

BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION

RADIO 4

TRANSCRIPT OF "FILE ON 4"- 'SIKH GROUPS'

CURRENT AFFAIRS GROUP

TRANSMISSION: Tuesday 26th February 2008 2000 - 2040

REPEAT: Sunday 2nd March 2008 1700 - 1740

REPORTER: Amardeep Bassey

PRODUCER: David Lewis

EDITOR: David Ross

PROGRAMME NUMBER: 08VQ3935LHO

THE ATTACHED TRANSCRIPT WAS TYPED FROM A RECORDING AND NOT COPIED FROM AN ORIGINAL SCRIPT. BECAUSE OF THE RISK OF MISHEARING AND THE DIFFICULTY IN SOME CASES OF IDENTIFYING INDIVIDUAL SPEAKERS, THE BBC CANNOT VOUCH FOR ITS COMPLETE ACCURACY.

“FILE ON 4”

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ACTUALITY OF INDIAN MUSIC

BASSEY: Britain is home to the largest community of Sikhs outside India – a testimony to the special relationship they have with the UK. With their distinctive looks, the Sikhs are widely viewed as loyal, well-integrated, law-abiding citizens, who live peaceful and often prosperous lives. But on File on 4 tonight, we expose a minority of hardcore Sikh militants prepared to justify the killing of their opponents.

ACTUALITY OF SANGEHRA SPEECH

BASSEY: We also find temples becoming a battleground for the hearts and minds of an increasingly wary community.

ANON: We don't want to go down the road where the Finsbury Park Mosque went down, where Abu Hamza seized control and fundamentalism was spread and he was using that as a base.

BASSEY: Do you think the problem is that serious, that we could be facing an Abu Hamza type scenario in Sikh temples in the UK?

ANON: I can see it coming.

BASSEY: And from India we hear concern that money is being illicitly sent to the sub-continent to fund militant activities in the quest for an independent Sikh homeland called Khalistan.

SIGNATURE TUNE

ACTUALITY IN LUDHIANAN, BIRDSONG

BASSEY: Ludhiana, in the industrial heart of the Punjab. It was from this city's university that the Khalistan movement drew a large number of its recruits. We're here to meet one of the poster boys of the armed struggle for a Sikh homeland. A man who was at the violent centre of the decades-long campaign to establish a separate Sikh state here.

BITTU: We are a unique nation, we are a unique religion. For a nation it's very essential to have a state. We need sovereignty for us to flower, for us to succeed. You have to have roots. Without roots there cannot be any flowering.

BASSEY: Daljit Bittu was one of Punjab's most wanted Sikh terrorists. He spent years on the run as one of the leading members of the armed struggle, which began in earnest after the Indian army stormed the Sikhs' holy shrine, the Golden Temple, in Amritsar in 1984.

BITTU: When you compare violence or armed struggle from the other side, ... side and compare it with a state that's nothing, the state, they can kill thousands of people and nobody takes note.

BASSEY: Can I ask you bluntly, during the armed struggle, did you kill anybody?

BITTU: I was arraigned in different cases, around 22 cases. The courts acquitted me in all these cases.

BASSEY: Is that to say then that you were not guilty of these or was it a case that you were acquitted because of a lack of evidence? I mean, can you say if you yourself did kill anybody?

BITTU: At the time, violence, armed struggle was right and I was a part of it. The state did arraign me in 22 cases but the courts acquitted me of all the charges.

BASSEY: The armed struggle lasted over a decade with the loss of more than 20,000 lives.

EXTRACT FROM NEWS REPORT

NEWSREADER: We regret to announce the death of the Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi. She was critically injured this morning at her residence when she was shot by And she was immediately rushed to All India Medical Institute, where she succumbed to her injury.

BASSEY: Sikh bodyguards shot dead Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi just months after the Golden Temple assault. Her murder led to days of anti-Sikh riots in which thousands of innocent Sikhs were killed by angry mobs of Hindus.

REPORTER: The rescue crews could see the wreckage from three miles away. Small pieces of aircraft fuselage and cabin fittings ...

