

## THE SIKHS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Graduating Essay

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Although the actual amount of what can be called new knowledge on the Sikhs of British Columbia contained in this essay is relatively small, the essay does combine the existing knowledge into one source. In this action lies the main value of the essay. Because the Sikhs are few in number in British Columbia, nearly all of the existing studies of Oriental life in the province have been devoted to the Chinese and Japanese groups, who by virtue of their numbers, have called both critical and praising attention to them. Except for the Komagata Maru incident the Sikh has been one of the forgotten men of British Columbia history.

This essay is divided into three main sections-- the first on background information on the Sikhs' life, history and religion while in India; the second on their political struggles in British Columbia for the franchise and related political freedom, and for less stringent immigration regulations; and the third section on their social history in British Columbia. Chapter I deals with the background material. In India as well as in Canada the Sikhs are a small minority group, hence most general works on India give them but fleeting reference. The religious portion of the chapter is presented without

critical analysis of a historical nature because the writer does not consider himself to be competent to judge any religion, except for a small segment of Protestant Christianity. Chapter II deals primarily with the immigration problems of the Sikhs. The Komagata Maru incident is included because of its uniqueness as an immigration problem. The third chapter contains the history of the Sikhs' political struggles in the province, chiefly the franchise struggle. In this chapter and in the preceding one the thin edge of the wedge of social history appears. Chapter 4 is devoted to a sociological study of the Sikhs in the province. A more or less statistical presentation is used with very little critical analysis being added. Chapter 5 contains the personal conclusions of the writer. Although the portions on the psychologies of the group mind and racial prejudice are based on observations of writers qualified in the field of psychology. If it is possible to state a composite conclusion to be drawn from the essay, then such a conclusion would be: the problems of the Sikhs have arisen—not so much from situations in the world of reality—imaginary incidents and possibilities found in the minds of both non-Sikh and Sikh. The Sikh problem becomes, like that of other minority groups, one of mutual psychological adjustment.

If the writer is guilty of biases and prejudices of his own then they are resolvable into one: he is anti most "anti-groups", with the sole exception that he considers himself

a democrat by choice, who believes in the present Canadian of life as reformable, and who is anti-Communist. Since the main problems of the Sikhs of British Columbia are now those of the past, it is perhaps safe to say that this essay endeavours to place the contemporary story of the Sikhs into historical perspective, and by so doing remove some of the clouds of ignorance that surround these people.

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## PREFACE

To understand the present position of a minority ethnic group, one must know something of its past. When a religious as well as a racial difference exists between the majority and minority groups, the religious difference cannot be overlooked. "Colour" differences also complicate the study of group relationships. In British Columbia the problem of minorities has been centered on Doukhobours and Orientals. Studies of these minority groups are relatively numerous, with the exception of the East Indian segment of the Orientals. This segment has usually been referred to as Hindus, colloquially and officially. In fact, about 95% of the Hindus are Sikhs, who are members of a different religion.<sup>1</sup> Hindus in British Columbia, if any, are among the remaining 5%. As a group to study the Sikhs offered many interesting features ranging from their religion to their occupations. This study is facilitated by their small numbers and their tendency to concentrate as a group in the Lower Mainland area of the province. To the Occidentals of British Columbia the Sikh community reveals one small, but brightly flashing, facet of the Orient.

When Occident meets Orient on the personal level, as is the case in British Columbia, the resulting racial clash is usually bitter and violent. The Sikhs, to a lesser degree than the Chinese and Japanese, have been victims of a particularly foolish aspect of the West, its feeling of superiority that stems to a large degree from a heritage of aggressive colonialism. Yet, without moralizing, the story of the Sikhs is an interesting one and is worthy of a fitting place in the pages of

... .. three main sections:

the Sikhs in their homeland, Sikh immigration and the Sikhs in British Columbia. These three sections when combined give the story, cultural and political, of the Sikhs of British Columbia. The background material on their homeland, the Punjab region of India, has been covered by geographers, historians and political writers to such a complete degree that secondary materials were used in this essay. The religious portion has been based on one work by a Sikh scholar, who is thoroughly acquainted with his religion, partly because of the clarity of his work and partly because the minority position of Sikhism in India usually results in only passing references to it in general descriptions of India's religious and cultural life. The now famous Komagata Maru incident has been sufficiently explored by other writers to make the use of their writings adequate. Personal interviews, current newspaper reports, a PHD thesis, government publications and Sikh society publications have been used to cover the life of the Sikhs in British Columbia. The section on racial prejudice is treated as a study in group psychology and is based on relevant secondary material.

Arising from the nature of the essay is an attempt to present the material and observations in a way that will pierce the clouds of ignorance surrounding these people. To adopt an old expression: since it is in the minds of men that racial prejudice begins so in the minds of men must racial understanding begin. It is hoped that future generations will not be treated to such doggerel as:

"The poor benighted Hindoo  
He does the best he kin do,  
He sticks to his caste from first to last,  
And for clothes he lets his skin do."

## CHAPTER 1

The area of India which the Sikhs claim as their homeland is the Punjab. This land of sun-baked plains is named after the five rivers by which it is watered. These rivers are of large volume with shallow channels, and now are used primarily for irrigation and sail-boat transport. The irrigation systems of the Punjab have made the province a major wheat-growing area of India. Climatically speaking, the year consists of a hot season, a monsoon season, and a cool winter season. During the hot months from mid-April to mid-September the temperature very often reaches 120 degrees F. in the shade. From June to September the heavy monsoon rains occur. From October to March the climate is like that of the French Riviera with warm bright days and cool nights. January is the month of the light winter rains. This arrangement of seasonal weather makes possible the production of two crops a year. Wheat, barley, various vegetables, oil-seeds, and tobacco are harvested in the spring, while the autumn sees the harvest of rice, millet, maize, pulses, cotton, indigo and sugar-cane taking place. Apart from the agricultural wealth of the land there are natural deposits of rock-salt, limestone, alum, coal and petroleum. The manufacturing industries of the province are as varied as its natural resources. Woollen fabrics, carpets and shawls, silk cloths and embroidery, jewellery, ornamental metal work, wood and ivory carving, and arms and armour, form the major handicraft manufacturing of the Punjab. This area is a predominantly agricultural one, consequently all trade is governed by crop success or failure. The geographical environment has shaped the type

of individual which the Sikh has turned out to be.

The Sikh of the Punjab, like the rest of the peasant class of India, is very poor by Western standards. The wages of the peasant of the Punjab average about 15¢ (Canadian) per day. The villages of mud huts are spread throughout the plains of the Punjab. The people that call these hovels "home" are dressed in a simple manner, shirts, pyjama-style trousers, long loose coats and turbans. Though physically poor and downtrodden, the spiritual and mental independence of these people make them essentially democratic by nature. This congenital spirit of democracy is reflected in the Sikh religion and in their resultant outlook on life, as will be seen. The equality of democracy, however, applies mainly to the men, for the women share a lower position which is common to other eastern countries as well as India. From population figures of the 1941 census the total population of the Punjab was 33,922,373<sup>1</sup> of whom 14.3% were Sikhs. In India as well as in Canada the Sikhs are a minority group. This factor has played an important role in shaping the personality of the Sikh.

The third factor that has shaped the Sikh personality is education. The overall picture of the educational facilities leaves little doubt as to the educational opportunities offered the population. In 1938 there were 1,302,461 pupils enrolled in the Punjab University, thirty-four Arts Colleges, ten Professional Colleges, 397 High Schools, 3,336 Middle Schools and 7,730 Primary Schools. As a consequence, illiterate ignorant people abound in this area.

Even if one allows only a minimum role to environment in shaping the characteristics of a group of people, the environment of the Sikhs is of prime importance in shaping them as a people. Financially poor, educationally starved, in many cases physically starved also, a minority group in a region of large population, these factors have led the Sikh to adopt a militant religion.

Making allowances for the play of heredity in shaping the individual, one turns to the past to see another moulder of group characteristics. The past glories or shames, leaders or traitors, victories or defeats, traditions or revolutions, all play an important role in making a man of one group different from a man of another group. So it is with the Sikhs. The pride of their history is well justified. Racially they can be traced back to the Scythians.<sup>2</sup> From the waves of 15th Century reformation that were sweeping over India, Sikhism arose. It was founded by Guru Nanak (1469 - 1539), the first of the gurus or teachers. The fifth guru, Arjan Dev, gave Sikh history the Granth, the book of the holy passages written in Sanskrit, Persian, Hindu, Urdu, and Punjabi; and the holy city of Amritsar. The tenth and last guru, Guru Gobind Singh (1666 - 1708), who lived in the days of Mogul persecution added to Sikhism the baptism of the sword, and turned the pacifist Sikhs into warriors. The break up of the Mogul Empire in the 18th Century marked the beginning of the second phase of Sikh history.

Ranjit Singh, the Lion of the Punjab, made the Sikh confederacy on the banks of the Sutlej a powerful force in the India of his day. Lahore became his capital in 1799. So powerful was Ranjit Singh that the British,

who were then consolidating their control of India, made an alliance with him in 1809 in order to keep the Punjab peaceful. Ranjit Singh until his death remained friendly with the British. After his death the only strong force left in the confederacy was the army. The Sikh Wars of 1845 to 1849 were started by a discontented Sikh army of 120,000 trained troops who invaded British-controlled India bordering the Sutlej. The next year, 1846, a British protectorate was established over the Punjab. Until 1848 there was an uneasy peace in the area. In that year occurred the Multan Revolt in which some British officers were murdered. On January 13, 1849, the Battle of Chillianwalla took place in which clash the Sikhs were forced to retire although they were not decisively beaten. However they were still persistent. At Gujrat on February 21, 1849, the Sikhs were defeated and the war ended. The final act of the Sikh Wars was the formal annexation of the Punjab by Britain on April 2, 1849. The terms of the peace treaty gave the Sikhs generous treatment. This wise policy of the British secured them loyal allies who in later years proved their worth. In 1852 a Sikh battalion was raised to take part in the Burma campaigns. The British were further aided by the loyal Sikhs during the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Although the Punjab was extremely turbulent during this period. The third phase of Sikh history had begun. It was characterized by an extreme loyalty to the British.

The culminating point of this loyalty came with the First World War. In this struggle, to which India was committed, the Sikhs contributed over 80,000 men who earned for themselves a lasting place

in the annals of British military history, though remaining loyal after World War I more and more Sikhs gravitated to the side of the Indian Congress Party of Ghandi and Nehru in the political fight for independence. By World War II the more radical Sikhs were favouring a partition of India with the establishment of an independent Sikh state, Khalistan,<sup>3</sup> in the Punjab. This dream was not realized, however, when the British granted independence to India and Pakistan in 1947. The Sikhs became a part of the Republic of India.

