



Image: Guru Nanak and Raja Sudhar Sain, Jhanda Badhi the carpenter, and Indar Sain (detail), from a manuscript of the Janam Sakhi (Life Stories), 1800s. India; Lahore. Pigments on paper. Asian Art Museum, Gift of the Kapany Collection, 1998.58.19. Photograph © Asian Art Museum.

# THE LANGUAGE OF COLORS: A DISCUSSION OF GURU NANAK'S JANAMSAKHI LIFE STORIES

SATURDAY, FEB 20, 2016  
1-2 PM NORTH COURT  
2-4 PM SAMSUNG HALL

Space is limited. Seating is first come, first seated.

Join us to explore the legacy of Guru Nanak, the first Sikh guru, through the museum's collection of Janamsakhi paintings, which share the miraculous story of his birth and life. The program begins with artist Rupy C. Tut demonstrating traditional miniature painting in the North Court. At 2 PM, the program will continue in Samsung Hall. Guest speakers will include Dr. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh of Colby College; Kamla Kapur, author of *The Singing Guru: Legends and Adventures of Guru Nanak, the First Sikh*; and docent Shivi Legha. Kapur will sing a *shabad* (Sikh hymn) and Qamar Adamjee, associate curator of South Asian and Islamic art, will introduce paintings on display in our collection galleries.

This program is co-sponsored by The Sikh Foundation.



THE  
SIKH FOUNDATION  
*International*

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 **Asian**



# THE LANGUAGE OF COLORS: A DISCUSSION OF GURU NANAK'S JANAMSAKHI LIFE STORIES

FEB. 20, 2016, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco  
1-2PM North Court  
2-4PM Samsung Hall

Co-hosted by the Sikh Foundation & the Asian Art Museum  
www.sikhfoundation.org www.asianart.org

## ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

Dr. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh



Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh is a Professor at Colby College, where she holds the Crawford Family Chair in Religious Studies. She has published extensively in the field of Sikhism, including books entitled *Of Sacred and Secular Desire: An Anthology of Lyrical Writings from the Punjab* (IB Tauris 2012), *Cosmic Symphony* (Sahitya

Akademy, 2008), *The Feminine Principle in the Sikh Vision of the Transcendent* (1993), *Sikhism* (published by Facts on File, and translated into Japanese, 1993) *The Name of My Beloved: Verses of the Sikh Gurus* (Harper Collins 1995; Penguin 2001) and many others. She has received many honors from the Sikh community for her distinguished scholarship. Her views have also been aired on television and radio in America, Canada, England, Ireland, Australia, India, and Bangladesh. She serves as a trustee for the American Institute for Indian Studies, and is on the editorial board of the *History of Religions* and the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*.

### Abstract:

In a symphony of colors and compositional elements, Janamsakhi illustrations record the life of the founder, Guru Nanak (1469-1539). Professor Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh's paper explores how the delightful paintings from the Kapany Unbound Collection use the language of colors to 1) highlight the Guru Granth Sahib, 2) amplify Sikh theological precepts, and 3) express an existential mode of being in the world.

Kamla K. Kapur



Kamla K. Kapur is the author of "The Singing Guru" based on the Janamsakhis (life stories) of Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru. Her other critically acclaimed books include, *Ganesha Goes to Lunch: Classics from Mystic India* (2007, Mandala, USA & Jaico Publishing, 2013), and *Rumi's Tales from the Silk Road, Pilgrimage to*

*Paradise* (Mandala USA and Penguin India, 2009). Kamla is a poet and a playwright as well. Her award winning play, *Kaamiya*, has been touring various cities in India. Ms. Kapur divides her time living in the remote Himalayas and in San Diego, California, with her husband, the artist Payson R. Stevens.

### Reviews of "The Singing Guru":

*"Kamla Kapur has created a Sikh parallel of Homer's Odyssey in the re-imagining of its founder's spiritual journey, cleverly recounted in the voice of a mercurial acolyte."* – Thomas Hoover, author of *Zen Culture and The Moghul*  
*"In this fascinating book, Kamla K. Kapur weaves together facts,*

*legends, folktales, myths, and over forty of Guru Nanak's poems—preserved in the Sikh holy book, the Granth Sahib—to form this captivating depiction of the leader's life. From being seduced by deadly women to almost getting eaten by cannibals, the exciting account presented in The Singing Guru includes moral tales without being proselytizing. Factual details are intermingled with fantasy to produce a symbolic portrait in which humor and imagination combine to convey a profound and entertaining spiritual narrative."* – Dr. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh

Qamar Adamjee



Qamar Adamjee is Associate Curator of South Asian and Islamic Art at the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco where she is currently curating the museum's presentation of the upcoming exhibition *Pearls on a String: Artists, Patrons and Writers at the Great Islamic Courts*. Other recent exhibitions at the Asian include *Yoga, Cyrus Cylinder and*

*Ancient Persia, and Maharaja*; as well as the regularly-changing displays of Indian painting in the South Asia galleries. Qamar comes to the Asian from The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Islamic department, and earned her doctorate in art history from New York University's Institute of Fine Arts. Museum practice has prompted Qamar to find ways to translate history—through art objects—into terms relevant for our present. Her current research interests explore the intersections of the global and vernacular in Indian paintings.

### Abstract

The Janamsakhi stories come alive for devotees and audiences in various ways, such as the spoken word, song, and painting. Each creative medium makes its own impact. The Janamsakhi paintings on view in the galleries reflect the ways in which their artists interpreted and represented well-loved and familiar stories.

Shivi Singh Legha



Shivi Singh Legha is an art historian with a masters degree in art history from Punjab University under the guidance of the renowned Dr. Goswamy. Her interests are in Indian Miniature Paintings and Terracotta Sculptures of (Molela) Rajasthan. She has an abiding interest in the dying art of Phulkari Textiles of Punjab and in the Janam Sakhi Paintings. She

has given lectures, seminars, written and has workshops on Indian art both in the US and India. She lives in the Bay area with her husband and three children .

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Rupy C. Tut



Rupy C. Tut is a San Francisco based traditional miniature painter. Inspired by her Sikh American background, her work explores themes of identity and multiculturalism. She received training in traditional methods of miniature painting from the Prince's School of Traditional Arts in London, England. She is currently an artist-in-residence at the Sikh Foundation focusing on 19th century miniature paintings in the Kapany fine art collection. Her work also includes calligraphy in English, Gurmukhi, and Urdu.