BASSEY: Sikh terrorist operations included bringing down a transatlantic airliner in what until 9/11 was the single deadliest terrorist attack involving aircraft. The insurgency was eventually crushed by Indian forces in 1994. Hundreds of Sikhs were murdered in extra-judicial killings or simply disappeared. The wholesale human rights abuses have been well-documented. Since then, the level of violence has dropped dramatically and men like Bittu now believe the armed phase is over and the struggle is political. But he retains the right to draw the sword if all other means fail.

BITTU: Now it's the time of democratic struggle. We are following that. But regarding violence and regarding arms, I will say that these are not permanent conditions. It all depends upon the time. Mostly it depends upon the state.

BASSEY: So the armed struggle is still an option? It's not something you've completely renounced?

BITTU: No, we don't want violence.

BASSEY: So have you now put down the gun for good?

BITTU: We don't want violence now, but it all depends upon the state. If again the state creates such conditions of June 84, November 84, then people will have to take the last resort.

BASSEY: But the violence hasn't disappeared completely.

EXTRACT FROM BOLLYWOOD MOVIE

BASSEY: A Bollywood movie plays to a small audience in a vast cavernous cinema. But only a dozen or so of the thousand seats are occupied. That's because people are afraid to come to this cinema. Last October, on the Islamic holiday of Eid, a bomb exploded.

CHOUDHARY: There was all smoke, broken glass, spattered blood and slippers all around and people were crying everywhere.

BASSEY: Amrita Choudhary was one of the first journalists on the scene after the blast.

CHOUDHARY: This hall which can house around a thousand people. It was chock a block. There were people standing. The film had just resumed after the interval and there was a song sequence going on when the blast occurred. It was total confusion at that time. People were frantically looking for their loved ones and their mobiles were not

BASSEY: Dr Ajai Sahni is one of Asia's most respected security analysts. He's also director of the Institute of Conflict Management in New Delhi.

SAHNI: The movement, after it was comprehensively defeated in 1993, has seen continuous spurts of the odd incident every year, two or three incidents sometimes, to engineer a revival, but which is essentially an unsuccessful effort to do so. Terrorist incidents have often been coincident with particular politically controversial events. Now the obvious intent here is to take what is thought to be a politically volatile situation and, through a few terrorist incidents, catalyse a larger conflagration. And that's what is seen at this juncture. They're trying to whip up a kind of frenzy among the more radicalised elements.

BASSEY: What's worrying the Indian authorities is that the rump of Sikh terror groups are getting assistance from outside the country. Evidence gleaned from the Ludhiana bombing points to links with Pakistan and its secretive and feared intelligence service, the ISI. In fact, the leaders of practically every major Sikh terror group, all who feature on India's Most Wanted list, are now based in Pakistan, from where they occasionally deliver fiery speeches over the internet. It is no wonder then that the alleged mastermind of the cinema blast, Gurpreet Singh, is said to have travelled to Pakistan before carrying out the attack. Born into a Sikh militant family, Gurpreet was arrested just weeks after the bombing. There's little doubt in the mind of NPS Aulakh, Director General of the Punjab police, that they have caught one of the main instigators.

AULAKH: The mastermind – Gurpreet Singh – he motivated the others into militancy and he arranged for the explosives also, along with the detonators. During interrogation, he hinted that he had organised a place in a district where he gave training to them in the handling of explosives and also in handling weapons.

BASSEY: Have your investigations into the Ludhiana bombings reinforced the belief that Sikh militants are being helped by the Pakistan agencies?

AULAKH: You see, the interrogation of Gurpreet Singh, he mentioned that he had gone to Pakistan and that he got training out there. He met somebody out there in the gurdwara in Lahore and he took him along for training. And further he also managed to get explosives through the Rajasthan border. So that the indirect connection is always there with the agencies that are operating in Pakistan.

BASSEY: Was Gurpreet and the rest of the gang, were they linked to any particular Sikh militant group at all?

AULAKH: Basically they were associated with the Babbar Khalsa.

