously as it is one of the most impactful movements that has shaped current Sikh sensibilities. I would again recommend the Khālsānāmā channel on YouTube for more in-depth analysis and review of the impacts of the Singh Sabhā movement.

within two broad categories, (one that we have discussed at the length, and is the primary subject of this project) the Khālsā and the Sehajdhārī Sikhs. In the interpretation that I have presented before you, this is what I believe to drive all Sikh understandings of moving and acting within the world. We will now use this understanding to dive into the first piece of discussion: land.

Engaging in the Re-evaluation Sikh Responsibilities and Relationality to Land

In Maracle's discussion of land, she speaks to Salish relationality with salmon and thus the broader network of care that is required to ensure the continuance of the diverse life that Salish peoples are responsible towards. Her approach is rooted in thousands of years of history that many Indigenous peoples have of developing deep-rooted connections to the processes and relationships that exist between the flora, fauna, and human beings, and, even as cultures change and build new traditions and practice, the relationality between the environment and its peoples was a constant. Due to the nature of Maracle's understanding of responsibility, she is clear that the subjugation and limitations placed upon Indigenous peoples did not diminish or limit their attitudes towards their responsibilities. The distinction, that I am interpreting, is that while worldly authorities stripped power from Indigenous peoples to make way for colonial empire, spiritual obligations still rooted Indigenous peoples to understand the seriousness of still maintaining and understanding original lifeways. I am deeply thankful for this approach to land relationships and will borrow this approach in discussing the following themes for Sikhs: what are the often understood approaches that Sikhs take towards land; what responsibilities do they cultivate; lastly, does this actually re-imagine our understanding of ideas like 'territory' or 'property'?

As shared in earlier discussions, Sikhs, especially during the Khālsā period, are seen as having grander aspirations to acquire territory to propagate Khālsā rule and fulfill the promise and command of Gurū Gobind Singh Mahārāj. However, I'd like to begin with a few references to the idea of 'land', abstractly, as shared throughout Gurbānī and include this as a foundation into how to think about the development of the Khālsā. The word 'land' is used colloquially, with some being used in Gurbānī, through various words: ਧਰਤੀ (dharthī), ਲੋਅ (lo(a)), ਜਮੀਨ (jamīn), ਭੂਮੀ (bhūmī), ਥਲ (thhal), ਮੰਡਲ (ma(n)dal), ਦੇਸ਼ (desh), ਰਾਜ (rāj), ਜਾਗੀਰ (jāgīr), and ਭੋ-ਸੰਪਤੀ (bho(n)-sa(n)pthī), to name a few. Many words have different connotations and meanings attached with them - some speak specifically about the land itself as a 'realm', about it as acquiring territory, sometimes ownership over land, such as property. In Gurbānī, they are also

used to describe different relationships and roles that people play with land - farmers, shepherds, kings, landlords (feudal system), cultivators, etc. In addition, outside of this examination of land as "earth and dirt", there are vast numbers of references to different animals, plants, and non-living beings and the lessons that one can learn from them in that process.

Generally speaking, I believe that, in Gurbānī, the way most references are made is to talk about a particular dynamic and/or quality that can be understood as relating to connecting with the qualities of the One, such as the ones we mentioned in the previous section. I would like to give an example that I believe can help us with a glimpse of understanding how observation, connection, relation, and action are intermingled within sabad, particularly when looking at examples of land.

Please consider the translation/interpretation of the following shabad,[181]:
Sorat, Mehlā 1 (written by Gurū Nānak Dev jī), 'House' 1. (Hey Father! If I am to become a plowman/farmer then let me do it in this way,) Make my mind the plowman/farmer, make effort and humility the water, and consider my body to be land/field/farm to which the work should be done. Let Nām become the seed (I plant), make contentment the plow (to ready the fields), and let your appearance reflect your work, simple and humble. By acting (and stewarding the field of the body) through love (and blessings from the Supreme One) you will see the sprouts begin to emerge. Thus, this is how your home (or property/estate) will achieve and see the true flourishing. 1. Bābā, māyā (property, wealth, material objects/goods, etc., i.e. worldly things that are described as illusions) does not go back with anyone! Māyā has brought the entire world into her trance, only those rare few (one in a million) will understand this truth. Pause. (Hey Father! If you wish for me to open a store, let me do it in this way,) Make my age (the remaining life-breaths inside my body) the store instead and let the merchandise I sell be the tools of devotion towards Nām (kīrtan, bhagtī, simran). Make my intellect/consciousness and my ability of reflection/contemplation the warehouse that keeps my merchandise of Nām (safe and available). (I'll) Make my deals with