From even this barest of outlines of Sikh history it can be seen that the Sikh today has a past of which he can well be proud. Religion binds history and environment together. Religion was and still is the beginning and the end of Sikh life. As non-Sikhs, Sikhism can only be presented as written, by westerners. Whether or no Sikhism is as perfect in practise as it is in theory is not relevant to this discussion. The teachings of Guru Nanak, modified by Guru Gobind Singh, remain today the religion known as Sikhism. In British Columbia, however, there is a growing unorthodox wing of the religion which to the western mind may not seem unorthodox at all. The unorthodoxy of these Sikhs consists in being clean shaven and wearing their hair cut in Canadian fashion.<sup>4</sup> In other details they are as orthodox as "the orthodox" whose position will be described in the following pages. The religious element of Sikh life provides the answer to many of the problems which the Sikhs have faced in India and even more often in Canada.

Guru Nanak, who was born the son of a village accountant, lived as a contemporary of Martin Luther. Both men gave the religious world revolutionary teachings.<sup>5</sup> Nanak early in his life renounced the world in search of the "light eternal". After the subsequent period of meditation and soul searching he discarded ascetism and returned to the world with a practical common-sense philosophy. He regarded himself as a man among men who had no divine origins. Nanak preached a simple faith in one God, whom he called Nirankar who was all-pervasive and omniscient, just and true, and before whom all men were equal. Coupled with his monotheistic teaching was a bitter denunciation of caste, idolatry, superstition and hypocrisy. Because of the revolutionary nature of his teachings he was placed between the fire of the Hindus and the Moslems. He returned their hostility by attempting to reconcile their religions with each other and with his own followers. Religion to Nanak was a principle woven into the warp and woof of life, that meant a faith in God coupled with a detachment from worldly things. Religion also gave strength and equanimity in the struggle of life. The theories of this religious teaching were put into practice in Nanak's own daily life. Thus by his deeds he taught his followers.

Some of the basic teachings of Nanak were: true living rather than empty ritual, no caste, no priestcraft, relation of God and man, a balanced view of life, reincarnation, and Karma. A more detailed examination of his teachings reveal that Nanak ridiculed the Hindus for their sacred thread ceremony, and attacked the Moslems for their empty

ritual. In the words of Mr. Dhami, "what matters most is what we do, not what we profess".<sup>6</sup> His attacks on caste and priestcraft were associated with his ridicule of all sham and humbug, especially as found in religion. There was no need for a special religious caste, hence anyone could lead a religious meeting. God, according to Nanak, was both imminent and transcendent, He is in the world but above it. Man was not Divine; yet by right desire, right thought and right action he can be as perfect as God himself. Neither rituals, nor ceremonials, nor penance and austerities can lead to salvation. He denounced the Yogis and ascetics for their practice of such things. To Nanak the greatest of all renunciations was of base desires and violent passions -- fear, anger and hate, covetousness and egotism, falsehood and bigotry, lust and hypocrisy. Nanak, however, offered his followers a balanced view of life. He wanted them to live in the world and be for it, and yet to be above it. To do this, you neither had to starve your body nor cripple your soul. The Law of Karma, which literally means action ordered, stated that man is responsible for his condition; every thought, word or deed, leads to a living chain of causes. This was not rigid determinism but freedom of choice. Reincarnation held that death is a transformation from one life to another. Nanak carried the principles of evolution and causality beyond the phenomenal existence. The law of Karma and reincarnation make the individual responsible for his position. The teachings of Nanak left his followers with a philosophy of a balanced life that enabled them to form a brotherhood of God-fearing democrats.

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and last guru, gave the religion the baptism of the sword. Personal courage became the highest virtue. Guru Gobind Singh was a rare combination of prophet and soldier, poet and scholar, general and law-giver, who lived and died for religious freedom. To Sikhs his is rightly known as the Prince of Martyrs. He instituted the brotherhood of the Khalsa Panth (the Pure Way). "The Khalsa arose from the Guru and the Guru from the Khalsa," he stated; thus placing the Guru and his followers on the same footing. The name Singh (lion) must be used by a Sikh after baptism when he takes the five symbols -- the five K's, Kes, Kenga, Kachh, Kara, and Kirpan, which are long hair, comb, short trousers, iron bangle, and sword. These symbols can be changed with the consent of the Khalsa.

Sikhism has become a democratic and humanistic religion. The fifth guru, Arjan Dev, stated that the Sangat (the public) was higher in dignity and power than the prophets. This idea culminated in Guru Gobind Singh's advocacy of the Gurmatta (general councils) of the Khalsa as the deciding voice in all matters affecting the community. As a consequence the Sikh public has the power to modify its religious practises. The humanism of the Sikhs can be summed up in the words - man is not for religion, religion is for man. As a result the Sikh Temple becomes not only a place of worship, but also a forum for the discussion of social, economic, and political matters affecting the community. By the time of the death of Guru Gobind Singh the Sikhs had a democratic base, political solidarity, and martial valour, that enabled them as a minority group of less than 1% of the total Indian

... stresses and strains of an ever-changing sub-continent.

A brief summary of Sikhism shows it to be a religion with a simple, commonsense philosophy that stems from a belief in one God. The common Sikh greeting which reflects their beliefs is Sat Siri Akal (God is true, truth is eternal). Sikhism further emphasizes: Serva (selfless service to humanity), Sat Sang (company of the wise), Bani (meditation on the attributes of God), Karbani (self-sacrifice). Such is the religion to which the Sikhs have turned in time of trouble in India and Canada, and in which they have found a way of life that makes most western ideals unnecessary to them.

A brief glance at the Sikhs in India during the years prior to 1947, shows the Sikhs on three social levels. On the top level were the Sikh princes ruling over Patiala, Nabha, Kapurthala, Jind and Faridkote in the Punjab. The second level were members of the landed and military aristocracy. The lowest level was composed of the large mass of peasant proprietors. A political cross-section of the Sikh community reveals many different views from medieval autocracy to militant communism. The majority of Sikhs are ardent nationalists and democrats. The landed and military aristocracy used the Chief Khalsa Diwan as their political agent through which they expressed their reactionary political views and favour of the existing religious order. The Sikh peasants backed the Indian National Congress and were instrumental in forming Kisans (peasant committees). A composite picture of the Sikh peasants would show a person who likes the simple life, with

a rather puritan outlook. He would not smoke and probably would be a non-drinker as well. His diet would be usually vegetarian, consisting of wheat or corn rotis (pancakes), boiled vegetables, fruit, plenty of butter and curds, milk and whey. If he ate meat he would not eat beef; while mutton or pork would provide his most frequent dishes. His birth, marriage, and funeral ceremonies would be similar to those of a Hindu. He would prefer the outdoor life and would probably serve some time in the army.

From the peasants came the majority of Sikh immigrants to Canada. The picture of the Sikh in India, especially the religious shades of his colourful portrait, explain part of his difficulties when he came to this Dominion. For the older generation of Sikhs in British Columbia have never forgotten their birth-place, and to many of them India, not Canada, is still their homeland.<sup>7</sup> This attitude has presented a formidable barrier to the understanding of the Sikhs by the non-Sikh majority of British Columbia.

The immigration to Canada of a large number, or so it seemed at least to the residents of British Columbia, of Sikhs added fuel to the fires of anti-Orientalism already kindled by the arrival of Chinese and Japanese immigrants. A movement of Asia to take over North America now seemed to have started. For India was disgorging its people as well as China and Japan. The Sikhs began arriving in British Columbia in 1904, and almost immediately became the victims of anti-Oriental feeling. This prejudice against Asiatic immigration, based on economic

fear of the British Columbia residents, was carried into the struggle for political equality in later years. The consequence of Sikh immigration prior to World War I provided fireworks that kept British Columbia, and Vancouver in particular, well entertained.

The reasons underlying Sikh emigration are fairly clear. The Boxer Rebellion of 1900 saw Sikhs fighting alongside troops of the western powers including those of the United States. The stories of America filled the Sikhs with admiration for this fabulous country. Three years prior to this, in 1897, Sikh troops passed through Canada on their way back to India from Queen Victoria's Jubilee. Other Indian transients also came through Canada. The picture of North America as a promised land was complete. This imagined picture provided the incentive for the Sikhs to come to Canada. But incentive alone never gets anything done. In North America cheap labour was scarce at this time, hence employers were provided with an incentive for encouraging Sikh immigration. A third reason for Sikh immigration was provided by the various steamship companies who saw a chance to increase their revenues from steerage passengers. These major forces that were working towards a common end added up to a single force of economic necessity. Until 1907 there was no great discrimination against the Sikhs who did not present to the people of British Columbia an economic or a social problem. In 1907 anti-Oriental riots took place in Vancouver. Although the physical violence was directed against the Chinese and Japanese, the Sikhs received their share of verbal attacks.

The Deputy Minister for Labour, W.L. Mackenzie King, came to British Columbia in 1908 to head a royal commission on the Oriental

Obtem In his report he stated the necessity of such  
"the distribution, the constant and in rural districts of India, of such  
growing accounts of the opposite sides for making judgments in the province of B.C.  
that many an Indian peasant farmer  
& raise money for the journey, had mortgaged to the  
village money-lender his homestead and all that it contained  
at a rate of interest varying from 15% to 20%.

"The activity of certain steamship agents who were desirous of selling transportation in the interests both of the companies with which they were connected and of their own commissions.

"The activity of certain nationals of India in the province of British Columbia who were desirous of exploiting their fellow countrymen, and certain Canadian industrial concerns, which with the object of obtaining unskilled labour at a price below the current rate, assisted in inducing a number of men to leave India and enter into actual or virtual agreements to work for hire."<sup>1</sup>

British Columbia hostility to the Sikhs continued to grow.

The Sikh in British Columbia was forced to accept lower wages just to keep his job. The dictate of economic necessity to the Sikh aroused the white workers. During 1908 there had been a total of 2,623 East Indians admitted to British Columbia.<sup>2</sup> To the non-Oriental workers the brown as well as yellow tide was mounting. The British Columbia public cried louder for a stop to Oriental immigration. The Dominion Government finally acted. On January 8, 1908, an order-in-council was passed that cut off the immigration of Sikhs, by requiring entrants to Canada to come by direct passage from the country of origin as there were no direct steamer trips between Canada and India.<sup>3</sup> Another order-in-council of June 3, 1908, further required the entrant to have the sum of \$200 on landing.<sup>4</sup> This was another bar to the

1. S. Chandrasekhar, Indian Emigration to America, Bombay, Oxford Press, 1945, p. 4 for excerpts of the King report.

2. Ibid., p. 7.

3. & 4. Cheng Tien-Fang, Oriental Immigration in Canada, Shanghai, The Commercial Press, Ltd. pp. 145 - 146.

