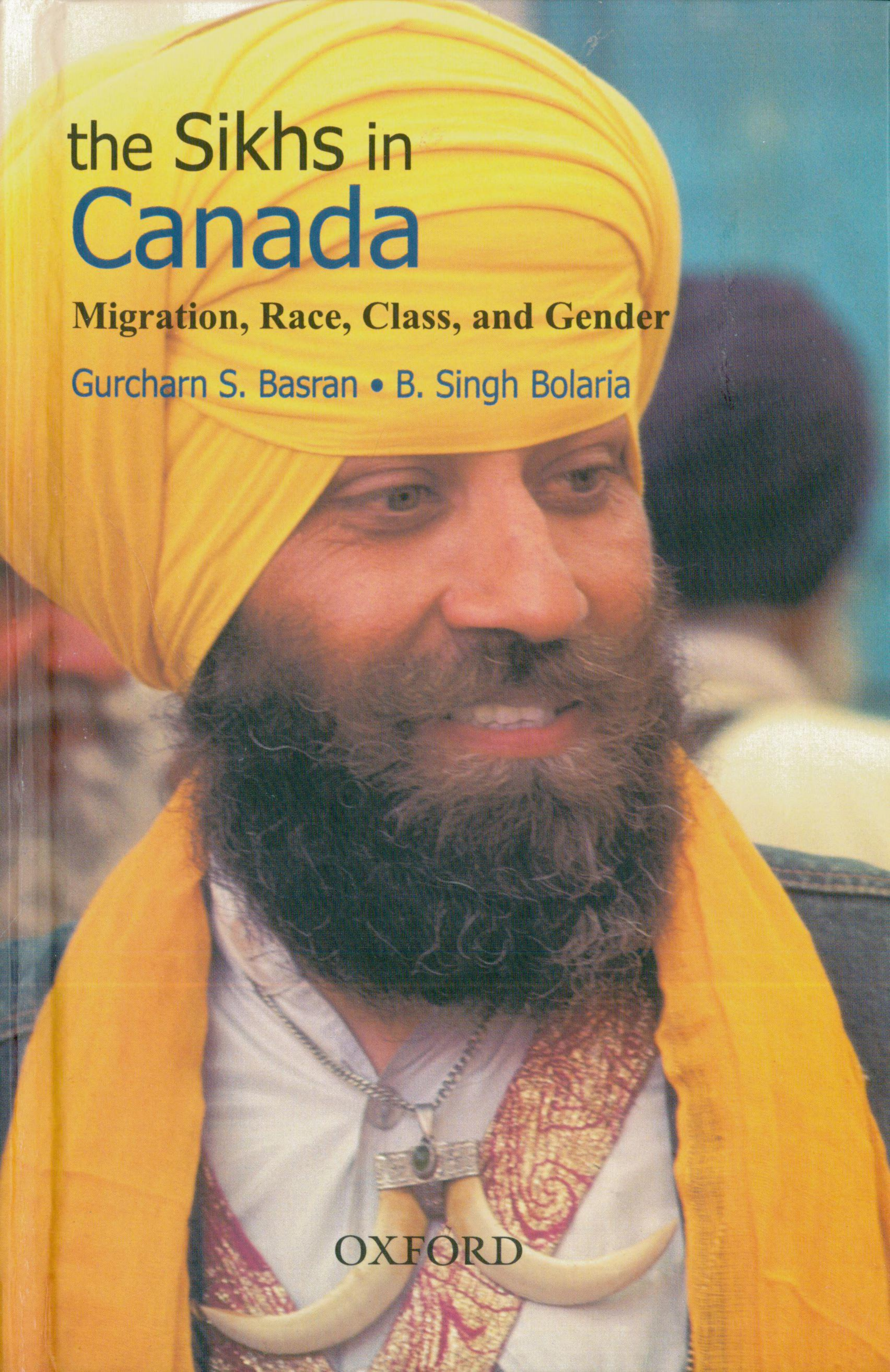




the Sikhs in Canada

Migration, Race, Class, and Gender

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OXFORD

Migration, Labour, and Racism



INTRODUCTION

To fully appreciate the migration patterns and characteristics of immigrants to Canada it is important to consider some of the salient aspects of the theoretical and conceptual debates in migration studies and perspectives on racism and racial inequality. Such a discussion is important to understand the reasons for migration, the volume and characteristics of migrants, and their social, economic, and political location in the Canadian mosaic. Those interested in the study of migration and racism approach and examine such issues from various theoretical perspectives and paradigms and use varying levels of analysis. In the area of migration, explanations range from individual motivation and economic self-interest to migrate, to an analysis of structural determinants involved in patterned migration movements determined by the dynamics of capitalist development and the interface between the needs of the capital and characteristics of labour. Similarly, in the study of racism and racial inequality, explanations range from individual racism which refers to the attitudes and actions of individuals to institutional racism which refers to the normal daily social practices of legal, political, and economic institutions that systematically exclude racial minorities from equal participation and treatment in society.

This chapter discusses various perspectives and paradigms used in studies of migrations and racism with a view to providing a broader context within which the migratory flows and social inequality can be fruitfully analysed. More specifically, the following topics are discussed: international migrations; capital and foreign labour; state and labour procurement; and institutional racism and exploitation.

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATIONS

The history of migrations is the history of a succession of labour reservoirs. The migration of labour across national boundaries has been part of the global relations between the colonial and advanced capitalist and the colonized or neo-colonial underdeveloped countries. Historically, it took the form of the slave trade from Africa (Williams, 1964); indentured and 'coolie' labour from India and China (Tinker, 1974; Huttenback, 1976; Gangulee, 1947; Saha, 1970). Currently, foreign workers constitute a significant part of the workforce in many Western European countries, Australia, North America, and some Middle-Eastern countries (see Bolaria and Bolaria, 1997).

The conditions and mechanisms of transfer and use of slave and unfree labour were, of course, different from the current voluntary and free-labour movements from one country to the other. The slave trade involved overt violence and forced transfer of labour. The present-day migrations take place under different conditions and are caused by a different set of forces, though not necessarily less coercive. In the following pages we discuss some perspectives on migration.

The international circulation of workers has traditionally been understood as resulting from mechanical demographic forces rather than as a consequence of international inequality between rich and poor nations. The primary focus of demographic studies is to compile the demographic characteristics of migrants and to search for individualist reasons or motives for migration. The tendency of this type of inquiry is to produce a so-called theory of migration that amounts to identifying a list of 'push' and 'pull' factors (Bolaria and Li, 1988). The assumption here is that, because of self-interest and economic rationality, individuals decide to migrate to maximize their opportunities for better employment, higher wages, a better quality of life, and other favourable conditions. This perspective has been criticized for its focus on individual interests and motivation, and assumptions of a uniform international labour market and freedom of mobility across national boundaries without adequate recognition of the social, economic, and political contexts of decision-making (Gardezi, 1995). It is argued that demographic studies with their focus on migrations as movements of people not only distract attention from the economic role migrants play in the receiving countries but also do not explain the structural determinants involved in patterned migration movements. In essence, these

studies obscure and devalue the essential role of migrants as labour resource and reservoirs.