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[181] Guru Nanak Dev ji et al., "Guru Granth Sahib Ji.": ਸੋਰਠਿ ਮਹਲਾ ੧ ਘਰੁ ੧॥ ਮਨੁ ਹਾਲੀ ਕਿਰਸਾਣੀ ਕਰਣੀ ਸਰਮੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਤਨੁ ਖੇਤੁ॥ ਨਾਮੁ ਬੀਜੁ ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਸੁਹਾਗਾ ਰਖੁ ਗਰੀਬੀ ਵੇਸੁ॥ ਭਾਉ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਿ ਜੰਮਸੀ ਸੇ ਘਰ ਭਾਗਠ ਦੇਖੁ॥੧॥ ਬਾਬਾ ਮਾਇਆ ਸਾਥਿ ਨ ਹੋਇ॥ ਇਨਿ ਮਾਇਆ ਜਗੁ ਮੋਹਿਆ ਵਿਰਲਾ ਬੂਝੈ ਕੋਇ॥ਰਹਾਉ॥ ਹਾਣੁ ਹਟੁ ਕਰਿ ਆਰਜਾ ਸਚੁ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਿ ਵਥੁ॥ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਸੋਚ ਕਰਿ ਭਾਂਡਸਾਲ ਤਿਸੁ ਵਿਚਿ ਤਿਸਨੋ ਰਖੁ॥ ਵਣਜਾਰਿਆ ਸਿਉ ਵਣਜੁ ਕਰਿ ਲੈ ਲਾਹਾ ਮਨ ਹਸੁ॥੨॥ ਸੁਣਿ ਸਾਸਤ ਸਉਦਾਗਰੀ ਸਤੁ ਘੋੜੇ ਲੈ ਚਲੁ॥ ਖਰਚੁ ਬੰਨੁ ਚੰਗਿਆਈਆ ਮਤੁ ਮਨ ਜਾਣਹਿ ਕਲੁ॥ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਕੈ ਦੇਸਿ ਜਾਹਿ ਤਾ ਸੁਖਿ ਲਹਹਿ ਮਹਲੁ॥੩॥ ਲਾਇ ਚਿਤੁ ਕਰਿ ਚਾਕਰੀ ਮੰਨਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਿ ਕੰਮੁ॥ ਬੰਨੁ ਬਦੀਆ ਕਰਿ ਧਾਵਣੀ ਤਾ ਕੋ ਆਖੈ ਧੰਨੁ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਵੇਖੈ ਨਦਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਚੜੈ ਚਵਗਣ ਵੰਨੁ॥੪॥੨॥

shoppers/dealers that wish to trade in Nām (the sathsangath) and by doing this I will earn the best profits - my mind will be able to rejoice and be so satisfied. 2. (At this stage, Bābā Kālū jī asked that Gurū jī if those options do not satisfy you, become a trader of horses instead. Gurū jī responds,) Make listening to the praises of the One - such as the old granths and literatures of the past - the business, and the horses will be the qualities of character, truth, and contentment that I take with me. Collect all of the actions based in goodness and virtue, for these will be payment for your life-expenses. (Be careful, my mind) Do not put off the effort to ensure that your business is profitable (here and now!). When it is time to the country of the Formless Oneness (and you have done your best to bring back the best merchandise as your offering), you shall come to find the ultimate peace (and have no regrets) within the presence of the One. 3. (Hearing this, Bābā Kālū jī spoke to his son, if trading does not work either, then maybe try to find an occupation/job/service to spend your time within. Gurū jī responded,) Make your consciousness rest within the feet of the One Deathless Form, and consider that your service/occupation. Make the work of such an occupation be the practice of accepting the Nām. Make your work, that makes you run around to complete it, restraint and control from the grips of misdeeds, and the qualities that promote them; only by doing this, can you receive the greatest praise from your Master. Nānak says, (this is the way to receive the best results) once you are able to receive the Sight of the One Master, you will be given the color of the One, four times over. 4.2.

In this first sabad, I used the tīkās I mentioned in the beginning of this project to aid in my translation/interpretation. Particularly in the Farīdkot Tīkā, we gain a very interesting context that the impetus of writing this particular bānī was to document a conversation between Gurū Nānak Dev jī and his father, Bābā Kālū jī. Here we see that Gurū jī's father is asking Gurū Nānak Dev jī to find some work or source of income through which he can increase his wealth and engage in the natural progression of a young person's life. Gurū jī responds by providing what he is hoping to achieve through those lines of work and how he understands them to be. All of these metaphors are also ripe throughout Gurbānī, and present two major points for us to reflect upon. Firstly, Gurū jī is using available roles and experiences to reflect how this can be understood through the One. In other words, they are connecting various roles and actions and transforming how they are considered in regard to 'mastery' over the body and mind. In addition to mastery, I

believe Gurū jī is also very practical in that, if those types of qualities or values are also applied to those types of roles, the material profits or standards or outputs could be done in an exceptional way. Farming, business, trade, service, etc. are all opportunities, no matter how worldly they are, to understand how the process can be reflected back internally. Bringing me to my second point, which is also more contextualization for the praxis of Sikh lifeways, engaging in the world is a command and part of the spiritual aspects of Sikhī. Specifically, Gurū Nānak Dev jī was not necessarily telling us through this shabad that he believes those roles are in of themselves undoable, but rather it is a reflection in the conversation between himself and his father on what he wishes to gain from that experience.