Lowering the Dominion Government allowed them to stay. The admission nevertheless, was not to constitute a precedent." The Sikhs

thought

otherwise. The decision by Chief Justice Hunter of British Columbia that both Section twenty-three of the Immigration Act and the Orders-in-Council of 1910 restricting immigration were ultra vires opened the way for further Sikh immigration. In the year 1913, eighty-eight Sikh immigrants entered Canada.<sup>12</sup> The next year, 1914, which is so well remembered, saw the final phase of the pre-World War I immigration difficulties.

The year 1914 to Vancouver could well be called the year of the Komagata Maru Incident. Gurdit Singh was the leader of this Sikh enterprise which was designed primarily to embarrass the British Government.<sup>13</sup> On the Pacific Coast of North America there had been a growth of Indian nationalist sentiment. An agitator in San Francisco, Hardayal by name, founded a newspaper printed in Hindustani called Ghadr (Meeting) which was openly seditious. A group of Sikhs in North America consequently followed the policy of action as advocated by this newspaper. An active conspiracy was afoot to aid India by giving trouble to Britain. The situation was ripe for an incident. Gurdit Singh assembled a group of Sikhs, two hundred to three hundred strong, and then chartered a Japanese steamer the Komagata Maru to carry the Sikhs from Hong Kong to Vancouver, where he hoped to land them if possible. In any event he hoped to stir up as much trouble as possible. On May 23, 1914, the Komagata Maru entered Vancouver Harbour and the tragi-comic episode

11. Cheng, Oriental Immigration, p 148.

12. Ibid., p 151.

13. R.L. Reid, "Inside Story of the Komagata Maru" B.C. Historical Quarterly, Jan. 1941, p 6.

legion. The immigration officials in Vancouver were determined to maintain the law, and to provide a test case to validate the Immigration Act

ACT which would then become the basis of their actions.<sup>14</sup> Inspector R.L. Reid was in charge of the immigration officers in Vancouver, and A.H. MacNeill was the consul for the Sikhs. The decision of the court in this case was that Section 23 of the Immigration Act was valid and binding on all courts. The Komagata Maru remained in Vancouver.

The longer the ship stayed in port with its passengers confined to the ship, the lower the food supplies became. The scarcer the food, the more hostile the men on board became. By July tempers were reaching a breaking point both on board ship and on shore. On July 17th, 1914, there was a riot on board ship and the passengers seized control. The next day formal notice was given by the authorities to the captain of the Komagata Maru that the ship must leave or he would have to suffer the consequences. That afternoon the battle of the Komagata Maru took place. A joint immigration-police boarding party set out in the tug Sea Lion. The passengers on board the Komagata Maru, by throwing up a tremendous barrage of coal, wood, and almost everything else on board that was moveable persuaded the Canadians that discretion was the better part of valour. The Sea Lion withdrew without attempting any action. The Komagata Maru did not sail. By now Ottawa had sent out the Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Martin Burrell, to mediate the dispute. H.H. Stevens who had also been taking an active part in the settlement of the incident, requested and received the use of H.M.C.S. Rainbow, one half of the Canadian Navy, to prevent by virtue of its presence any further outbreaks of violence. The government offered

14. Reid, Inside Story, p 10.

terms to allow cooling and provisioning the Komagata Maru if it would sail. On July 22 the First Fusilliers & the 6th Vancouver regiment (D.C.O.R.'s) were called out. The nervous strain became in-

tense. The Sikhs accepted the government's terms. At 5 o'clock the next morning most of Vancouver went to various vantage points to watch the Komagata Maru and H.M.C.S. Rainbow leave. For Vancouver the Komagata Maru affair was over.

The aftermath of the Komagata Maru affair was felt in India when the thoroughly disgruntled Sikhs arrived there. The Budge Budge Riot of September 27, 1914, can be traced directly to the Komagata Maru incident. Canadian opinion regarded the whole affair as a nasty job well handled by Canadian immigration officials, though many at the time regarded it as another German-engineered incident to split the Empire. This view was still held as late as 1933, when James H. Hamilton wrote:

"Taken by itself the Komagata Maru affair might have been the scheme of an ambitious Sikh, but in all the circumstances there can be but little doubt that it was but part of a general scheme to create troubles for John Bull."<sup>15</sup>

On August 4, 1914, the East Indian problem became a minor issue as World War I broke out. During the war years only one East Indian entered Canada.<sup>16</sup> The Canada India League petitioned the Imperial War Conference of 1917 to lift the bars on East Indian immigration in Canada.

The Imperial Conference of 1918 marks the start of the post-war era in East Indian immigration. That Conference passed a resolution on intra-Empire migration which recommended the Dominions the right to

15. J.H. Hamilton, Western Shores, Vancouver, Progress Publishing Co Ltd., 1933, p 29.

16. Cheng, Oriental Immigration, p 156.

that their immigration policies. A Canadian Order in Council of March 26, 1919, allowed the entrance of wives & children of Sikh residents in Canada. By 1921 there were 1,016 East Indians, Canada, of whom 951 were in British Columbia.<sup>17</sup>

The immigration figures for the years from 1921 to 1941 show that the numbers of entrants<sup>18</sup> were insignificant when compared to the pre-1909 figures. The depression of the 1930's reduced immigration of all classes and nationalities in to Canada. The years of World War II also stopped immigration for all practical purposes. Throughout these years East Indians generally, including the Sikhs in British Columbia, continuously agitated for equal status with other British subjects. The East Indian immigration problem also became a part of the overall Commonwealth question of Dominion autonomy, equality and Commonwealth solidarity. The closing phase of Sikh immigration started with India's gaining its independence in 1947. Canada was now faced with a Commonwealth problem of its own making. On January 26, 1951, the External Affairs Department announced that an agreement had been reached with India whereby 150 Indian citizens per year would be allowed to enter Canada.<sup>19</sup> A similar agreement was reached with Pakistan a few months later. At that time there were approximately 1,700 East Indians in Canada, the majority of whom were in British Columbia.<sup>20</sup>

The fact that the small number of East Indians in Canada is apparently out of proportion to the number of entries is easily explained. The majority of Sikhs who came to Canada came for the express purpose of making money and then returning to India. Some entered Canada and then moved on to the United States. Added to this emigration of Sikhs from

17. Cheng, Oriental Immigration, p 157.

18. See Appendix A for complete figures.

19. Victoria Daily Colonist, January 27, 1951.

20. Ibid., cit.

Canada was a lack of wives and consequent small natural increase to keep the total number of Sikhs in the province relatively small.

When one looks back on the past forty-eight years of Sikh immigration to Canada the fact that stands out clearly is that the Canadian government acted as the Canadian voters, at least in British Columbia, wanted it to in its restrictive East Indian immigration policy. Constitutionally the Canadian stand was correct. Yet, one feels that morally it left much to be desired. The idea of white supremacy dies slowly, if at all. An examination of the life of the Sikhs in British Columbia shows how unfounded most of the fears of the anti-Orientals were.

*The political history of the Sikhs in B.C. has been woven around their battle for the franchise.* As a result of this

struggle their legal status has been examined by many writers. Because of the nature of this struggle the various political parties also have played their part. Another phase of the political aspect of Sikh life is seen in the various propaganda outbursts either for or against the group.

The opening rounds in the battle for political rights for the Sikhs were fired in the years which immediately followed World War I. In the year 1922 the Rt. Hon. V.S. Srinwasa Sastri toured Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, to plead for the franchise for East Indians resident in those Dominions. At Victoria, British Columbia, he pleaded only for the franchise, not for an increase of immigration for Sikhs. In doing this he stressed the idea of imperial solidarity, and linked political unrest in India with the treatment of East Indians in the Dominions.<sup>1</sup> Of course the question of the franchise of the Sikhs was raised in the Canadian House of Commons where, according to one writer, the resulting debates were highly academic for there were only 951 "Hindus" in British Columbia, according to the 1921 census figures, who did not demand the franchise for themselves and who would probably not use it if granted to them.<sup>2</sup> British Columbia's fears were ridiculous. A cross-section of an average debate on this topic shows the feelings prevalent and illustrates some of the arguments produced. This debate took place on June 29, 1923.<sup>3</sup>

1. Canadian Annual Review, 1922, p 201.

2. Cheng, Oriental Immigration, p 159.

3. Canada. House of Commons Debates, 1923, pp 4640 - 4653.

*The member for George Etienne Cartier riding argued in favor of giving the franchise to the Hindus in B.C. on the grounds of Empire solidarity & the obligations undertaken by Canada at the*

Imperial Conference of 1921. To quote Jacobs, the member in question,

"I claim we would be doing our duty as citizens of the British Empire in granting this franchise to the Hindus."<sup>4</sup> Mr. T. Neil, the member

for Comox-Alberni, argued for the opposite point of view. Neil summarized his own views when he said that: "It is not a Dominion matter.

It is a British Columbia problem. Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. Let us settle the problem in British Columbia."<sup>5</sup>

McBride, the member for Cariboo supported Neil with the following view:

" . . . we in British Columbia want no more Hindus . . . We have on the coast of British Columbia Chinamen and Japs running our stores.

They are running the white people out. We have the Greeks there

running our hotels and we have the Jews running our second-hand stores, and now some people want to bring in the Hindus to run our mills . . .

If this country wants to cast British Columbia adrift and let her cast it adrift before any more Orientals come in. If they do, we white people out on the Pacific will prevent any more Orientals coming to British Columbia."<sup>6</sup>

J. S. Woodsworth in answer to the statements of Neil and McBride, supported the franchise and referred to the statements of the anti-Orientals with the statement: "I cannot see that we are going to get very far by a narrow bigotry of that kind."<sup>7</sup> Such

were the arguments put up by various representatives of the people.

For the next twenty-four years the controversy was to continue.

4. Commons Debates, 1923 p 4642.

5. Ibid. p 4647.

6. Commons Debates, 1923 p 4648.

7. Ibid. p 4651.

ignorance and complacency emerged as World War II.