Contrary to the assertions of demographers, an aggregate flow of migrants is not a random collection of 'individual choices' to migrate (Cockcroft, 1982). Patterned migration movement and migratory flows are determined by conditions of differential development between countries. Migratory flows will be produced and reproduced so long as such unequal conditions persist. As Sassen-Koob (1978:514-15) notes: 'The nature of migratory flow depends on the nature of these conditions, not on those of the migrants themselves, these being a consequence of those conditions.' Thus, 'migrants can be viewed as stepping or falling into a migratory flow, rather than initiating or constituting such a flow through their individual decisions and actions' (Sassen-Koob, 1978:515).

Recent studies of international circulation of labour and resources have begun to pay greater attention to capitalism as a world-system characterized by gross disparities and unequal accumulation of capital between core and peripheral countries (Elling, 1981; Jonas and Dixon, 1979). The political and economic forces that produce wealth in core capitalist countries simultaneously produce and sustain underdevelopment, unemployment and poverty in peripheral countries. The transfer of labour is one aspect of the unequal and exploitative relations between labour-importing and labour-exporting countries. Blocked development and underdevelopment create high unemployment and hence surplus labour, thus forcing many workers to migrate. As Bonacich and Cheng (1984:2) state: 'migration is a product not of discrete and unconnected factors in the sending and receiving countries, but of historical connections between the countries. It is not fortuitous; it is systematic.'

As capitalism becomes increasingly global in character, the internationalization of capital is accompanied by the internationalization of labour (Navarro, 1986; Elling, 1981; Barnett and Muller, 1974; Turner, 1973). Global disparities allow core countries to have access to an international labour pool. The core countries play an important role in regulating the flow of labour and capital. The poor economic conditions of many Third World countries facilitate both the transfer of workers from these countries to advanced capitalist ones and the direct penetration by multinational firms of the cheap overseas market.

Workers of poor nations face exploitation both in their own countries and in foreign lands. To service large foreign debts many Third World

nation states are dependent upon remittances from abroad. To ensure this, some labour-exporting countries are involved in enforcement of labour contracts to provide a stable workforce to employers and to require these workers to remit a certain percentage of their earnings to the 'home' state (Arnold and Shah, 1984; Choucri, 1983; World Bank, 1980; Gardezi and Rashid, 1983). These funds, however, have little impact on economic development in the labour-exporting countries (Whyte, 1984; Satzewich, 1995a or b; Gardezi, 1995). On the contrary, these funds often disrupt local economies, create inflationary pressures in some sectors, and increase consumption of goods from countries where those workers are employed. In reality, the presence of contract labour allows employers to super-exploit their labour power and increase capital accumulation in those countries. Ironically, this process further increases inequalities between the countries and sustains structured conditions for continued exploitation. Globalization of production, enhanced mobility of capital across national boundaries, and capital's enhanced structural power have created a new despotism of capital over labour. This mobility of capital has strengthened its power and position over the workers and weakened labour in any one community, region, state, or country. Workers are compelled to make concessions to keep their jobs and compete for investments.

CAPITAL AND FOREIGN LABOUR

Material production requires labour power. For a capitalist economy to function, its labour force must be produced, maintained, and renewed. In the process of consuming labour power, the capitalist is able to realize a gain in value beyond that required to purchase the labourer. Capitalists seek every means to reduce the labour cost and to increase the output of workers so that an even larger surplus is realized. Among the strategies used to reduce labour costs are the export of capital to areas of low-cost labour or procurement and use of ready-made labour, immigrant and migrant workers (Bolaria, 1984a, 1984b, 1986).

What specifically are the attractions of foreign-born labour? What are the specific characteristics of this labour that make it so attractive even when there might be a pool of unused domestic labour? The answer lies in the political, legal, and social status of this labour.

Immigrant labour is advantageous to capital in many respects (Satzewich, 1995a; Bolaria and Li, 1988; Trumper and Wong, 1997). As noted earlier,

for a capitalist economy to function its labour force must be maintained and renewed. In the case of imported labour, the costs of labour force renewal are externalized to an alternate economy and/or site (Burawoy, 1976). The circulation of workers across the borders helps to reduce the cost of renewing labour at the point of production (Burawoy, 1976; Bach, 1978; Sassen-Koob, 1978).

Migration involves the transfer of valuable human resources from one country to the other. This transfer represents a very large economic cost to the countries of emigration. Emigration is considered by some economists as 'capital export' similar to the export of other factors of production (Berger and Mohr, 1975). Considerable sums are invested in the reproduction, creation and upbringing of workers (Gorz, 1970). The use of labour, already produced and paid for elsewhere, means a considerable saving for the receiving countries (Berger and Mohr, 1975). Generally, as migrant workers enter the country at the beginning of their working lives, they make an important contribution to the workforce, to production, and to capital accumulation (Jones and Smith, 1970).

The purpose of allowing immigration is not only to increase the supply of labour but to increase the supply of a particular form of labour: cheap labour (Portes, 1977; 1978a; 1978b). This low-cost labour is often used to replace high-cost labour and to counteract and weaken the organizational efforts and bargaining position of the domestic workforce (Portes, 1978a).

For capital, immigrant workers represent a labour force that is stateless, deprived of legal and political rights, and therefore vulnerable and defenceless, and isolated from the indigenous working class (Dixon et al., 1982). These workers can be easily deported if they 'cause trouble' or are no longer needed. The immigrant workers from Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean represent a labour force that 'because of the historical workings of colonialism and racism, can be submitted to levels of degradation which are socially unacceptable for other sectors of society' (Dixon et al., 1982:108).

The newly-arrived workers are often used as scabs and, whenever necessary, as scapegoats, particularly when the labour pool is overflowing and capital faces an accumulation crisis. Cockcroft states: '... capital seeks more immigration labour to build up the pool and yet intensifies the pace of scapegoating and deportations, as part of its general anti-labour and racist offensive, to extricate itself from its crisis in accumulation' (1982:58). Because of their legal and political vulnerability (aliens), migrants become easy targets of blame for social and economic ills (Bustamonte, 1972; 1976).

Immigrant workers are not only a source of cheap labour; they also regulate class conflict, '... directly by undercutting the collective actions launched by domestic worker organizations and indirectly by diverting the class hostilities rooted in the economy onto alien scapegoats' (Jenkins, 1978:324-5).

