



# YSA's DNA – Innovate to Progress

Mr Ravinderpal Singh

Innovation can be defined as the process of developing new ideas that would add value to an organisation. This may mean creating new products, new systems and processes or enhancing existing ones. Many would be familiar with smartphones as a form of product innovation.

Smartphones have revolutionised the telecommunications industry and have had a great impact on human behaviour. Its unparalleled functions have added value to our daily lives and the way we work. Organisations today are embracing innovation because they have realised and identified the benefits which innovation is able to unlock for them. Keeping to the same products and processes has become stale. Successful innovation takes place in organisations that have a culture of embracing new ideas. Organisations that foster innovative thinking encourage discovery, which is crucial to developing new or enhancing current products and processes.

Although the innovation culture of an organisation is suited for for-profit set-ups, it is also applicable to a non-profit organisation such as YSA. The Sikh community, like other communities in Singapore, faces its fair share of challenges and issues. It thus becomes the duty of the community as a whole to address these challenges. While the Sikh community has been, through its various institutions,

able to address different issues it faces, there was a lack of a platform for Sikh youth to tap on to explore opportunities and grow as individuals.

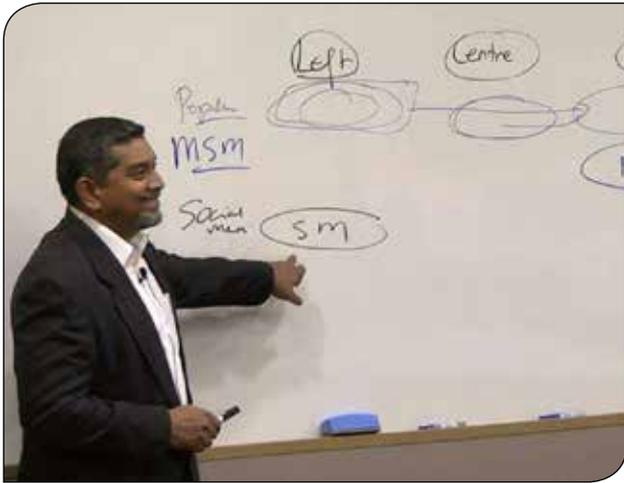
YSA was born to address this gap. In 2003, the founding president, Mr Hernaikh Singh, together with a team of like-minded volunteers, saw the need to create the means for networking between young Sikh and non-Sikh professionals; nurturing entrepreneurship and encouraging a global mindset. This in itself is an apt example of innovation to create value for an organisation or a community.

A non-profit organisation requires innovation just as much as for-profit organisations. This is possibly due to the lack of abundant resources compared to commercial entities. Innovation is beneficial across a range of operations –executing one's mission, fund-raising and

resource utilisation, just to name a few. YSA has organised and executed many events over the course of the years. These have included racial harmony sporting events aimed at fostering ties among youths from various communities and the overseas community service projects such as the highly-lauded Khwaish project in India (which completed its 16th run) and the annual tea reception for Sikh graduates, an event to celebrate the educational achievements of young Sikhs.

Mr Malminderjit Singh, who succeeded Mr Hernaikh as YSA's President in 2012, led the Executive Committee in starting a fresh new project aimed at developing future Sikh leaders called the Young Leaders Programme (YLP). The idea in itself innovative – it is an important attempt to create future leaders for the Sikh





community and its institutions, as well as the national level.

The YSA leadership felt that there was a lack of young Sikhs excelling at national level, and was concerned with a growing apathy towards the community and national/global affairs. Through this programme, YSA targets to groom and identify young Sikhs to take on national-level responsibilities and build a pipeline of community leaders. To meet this objective, the YLP will equip the young Sikh leaders with skills that will allow them to have a competitive edge in the professional arena. A core tenet of developing professionally is harnessing good networking skills. The programme will impart these skills and more to the participants. YLP aims to groom these future Sikh leaders not just with professional skills but also to develop them to be confident, competent, compassionate and conscious leaders of the future generation.

The YLP consists of three pillars — Community Leadership, Thought Leadership and Professional Development - which will equip the participants with the relevant skills to tackle future challenges and issues they might face on a community and national level. The participants kicked off the programme with an interactive forum with Sikh community

leaders to understand the current challenges faced by the community and have a better understanding of the support systems currently in place for the community members.

The participants identified three main areas on which to focus. The first area was the social aspect of the community, pertaining to substance abuse, convicts and those in need of social welfare. The second was youth empowerment aimed at motivating Sikh youth to excel in their area of interests and the third, the educational aspect aimed at improving educational standards among Sikhs. Each of these groups will undertake a project and work on delivering solutions to create new or enhance current support systems. Through these initiatives, YSA hopes that the participants will not gain a deeper appreciation of the issues facing the Sikh community but to also propose innovative solutions to address them.

The YLP will have its graduation ceremony on 19 February 2017 for its pioneer batch of participants. YSA has taken an innovative approach through the YLP to groom future Sikh leaders in the professional arena as well as for the Sikh community. The platform given to these young leaders to analyse community



challenges and develop solutions will shape them to be more compassionate, conscious and ultimately be servant leaders for the community.

The seed of innovation has been planted within the culture of the organisation and YSA has taken a conscious effort to grow it and allow the culture of innovation to permeate through its five pillars. YSA's DNA, after all, is to innovate so as to ensure progress, both of its own and that of the Sikh community.

Mr Ravinderpal Singh is currently working in DBS with the DBS Consumer Banking Group. He is a Committee Member in YSA, overseeing the 'Professional and Intellectual Development' portfolio. The views presented in this article are personal and do not necessarily reflect those of YSA.