5. Victoria Daily Colonist, July 25, 1940.

13. personal interview with Mr. Elmore Shiltcott, March 20, 1952.

especially in the Vancouver & Fraser region. During the next year  
1943, the battle for the franchise made its way into the  
troubled columns of the daily press. The

of the daily press. The Daily Province of March 2, 1943, ran the head-  
line: "East Indians ask Franchise".<sup>16</sup> The next day, "Hart Ponders  
Franchise for East Indians", ran the Vancouver Sun.<sup>17</sup> The result of  
these deliberations by the premier was: "No decision on vote for East  
Indians".<sup>18</sup> The franchise issue remained quiet for the remainder of  
the year.

In March, 1944, however the Sikh franchise question exploded in  
a bitter outburst of racial prejudice and ill feeling. The newspaper  
headlines expanded a little, tell the story in graphic terms. The first  
signs of the coming battle became apparent in February, 1944: "East  
Indians' vote pressed"<sup>19</sup> On March 9, 1944, the battle opened in earnest.  
"Perry halts measure on East Indian vote,"<sup>20</sup> B.C. Hindus flayed by  
Pearson as unworthy of receiving vote,"<sup>21</sup> announced the Vancouver news-  
papers. Mr. George Pearson's statements were somewhat true as Sikhs  
had violent tempers and tended to be reckless drivers.<sup>22</sup> The Sikhs  
took up the challenge: "East Indians say Pearson attack unfair."<sup>23</sup>  
They continued their action as the March 10 issue of the Province  
showed: "East Indians demand Pearson apologize or retract words."<sup>24</sup>

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14. Khalsa Diwan Society, Report on Dominion, Provincial and Municipal  
Franchise for the Hindus in British Columbia, Victoria, Nov. 1947 p 5.  
15. Victoria Daily Times, Oct. 9, 1942, p 2.  
16. Vancouver Daily Province, Mar. 2, 1943, p 4.  
17. Vancouver Sun, Mar. 3, 1943, p 8.  
18. Vancouver Daily Province, Mar. 19, 1943, p 5.  
19. Vancouver Daily Province, Feb. 24, 1944, p 13.  
20. Vancouver Daily Province, Mar. 9, 1944, p 15.  
21. Vancouver Sun, Mar. 9, 1944, p 9.  
22. Personal Interview with Mr. Elmore Philpott, Mar. 20, 1952.  
23. Vancouver Sun, Mar. 9, 1944, p 22.  
24. Vancouver Sun, Mar. 14, 1944, p 2.

*the 20th Legislature of B.C. fl itself with a first rate political battle on its hands to the Sikh's demands Mr.*

... the Sikhs' demands Mr.

George Pearson said no.<sup>24</sup> "Union meeting rejects remarks 'derogatory to Hindus, Chinese';<sup>25</sup> This statement shows labour's position in the struggle. The Education Minister, Mr. Perry, on March 16, re-entered the fray. His position now was: "East Indians should have vote . . . His reason was that they were not Orientals. The same day saw the immediate results of this short but lively battle announced as: "CCF again beaten in move to get vote for Hindus"<sup>27</sup> However the minor rumblings of discontent carried on. One week later the "East Indians refuse to accept George Pearson's statement,"<sup>28</sup> and so announced the continuation of the battle. In April a few shots were still being fired as: "East Indians renew protest."<sup>29</sup> The summer and autumn months of 1944 remained reasonably quiet. In the last month of the year the voice of opposition to the franchise for the Sikhs spoke again. On December 5, 1944, Attorney General R.G. Maitland was reported as saying that since for the past fifty years the question of the Hindu franchise has been accepted and settled and as 50,000 men and women were away from the province, the policy of no vote for the Sikhs should be left unchanged.<sup>30</sup> To his statement of a personal opinion, the Vancouver Sun said: "Maitland attitude on Sikhs insolent."<sup>31</sup> Thus one of the most explosive episodes in the franchise battle came to an end.

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24. Vancouver News-Herald, Mar. 15, 1944, p 3.

26. Vancouver Daily Province, Mar. 16, 1944, p 7.

27. Vancouver Sun, Mar. 16, 1944, p 13.

28. Vancouver Daily Province, Mar. 22, 1944, p 12.

29. Vancouver Daily Province, April 6, 1944, p 3.

30. Victoria Daily Times, Dec. 5, 1944, p 11.

31. Vancouver Sun, Dec. 6, 1944, p 13.

The year, 1945, marked the end of World War II. It also marked the beginning of a more tolerant attitude to the Sikhs by the people of British Columbia. In the twenty-first Legislature the CCF again pressed for the vote for the Sikhs. The result was defeat by a three-vote margin.<sup>32</sup> The anti-Sikh forces still held a slim majority. The factor of the Native Daughters and Native Sons of B.C., Mr. J.E. Sears still claimed that the East Indians were unworthy of Canadian citizenship.<sup>33</sup> His arguments were by then the standard ones.

The year 1946 brought one of the strongest champions of the cause of the Sikh franchise to Canada in the person of Dr. D.P. Pandia. On August 13, 1946, he told a meeting at Montreal that favourable Canadian action on treatment of the Sikhs could influence India's decision to stay within the Commonwealth.<sup>34</sup> Dr. D.P. Pandia came to British Columbia in September. There he held conferences with prominent leaders of the Sikh community so that a successful campaign to obtain the franchise would result. He addressed Service Clubs, church groups, and other organizations, spoke on the air and on public forums, and obtained further recognition of the importance of the principles involved, in editorial comment and in expressions of public opinion. He went to Victoria and conferred with the Premier, John Hart, and all ministers and officials concerned, to present to them the various aspects of the franchise problem.<sup>35</sup>

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32. Vancouver Daily Province, March 28, 1945, p 6.

33. Vancouver Daily Province, April 7, 1945, p 9.

34. Victoria Daily Times, Aug. 13, 1946, p 8.

35. Khalasa Diwan, Report on the Franchise, p 6.

In the 1946 session of the Legislature an all party election committee was set up.

... under the chairmanship of Mr. R.H. Carson, to recommend any necessary changes in the Election Act. This committee met on October 31 and November 1, 1946 at the Vancouver Court House.<sup>36</sup> A delegation from the Sikh community consisting of Kapoor Singh, Kartar Singh, Mayo Singh, Ishar Singh, Gurdit Singh, Nagindar Singh, and Dr. Pandia attended this meeting of the Elections Act Committee.<sup>37</sup> Dr. Pandia presented a brief on behalf of the Sikhs and addressed the Committee. The Committee recommended the necessary change to the Act to give the franchise to the East Indians and the Chinese.

In February, 1947, Mr. J. Nehru conferred with Ottawa on the possibility of granting the vote to the East Indians of British Columbia.<sup>38</sup> The recommendations of the Elections Act Committee were introduced to the 1947 Legislature as Bill 85. The first reading of the Bill met with no opposition. In the second reading, however, the government introduced an amendment requiring a voter to have an adequate command of English or French. This amendment was passed by the House. The third reading of the Bill, as amended, took place on April 2, 1947. Bill 85, as amended, was unanimously passed by the House.<sup>39</sup> Dr. Pandia saw this action as a stimulus to good Indian-Canadian relations.<sup>40</sup> As the granting of the provincial franchise automatically gave the Sikhs the federal franchise, the right to vote in the municipal elections was still to be obtained.

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36. Loc. cit.

37. Loc. cit.

38. Victoria Daily Colonist, February 6, 1947, p 1.

39. Khalsa Diwan, Report on the Franchise, p 6.

40. Victoria Daily Colonist, April 4, 1947, p 3.

*The municipalities of B.C. w/ the excep. of Vancouver City  
are governed by the Municipal Elections Act*

and are autonomous bodies concerning civic affairs, including the municipal franchise. The City of Vancouver has its own charter under the Vancouver Incorporation Act. These two Acts contained clauses barring East Indians from voting. Any alterations, had to come from the recommendation of the municipalities, and would then be implemented by the provincial government. The annual convention of the Union of B.C. Municipalities is the statutory body to recommend alterations to the Act. The 1947 convention met at Harrison Hot Springs on September 15, 16 and 17. Mayor Percy George of Victoria sponsored Resolution 35, which in effect would give the vote to the Hindus.<sup>41</sup> Dr. Pandia, Messrs. Kapoor Singh, Mayo Singh and Kartar Singh attended the convention to lend assistance to the Convention in passing the resolution. The resolution was amended by Mayor Loutet of North Vancouver: "That the word Hindu be used as defined in the Provincial Elections Act, to denote persons here from India rather than members of the Hindu religion."<sup>42</sup> The resolution as amended was passed with only one dissident -- a delegate who thought the resolution did not go far enough but should embrace the native Indians also.<sup>43</sup> This Resolution applied to all municipalities in the province except Vancouver. On October 23, 1947 a recommendation giving the vote to Hindus in Vancouver was passed by the committee studying amendments to the city charter.<sup>44</sup> By April, 1948, the battle for the franchise was over.<sup>45</sup>

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41. Khalsa Diwan, Report on the Franchise, p 8.

42. Khalsa Diwan Society, Report on the Franchise, p 8.

43. Loc. cit.

44. Ibid. p 9.

45. Vancouver Sun, April 21, 1948, p 28.

the first federal election in which the Sikhs had the franchise

5. produced its own problems. Mr. Gordon Cameron, Conservative candidate for Victoria, reported that the enumerators had been instructed not to place East Indian names on the voters' list. This statement was confirmed by the Federal Returning Officer, Mr. Child.<sup>46</sup> The missing names were added to the voters' list and the situation was remedied. The Sikh struggle for the franchise had been a long and bitter one, and in the end the fears of the more prejudiced whites were proven to be completely unfounded.

The attitudes of the various political parties were influenced by pressure exerted from the left to the right - the communists forced the socialists who forced the liberals who forced the conservatives into some sort of action. The communist appeal to equality of races and for the end of colonial exploitation no doubt appealed to some of the Sikhs. In Canada however, the Sikhs were in such a minority as to be useful only for propaganda purposes. The CCF party adopted a progressive attitude towards the Sikhs. The CCF was opposed to further immigration of Orientals but "for those of Oriental origin in Canada there can be only one solution. That is to refuse to draw the colour line."<sup>47</sup> The CCF pointed out that according to the 1941 census there were a total of 1,465 East Indians in Canada of whom 1,345 were in British Columbia.<sup>48</sup> Hence equality of treatment for the Sikhs would be the solution. This attitude was based on Section 12 of the Regina Manifesto that stated: "Equal treatment before the

46. Victoria Daily Colonist, June 22, 1949, p 3.

47. Grace and Angus MacInnis, Oriental Canadians: Outcasts or Citizens.

48. Ibid, p 5.

law of all residents of Canada irrespective of race, nationality  
or religion or political beliefs. 49 The Liberal party & the Conservative

Party adopted no official platform on policy on the question of the East Indians. Individual members of both parties held beliefs that favoured the existing status, modification of immigration restrictions, or complete equality for the Sikhs. But these two parties took no action until the pressure of the CCF and the Communists, backed by a changing public opinion, forced them to do so. The majority of the voting public were not necessarily opposed to the Sikhs, but they were mostly indifferent to their status. Consequently political parties who relied on public support could move only as fast as changes in public opinion. Having studied the political aspects of the Sikhs in British Columbia, a survey of their legal status will serve to fill out the picture.