These workers are used in specific sectors of the economy, particularly in agribusiness and the garment industries. Capitalists in all of these sectors are seeking to combat the tendency of the rate of profit to fall by saving on wages. The immigrant workers are used as one 'way out' of the structured periodic crises in capital accumulation. The employers benefit from immigrant labour both economically, as a temporary resolution to crises in accumulation, and politically, because of the divisions and many social contradictions between migrant workers and indigenous workers. The migrant and immigrant labour force is now a permanent part of the economic structure of many countries and their labour cannot be relinquished.

These workers also form the basis of the modern industrial reserve army (Castles and Kosack, 1972). Other groups which might serve the same function—men thrown out of work by rationalization and capitalist crisis, non-working women, members of the *lumpen-proletariat*—have already been integrated into the production process to the extent to which it is profitable. The use of further reserves of this type would require costly social measures, such as kindergartens and day-care services (Castles and Kosack; 1972).

Castells (1975) also argues that this labour force is a fundamental element in the economic structure of many capitalist countries and is not simply an extra source of labour during times of rapid economic expansion. The immigrant and migrant labour help to maintain the rate of surplus value (profits) and capital accumulation by, 'paying a proportionately smaller value for the reproduction of the labour force, and increasing the duration and intensity of work' (Castells, 1975:46). As far as these conditions are concerned, immigrant and migrant workers usually receive the lowest wages; these workers are generally young and healthy (health screening examinations for immigrants ensure this), and they are likely to be working in the worst safety and health conditions, which permits considerable savings in the organization of work (Bolaria, 1988a; 1991). Racial minority and women workers face extreme exploitation in the labour market and often end up in low-paying and dead-end jobs and unhealthy work environments (Bolaria, 1991).

A foreign workforce is viewed as a production factor that can be repatriated when no longer needed (Sassen-Koob, 1981). Cockcroft points out that, 'because of the intensity of their exploitation, the migrants themselves have their productive capacities "used up" relatively early in life and are then discarded to the margins of society, to be replaced by new waves of younger migrants' (1982:56). Access to offshore workers assures an almost infinite supply of labour.

In summary, the circulation of workers across borders helps to reduce the cost of renewal of labour at the point of production. Obviously, immigrant workers do supplement the supply of domestic labour. Their importance and usefulness is that they increase the supply of a particular type of labour: docile and cheap. Many economic and political advantages accrue to capital from this situation.

STATE AND LABOUR PROCUREMENT

The state uses immigration laws to regulate the quantity and composition of immigrants and control their legal-political status. Canadian immigration policy regulations have been changed periodically to accommodate its labour force and demographic needs (Bolaria, 1984a; 1984b; Bolaria and Li, 1988). For instance, during the 1960s and 1970s, many Western countries, including Canada, were in need of a highly specialized and technical labour force to accommodate the demands of rapid industrial development, especially when the domestic educational system was unable to generate a professional-skilled work force. To facilitate the recruitment of professional-scientific labour, a change in 1967 immigration regulations eliminated racial and nationality quotas and stressed linguistic, educational, and occupational qualifications of immigrants (Bolaria, 1992; Li, 1992). More recently, another important change has been to allow business immigrants to Canada to facilitate capital import as well (Wong and Netting, 1992).

Immigration laws often create the flexibility to allow foreign labour to be admitted without granting the workers the legal status of regular immigrants. In this way the state has the maximum benefit of importing cheap labour from all over the world without having to finance the overhead costs of labour reproduction. For instance, in addition to regular immigrant-settler labour, Canada also relies upon transient migrant workers to meet the labour force needs in various sectors (Bolaria, 1984a; 1992). In 1973,

Canada introduced Employment Authorization Regulations to allow the admission of non-residents for temporary employment. Thousands of workers have been admitted under this programme. Through the use of entry regulations, the Canadian state has been successful in converting what might otherwise have been permanent settlers into a lower-cost migrant-contract labour force. This labour procurement strategy, which was initially used in the case of domestic servants and agricultural sectors, has also been extended to the professional-scientific workforce (Bolaria, 1992).

The state through other immigration controls helps to reduce the labour costs, such as, single male or female workers without their families. The social cost of maintenance of workers without families is quite low. The recipients of this labour force save on a whole range of social costs: housing, schooling, and so forth. The absence of 'normal' married family life also delayed the growth of the native-born population of non-white immigrants, such as Indo-Canadians. The denial of legal-political rights and legal protection makes foreign workers vulnerable to extreme-exploitation by their employers. Various state-administered labour contracts also determine whether the foreign-born nationals are free to sell their labour power (free labour) or are confined and restricted to particular jobs and are not free to circulate in the labour market (Bolaria, 1992; Trumper and Wong, 1997). The state, of course, also has to manage the contradictions and political and ideological constraints in using immigration to solve demographic and fiscal problems associated with the declining fertility and aging of the Canadian population (Satzewich, 1995a).

The state, by regulating the migratory flows, admissibility and entry status of foreign-born nationals and workers, and denial of legal and political rights, provides capital with the cheapest, most submissive, docile, and exploitable workforce.

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM AND EXPLOITATION

Racial and ethnic inequality is a basic feature of the Canadian mosaic. Racial privileges, like class privileges, reach far back into the Canadian past. The colonization of the native population, racist immigration policies directed against South Asians and Chinese, the internment of the Japanese, all attest to the racist policies and practices of the Canadian state (Bolaria and Li, 1988). These policies and practices are present in the other institutions of this society, and continue to affect the current status of racial

minorities in Canada. While patterns and practices of discrimination have changed over time, racial domination and racial inequality remain permanent features.

With a few exceptions, sociological studies of racial minorities are guided by the traditional 'race relations cycle' perspective and its many present-day variations of assimilation theories. It is barely possible to escape the literature dealing with cultural distinctiveness, cultural patterns and orientations, adaptation, integration, accommodation, identity, assimilation, and the like. In addition, the tendency has been to examine the 'problems' of non-Europeans. Studies of racial minorities, for the most part, tend to degenerate into more or less socio-psychological examinations of 'ethnic problems', or 'identity crises', or 'adaptation problems' or 'assimilation problems' or 'race problems' or 'family problems'. In short, they highlight the personal and social pathologies of racial minorities and their institutions (Bolaria, 1983; Basran, 1983; Bolaria and Li, 1988). The disadvantaged position of the racial minorities is often explained by biological and cultural deficiency theories in which the organization of the society along racial lines, institutional racism, and differential power relations are typically overlooked (Eitzen and Zinn, 1989).