BASSEY: Babbar Khalsa International is a Sikh terror group, legendary for its uncompromising and violent commitment to Khalistan. According to security experts, it is also one of a handful of Sikh groups to have forged close links to Islamist terror outfits fighting for an independent Kashmir. This unholy alliance is particularly surprising given the traditional animosity between Sikhs and Muslims, which was accentuated during the partition of India. Dr Ajai Sahni says it's a marriage of convenience.

SAHNI: There were a handful of incidents in the early 1990s in which we had Kashmiri groups entering into Punjab and executing joint attacks with the Khalistanis, but that really is the last bit of incident-related evidence that we have of this nature. However a large number of interrogations of a large number of people arrested do confirm a continuous interaction between these groups in Pakistan, in their training programs, in their continuous coordination and interaction, one with the other. But this is largely located in Pakistan.

BASSEY: It's an extremely alarming trend and File on 4 understands that even the FBI in the US are taking the threat seriously. We can reveal that they've compiled a watch list of American and British-based Sikhs who regularly travel to Pakistan. The worry is that although the Sikh groups are relatively ill-equipped and undermanned, they now have access to groups like Al Qaeda. Indeed, intelligence and interrogation reports suggest that groups like Babbar Khalsa sends its recruits, including

BASSEY cont: UK-based supporters, to be trained in mobile terror camps alongside Kashmiri militants linked to Al Qaeda.

SAHNI: We are aware that at least about a hundred Diaspora elements have trained in camps in Pakistan. The presumption is that they are training as a reserve to act in India when the opportunity arises again.

BASSEY: Would it be fair to say, therefore, that indirectly even, Khalistanis have made links with Al-Qaeda in that respect?

SAHNI: It is not as if the Khalistanis see themselves as part of the Al-Qaeda's grand strategy. They cannot, because these are two mutually exclusive, religiously motivated movements. The cooperation between such groups can only be opportunistic and cannot be a permanent settlement, because at the end of the day they will have to come to terms with their own antagonisms, one with the other. It is only that at this juncture they see a common enemy in India and consequently find it expedient to cooperate with each other.

BASSEY: The authorities in the Punjab also say they are picking up intelligence that funds are coming into the region from the UK. The Director General of the Punjab police, NPS Aulakh, says it's a real concern.

AULAKH: We have had some information either from the intelligence sources or even from interrogation of some of these people who are arrested in Punjab that some of these people in Britain were involved in funding the activities of terror.

BASSEY: Do you know exactly how they do it?

AULAKH: As far as our information goes, they employ numerous channels. It's not just through the banking facilities. It's through Hawala also and it is through people who are coming out here or even from people going to visit the UK.

BASSEY: And what is this money being used for, as far as the Punjab militants are concerned?

AULAKH: Basically it is used for funding the activities out here and for supporting some of their families. There are numerous purposes for which they are using them.

BASSEY: How important do you think that the funding that comes from places like the UK to the Sikh militants in the Punjab, how important do you think it is?

AULAKH: Basically it is very important, because that's one of the ways of attracting more and more youths into the ... of militancy. Give them money for carrying out militant activity in the Punjab. So if the funds are dried up, yes I think to a large extent militancy can be checked.

BASSEY: So what exactly is the extent of militant activity in the UK by a Sikh separatist movement that many Sikhs themselves believe to be dead and buried? In 2001, two Sikh groups were banned in the UK after being labelled terrorist organisations by the Home Office. One was The International Sikh Youth Federation or ISYF. The ISYF officially disbanded after being proscribed, but some of its executive committee are now active with a legal group calling itself the Sikh Federation. The Federation lobbies British politicians on the issue of Khalistan.

ACTUALITY ON INTERNET

BASSEY: I've just Googled the words Babbar Khalsa, the group that the Indian police say was behind the bombing in the Punjab. It too was banned in the UK under the Terrorism Act 2000. One of the pages has directed me to a YouTube video.

EXTRACT FROM VIDEO ON YOUTUBE

BASSEY: It shows a rally in Trafalgar Square last summer. As the camera pans around you can see the crossed Kalashnikov insignia of the Babbar Khalsa terror group being held by young Sikhs. On a platform a turbaned man addresses the audience in Punjabi.