First of all, the Sikhs were British Subjects. This fact was accepted by all concerned. This sharply differentiated them from Japanese and Chinese because by nature of their status as British Subjects the Sikhs claimed equal treatment with British Subjects in other parts of the Empire and Commonwealth. The Dominions had reached agreement on the issue of immigration, each Dominion could take in whom it wanted for citizens. Bowing to the wishes of British Columbia the Canadian Government enacted legislation of a discriminatory nature against alien Orientals of China and Japan and British "Orientals" of India. In fact, because of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance that was in effect till 1922, Japanese were treated with more favour than the British

Subjects of India who were of non-European stock. Hence when the authorities in India co-operated with Canada in the realm of immigration this problem was laid aside.

The field of political rights of British Subjects in a Dominion other than that of their birth also produced some interesting questions for Canada and the Sikhs. The franchise was strictly a provincial matter by the terms of the Dominion Elections Act the provincial franchise entitled one to the federal franchise. British Columbia by denying the Sikhs a vote in the provincial elections also denied them a vote in federal elections. Hence when India complained to Canada about the treatment of Sikhs in Canada, Canada could only refer the matter to the British Columbia government for their consideration. Similarly if India complained to British Columbia, the provincial government could refer the matter to the Dominion government. Because by the terms of the B.N.A. Act the power to deal with foreign and external governments was left in the hands of the British government. Through practice and precedent this power had been assumed by the Dominion government.<sup>50</sup> The circle was complete; by passing the matter back and forth between Ottawa and Victoria, the government with the problem in its hands could delay taking remedial action until it felt the voting public of British Columbia was ready to accept the Sikhs as political equals. For in the last analysis it was the voting public of British Columbia that made it impossible for either government to take any action. The politicians regarded one vote from a voter who had the franchise as much more valuable than one vote from a voter who

50. Examples of this: Treaty of Versailles, 1919, and the Halibut Treaty of 1923, signed by Canada and the U.S.

might have the franchise in the future. The old statement that the time was not politically expedient to initiate new action proved to be true until the years following WW II. The words of the

Atlantic Charter, U.N. Charter and U.N. Declaration of Human Rights impressed the people of British Columbia. At the time of writing the Sikhs have the rights and privileges, at least legally, of Canadian citizens.

Between the years 1939 and 1947 the status of those Sikhs who had entered Canada after legal immigration to the country was halted was determined. In mid-1939 Dr. Pandia took up the question with the Dominion government. The federal cabinet agreed:

- "1. To suspend indefinitely deportation proceedings already initiated.
2. To allow all Indians who had entered Canada illegally to remain, subject to good conduct.
3. To refund over \$30,000 security bonds furnished by, and on behalf of those Indians against whom deportation proceedings had been started."<sup>51</sup>

From 1940 to 1946 the 218 illegal immigrants remained in Canada without full domicile and there was no improvement in their position.<sup>52</sup> After the franchise campaign Dr. Pandia again took up the domicile issue. He was supported by the Sikh communities of the province. Negotiations with the federal government lasted until August 14, 1947, when an order-in-council gave the immigrants, by then reduced to 210, legal status as Canadian citizens.<sup>53</sup> This was the last of the internal

51. Khalsa Diwan Society, Report of correspondence and documents relating to negotiations between 1939 and 1947, culminating in domiciling rights being accorded to 210 members of the Indian community by the Dominion Government, Vancouver, September 27, 1947, p 3.

52. Ibid. p 9.

53. Ibid. p 24.

problems of the Sikhs in Canada. But as suggested above, the problems of the Sikhs in British Columbia were not always confined to the local sphere.

The treatment of East Indians in other member countries of the British Commonwealth was always a source of annoyance to India. South Africa, and Canada to a lesser degree, were the objects of India's searching questions. With the development of India as a Republic within the Commonwealth the matter of East Indians abroad led to a strain being placed on the usually cordial intra-Commonwealth relations. Thus when the Sikhs in Canada became politically equal to the Canadians of European and Oriental descent, Indian-Canadian relations took on a warmer tone. But the treatment of Indians in South Africa is still a point of contention between these members of the Commonwealth. While prejudices existed within the "democratic" Commonwealth, fuel was provided for such groups as the Communists, to use in propaganda campaigns against colonialism and imperialist capitalism. What appeared to many Canadians to be purely a local problem was, even if on a relatively small scale, an international one as well.

Chapter 11

*Having examined the Sikhs of B.C. as a political legal*

group, they will next be considered as a group of fellow human beings. This social-historical survey of the Sikhs of British Columbia, although not as detailed as a sociological report, will endeavour to look at the Sikh in the province from as many sides of his life as possible -- economic, cultural, religious, social and commercial. Because this is a survey of human beings, generalizations that are made will of necessity not always be truly representative of any given individual. The richest element of human life lies in the nature of its very diversity from person to person. The strength of western civilization lies in the individuality of its member nations. Yet, because of this very individuality, human beings must learn to accept the concept of mankind as a group of equals and not as identical units like so many mass-produced door knobs. Thus in Canada the "melting pot theory" of the United States has not become a part of our immigration policy. In Canada we must therefore derive our strength from the individual or the group and not as 100% Canadians that are composites of the worst elements of all.<sup>1</sup> Though the Sikhs are few in number when compared with other Canadian ethnic groups, such as the French-speaking Canadians or Ukrainians, we as Canadians can profit from their culture. Perhaps the doctrines of Guru Gobind Singh are what are needed to bolster western "democracy".

As it is by his religion that the Sikh is known, the first aspect of his life in British Columbia to be examined will be the religious one.

1. For example: the high vice and crime rate among second generation foreign elements in the U.S.

*altho there is an unorthodox section of the Community the Sikhs have stayed true to their religion while in Canada there have been no converts to Christianity.* The interest of the

Christian Church in them was largely confined to the Presbyterian Church,<sup>2</sup> which set up schools of religious instruction. One Presbyterian minister reported that the Sikhs were not very interested in becoming Christians for the while Christians with whom they had contact did not indicate that the religion was equal to their own. Because the Sikhs have not switched to the Christian religion, many outsiders have seen only the relatively solid front of Sikhism, and are not aware that there are dynamic changes taking place within the Sikh community.

The orthodox Sikhs in particular have been tied to their religion and consequently have kept tied to their old land. India's struggles were therefore regarded as their struggles. But because of the immigration restrictions relatively little new blood and few new ideas have come from India. The result has been that the first generation orthodox Sikhs are living in the social and cultural age of early-20th Century India.<sup>3</sup> The orthodox have clung to the ritual and ceremony of Sikhism to such a degree that they have built the religion as a shell about them. The Sikh religious services are held on Sundays, with special services held on anniversaries of births and deaths of religious leaders such as Guru Gobind Singh and Nanak. Special services were also held in memory of Gandhi,<sup>4</sup> regarded as the father of Republican India, and when India achieved her independence.<sup>5</sup> Services such as

2. Rev. Mr. J.K. Grant, Methods of Work and Results, 1915, p 108.

3. Personal interview with Mr. Kartar Singh, Jan. 30, 1952.

4. Victoria Daily Times, February 6, 1946.

5. Ibid. August 18, 1947.

these have reinforced the cultural ties w/ the old land.  
There are permanent Sikh temples at Vancouver, Victoria,  
Abbotsford & Duncan.

The Sikh Temple at Vancouver was built in 1909, in the 1800 block on West 2nd Ave. The building itself is of frame construction with a salmon-pink stucco exterior. On the ground floors are dormitories, which are used during special ceremonies, such as the one held on January 17, the birthday of Guru Gobind Singh, to house out-of-town Sikhs. The main floor of the building consists of the temple proper. The room is oblong, lying north and south in length. At the north end is the main entrance, where one leaves one's shoes before entering. The room is richly carpeted. Various pictures of gurus, and holy scenes, adorn the walls. At the south end of the room is a raised altar on which is placed the granth, or holy book, which contains the sayings and teachings of the gurus. The main articles of furnishings that are missing from the Sikh temple are chairs, for the Sikhs squat or sit on the floor during the services. The richness of the colours of the carpets and embroidered altar coverings give the generally bare and simple room a touch of the Oriental splendour that is usually associated with India. Outside the building again, the flag pole flies the yellow triangular pennant of the Sikhs with its black Punjabi characters. All in all, the simplicity of the temple is in keeping with the fundamental simplicity of Sikhism.

As late as 1937 the Sikhs still used their traditional funeral services. On September 21, 1937, the funeral of Lahab Singh took place.<sup>6</sup>

6. Victoria Daily Times, September 21, 1937, p 8.

The services were held on the outskirts of Victoria the body was laid on a pyre of stones w/ flowers at the head & feet.

Cordwood was laid on the body by the male mourners. When the pyre was finished the widow took a lighted torch and touched it to the pyre, each other mourner then followed suit. While this was being done an elder read passages of scripture and led the funeral chants. When the pyre was ablaze the funeral party, except for a few males who were left behind to watch the fire and gather the ashes, returned to the temple in Victoria for further prayers and services. The dead man's children were not present at the funeral rites because, as one of the mourners stated to the reporter covering the funeral, the ceremony would be too frightening for them. This funeral procedure is very similar to that of Hinduism. In both religions now, the widow is not expected to throw herself on her husband's funeral pyre. Sikhism retains in its funeral ceremonies its intrinsic simplicity of ritual.

Other religious ceremonies celebrated in traditional fashion by the Sikhs are weddings. On April 4, 1939 such a wedding took place in Vancouver.<sup>7</sup> In fact this was the first Sikh wedding to be held in that city. The groom was Hajara Singh of Duncan, British Columbia, and the priest was Harnam Singh, also of Duncan. In the account in the newspaper there was no mention of the bride's name. A truck garage in the 1700 block West 2nd Ave was transformed into a magnificent temple for the occasion. Silk drapes, rich carpets and a temporary altar were added to the usually dull surroundings of the garage. The ceremony and celebrations lasted from Sunday night until Wednesday morning.