Connecting to these previously mentioned issues, this speaks to how we come to understand our contemporary roles and responsibilities. Some may take the interpretation that I have shared as a means to say that any and all roles or occupations can be reflective of the Oneness and transformed by it. What I would say in response is that is a question, based on the example listed in the beginning of this project, could we transform the role of the police officer or army official in a state like the United States or Canada into one that reflects and embodies the qualities of true love, compassion, mercy, discernment, forgiveness, etc.? Perhaps they could be transformed, but transformation means that the root that exists must be stable and permanent. The root of the role of the police officer has been shown to be connected to histories of slavery, carceral punishment, brutality through the subjugation of peoples, and racist, classist, and misogynist praxis. All of this would mean that, fundamentally, such roles would need to undergo complete erasure or erasure to be sprouted anew from the soil. Similarly, the process that Gurū Nānak Dev jī describes here, even "outside of" the context of a conversation between themself and their father, is the planting of a seed of Nām that is cultivated through qualities that have shown to be untenable with current systems of surveillance, violence, and carcerality that are upheld by the policing system in the United States. These ideas should not be taken as mystical, in the sense that they are talking about transcendence as the only 'real experience.' Rather, the Gurū's methods are completely grounded within a praxis of transformation that uses knowledge, intellect, discernment, practicality, humility, and more to enact or destroy institutions that run contrary to what the concept and embodiment of Oneness creates within the consciousness.

There is a wide breadth of discussions and usages of concepts related to 'land' and 'Earth' that I will not be able to continue to explore in this project. However, what I believe is

important in the discussion we have just entertained, is that for the Gurū, and what I believe is true for many Indigenous peoples across the world, is that every aspect of life comes down to experience. In particular, the lands we are born into play a direct role in the ways we come to see and interact with the world around us, but we often look towards land now through the lens of strict boundaries and borders that limit our movement. Gurū Nānak Dev jī, at the age of 31, spent approximately 24 years traveling, what is now estimated to be 28,000 kilometers, in what are called the Udāsīs[182]. The time period, the state of discourse, the development of spirituality, the state of empires of the time, etc. all had important influences on Gurū Sāhib's interactions with the people of the time, and his ability to go from place to place. That was the beginning of Gurū Nānak Dev jī cultivating and asking people questions about their understanding of the 'One, Ever-Expanding Sound.' Similarly, by the time of the formalization of the Khālsā, movement was an important part of the Panth that remained. Many of the Gurūs created towns/cities at various locations across Panjāb, and the general region, and were highly involved with creating co-existing spaces with many of the locals, various traditions, and other travelers or pilgrims that wished to also join the new kind of societies that were springing up through the guidance of the Gurū.

In a brief summary, we have considered the following: when thought about through the remembrance of ੴ, we can understand that while land is a reflection of the social and political dynamics of a particular space/context, the embodiment praxis of Nām allows for an expansive approach towards these social/political dynamics by considering the universal *and* the 'plural' as one and the same. When considering this type of 'visible' contradiction, we see that the Gurū transforms it into a concept that finds equilibrium when you are able to *experience* that the Oneness is the acceptance of the body, mind, and consciousness as one form that constantly transforms itself into 'many.[183]' In addition to this understanding, we briefly discussed the ways that these experiences have been interpreted, especially contemporarily, to not necessarily be tied to the material conditions that exist around them. However, I believe that it is made clear in many pre-colonial dialogues/literatures that temporalities of Sikhī included political and social strategies and disruptions inside of what we understand as the spiritual praxis of Sikhī, like Nām

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[182] Kaur, Daljit. "An Apologue Guru Nanak: Globetrotter or a Pioneer" 9, no. 6 (n.d.): Please refer to figure 1 in the article to be given a sense of the breadth of Gurū Nānak Dev jī's travels.