EXTRACT FROM VIDEO ON YOUTUBE

BASSEY: He rants about the Ram Raheem sect, telling his captive audience that Babbar Khalsa has set its cross-hairs on three Sikh apostates who are trying to divide the Sikhs. This is our message, he says. The Babbar Khalsa youth are adamant that they will wipe these three so-called home men off the face of the Punjab. Later, the speaker turns his rhetoric towards the plight of a Babbar Khalsa militant, Jagtar Singh Hawara. Hawara was convicted of a murder he carried out alongside the first ever Sikh suicide bomber and he is now facing the gallows in India. He says, we are proud of this brother of ours. With God's blessings, more men like Hawara will be born. We showed the clips to Adrian Hunt, an expert in counterterrorism law at the University of Birmingham.

HUNT: It's not an offence to glorify terrorism per se. What is an offence is that if, in your praising of it, persons of the public who hear what you say may reasonably be able to infer that what you're glorifying is conduct which they are encouraging you to emulate as distinct from merely praising something in the past.

BASSEY: So in a way that would depend on the mindset of the audience and the people that he's actually delivering this speech to then?

HUNT: Absolutely, and of course there's never been a prosecution for this new offence, but that is the key feature. What do the people who are being spoken to understand is being said to them? And that is a, is a complicated and culturally specific thing in circumstances such as this.

BASSEY: When he makes clear reference to these three apostates should be wiped off the face of the Punjab, that the Babbar Khalsa youth are adamant that they will do this, that the Sikh nation will do what it has to do to settle its affairs, how close to the wind is he sailing here?

HUNT: Any official looking at it would want to understand how that might be understood by members of the Sikh community who attended the particular event and that's the key element in the offence really. And there certainly would appear to be sufficient material there for the matter to be inquired into very seriously by the authorities.

BASSEY: The authorities were at the Trafalgar Square rally. Pictures show police standing by and watching, despite the fact that Babbar Khalsa is on the proscribed list of terror organisations and members were clearly displaying their logos and made constant references to Babbar Khalsa.

ACTUALITY IN COVENTRY TEMPLE

BASSEY: We traced the speaker to a temple in Coventry. He's Avtar Sanghera, a former vice president of Babbar Khalsa before it was banned in the UK. You're more than aware that Babbar Khalsa has been banned under the Terrorism Act. Why was there Babbar Khalsa logos? Why were you referring to Babbar Khalsa youth? Why make all these references when it was clearly against the law?

SANGHERA: I think this Babbar Khalsa didn't establish any ... They just say the logo is Babbar Khalsa. It's because that the leader of Babbar Khalsa was murdered by the Indian Government. They want to remember him because we are the Babbar, right, we don't deny that one. I'm a Babbar.

BASSEY: What do you mean, I'm a Babbar? You're a member of Babbar Khalsa International?

SANGHERA: No, no, no. There is two different things, right? Babbar and Babbar Khalsa International. I make it clear on that day, Babbar Khalsa International is banned. Not Babbar is banned.

BASSEY: What's the difference?

SANGHERA: I'm a Babbar, right? Babbar means is a lion, who is the brave Sikh.

BASSEY: So it's a matter of language then, basically?

SANGHERA: That's right.

BASSEY: And Mr Sanghera says he would be happy to see the apostates killed, if the Indian Government doesn't hang them first. On this video you talk about these three sect leaders and you actually say that they should be wiped off the face of the Punjab.

SANGHERA: Yes, I say that.

BASSEY: Are you calling for their assassination? Are you calling for them to be killed?

SANGHERA: Well, we call for justice from the Indian Government or the Punjab Government, right, and we ask them, why don't you stop them? But there is nobody going to stop them. Then our guru says, if everything is finished, then you take this work in your hands and do by yourself what you want to do. That's the last thing we can do.

BASSEY: Would you encourage somebody to kill?

SANGHERA: No, I won't say that. We're going to request the Government, right, to do something. But there is not just them. Some people are coming and going to do by themselves.