7. Vancouver Daily Province, April 4, 1939, p 5.

During this time well-wishers and friends brought gifts for the newly-weds and joined in the general celebrations. Many curious non-Sikhs also visited the garage to watch the celebrations. In doing so they saw a small segment of East Indian culture. This long period of wedding celebrations is not very different in this respect from some of the wedding customs of Europe. In marriage it seems as though East and West do meet.

Closely associated with the purely religious life of the Sikhs is the community life as expressed through their organization, the Khalsa Diwan Society. This Society was organized in 1909 with its headquarters at Vancouver, and branches at Victoria, New Westminster, Abbotsford, Fraser Mills, Duncan, Coombs and Ocean Falls. It was to appoint ministers of the Sikh religion for the various temples and to look after the religions of the Sikhs who were scattered across Canada.<sup>8</sup> Apart from religious problems the Society takes an interest in educational and philanthropic functions.<sup>9</sup> This Society has also

8. Cheng, Oriental Immigration, p 208.

9. Ibid. p 228.

Philanthropies of Khalsa Diwan Society to 1921:

|                                                             |                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| (1) to sufferers from massacres . . . . .                   | \$ 4,330.      |
| (2) to families of political prisoners . . . . .            | 2,100.         |
| (3) to sufferers from political causes . . . . .            | 30,700.        |
| (4) to Congress Tilak Swaraj fund . . . . .                 | 3,333.         |
| (5) to religious and educational causes in India & Canada . | 148,000.       |
| (6) to Komagata Maru case . . . . .                         | 50,000.        |
| (7) to Immigration cases . . . . .                          | 30,000.        |
| (8) to deputations to Canadian & British governments . . .  | 12,000.        |
| (9) to Hindustani Press in Canada . . . . .                 | <u>15,000.</u> |

Total

\$295,463.

been the main voice of Sikh orthodoxy in B. C. w/ the Sikh community there exists a growing # of unorthodox Sikhs who

Following the lead of Mr. Kartar Singh, the first to shave his beard and cut his hair in western style, are playing an increasingly important role in the life of the community.<sup>10</sup> This group which has been reinforced by second generation Sikhs and by new arrivals from India is supplying the necessary stimulus to prevent the community from becoming crystallized.<sup>11</sup> This year, 1952, in the elections to the executive of the Khalsa Diwan Society a majority composed of unorthodox Sikhs was elected. This election represents a revolutionary step for the whole of the Sikh religion.<sup>12</sup> It came about over an interpretation of a relatively minor point of religious ceremony. The priest, who had recently arrived from India, insisted on leading the services with his naked sword lying across his lap. The Sikh orthodoxy backed him while the unorthodox did not. When the orthodox refused to accept the ruling of the headquarters of the religion in India in favour of the unorthodox the orthodox in fact became unorthodox. Through this confusion the unorthodox were elected to the executive. After this regeneration within the community is completed we may look forward to an active cultural group that will contribute much to the life of British Columbia. A brief biographical sketch of the life of Mr. Kartar Singh in Canada will best illustrate this last point.<sup>13</sup>

Mr. Kartar Singh arrived in Canada in 1911 as a more or less typical Sikh immigrant complete with turban and beard. The next year, 1912, he started a native language paper. His first difficulty was in finding

a type setter. He tried several in Vancouver, who were rather shocked at the thoughts of such a paper. However the printer of Vancouver

referred him to a radical printer in Victoria who might help him.

But a Punjabi-language paper was too radical a step for this radical who refused to help Kartar Singh. He therefore had to learn to set type himself in order to publish his paper. The outbreak of World War I, in 1914, put an end to his journalistic career for the time being. For the next fifteen years he was in Ontario, spending much of his time in the Toronto region, learning to speak English and furthering his knowledge of Canadians.

In 1929 he returned to Vancouver where he started an English-language paper, that was hailed by the press of Canada as a most welcome step to further the understanding between India and Canada. The editorial address of the paper ran as follows: "India and Canada. A Journal of Interpretation and Information, published at 1664 West 4th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C, published and edited by Mr. Kartar Singh." The aims in printing this journal were:

"This small journal is now started to be a medium of interpretation between the people of both these countries.

For its immediate usefulness, this publication will endeavour to place before the Canadian public the truth and **nothing** but the truth, about the people from North India now resident in Canada.

The other aspect of the work of this journal will be to inform, through its Punjabi section, the people of North India here and at home, about the life, institutions, problems, requirements, standards and ideals of Canada." 14

The following issues of the journal followed these aims by containing

articles on incidents in India, Canada relations, Sikhism, biographical sketches of successful Sikh businessmen, & articles on Canada. Mr. H. Singh's literary efforts this time were not successful, although short-lived. The effects of the economic depression struck in 1930 when the journal suspended publication. Since then, Mr. Kartar Singh has been active in championing the cause of the Sikh community in British Columbia. At the present he may be found in the offices of the Canada-India Association on West Hastings Street, still willing to further the cause of mutual understanding. This sketch is perhaps of the uncommon Sikh or uncommon man in any community, yet it is of a good Canadian citizen.

Sketches of composite Sikhs in British Columbia will show two groups -- Canadian born and Indian born. It is with the latter that we shall start in showing that what for want of a better phrase, can be called the daily life of a Sikh. His food would consist of wheat cakes, made from a wheat flour and butter known as chappati, and large amounts of vegetables, eggs, butter, milk, and fish. This diet which comprises large amounts of butter produced an interesting exception in the rationing of essential foods in Canada during World War II. By special consideration the Sikhs were allowed extra butter rations.<sup>15</sup> By his religion he is closely akin to the Hindu in that he is prohibited from eating beef, and he rarely eats pork, mutton or poultry. His diet then could be classed as largely vegetarian. During the inter-war years the Sikh spent more on his food than either the Chinese or Japanese.<sup>16</sup> The second generation Sikhs, in eating habits

15. Vancouver Sun, April 7, 1943, p 17

16. Cheng, Oriental Immigration, p 199.

on closely tied to their parents, because of tradition. Conditioning of the facility of boarding at home.

In the matter of clothing the Sikh did not dress as well as the Chinese or Japanese.<sup>17</sup> He always appeared to be untidy. To quote one western observer:

"It must be pointed out that the Hindustani does not dress himself with special reference to society . . . he fails utterly to appreciate the idea that he must adjust his dress according to the social etiquette. His shirt though freshly washed is frequently unironed . . . suit often unpressed; shoes though costly are unpolished . . ."<sup>18</sup>

This picture also has exceptions among the native born as well as among the second generation. The Sikhs who are westernized, as far as outward appearance goes, are as tidy and neat with their dress as their western opposites. Turning to the next basic item in Sikh life we once again find the intrinsic simplicity of Sikhism coming to the fore. Their housing accommodation found them living in poorly furnished rooms that served mainly as sleeping quarters.<sup>19</sup> Once again, the more Canadianized the Sikh the more the Canadian comforts in housing are prevalent.

In economic matters, in Sikh life we find a typical minority situation. The first Sikhs who came to British Columbia were employed by the lumbering firms as labourers, where their strength and willingness to do hard work made them much sought-after employees. Consequently their wages tended to be higher than those of either the Chinese or Japanese, and were nearly equal to those of whites doing comparable work.

17. Cheng, Oriental Immigration, p 200.

18. James E. Dobbs, quoted in Cheng, p 200.

19. Cheng, Oriental Immigration, p 201.

like many minority groups the Sikhs tended to stay w/ their original

occupation. Many of them, in fact, became independent mill-owners with white employees. Closely allied to the lumbering industry is the wood-fuel business. Here the picture of the Sikh and his wood truck is a familiar one to the residents of the province. One possible explanation of the Sikh gravitating to the wood-fuel trade lies in the fact that in India many of the Sikhs are pedlars, hence selling wood was the closest they could come to their occupation in India.<sup>20</sup>

Once again using the inter-war years as a sample period the Sikh's average annual income was \$1320. For a single man, a breakdown of his wages shows: food used \$320, clothing \$60, housing \$60, miscellaneous expenses \$30, and savings of \$800 of which \$400 was sent home to India. Hence the Sikh could rightly be called a frugal man. The general trend during these years was for the Sikh to save a few thousand dollars and then return to India to buy a farm and settle down. Consequently the 1925 figures showing the age and sex breakdown of the Sikh population do not seem to be startling when this emigration to India and the restricted immigration to Canada are taken side by side.<sup>22</sup> Closely allied to economic matters is the spending of money on social activities

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20. Personal interview with Mr. Elmore Philpott, Mar. 20, 1952.

21. Cheng, Oriental Immigration, p 203.

22. Ibid. p 205.

| <u>Age Group</u> | <u>Male</u> | <u>Female</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| under 20         | 40          | 20            | 60           |
| 20-40            | 25          | 15            | 40           |
| 41-60            | 605         | 15            | 620          |
| Total            | 670         | 50            | 720          |

The Sikhs cared very little for amusement or social functions as their cultural background led them to contemplation and meditation rather than to action and pastime activities as known to the west. This form of mental relaxation also led the Sikh to spend much of his time in unnecessary debates, or at least so they seemed to the non-Sikh. Another aspect of life that can be attributed to economic pressures is that of crime and vice. The Sikhs and the Japanese shared the distinction of being the most law-abiding of all national groups within the City of Vancouver. Their major contributions to keep the police in action were traffic violations.

Arising from the economic and personal life of the Sikh is the problem of assimilation. In the problem of assimilation once again the distinction between the orthodox and the Westernized Sikh must be made. The orthodox are the least assimilable of the Orientals, even though they are of Aryan racial stock. Even with their darker complexions the Sikhs' features are indicative of a highly developed Caucasian type. As the word orthodoxy implies, they have clung tenaciously to their culture and customs and have paid very little attention, if any at all, to Canadian life, social ideals or ways. They have endeavoured to conform in their modes of living with the teachings of Sikhism. Because of their turbans, beards, dark complexions, and religious beliefs the orthodox Sikhs have aroused curiosity that through ignorance has led many whites to adopt a strong racial prejudice against them. The second generation, and unorthodox native Sikhs, are well Canadianized. This group has endeavoured to maintain their own culture, while super-

*imposing on it what may be best termed the Canadian, or more exactly the S. Columbian way of life. This split as has been mentioned before*

...led to a certain amount of internal strife in the community. Racial mixture through intermarriage has been limited to one or two cases, partly because the Sikhs are few, but mainly because of the social stigmas, which westerners of the North American variety attach to inter-racial marriages. The tight bonds of the Sikh community have resulted in this small minority maintaining its identity as a very distinct ethnic group. It is still too early to see what the effects of fresh immigration and a relatively large second generation will have on the community. Also it is impossible to predict what changes will take place in western social values. The problem of assimilation is still very much the same as it was before World War II.

