

"White" Canada?

"WHITE" - CANADA ?

East Indians first arrived in Canada in the late 1890's. The influx of non-whites resulted in a radical change of the immigration policy.

To keep Canada "WHITE", the Immigration Act of 1908 refused entry to anyone in Canada who did not travel directly from their country of origin. [The Government was aware that a direct link was impossible from India].

Knowing the existing policy, Gurdit Singh a Sikh entrepreneur, chartered a ship, THE KOMAGATA MARU from Hong Kong and collected 376 East Indian passengers and sailed to Vancouver, B.C. On May 23rd, 1914, the passengers arrived at Burrard Inlet seeking a new home in the LAND OF OPPORTUNITY.

Gurdit Singh had challenged the restrictive policy of Canada towards Non-whites. A legal battle began in which 5 B.C. Judges rendered a verdict against the passengers. Having spent over 2 months on the ship, on July 23rd, 1914 the ship was deported, and the passengers were tormented upon their return back to India.

75 years later the THE KOMAGATA MARU incidence allows us to reflect back at Canada's transition towards a policy free of racial discrimination. We are now a MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY and a leader of HUMAN RIGHTS.

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