BASSEY: The phrases you used and the way you talked about Hawara in such glowing terms, you were clearly glorifying him - as far as you were portraying him, he was a Sikh hero.

SANGHERA: I will not deny that one, he is a Sikh hero.

BASSEY: Is there not a danger by you using such language on the stage that some young Sikh here, a British born Sikh may get angry enough to do the same things that Hawara has done?

SANGHERA: Well, I can't understand about that one, but if they're going to hang him, they're going to do it, right? But we always pray for him, this is our own mind, right? Because he done for the Sikh religion, so I have done on the stage, in my mind on what was coming, but I have done.

BASSEY: As well as ideological support, the big worry for the Indian authorities is the money coming from the UK, and they some of it is collected in Sikh temples or gurdwaras. Sikh congregations are known for their affluence and there is an obligation to give at least 10% of earnings to charitable causes. Professor Gurharpal Singh from Birmingham University has taken a close look at temple finances.

SINGH: If one looks at the research on the gurdwaras, it is quite evident that they raise substantial funding on a regular basis, often cash donations which are managed and sometimes quite mismanaged. When campaigning groups take over some gurdwaras, then you have a situation where funds are often diverted for political causes, for example Martyrs funds or support of families or charitable causes, and then the control over these funds is much more difficult to maintain and audit. And as the reports of charity commissioners regularly point out, many of these gurdwaras are regularly accused of not following the Charity Commissioner's guidelines.

BASSEY: Has there ever been any suggestion, now or in the past, that some of this money was being channelled back to the Punjab to fund militancy?

SINGH: This is a notoriously difficult area and one cannot give a definitive answer, but certainly I would be very surprised if funds had not been sent to some of the organisations operating either in the Punjab or from Pakistan.

ACTUALITY IN THE SINGH SABHA GURDWARA

BASSEY: This is the Singh Sabha Gurdwara in Southall, the biggest Sikh temple outside India. During the height of the armed struggle for Khalistan, the temple went into receivership with significant debts. One concerned member of the congregation believes the money was being misused and diverted to fund activities on the sub continent.

MAN: Following the incident at Amritsar in 1984, some people who claimed to be Khalistanis for liberation of Khalistan, they seized control of the gurdwara and through intimidation, threats of violence. From my experience they were only seizing the assets. What was donated was being siphoned off and bills were not being paid which led to the gurdwara going into receivership.

BASSEY: What do you think was happening to this money?

MAN: A lot of the money they claimed was being sent off to fight for the liberation of Khalistan, Punjab, and they used to come into the gurdwara and they used to say, 'This money is to buy a tank, is to buy bombs.' When they were at the stage they would even say, 'Donate your gold.' Women would take off their bangles and their chains. They'd say, 'This would not even buy the chain that goes round the wheels of the tank,' and they'd collect up a lot of money.

BASSEY: How big was this hole in the accounts?

MAN: We're talking of income from 1984 to 1993 and at that time, if I recollect correctly, our income was about £500,000 to £600,000 a year.

BASSEY: So we're talking here, over nine years, £4.5 million has literally vanished and has been completely unaccounted for?

MAN: Yes, that's at the lower end.

BASSEY: The present administration managed to put the temple back on a firm financial footing. They went on to build a grand new temple building at cost of more than £18 million, with most of the money coming from individual donations. The temple slowly regained its reputation, but in recent months the leadership has found itself under attack.

ACTUALITY OF DISTURBANCE OUTSIDE SOUTHALL GURDWARA

BASSEY: Violence flared when more than five hundred people attended the temple's annual general meeting held in a tent at a community hall. Despite police attendance and elaborate security enforced by Gurkhas, we had been tipped off there would be trouble and we had a reporter inside.