The biological and cultural deficiency theories in fact argue that some groups are 'inferior because they are inferior' (Eitzen and Zinn, 1989:213). The inferiority of the groups is attributed to 'flawed genetics' or 'flaws' within their way of life which impedes their success. These theories tend to, '... blame the victim and ignore the structural constraints that deny certain groups the same opportunities that others have' (Eitzen and Zinn, 1989:215). While deficiency theories focus on minorities, some other theories, which Eitzen and Zinn refer to as bias theories, focus on the prejudicial attitudes and bigotry of the majority members. The focus on individual attitudes overlooks the importance of 'racial organization of the society that is the cause of people's racial beliefs', and that the determining feature of racial inequality is not prejudicial attitudes but rather the differential power relations and institutional and structural arrangements that maintain these inequalities (Eitzen and Zinn, 1989).

In contrast to the biological and cultural deficiency theories that put the blame on racial minorities, and others that blame individual racism for the disadvantaged position of the minorities, the structural theories focus on institutional patterns and structural inequalities that perpetuate racial inequality and exploitation. Carmichael and Hamilton (1967:4-5) discuss

both types of racism. Individual racism 'consists of overt acts by individuals, which cause death and injury, or the violent destruction of property', and institutional racism 'originates in the operations of established and respected forces in the society'. Institutional racism entails both a racist theory and a social practice embodied in institutions that systematically exclude racial minorities from equal treatment and participation in society. Wilson (1973:34) describes it as follows:

When ideology of racial exploitation gives rise to normative proscriptions designed to prevent the subordinate racial group from equal participation in associations or procedures that are stable, organized, systematized ... institutional racism exists. Institutional racism therefore represents the structural aspect of racist ideology.

Institutions and social arrangements provide differential opportunities for groups: advantage some and disadvantage others. As Knowles and Prewitt state, societal institutions 'have great power to reward and penalize. They reward by providing career opportunities for some people and foreclosing them for others. They reward as well by the way social goods and services are distributed . . . (1965:5).

Racial categorization of a segment of the working class, which Miles (1982:151) calls 'the racialized fraction of the working class' provides a pretext for extreme exploitation of coloured labour. The process of racial categorization, 'can then be viewed as affecting the allocation of persons to different positions in the production process and the allocation of material and other rewards and disadvantages to groups so categorized within the class boundaries established by the dominant mode of production' (Miles, 1982:159).

Racial categorization provides a convenient basis for generating low-cost labour, and racial discrimination serves as an effective barrier in preventing non-white workers from moving away from undesirable jobs. For instance, labour market profiles of white workers are often different from those of racial minority workers. The latter group is more likely to be concentrated in the secondary labour markets characterized by low-paying jobs: arduous, dangerous, and seasonal work (Collins, 1997; Trumper and Wong, 1997).

Racist ideology provides justification for differential treatment and exploitation of racial minorities. It has been argued that this ideology flourished concomitantly with colonialism and justified the control in the political, economic and social spheres and exploitation of the coloured people the world over (Blauner, 1972; Baran and Sweezy, 1966). Due to

conquest and colonial expansion and domination, the people of colour not only came to be exploited in Asia and Africa but also when they were brought to work in various parts of the colonial empires. Justification for exploitation was provided by racial stereotypes and colonial heritage. Racial minority workers find themselves 'branded with the stigma of colour and racial inferiority (Moore, 1977:146).

There are various examples and dimensions of institutional racism in Canada (Basran, 1983; Bolaria, 1983; Bolaria and Li, 1988; Satzewich, 1995b; Trumper and Wong, 1997). Institutional racism has been most explicit in the immigration legislation in the form of restricted entry and quotas for racial minorities. Historically, it is also evident in the denial of legal-political rights and racial labour policy. For instance, the Chinese residing in British Columbia were denied the right to vote as early as 1875, and twenty years later this was extended to other Asians living in British Columbia. The disfranchisement had a wider impact in terms of occupations and employment opportunities. Chinese and Japanese were denied practice of law and pharmacy because eligibility to these fields was limited to those on the voters' list. East Indians could not enter certain occupations for the same reasons (Basran, 1983; Bolaria, 1983).

There were other laws and practices that were discriminatory. As soon as the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) construction was completed in 1885, and Chinese labour started entering into other occupations, institutional racism began in various forms (Li, 1979; Munro, 1974; Palmer, 1970). A head tax of \$50 was imposed on the Chinese in 1885, later increasing to \$100 in 1900, and \$500 in 1903. Other Orientals were also subjected to a head tax, while passage assistance was available to the British immigrants. As the Chinese and East Indians had to pay a head tax in Canada, their immigration was virtually brought to a halt after 1907. Other laws and regulations were intended to control immigration from non-white countries. In the 1906 Immigration Act, important discretionary powers were given to immigration officers, who used them to deny entry to non-white immigrants (Krotki and Matejko, 1977). The continuous journey requirement from India to Canada was intended to control immigration from India. In 1914 there was the *Komagata Maru* incident, where Sikh immigrants were refused entry to Canada after following the requirements of the continuous journey stipulation. This is one of the few incidents when the Canadian navy was employed to uphold the exclusionary racist laws of the land. In another case in 1923, the Chinese were squeezed out of fishing. The

Canadians had a gentlemen's agreement with the Japanese, limiting Japanese immigration to Canada. In 1907, immigrants from Asia were required to have a minimum of \$200 and in 1919, this amount was increased to \$250. In 1930, Section 38 of the Immigration Act prohibited the landing in Canada of immigrants of any Asiatic race. The wartime relocation of the Japanese (many of them Canadian citizens) from the British Columbia coastal areas and virtual confiscation of their property is another instance of racial confinement and differential treatment (Sunahara, 1980; Broadfoot, 1977). In 1946, nearly 4,000 Japanese returned to Japan, many of them disenchanted and disillusioned after their wartime experiences in Canada. According to 1912 legislation, Saskatchewan made it an offense for an Oriental businessman to hire a white woman. Until 1952, a city ordinance prohibited Japanese immigrants to live in Lethbridge, a city in the province of Alberta.

A racialized hierarchy of acceptability has been part of the Canadian immigration policy. In 1923, defined by order-in-council 183, British and American immigrants were the most-favoured, northern Europeans were relatively well-received, and other Europeans were accepted if none of the other preferred categories were available. Non-whites were not welcomed and were actively barred from entering Canada through various pieces of legislation. This policy was partly justified by immigration and government officials on the basis of the inability of immigrants from certain countries to assimilate into Canadian society and adapt to the Canadian climate.

However, discriminatory policies were changed because of international and domestic reasons. After the Second World War, a large number of colonized countries became independent and started playing an important role in the United Nations and in world politics. International political considerations and rapid economic growth in Canada and its labour force needs led to changes in the immigration regulations. However, immigrants from Third-World countries were still limited to an annual numerical quota. In 1962 (P.C. 86), for the first time in the history of Canadian immigration policy, any explicit reference to race, ethnicity, and nationality for admissibility to Canada was removed. Canada moved away from institutional racism and started the process of receiving immigrants on the basis of individual qualifications and characteristics regardless of race and nationality. Characteristics like educational qualifications, occupational training, and language proficiency and their correspondence to the labour force needs became the important considerations in admissibility to Canada.