The first effect of the Sikh community on the non-Sikhs was to produce a feeling of hostility. Originally this hostility stemmed from economic reasons, lower wages for Sikhs as compared to whites. This economic prejudice was largely confined to the years prior to World War I. In the 1920's and 1930's, apart from the immigration restrictions and lack of the franchise, discriminations against the Sikhs were the exception rather than the rule. Education was open to all, in the "British tradition". There was no enforced segregation, though the Sikhs tended to stay together. Yet there was a great difference between theory and practise which left them feeling that western democracy was hypocritical.<sup>23</sup> Taking the Sikhs as part of the whole Oriental population group, T.H. Boggs gives four principle reasons for

23. 8th Conference, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1942, Paper No. 1, by a Study Group of the Winnipeg Branch C.I.I.A., p 16.

opposition to the Orientals as: race prejudice, including colour and language and culture prejudices, economic competition and a lower standard of living, white alarm over the weight of numbers through higher Oriental birth rate, and racial assimilation.<sup>24</sup> On August 12, 1907, the Asiatic Exclusion League was formed in Vancouver. On February 5, 1927, the Vancouver Klan Number One, of the Canadian Knights of the Ku Klux Klan passed a resolution urging that the entry of all Asiatics be banned.<sup>25</sup> An example of rather extreme anti-Asiatic sentiments and thoughts is found in the person of H.H. Stevens.

The following quotations, taken from a pamphlet written by him,<sup>26</sup> will suffice to sum up the anti-Asiatic feelings of British Columbians. His general description of the Sikhs, " . . . utterly irresponsible people, whose foolish fanaticism has entirely blinded their judgement"<sup>27</sup> This statement, however, describes the anti-Asiatics as well. When describing individual Sikhs, he again expresses himself forcefully:

"Dr. Saudar Singh . . . is altogether undesirable and unreliable, and a menace to the community.

Teja Singh . . . as a scholar, he is interesting; but as a citizen guiding the destiny of his fellows, he is extremely dangerous.

Rajah Singh . . . is the only trustworthy one of the three; but he is pretty much controlled by the others, so is not of serious consequence." <sup>28</sup>

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24. T.H. Boggs, "Oriental Penetration of B.C." International Forum Review, July, 1926, p 3.  
25. Vancouver Daily Province, February 5, 1927, p 1.  
26. H.H. Stevens, "The Oriental Problem dealing with Canada as affected by the immigration of Japanese, Hindus and Chinese", n.d.  
27. Ibid. p 8.  
28. Stevens, Oriental Problem, p 9.

*So much for three leaders of the Sikh community.  
He further claimed that*

*the Sikhs.* would not pioneer but would settle in the cities.

"They dare not; they have not got in their natures the stuff which makes pioneers . . . they should do it (settle the hill country of India), but no it is left to the sturdy Anglo-Saxon to pioneer and explore these wild regions."<sup>29</sup> Continuing his thoughts along the same line he stated that: "the destiny of Canada is best left in the hands of the Anglo-Saxon race . . ."<sup>30</sup> And in conclusion he said: "We conclude . . . with the deliberate assertion that the Oriental races do not in any sense, measure up to the standard of citizenship necessary for the proper development of this country, . . . including the Hindu."<sup>31</sup> Here endeth the lesson as read by Mr. Stevens. He missed, however, the argument that British Columbia would be submerged by a rising tide of Orientals, including the Hindu. Yet an examination of the natural increase of the Sikh population of British Columbia from 1931 to 1940 shows that the feared tide was hardly even a ripple.<sup>32</sup> Yet, for all this anti-Sikh propaganda and outbursts there was an equal amount of pro-Sikh propaganda and pro-Sikh outbursts.

Almost as soon as anti-Asiatics turned their attention to the Sikh minority a few vociferous non-Sikhs took up the challenge. One such person was Isabella M. Broad who, in 1913, wrote a pamphlet advocating fair play for the Sikhs.<sup>33</sup> Her main argument was based on

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29. Stevens, Oriental Problem, p 11.

30. Loc. Cit.

31. Stevens, Oriental Problem, p 20.

32. See Appendix B.

33. I.M. Broad, An Appeal for Fair Play for the Sikhs in Canada, Victoria, 1913.

the idea of Christian brotherly love. As Christians, therefore, the people of B.C. would accept the Sikhs as equals & ask for the elimination of restrictive measures. Another section of Sikh supporters based their ideas of justice for the Sikhs on the British tradition of fair play. These people also used the concept of Empire solidarity to strengthen their arguments. World War I introduced a new weapon in the battle of the Sikhs. The gallant efforts of Indian troops, of whom some 40% came from the Punjab, gave added weight to the arguments for equality for the Sikhs. People began to ask whether democracy, like war or peace, was indivisible. The 1920's found a growing number of people supporting the idea of no more immigration of Sikhs but political equality for the Sikhs already here.<sup>34</sup> The economic depression of the early 1930's made people conscious of a falling standard of living. Any group that was thought to be undermining the economic security of the individual came under fire. Consequently the number of Sikh supporters remained constant while the number of Anti-Asiatics grew in size. World War II and the cry of survival of democracy once more added support to the pro-Sikh group. Organized labour, which in the past had been anti-Asiatic, now added its support to the movement for fair play for the Sikhs. Mass meetings were held and were well attended. An example of this was a meeting, held in the Orpheum Theatre in Vancouver, which was attended by 1,200 people who urged that the franchise should be granted to the Sikhs in British Columbia.<sup>35</sup> The struggle for the franchise during these terrible war years, as previously mentioned, shows the changing spirit of British Columbia

34. Boggs, Oriental Penetration, p 18.

35. Vancouver News Herald, January 18, 1943, p 3.

opinion. The emergence of Communist China and a free independent India within the Commonwealth no doubt played a role in this changing attitude towards Asiatics. At present there is no active anti-Asiatic feeling prevalent in the province. The election, by the students of the University of British Columbia, of Raghubir Singh Basi, an East Indian student, to the office of President of the Alma Mater Society is another indication of the changing attitude of British Columbia. This act is probably the forerunner of similar action in the realm of provincial and civic politics.

In a study of a minority group such as the Sikhs we see much of ourselves reflected in their actions and attempts to cope with the everchanging problems of daily life. This group so much like us, is very different from us also. The secret of successful co-existence lies in the acceptance of differences as facts, and not fancies. No two individuals can ever be absolutely identical.

## CHAPTER 5

If one analyzes the opposition to the Sikhs in an attempt to see if a rational basis for such opposition exists one finds that here the rational blends into the irrational, and the fact into the fancy. The main opposition to the Sikhs was based on the fact that their standard of living was somewhat lower than that prevalent in British Columbia. By employing Sikh labour, so it was argued, white labour would be driven out or forced to accept a standard of living comparable to that of the Sikhs. Immigration and birth-rate figures as previously quoted show that this fear of Sikh dominance in the labour market for lumber mills, for it was in that industry that they were chiefly employed, was none too securely based. The economic opposition tended to shape itself into a wave-like occurrence, the crest coming with economic difficulties, the trough with economic prosperity. Such economic opposition would be explainable if its motives remained pure. Racial and religious prejudice, however, shaped the motives of economic opposition into such distorted forms as to make the introduction of fanciful thinking an easy task. Fanciful ideas develop best in ignorant minds, and in British Columbia such minds abounded. The majority of people of the province knew very little about the East Indian population. The name applied to them was "Hindus". If the fact that the majority of the East Indians were Sikhs and not Hindus was mentioned to most British Columbians, they would modify their description of an East Indian as to point one out as: that Hindu is a Sikh. The fact that Sikhism was a religion and not a province of India did not occur to

to many this ignorance was the starting point for racial prej-  
udice & cultural boxes. It is centered around economic, political, and such social phenomena as religion and morals, quite as much as around race. Prejudice contains an element of dislike, if not fear and hatred. The tendency to prejudge comes from both personal and cultural conditioning. The cultural heritage of the past is passed on from parents to children, teacher to pupil, and older to younger person. To quote Mr. K. Young, "It is clear, then, that prejudice -- racial, national, creedal or class -- depends upon a cultural content which is passed down from generation to generation, fed and coloured by every crisis, large or small, which arises when two races or groups come into competition or conflict."<sup>2</sup> Myths and legends furnish the rationalization for those habits and attitudes which express prejudice. Prejudice also rests on cultural stereotypes of differences, fed and enhanced by literary and theatrical representations, by political ambitions, and by current crises arising out of group rivalry and competition.

The basic causes for racial prejudice in the case of the Sikhs were two in number. The Sikhs had darker complexions than the white residents of British Columbia. The Sikhs did not conform to the Euro-American cultural pattern. The colour prejudice perhaps stems from the fact that the coloured people come from areas that are backward when judged by western Euro-American standards. Consequently

1. K. Young, Social Psychology of Oriental-Occidental Prejudices, American Council Institute of Pacific Relations, 1929, p 3.
2. Ibid. p 5.
3. Ibid. p 10.

Euro-Americans automatically feel superior. This line of reasoning leads to situations where Euro-Americans are quick to condemn a fellow member of the gp. of heath in a superior manner to the majority while collectively the whole and whole feel smugly superior to Asiatics, Africans and anybody else who is not of the white race.

This outlook of Euro-Americans then partially explains the attitude of British Columbians to the Sikhs. The cultural problem of the Sikhs shows the other side of the Euro-American outlook. The Sikhs by the very nature of their intrinsic beliefs could not conform to the accepted pattern of life in British Columbia. Even the unorthodox members of the Sikh community could not accept the prevailing culture of British Columbia in its entirety. Thus the Sikhs felt the disfavour of the Euro-American population of the province on the grounds of racial snobbery. This racial prejudice was modified slightly by religious prejudice. The Sikhs were regarded by the Christian population as being "heathen 'Indus" and therefore were automatically inferior.