SASHI: One man got up and started shouting and then others got up with him and they all started fighting with each other and they started shouting and then suddenly I saw two men running in front with their turbans off. They were saying, 'Look what they've done to me, they've taken my turban off, they've taken my turban off.' And then a young man came to me and he was like shaking and he said, 'Look what they've done to my uncle, look what they've done to my uncle.' I said, 'What have they done to your uncle?' He said, 'They've taken the sword out and taken his stubble off and his face got slashed with a sword.' I don't think he was very bad, but there was a lot jostling and one of them tried to snatch my recorder. Eventually I had to tell him that I am a woman and you should be ashamed of snatching something from a woman. He says, 'You're not a Punjabi.' Does it matter? It was a very frightening experience, believe you me it was. I didn't want to be there. There were five hundred people in the tent and there could have been a stampede, there could have been anything and it was pretty dangerous, I tell you.

BASSEY: According to one member of the congregation, the clash was just the latest in a series of disturbances at the temple. He agreed to speak to us, as long as we didn't identify him, because of fears for his own safety.

MAN: They had been disrupting services for the congregation and these people were just bringing thugs, hired thugs, which are mostly illegal immigrants. And we have been standing there, watching these people come in

MAN cont: intoxicated, which is against the religion, and they push and shove, intimidate, bully and they take over. And on 20th January that very sad incident where the head priest was assaulted, manhandled and a young Sikh had his turban knocked off when he said, 'What you're doing is sacrilege. The sanctity of this place of worship has been desecrated,' and they just assaulted him. They have threatened that they are going to seize control. But the vast majority, I think the silent majority of the congregation are being terrorised by this small group of people who are bent on seizing control of this charity.

BASSEY: Much of the attack is directed against the president, who has been criticised for owning a number of off-licence stores, because it involves handling alcohol, and he received death threats after attending a ceremony at a Hindu temple. Now President Himmat Singh Sohi has to take extraordinary measures for his safety.

SOHI (READ IN TRANSLATION): They made speeches saying that if the President isn't beaten and dealt with, he should have his head cut off. As a precaution, since then the police installed a panic button at the temple and I have some body armour, but I don't know why we can't negotiate our differences.

BASSEY: Do you feel in fear of your life?

SOHI (READ IN TRANSLATION): There's some truth in that. I have to take sensible precautions for my protection. I come from a village near the Pakistan border, so it's not that I'm not tough. Whatever happens will happen.

BASSEY: We spoke to the opposition, who said their campaign has nothing to do with Khalistan or militancy. They deny being behind threats and say they simply have concerns about the way the temple is being run. Southall isn't the only temple where there's been acrimonious disputes which have turned ugly.

ACTUALITY OF CHANTING

BASSEY: This is the Holy Bones Gurdwara in Leicester. The ruling faction have just been forced out after being in control for most of the last twenty years. Matters came to a head last year when they were accused of a lack of clarity over temple finances. The feud culminated in a mass brawl inside the temple, where ceremonial bangles were used as weapons.

MAN: It was an opposition group who was the questioning the legitimacy of the accounts and they didn't like that and so they attacked the opposition group. And four or five people got up and started fighting. Three people were attacked.

BASSEY: And what was the reaction of the women and children who might have been watching this?

MAN: On that occasion they were fights between the women as well, so ... It affects all the congregation. I was standing on the side and I was feeling very very low, very sadly that it shouldn't happen in a Sikh temple. It's a religious place and it does have an effect on the congregation, the congregation becomes scared to speak out.

BASSEY: The new management committee are still working through the financial records. They're particularly interested in two separate funds which operated out of the temple - Khalsa Human Rights and the Shaheedi or Martyrs Fund.

MAN: I've personally given money in the form of donating to the Shaheedi fund for the families of the victims who actually lost their lives in the NTUC riots and there's a collection box at the temple in Leicester and I myself have given money and I know other people who have given money. There are fellow members of the congregation who their own relatives back home are victims and haven't got husbands and sons to earn money for the household, and they are saying that the money hasn't reached them, and rumour has it that money was being lost and all I can say is that there's a question mark and we don't know whether the money has gone to those families or whether it has gone elsewhere.