Eventually this system was replaced by the 1967 changes in the immigration policies (P.C. 1616). These new regulations have three elements: 1) they clarified the principles governing the selection and admission of immigrants; 2) established a distinction between dependent and close relatives of Canadian citizen or permanent residents of Canada, and 3) created an assessment system for the admission of immigrants. The point system, based on a person's qualifications, ability, training in the two official languages (English and French), age, prospects of getting a job, education, occupational skills, and occupational demands, was introduced to admit independent immigrants.

The 1967 regulation was a fundamental departure from the explicitly racist immigration policy. There have been other changes since then to accommodate the demographic and labour force needs of Canada. These changes are manifested in the increasing diversity of the Canadian population.

SUMMARY

This chapter provides an overview of various perspectives and paradigms used in the studies of migrations and racism. Migration studies range from focus on individual motivation and economic self-interest to migrate, to an analysis of structural determinants of migratory movements of people. Similarly, in the study of racism and racial inequality explanations range from individual attitude and prejudicial behaviour and actions, to institutional and structural factors and practices which perpetuate racial inequality and exploitation of racial minorities.

The individual level and demographic studies of migration tend to obscure and devalue the economic role of migrants as labour resource and reservoirs and do not focus on structural determinants involved in patterned migration movements. Recent studies, however, have begun to focus on structural factors and global disparities and unequal accumulation of capital between core and peripheral countries. Global disparities and internationalization of capital is accompanied by internationalization of labour. Workers of poor countries face exploitation both in their own countries and in foreign lands. Globalization of capital and production has enhanced capital's structural power over workers and has weakened labour in any one country or region. Circulation of workers across national boundaries helps to reduce labour costs and provide capital an increased access to cheap and docile labour. The state, by regulating the migratory flows and by controlling the

political and legal status of migrants, creates labour flexibility and provides capital with the cheapest and most easily exploitable work force.

Racialization of a segment of the working class provides a pretext for extreme exploitation of racial minority workers. Institutional and social arrangements create differential opportunity structures for various groups. This is also manifested in allocation of workers in the labour market and labour profiles of different groups. Racial minority workers are more likely to be concentrated in secondary labour markets characterized by low paying jobs and unhealthy, dangerous and seasonal work.

Racial inequality is a basic feature of Canadian society. While patterns and practices of discrimination have changed over time, racial inequality remains a permanent feature of the Canadian mosaic.

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From India to Canada

Immigration Policy and Migration Patterns



INTRODUCTION

The history of immigration from India to Canada dates back to the early 1900s. Entry of Indian immigrants has been regulated through various immigration regulations and laws, which ranged from total exclusion based upon a racialized hierarchy of acceptability, and later racial quota systems, to universal entry regulations tempered with labour force needs and other demographic and political considerations. This is reflected in the volume and characteristics of immigrants, their entry status, and settlement patterns (Bolaria and Li, 1988).

This chapter provides an overview of the migrations from India to Canada. The discussion and analysis is divided into four time periods, each characterized by a more or less distinct policy regulation(s), context of immigrant reception and volume and the characteristics of the immigrants. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of response and resistance to institutional racism and discrimination.

INDIAN IMMIGRATION: 1900–1908

East Indians started arriving in Canada around 1900.¹ The impetus for early immigrants came from a visit in 1897 when Sikh soldiers visited British Columbia (BC) in the course of their return journey to India after participating in Queen Victoria Jubilee celebrations. Some of these Sikh soldiers resigned from the British armys in India and migrated to Canada. Other immigrants were relatives of these soldiers. Yet other Sikh immigrants during this time came from the British colonies of Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore (Kurian and Srivastava, 1983:31). The passage from India to

Canada at that time cost about three hundred Indian rupees (approximately \$65). The usual mode of transportation was by a merchant ship from Calcutta to Hong Kong and then a passenger ship from there to Canada. The passage took about 12 days from Calcutta to Hong Kong and about 18 days from there to Vancouver (Helweg and Helweg, 1990:47).

Early immigrants were predominantly single males,² largely employed as manual workers in lumber mills, railroad construction, and in the transportation industry, who faced employment discrimination and exploitation.

By the end of 1908, about 5,000 East Indians had entered Canada, of which 2,124 arrived in 1907 and 2,623 in 1908 (Table 5.1). Though still few in number, East Indians and other Asians found a growing hostility against them. This took the form of serious anti-Oriental riots in Vancouver in 1907 and a number of legislative measures to restrict and control Asian immigration. (Ward, 1978; Bolaria and Li, 1988).

TABLE 5.1
IMMIGRATION OF EAST INDIANS TO CANADA 1900-91

<i>Number</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Year</i>
1900	0	1931	80	1962	584
1901	0	1932	47	1963	858
1902	0	1933	63	1964	1,463
1903	0	1934	33	1965	2,664
1904	0	1935	21	1966	2,799
1905	45	1936	10	1967	4,614
1906	387	1937	13	1968	3,858
1907	2,124	1938	14	1969	6,400
1908	2,623	1939	14	1970	6,680
1909	6	1940	11	1971	6,281
1910	10	1941	6	1972	6,239
1911	5	1942	3	1973	11,488
1912	3	1943	0	1974	15,183
1913	5	1944	0	1975	12,309
1914	88	1945	0	1976	3,906
1915	0	1946	1	1977	7,130

<i>Number</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Year</i>
1916	1	1947	7	1978	6,269
1917	0	1948	130	1979	5,634
1918	0	1949	63	1980	9,364
1919	0	1950	52	1981	8,989
1920	0	1951	93	1982	8,544
1921	10	1952	81	1983	7,041
1922	13	1953	173	1984	5,502
1923	21	1954	170	1985	4,028
1924	40	1955	245	1986	6,940
1925	46	1956	330	1987	9,692
1926	62	1957	324	1988	10,409
1927	60	1958	451	1989	8,819
1928	56	1959	716	1990	10,624
1929	52	1960	673	1991	12,848
1930	58	1961	744		

Sources: Figures for 1900–36 from *Canada Yearbook*, Adrian Mayer, 1959; 1937–82, *Annual Reports of Department of Mines and Resources* (1946–9), Department of Citizenship and Immigration (1960–6); Department of Manpower and Immigration (1967–76); Department of Employment and Immigration (1977–88); Citizenship and Immigration Canada (1989–91). 1962–82 figures also include immigrants from Pakistan.