[183] **Ek-Anek**: One-Many. The idea that the One is constantly transforming themselves into the Many, and vice versa. In other words, the nirgun and sargun forms of Vāhigurū are constantly melding and molding within each other. Please consider Professor Mandair's discussion of this concept within his *Sikh Philosophy* book as well.

simran and Kīrtan. Thus, when transforming something through Nām, which we could consider as the framing of Gurmat (way of the Gurū), it means to destroy that 'thing', "I"-ness, to understand the ways that Oneness sprouts into form(s) and cultivation of qualities that remind us of our ever-present embodiment of Oneness. Lastly, we culminated in a final consideration on the idea that land, during the human Gurū period, was also linked with experiencing it - which again reflects that embodiment of Nām was not as simple as just an internal process, even if it must start and end there. As such, we reflected upon the fact that all of the Gurūs were highly mobile and interacted very intentionally within their local and regional communities, enough so that there are clear historical points that we can see that the Gurūs were establishing and transforming spaces into a 'new' villages, towns, and cities to strengthen every person's Nām praxis. This ability to ensure that the livelihoods and spiritual practices of people would be in balance with one another is an important detail within Sikh history that I believe speaks to responsibility towards land, and something that I hope to discuss further in a future project.

In conclusion, Gurmat's praxis of land is one that sees the lessons and value behind every living and non-living being behind it and endeavors for the creation of spaces that can innovate, adapt, and grow towards ultimately ensuring stability and harmony between all beings that share that space. Our responsibility then is the ability to discern when moments of building peace, growth, and safety can become available, in tandem with the discernment of conditions and treatment of peoples that are being oppressed by larger systems and our responsibilities to then engage in warfare and martial practice to protect the dignities and freedoms of peoples to cultivate a Nām praxis.

Throughout the late-17th and early-18th century, when the Khālsā moved place-to-place and engaged in warfare, they were intimately tying their efforts to the richness of Gurbānī that grounded them within the propagation of Oneness that respects and helps various peoples thrive. Even within the period of Sikh rule, where we can see issues levied against Rājā Ranjīt Singh's character and style of governance, the ruling class was diverse and encouraged the building of spaces like mandirs and mosques, alongside the many investments in Sikh spaces. In this, I believe lies the lesson that that we implicitly understand about things like territory and property: when righteousness and Oneness are the root of the actions taken to acquire them, then the objective of dissolving your ego, even amidst that type of power, can transform how governance and rule proceed can proceed.

The Land itself holds the memories, secrets, and contexts of our bodies because it is the one that birthed us and allows us to come into existence. In this way, Gurū Sāhibs themselves have given us the unique opportunity to learn from various contexts and metaphors as to how we should consider seeing the world and the establishment of things like territory, rule, and property. Tied directly to this is conversations around sovereignty, or the right to self-govern and/or self-rule, which we will now explore in this next section.

Conclusion and Future Project Considerations

Within this paper, I have endeavored to bring forward a narrative that considers the following. Firstly, we have explored the creation of the Khālsā itself, and then retroactively considered the first origins of Sikh praxis as well. This is to help ground our discussion into what the contexts we should be aware of regarding the Khālsā's creation, but also it was for an explicit re-understanding of how we should consider the development of ideas like land, sovereignty, and belonging. In order to deepen this, I moved forward with an analysis of Lee Maracle's *Memory Serves: Oratories*, which I completed with the idea that by understanding how Salish memory is structured and then its subsequent applications into land relation, sovereignty building, and belonging, we could also build such a bridge more authentically for diaspora Sikhs. Finally, I came to my final section that structured Sikh memory in ways that I felt were more honest with its priorities, and then how this could then move forward within considerations the diaspora needs to make about material conditions surrounding settler-colonialism and capitalism.

Due to the nature and scope of this project, I could not engage in further discussion of the transformation and clarity of topics of sovereignty and belonging in Sikh praxis, as facilitated through the dialogue encountered in Maracle's *Memory Serves*. Thus, I instead have used this project to establish the framing towards sovereignty and belonging. For sovereignty, I believe that the considerations that Maracle shares can push us towards further discussion on how Sikh sovereignty must consider and contend with its hyper-masculinization over course of colonialism and thus the general exclusion of women. For belonging, the discussion of orality by Maracle helps us to reflect on what types of institutions, practices, traditions, and communities are we investing in, such that it can actually help a growing diaspora keep in mind the 'homeland' it still embodies. Once I have further established the purposes behind these reinterpretations and their effects on Sikh praxis in the diaspora, I will consider the process of pedagogy through Dr. Nesha

Haniff's work, such that it can develop programs or institutions in the diaspora that, grounded in Sikhī, can challenge settler-coloniality and capital.

It is my understanding that Sikhī natural development was always the Khālsā because struggles for justice, from Gurū Nānak Dev jī and beyond, have always been intimately linked to the empowerment of marginalized peoples, so that anyone can cultivate a practice that is within the flow of our 'original instructions' - to act within dharam, righteousness, that is held up through the strings of compassion and humility, to build a world that allows the universal praxis of Nām to become the foundation of cultures, heritages, traditions, and ways of life.

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