

# Sikh Heritage Awards Gala in New York

**SATimes:** A star studded evening will mark the Sikh Heritage Awards Gala 2008 to be held on October 3 at the Cipriani Wall Street in New York City celebrating the rich culture, traditions and heritage of Sikhs.

The awards will be presented to individuals and groups who have contributed towards elevating the Sikh experience. It includes: Vision - Stuart Rabinowitz, President of Hofstra University, Leadership - Ajay Banga, Chief Executive Officer of Citi Asia Pacific, Creativity - Susan Stronge, Senior Curator of Asian Department of The Victoria & Albert Museum and Community Service - Sikh American Legal Defense & Education Fund (SALDEF), Sikh Coalition and United Sikhs.

General (Ret.) JJ Singh – Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, India will be the chief guest at the gala. He will be accompanied by special guests: Thomas P. DiNapoli - Comptroller of New York State, Tarlochan

Singh - M.P., India and Navjot Singh Sidhu - M.P., India. David Paterson – Governor of New York State, Ronen Sen – Indian Ambassador to USA, as well as celebrity guests such as Kabir Bedi, Padma Lakshmi and Cathy Moriarty are expected at the gala.

"Bulla Ki Jana" and "Avengei Ja Nahin" fame Punjabi and Sufi recording artist Rabbi Shergill will entertain the crowd with a live performance followed by a special guest performance of Punj Darya by Padma Shree Vikramjit Singh. Finally, the guests will get a chance to dance to the high-energy percussion beats of Bhangra music by the Creator & Producer of Basement Bhangra, New York's – DJ Rekha.

The Mistress and Master of Ceremonies will be none other than film and TV actress Katheryn Winnick (credits include Failure to Launch, When Nietzsche Wept, and Law & Order) and Dr. Chirinjeev Khaturia



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- founder, PlanetSpace, Inc.

A silent auction of exquisite Sikh Art will also be held during the Heritage Gala.

"We aim to cultivate a greater and more accurate understanding of the



Live performance by Rabbi Shergill will be the highlight of the gala entertainment.

Sikh way of life within the American Bindra, President of the Sikh Art & community at large," said Teji Film Foundation.

## Annual Sikh film festival to celebrate Asian immigrant experience

**SATimes:** A diverse mix of independent documentaries, short and feature films will be screened at the 5th Annual Sikh Film Festival 2008 on October 4, 10 am to 12 midnight at the Asia Society on Park Avenue in New York City.

Headlining the phenomenal collection of 15 Films from across the globe is the feature presentation and New York Premiere of the critically acclaimed film – Ocean of Pearls (USA) directed by Dr. Sarab Singh Neelam.

Dr. Neelam's first film Ocean of Pearls is a labor of love of over 10 years. He felt it is needed to break down barriers just as great African Americans did for their community. Ocean of Pearls is the story of a young Sikh doctor struggling with the inequities of the

American Health System and ultimately his own identity. It speaks to the universal challenge of how so many people (not just Sikhs) have to balance romance, family, ethics and spirituality in today's complex world. Dr. Neelam hopes it will be an inspiration to all.

The documentary session has four powerful films covering the wide spectrum of current social issues to historical art and traditions of Punjabis in South Asia. The PBS Independent Lens featured A Dream in Doubt (USA) directed by Tami Yeager profiles the violent aftermath of 9/11 where Sikhs were singled out because of their turbans and beards, while Sarah Singh's The Sky Below (USA) takes a contemporary look at the 1947 Partition of the Indian Sub-Continent. Emmy Award Winner Sikhs in America (USA) directed by Niall McKay and Marissa Aroy shows how Sikhs maintain their cultural traditions while also participating in the American dream. Finally, Navdeep Singh Kandola's Pahelwani (India) shot in West (Pakistan) and East (India) Punjab traces the history and traditions of the dying art of Punjabi wrestling.

Short Films showcase the talent and work of directors covering thought provoking topics such as the 1984 Sikh Genocide, post 9/11 Racial Profiling, Community Police relations through sport, and the proud traditions of the Sikhs with films such as Saving Mom and Dad (France) by Kartik Singh, The Holy Duels of Hola Mohalla (India) by Vani Subramanian, On Common Ground (USA) by US DOJ and SALDEF, Warrior Saints (USA) by Kevin Lee, Reaching for Home (USA)



A still from 'Ocean Of Pearls'.

by Jasmeet Singh Bansal and Kabaddi Cops (Canada) by Greg Cote.

The morning children's session covers topics geared towards young Sikh-Americans and their friends. These include Sabat Surat (Canada) directed by Jaspreet Kaur, One Light (USA) directed by 14-year-old Angad Singh, Sikh, Rattle and Roll (UK) directed by Ekta Walia and finally The Sikh Next Door (USA) directed by Tami Yeager.

This is the first year the foundation will present cash prizes totaling \$15,000 to winners of each session: Best Children's film \$2,500, Best Short Film \$3,500, Best Documentary \$6,000 and Feature Presentation \$3,000.

A distinguished Panel of Judges, who will be seated with the audience, will determine winners in the Short Film and Documentary genres. These include "A List" Hollywood and TV actresses Katheryn Winnick and Navi Rawat.

Celebrity New Yorkers such as Aseem Chhabra - freelance writer & South Asian Journalists Association (SAJA) board member, Sabrina Dhawan – writer, Monsoon Wedding and director of Saanjh, Vicki Mabrey - correspondent for ABC News Nightline and Carol

Anne Riddell – Education reporter and weekend anchor NBC News 4 New York. Rounding up the judges are prominent Sikhs from all walks of life: Dr. Daljit Dhaliwal - anchor for PBS Foreign Exchange & Global Watch, Dr. Narinder Singh Kapany - father of Fiber Optics and philanthropist and Dr. Sarab Singh Neelam - director of Ocean of Pearls.

At the conclusion of the feature presentation, the awards ceremony will take place in the Lila Acheson Wallace Auditorium, which will be followed by an After Party at the Asia Society's Garden Court. The After Party will provide the audience a chance to mingle with fellow festival guests, meet the filmmakers, judges, actors, and celebrities while listening and dancing to high-energy Bhangra music by New York's own DJ Rekha – Creator & Producer, Basement Bhangra.

According to the Film Festival Chair, Dr. Paul Johar, "We are expecting each session to be completely sold out. The primary goal of this Festival is to create awareness and pride in the diversity, culture and history of the Sikhs and highlight the contributions made by the Sikhs in America, India and other parts of the world."



DJ Rekha will rock the film festival After Party.