Most of the provincial political leaders, members of parliament from British Columbia, labour leaders, church representatives, business groups, and various racist and right-wing political parties opposed Oriental immigration into B.C. The justifications for these exclusionist policies and programmes were based on economic, cultural ('Orientals cannot and will not assimilate'), racist ('Orientals are inferior to whites'), social, and political arguments. However, these exclusionary and racist policies posed contradictions and conflicts for the Canadian state. State policies and programmes have to take into consideration domestic political and international diplomatic demands, the political and economic interests of the empire, the interests of the steamship companies, and need for cheap Asian labour. On

the one hand, many politicians and other Canadian people were opposed to immigration from Asia (Japan, China, and India) into Canada. On the other hand, there were foreign pressures and diplomatic considerations that the Canadian state could not ignore. For example, Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier of the then Liberal government expressed his views in regard to Asiatic immigrants by saying, 'I have very little hope of any good coming to this country from Asiatic immigration of any kind' (Ward, 1978:59). However, in 1902, with Japan developing political and business alliances with the UK, Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Office of the UK, did not want to alienate the Japanese government. Moreover, India was still ruled by the British, making it difficult to exclude East Indians (British subjects) from Canada. Furthermore, steamship companies from Canada were against the exclusionist policies of the Canadian government as it was profitable for them to transport immigrants to Canada. In addition, some lumber and railroad companies wanted to have access to cheap Asian labour.

Provincial legislatures in B.C. passed various legislations in order to exclude Orientals from there by depriving them of their rights to own property, to enter certain professions, to start businesses, and to attend schools. However, the federal Canadian government was not always supportive of these discriminatory laws, programmes and policies, as it wanted to 'manage' the East Indian 'problem' in a more 'diplomatic' manner. For example, on 25 October 1908, the government sponsored a delegation to go to British Honduras (now Belize) with two Sikh representatives, Bhai Nagin Singh and Bhai Sham Singh, and a number of government functionaries. The primary purpose was to convince the Sikhs to 'voluntarily' migrate to Honduras permanently. However, the Sikh representatives were not impressed by the wages, living conditions, or with the socio-economic and political situation in Honduras. Even attempts by the Canadian immigration officers to bribe the Sikh representatives to give a positive report on Honduras did not succeed (Muthana, 1975:88). Instead, the Sikh representatives recommended that Sikhs should not accept the proposal to migrate to Honduras. In spite of various discriminatory legislations and personal and social hostilities against early immigrants, they were able to establish their religious institutions.³ They were also actively involved in various social and political activities and made substantial financial contributions to various groups and causes (Jagpal, 1994:118). For instance, the Khalsa Diwan Society, prior to 1921 contributed nearly \$300,000 for various religious, educational, political, and immigration related issues. The major

contributions were made to the following: religious and educational causes (\$148,000); *Komagata Maru* case (\$50,000); sufferers from political causes (\$30,000); and \$30,000 to immigration cases (Jagpal, 1994). When one considers the level of wages of these immigrants in that period, these are indeed large sums of money.

INDIAN IMMIGRATION: 1909 TO THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The second period of immigration extends roughly from 1909 to the Second World War. During this period many measures were taken to control and restrict entry of potential immigrants from India. The most notable of these was the continuous journey stipulation as well as the requirement to possess \$200 upon entry into Canada. Regarding the continuous journey stipulation is the Order in Council of 9 May 1910 which reads as follows:

From and after the date here of the landing in Canada shall be, and the same is hereby prohibited of any immigrants who have come to Canada otherwise than by continuous journey from the country of which they are natives or citizens and only through tickets purchased in that country or prepaid in Canada [*British Columbia Magazine*, 1919:665].

This measure meant that immigrants who came to Canada, 'otherwise than by continuous journey from the countries of which they were natives or citizens, may be refused entry'. Also, the steamship companies stopped issuing tickets to East Indians via Hong Kong, which was the only way to come to Canada. There were no direct lines of steamships from India to Canada at that time (*British Columbia Magazine*, 1912: 665). Another means used by immigration authorities to control immigration from India was to deny proper documents to Indian residents, which were required for re-entry to Canada after travel abroad (Jagpal, 1994:27). As Table 1 indicates, these regulations proved to be quite effective in barring Indian immigrants after 1908. Canada experienced a sharp decline in immigrants from India, with only 29 immigrants admitted between 1909 and 1913, and only 88 in 1914. This trend persisted from 1908 to 1920, when 118 immigrants entered Canada. After this period, few East Indians were admitted until after the Second World War. The number of Canadians who objected to this discriminatory treatment was quite small (Grace, 1913:10–13; see also Johnston, 1989, 1992).

In November 1913, the Order in Council of May 1910 was declared null and void by the Supreme Court. The Canadian government passed another Order in Council which prohibited the immigration of 'artisans or labourers whether skilled or unskilled' from other countries. While apparently universal in intent, in practice these rules and regulations were primarily used against Oriental immigrants.

In 1914, an attempt was made to test the continuous journey regulations. A Sikh businessman, Gurdit Singh, chartered a Japanese ship, *Komagata Maru*, in Hong Kong along with 376 passengers. Of the 376 East Indians on the *Komagata Maru*, 340 were Sikhs, 24 were Muslims, and 12 were Hindus. The ship left Hong Kong on 4 April 1914 and arrived in Vancouver on 23 May 1914 after short halts at Shanghai (China), Moji, Yokohama (Japan) and Victoria (B.C.). With the exception of a few (approximately 22), mainly dependants of earlier settlers, all the other passengers were prevented from landing in Canada.

Sikhs in Vancouver made every effort to convince the provincial, federal, and local politicians to reject the racist continuous journey legislation. These Sikhs collected \$18,000 to assist the passengers of the *Komagata Maru*. They appealed to various organizations and groups, but were refused assistance or support from all of them. The *Komagata Maru* left Vancouver for Calcutta, India on 23 July 1914. According to some reports, Sohan Singh Bhakana, president of the Ghadar Party, met the *Komagata Maru* leader Gurdit Singh at Yokohama, Japan. S.S. Bhakana allegedly gave Gurdit Singh 200 automatic pistols and 2,000 rounds of ammunition. Gurdit Singh distributed these weapons to some passengers before they arrived in Calcutta on 29 September 1914. The British army and police were waiting for the *Komagata Maru* in Calcutta. Some passengers were supportive of the anti-colonial Ghadar Party in North America and the British colonial power was very aware of the potential disruptive and destabilizing impact of the *Komagata Maru* passengers on British rule in India. These passengers wanted to immediately go to Punjab but the government of the day wanted to detain them temporarily in Calcutta to delay their departure. When the passengers did not comply with this plan the police opened fire on these innocent passengers. About 193 passengers were arrested, 20 died, several were injured, about 28 remained at large, and 62 were sent to Punjab (Muthana, 1975:321). Gurdit Singh escaped and remained at large for several years. He later returned to Punjab in 1921 and joined the Congress party, which was fighting against British colonialism.