To further appreciate the Sikh position one must turn, if rather superficially, to group psychology. Group characteristics are: attitudes and habits of loyalty, mutual aid and co-operation with each other, a sense of social solidarity or unity, and a sense of understanding and common feeling.<sup>4</sup> The individual tends to identify himself with the group, hence he becomes the product of the group to which he belongs.<sup>5</sup> Religion and language become the instruments of group defence. "In the hands of a national group dominated by another, religious institutions become most powerful means of defence both as organizations and symbols of solidarity."<sup>6</sup> The minority group also

4. Young, Oriental-Occidental Prejudice, p 4.

5. H.A. Miller, Races, Nations and Classes, Philadelphia, J.B. Lippincott & Co. 1924, p 10.

6. Ibid. p 40.

*In many ways there is also a certain feeling of group egotism. The*  
group tendency to lack of interest in other groups also leads to a  
certain amount of prejudice. As a result, "prejudice really rests  
upon the construction and acceptance by a group of certain generalized  
notions or pictures of typical characteristics about another group."<sup>7</sup>

The Sikhs were also guilty of the sins of the Euro-Americans. Ignorance of the Euro-Americans' culture and way of life in British Columbia was common to the Sikh. They had fought Britain, one of the chief countries of the Euro-American world, and although they were defeated, in the long run they felt man for man equal to the Europeans. In British Columbia this feeling of equality led the Sikhs to turn inwards to the group and look backwards to India. In this manner the majority of them sought escape from the pressing realities of the situation in the province. They accepted the laws and duties of life in Canada without accepting much of the spirit behind them. On religious grounds they felt equal to the Christian element, who did not always practise what they taught. Consequently each side felt superior to the other. Each side was also ignorant of the other. This combination of ignorance and self-superiority produced the main features and problems of the life of the Sikhs in British Columbia. But as has been mentioned previously, attempts were made to remove the obstacle of ignorance.<sup>8</sup> The reason why most of these attempts failed is worth examining.

7. Young, Oriental-Occidental Prejudice, p. 4.

8. See Kartar Singh's India and Canada.

The rather intangible thing, public opinion, explains these failures. Every politician who seeks public office is aware of the fact that progressive movements or reforms can only move as fast as public opinion changes in their favour. Any movement that moves faster than the segment of the public mind supporting it is doomed to failure. It is, of course, possible to stampede the public, but stampeding people are not different to stampeding cattle in that once started they are almost impossible to control. On the side of the Euro-American public there was a slow but steady swing towards the acceptance of the Sikhs as equals. On the side of the Sikhs there was an equally slow but steady swing towards accepting a modification of their way of life to conform to that of the province in which they lived. The obstacle to this mutual acceptance lies in question of just how far will the Sikhs modify their life and be assimilated.

The assimilation of a minority group takes place in three main areas -- cultural, racial, and economic. Cultural assimilation of the Sikhs is taking place in British Columbia. At first glance this may seem to be an inaccurate statement when one considers the facts that the Sikhs still have their own religion, some still wear turbans and beards, and still tend to look inwards to their own community rather than to the province for cultural life. But the election of unorthodox Sikhs to the executive of their community society is proof enough that a certain, although small, amount of Canadianization has taken place. Racially, assimilation has not taken place, nor is it likely to do so. Both Sikh and Euro-American societies frown on

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*mixed marriages. Children of two-color marriages are not accepted*

as social equals by either group. There are of course exceptions to this general attitude of society in British Columbia. It is in the field of economic assimilation that the Sikh has been most successful. The Sikhs, as we have seen, have tended to gravitate to the lumber industry, in which they have been highly successful, both as employees and employers. The Sikh has a natural ability to do hard work and do it skilfully. Possibly the religion itself, with its emphasis on action rather than words, is the stimulus that keeps the Sikh working. Or perhaps it is the desire common to immigrants to make good in their new land. The worldliness of Sikhism also possibly makes business less disagreeable to the Sikh than to Asiatics who belong to religions that stress the other world of visionary perfection and not the present real but imperfect existence. But whatever the cause, the Sikhs have contributed much to the economic life of the province. Because of this successful economic assimilation, the economic opposition to the Sikh has dwindled. It would be wrong, however, to create the impression that the problem of the Sikhs is solving itself, if it still exists at all.

What then is the problem of the Sikh? Risking repetition it may be stated that the problem of the Sikhs exists only in the minds of humans. But the study of the human mind, as briefly attempted previously, leads one to psychological phenomena. Yet one may also add that it is in the human mind that history begins. As a minority group problem the Sikhs ceased to exist with the granting of the franchise to them and the subsequent easing of the immigration restrictions. But to many

people who are either Sikh or non-Sikh the problem still exists. The problem by definition is the problem of mutual acceptance. It is evident then that mutual acceptance must begin in the thoughts and then be transferred into action. Sikhs and non-Sikhs must honestly strive for an understanding of each other if the maximum good is to come of their association. In returning to the statement that the Sikh problem exists in the human mind, the rather abstract statements contained in this paragraph become clearer. In other words, the Sikh problem will exist only as long as people think it is a reality. Here then is the real problem, more psychological than historical, thoughts can very often become realities to the individual and the only way to erase such realities is through a planned and well executed psychological attack. The answer to the Sikh problem is this: we must be psychologically educated to accept others as our equals without wishing to make them over in our image.

In this study of the Sikhs the interplay of forces that the presence of a minority group in a locality produces has been examined. The action and reaction of the majority to changes in the accepted pattern of life are seen. Yet the Sikhs of British Columbia with their environment also present a miniature of the general relations of Occident and Orient. The story of the Sikhs of British Columbia spans only a few years, but it is the story of the evolution of man's political status in what is called a democratic state. This struggle for political freedom of the Sikhs also leaves the darkest stains on the pages of British Columbia's history. The lesson that is to be learned from the

history of British Columbia's Sikhs is the prime rule of democracy. Freedom for the individual, be he black, brown, yellow or white, must come through the action of the people. Freedom can not be imposed by orders-in-council, or statutes, or constitutions. Freedom can only come from the unselfish actions of those who have the power of government in their hands, the voting public.

APPENDIX A

This table and one in Appendix B are taken from the Report of the 8th Conference, Institute of Pacific Relations, Mt. Tremblant, P.Q., 1942. Paper No. 1, Study Group of the Winnipeg Branch, C.I.I.A., p 9. "East Indian entrants to Canada"

| Fiscal year ending<br>March 31, 19-- | Adult Males | Adult Females | Children | Totals |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|----------|--------|
| 21                                   | 7           | 2             | 1        | 10     |
| 22                                   | 5           | 4             | 4        | 13     |
| 23                                   | 12          | 5             | 4        | 21     |
| 24                                   | 25          | 11            | 4        | 40     |
| 25                                   | 21          | 14            | 11       | 46     |
| 26                                   | 6           | 18            | 39       | 63     |
| 27                                   | 6           | 19            | 37       | 62     |
| 28                                   | 2           | 25            | 29       | 56     |
| 29                                   | 4           | 25            | 24       | 53     |
| 30                                   | 2           | 21            | 35       | 58     |
| 31                                   | 6           | 28            | 46       | 80     |
| 32                                   | 4           | 9             | 34       | 47     |
| 33                                   | 7           | 8             | 48       | 63     |
| 34                                   | 6           | 9             | 18       | 33     |
| 35                                   | 2           | 12            | 19       | 33     |
| 36                                   | 1           | 4             | 16       | 21     |
| 37                                   | -           | 4             | 9        | 13     |
| 38                                   | -           | 6             | 8        | 14     |
| 39                                   | -           | 6             | 8        | 14     |
| 40                                   | 2           | 6             | 5        | 11     |
| 41                                   | -           | 4             | 2        | 6      |
| 42                                   | -           | -             | 3        | 3      |

Totals from  
1906

5,392

256

423

6,071

APPENDIX B

Finnipeg Study Group, Paper No. 1, p 11.

"East Indian Natural Increase"

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Births</u> | <u>Deaths</u> | <u>Natural Increase</u> |
|-------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| 1931        | 50            | 20            | 30                      |
| 1932        | 43            | 19            | 24                      |
| 1933        | 57            | 31            | 26                      |
| 1934        | 40            | 19            | 21                      |
| 1935        | 55            | 16            | 39                      |
| 1936        | 50            | 28            | 22                      |
| 1937        | 45            | 27            | 18                      |
| 1938        | 45            | 22            | 23                      |
| 1939        | 31            | 19            | 12                      |
| 1940        | 42            | 21            | 21                      |
| Total       | 458           | 222           | 236                     |

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Young, K., The Social Psychology of Oriental-Occidental Prejudices, American Council, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1929

#### IV Periodicals

Angus, H.F., "Canadian Immigration: The Law and Its Administration," American Journal of International Law, Vol. 28, January 1934, pp 74 - 89

Boggs, T.H., "Oriental Penetration and British Columbia", International Forum Review, Vol. 1, July 1926, pp 11 - 19

A general survey of the Oriental question containing some useful ideas on the problem's solution.

Gilbert, W.H., "Peoples of India", Smithsonian Institute, April 29, 1944

Institute of Pacific Relations, 8th Conference Report, Mt. Tremblant, P.Q., 1942, Paper No. 1

A source of statistical information on immigration and natural increase figures.

Worse, E.W., "Some Aspects of the Komagata Maru Affair" Canadian Historical Association Annual Report 1936, pp 100 - 109

Reid, R.L., "Inside Story of the Komagata Maru", B.C. Historical Quarterly, January 1941, pp 1 - 23.

This and Worse's article give a complete well-written presentation of one of the most colourful incidents in the history of the Sikhs in British Columbia.

"The Status of Indians in the Empire", Indian Institute of International Affairs, New Delhi, 1944.

An interesting pamphlet expressing India's concern over the status of Indians abroad.

#### V Personal Communications:

Personal interview with Mr. Elmore Philpott, March 20, 1952

Personal interview with Mr. Kartar Singh, January 30, 1952

These two interviews provided interesting, informative views on the Sikh community in British Columbia, that were most helpful in the preparation of this essay.

## VI Special Journals

India and Canada: A Journal of Interpretation and Information.  
June, 1929 to April, 1930. Published monthly in Vancouver.

This journal was of unusual value and interest to the topic.  
It represented a determined effort to educate both sides to enable them to solve their difficulties.

## VII Newspapers:

The daily newspapers surveyed proved to be a most useful source of contemporary information on the Sikhs of the province. Their value in the preparation of this essay was exceptional.

Vancouver News Herald, over the period January 18, 1943 to January 4, 1947

Vancouver Daily Province, over the period April 5, 1925 to April 14, 1951

Vancouver Sun, over the period October 9, 1942 to September 22, 1951

Victoria Daily Colonist, over the period August 15, 1907 to January 27, 1951

Victoria Daily Times, over the period August 19, 1922 to February 6, 1948