BASSEY: It's difficult for us to prove what happened to the money. Even the Charity Commission hasn't been able to find out exactly where it all went. Because the temple is a charity, the Commission instructed the management committee in 2004 to provide it with two years of accounts for the two Funds. It further asked for a list of people who'd benefited from donations to the Shaheedi fund and an order that the Shaheedi fund itself should be registered as a charity. However the Charity Commission told File on 4:

READER IN STUDIO: It doesn't appear that these accounts were submitted.

BASSEY: And in relation to the Shaheedi Fund, it said:

READER IN STUDIO: With regards to the points about the Shaheedi Fund, again it does not appear as though this information was received.

BASSEY: We spoke to the man who ran the two funds. He's Gurjeet Samra, a former member of the now banned International Sikh Youth Federation. He wouldn't be interviewed, but denied misusing any of the money and in a statement he said:

READER IN STUDIO: Given the relatively low levels of expenditure, Khalsa Human Rights has varied the way in which it has provided feedback on how it's used its donations. These have included document reports and verbal reports to the congregation and free access to records for those making a donation. As a human rights group Khalsa Human Rights is not required to register itself as a charity.

BASSEY: Mr Samra insists the Shaheedi Fund has nothing to hide and that all monies can be accounted for.

READER IN STUDIO: The Shaheedi Fund was set up in July 1991 and total donations received and fully accounted for amount to just over £160,000. These are full accounts that have been verified on exactly which bereaved families have been helped.

BASSEY: We would have liked to have interviewed the Charity Commission and the Government about the accountability of monies raised in Sikh temples, but neither wished to take part. That's no surprise to Professor Gurharpal Singh who says the authorities here, including the police, adopt very much a 'hands off' approach in tackling Sikh militancy.

SINGH: The civic authorities are reluctant to intervene in the management and disputes of ethnic minority religious organisations. They're often not very well informed, particularly for example in cities like Southall, Birmingham and Leicester, they are often not aware of the changing situation in the gurdwaras, and this leads to a degree of caution among the policing authorities about what they can and cannot do. In recent years, because of a number of well publicised initiatives and pieces of legislation, there's a heightened consciousness of correctness, of not seeking to add fire to the water, and while the main concern of the police in these issues has been fighting terrorism, with Sikh organisations the problem had largely been overcome, as it were, in the 1980s and 1990s. And I think possibly the policing links and networks that traditionally existed have collapsed, and there is probably a very limited understanding of Sikh groups and what is going on and how order and stability need to be maintained.

BASSEY: It's been difficult to speak to members of the Sikh community too. Throughout the making of this programme, we have come across a culture of fear that they – or family members back in India – will be attacked. But there are people who are prepared to speak out. Sunny Hundal runs a progressive think-tank for young Asians called New Generation. He says it is up to the silent majority to assert themselves or risk allowing the entire community to be besmirched.

HUNDAL: Frankly the Sikh community in the UK is in a mess. There is no intellectual debate going on. You know, there is no discussion about what the role of Sikhs in Britain is, what is going on within the community. It's shocking. You have all these fights going on, you have people slashing each other. That's not how Sikhs want to behave in this country. I mean you look at them and you think, oh my God, these people are from the village, they're just completely sullyng the name of the Sikh tradition. It's a first generation issue. These people have come over from India, they have lived through those times and they are obsessed about it, and I actually think that most Sikhs in Britain care about Sikhs in India, they care about the human rights abuses of

HUNDAL cont: Sikhs by the Indian Government, but they're interested in what's going on in Britain, you know, in housing, poverty, crime in their local areas, they're interested in the society that they live in.

BASSEY: More than 60% of Sikhs in this country were born here and are aged between 18 and 35. It is how the dynamics between them and the older generation play out that will dictate the degree to which the fight for an independent homeland continues to cast a shadow over the entire community. Professor Gurharpal Singh from Birmingham University says British Sikhism is now at a crossroads.

SINGH: I think what is quite interesting is this emerging disjunction between Sikh religious and political leaders and British Sikhs, young Sikhs. It is a young, British-born community whose politics and religion are at odds with its general outlook, and this tension will be played out in the next few years, and which way the community goes. The community is really at a turning point and the next decade or so will define which way it goes.

SIGNATURE TUNE