He was arrested several times by the British government for his anti-colonial activities. He died in 1954, at the age of 95, and has never received adequate recognition for his anti-colonial struggles.

Some of the other passengers were arrested in Punjab and were labelled as German spies. It is disturbing to note that Sikh leaders in Amritsar, rather than providing support to the passengers of the *Komagata Maru*, declared their loyalty to the British crown on 6 October 1914. On 15 October 1914, the Government of India (British) appointed a committee to investigate the *Komagata Maru* incident, but the members of the committee were supporters and sympathizers of the government.⁴ The report, which was released in the second week of January 1915, was not supportive of the *Komagata Maru* passengers, some of whom were sent to prisons, a few hanged, others were restricted to their villages, and the remainder discharged.

The *Komagata Maru* incident is an important episode in Canadian history and immigration policy. It brought into sharp focus the contradictions between democratic and egalitarian ethos, on the one hand, and discriminatory and racist policies of the state towards racial minority and colonized immigrants, on the other hand. Two plaques in Vancouver dedicated on the 75th anniversary of this incident underscore its significance for the Sikh minority and the Canadian state. The plaque at the Gateway to the Pacific set up by the state describes it as, '... that unfortunate incident of racial discrimination and reminds Canadians of our commitment to an open society in which mutual respect and understanding are honoured, differences are respected, and traditions are cherished'. The plaque in Vancouver at Ross Street Gurdwara, dedicated on 23 July 1989 to the memory of 376 passengers, states that, 'due to the racist immigration policy of the dominion of Canada, they were forced to leave on 23 July 1914. Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver, pays respect to those passengers by commemorating the reprehensible incident.' The difference in language used in describing this incident in these two plaques is quite significant (see Box 5.1).

Due to various restrictions on immigration, as well as the discrimination they faced, the number of East Indians in Canada steadily declined. Several thousand Sikhs went to India around 1914 to join the fight against British colonialism at the time of the First World War. In 1921, there were 1,016 East Indians in Canada, while the 1931 census indicated a population of 1,400.

Immigrants from India were also denied family life. The immigrants

BOX 5.1

PLAQUES COMMEMORATING *KOMAGATA MARU*

(Plaque at the Gateway to the Pacific, Downtown Vancouver)

On May 23, 1914, 376 British Subjects (12 Hindus, 24 Muslims and 340 Sikhs) of Indian origin arrived in Vancouver harbour aboard the *Komagata Maru*, seeking to enter Canada, 352 of the passengers were denied entry and forced to depart on July 23, 1914. This plaque commemorates the 75th anniversary of that unfortunate incident of racial discrimination and reminds Canadians of our commitment to an open society in which mutual respect and understanding are honoured, differences are respected, and traditions are cherished.

(Plaque in the Vancouver Gurdwara dedicated July 23, 1989)

Komagata Maru Incident 75th Anniversary. Dedicated to the memory of the 376 passengers (340 Sikhs, 24 Muslims, 12 Hindus) who arrived at Burrard Inlet, Vancouver on May 23, 1914, from the Indian sub-continent on the ship *Komagata Maru* (Guru Nanak Jahaz). Due to the racist immigration policy of the Dominion of Canada, they were forced to leave on July 23, 1914. Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver, pays respect to those passengers by commemorating the reprehensible incident.

were primarily males because of various restrictions concerning immigration of spouses and children. The principal argument advanced by those who opposed the entry of wives and children of Sikh immigrants in Canada was that Sikhs and their families would not assimilate into mainstream Canadian culture and were 'unassimilable in the Canadian civilization' (*British Columbia Magazine*, 22–8; McKay, 1914). They were considered 'unsuitable', and incapable of adaptation and adjustment to this country. MacKenzie King's report on Indian immigration in 1908 states:

It was clearly recognized in regard to emigration from India to Canada that the native of India is not a person suited to this country, that accustomed as many of them are to the conditions of a tropical climate, and possessing manners and customs so unlike our own people, their inability to readily adapt themselves to surroundings entirely different could not do other than entail an amount of privation and suffering which renders a discontinuance of such immigration most desirable in the interests of the Indians themselves. [House of Commons, Sessional Paper No. 360, 1908:7–8].

Moreover, there was a pervasive desire to keep Canada white and exclusively

for Europeans. On the other hand, the Sikhs were British subjects and made representation in Canada, Britain, and India to be allowed to bring their wives and children to Canada. By basing the argument for exclusion on assimilation and absorption, the government attempted to avoid any accusation of being racist.

The Imperial Conference of 1918 passed a resolution which allowed domiciled Indians in other countries of the British Empire to bring their wives and children. The Canadian government approved this resolution by an Order in Council the following year. However, not many women and children entered Canada. At the time, few of the East Indian male residents in Canada had enough resources to bring their dependants to this country (Mayer, 1959). Prior to the Second World War, 5,000 men migrated to Canada, as compared to only 400 Indian women and 423 children (Smith, 1944; see Bolaria and Li, 1988). The lack of any normal family life also meant considerable delay in the development of a native-born Indian community. For example, it is estimated that at the outbreak of the Second World War, the 1,100 East Indians in B.C. were composed almost entirely of single males residing in logging camps or apartments in Vancouver, and not more than 15 conjugal families (Mayer, 1959:2). Because of denial of other legal-political rights these immigrants remained alien residents subject to deportation. They also bore the brunt of racial stereotypes, facing considerable discrimination in housing and other matters.

INDIAN IMMIGRATION: POST-WAR PERIOD, 1966

The treatment of East Indians within the Empire continued to be a subject of much discussion between the Colonial and Dominion governments. There were concerns about the incongruity between the differential treatment of domiciled Indians in some parts of the Empire and the position of India as an equal member within the Empire (Holland, 1943). In spite of the recognition, '... that in the interest of the solidarity of the British Commonwealth it is desirable that the rights of such [domiciled] Indians to citizenship be recognized' (Holland, 1943:169), no concrete steps were taken by the Canadian government to grant franchise to East Indians until 1947. In that year, Indians were given the right to vote in federal and provincial elections. In 1948, this right was extended to municipal elections (Mayer, 1959). Another discriminatory law which required the fingerprints of East Indians on legal documents, was also revoked (Mayer, 1959). It is

instructive to note that these measures correspond to the end of direct British colonialism in India.

While domiciled Indians were granted franchise, the entry of new immigrants from India was still restricted. In 1952, a quota of 150 was established from India, subsequently raised to 300 in 1957 (Bolaria and Li, 1988:173). These changes were brought about for political reasons. In 1955, the minister of citizenship and immigration stated: 'We agreed upon this quota as a gesture for the improvement of Commonwealth relations' (cited in Hawkins, 1972:101). The admission for non-whites continued to be discriminatory. The large demand for labour during the post-War period was met through the aggressive recruitment of white Europeans (Law Union of Ontario, 1981). Immigrants from India continued to be relatively small in numbers, only exceeding 1,000 in 1964 and over 2,000 in 1965 and 1966. Thus, the total population of Indian background in Canada remained small. However, this began to change due in particular to the immigration regulations enacted in 1967.

INDIAN IMMIGRATION: SINCE 1967

The increasing demand for professional-skilled workforce led to basic changes in immigration policy in 1967. To achieve this, education and skills became the primary criteria in new regulations for admission to Canada and racial quotas were eliminated. For instance, in the 1967 regulations, points were allocated to potential immigrants based on such factors as age, education, occupational demand, skill, knowledge of the language, adaptability, and the like. For example, 12 points were assigned to education, 15 to vocational preparation, 8 to experience, 10 to occupation, 10 to arranged employment, 10 to age (two units subtracted per year if under the age 21 or over the age of 44), 15 points if immigrants were fluent in English or French, 10 points for personal suitability, 10 points for level of control (location where immigrants want to live and number of years they are willing to stay there). Ten points were given to those independent applicants who had some relatives in Canada willing to support them financially. Out of the total possible score of 100, a minimum 70 points were required to qualify in the 'independent immigrant' category. This system benefited non-white immigrants who had traditionally been barred from immigrating to Canada. While in the year before the introduction of the point system, 76 per cent of the immigrants were Europeans, this proportion

declined to 39 per cent by 1973 (Hawkins, 1988). Even incentives in the form of tax exemptions in some professions were not always sufficient to attract immigrants from white countries. The 'European immigration had declined to the point that Canada was forced to admit non-European immigrants in order to meet the demand for labour' (Law Union of Ontario: 1981:40).

Canada was the world's second-largest recipient of people from Third-World countries, including India. There was a noticeable change in the characteristics of immigrants from the Indian subcontinent. After the new regulations came into effect, a high proportion of immigrants from India destined for the Canadian labour force were in the professional, managerial, financial, and entrepreneurial groups. However, in subsequent years the proportion of professional-skilled immigrants consistently declined. For instance, the percentage of professionals among immigrants from India has fallen from 42.6 per cent in 1968-72 to 21.5 per cent in 1973-74, 10.4 per cent in 1978-82, and 1.5 per cent in 1983-84. There was also a shift toward the 'sponsored relative' category from the 'independent immigrant' category in the early 1980s.

Aside from those East Indians who have come to Canada as landed immigrants, others enter the labour market as non-immigrant transient workers. These workers enter the country under the Non-Immigrant Work Authorization Programme, to work in specific jobs for a specified time period. For instance, in 1982, 5,245 workers from India entered Canada on employment visas. India ranked third, accounting for four per cent of the total workers receiving such authorizations (Wong, 1984:89). The labour market profiles of the workers on temporary work visas are substantially different from other workers (Wong, 1984; Trumper and Wong, 1997). Similarly, the labour market profiles of racial minority workers are substantially different from that of the white workers.

The immigration regulations of 1978 continued to favour immigrants with skills. Although there are no blatant racist provisions in the law, the discriminatory treatment of immigrants from non-white countries is evident in the distribution of immigration offices in various regions. Through various administrative procedures and inadequate staffing, immigration from non-white countries is indirectly discouraged. The discretionary powers given to individual immigration officers makes it possible for prejudiced officials to make discriminatory judgements (Law Union of Ontario, 1981:46).

In spite of a substantial increase in immigration from the Indian subcontinent in the 1960s and 1970s, in comparison to earlier periods, these immigrants still constitute one of the smallest groups in Canada. However, as would be expected, the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of Indo-Canadian communities have also changed in recent years. This is primarily due to the changes in immigration requirements and the development of conjugal families and Canadian-born population. This community is now more heterogeneous in regard to income levels, educational achievements, labour force participation, and occupational differentiation. In the case of the Sikh community, the Sikhs are predominantly a young population and a majority of whom are still foreign-born, recent immigrants.

Overall, the proportion of the non-white population in Canada has increased over the years. This change in the Canadian population has also contributed to diversity in the labour force. Foreign-born workers from Asian countries have been an important component of the professional, scientific, and skilled workforce since the late 1960s. The Sikh population, like other minorities, is now represented in all sectors of Canadian society (Singh, 1994; Minhas, 1994; Chadney, 1985; Redway, 1984; Basran, Gill, and Maclean, 1995). Even with all the changes and recent increase in immigrants from non-traditional sources, the overall proportion of non-whites in Canada is relatively small.

Immigration levels, characteristics of immigrants, place of origin, and settlement patterns continue to be important subjects of debate in this country. In particular, there is concern about the increase in family sponsored immigrants. Recent policy initiatives tend to favour young, highly educated, professional, language-proficient (English or French), independent immigrants whose occupational skills correspond to the labour force needs in Canada (Simmons and Keohane, 1992). The Canadian state continues to face contradictory pressures with regard to immigration. The necessity to procure cheap labour from non-traditional sources and in capital accumulation comes into conflict with the conception of some Canadians of a Canada as a white-man's country (Satzewich, 1995). One strategy to resolve this contradiction has been to import non-white workers under the Employment Authorization Programme to work in certain sectors for a specified period of time and then 'send [them] home' at the expiry of their work contracts.

From the perspective of racial minorities, racism and racial inequality and discrimination in the labour market and in political and social institutions

has been a crucial element of the Canadian mosaic. Resistance to racial inequality formed an important dimension of the social and political activities of 'pioneer immigrants' from India.

POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND RESISTANCE

An examination of the history of immigration from India indicates that the Canadian immigration policy has been to control and limit the volume of immigrants from India. This ranged from total exclusion based upon explicitly racist policies to measures such as continuous journey requirements and annual immigration quotas. Those who did make it to Canada found themselves in a hostile environment facing institutional racism and discrimination in the social, economic, and political spheres. In their daily lives they often faced personal ridicule and social segregation because of their 'appearance' and national origin. These experiences, while a constant reminder of their common low status, also contributed to community, nationality, and political consciousness among the Indian immigrants (Puri, 1993).

The early form of community activities centered around religious institutions and organizations, predominantly the Khalsa Diwan Society and the Sikh Gurdwara. The Gurdwara became a center of religious, social and political activities. The newcomers, regardless of their religious background, received assistance in the form of *langars* (free community meals), social support, and help in finding jobs. These community activities in response to hostilities and discrimination strengthened kinship and nationality bonds among the Indian immigrants (Puri, 1993). Puri cites the words of Nihal Singh (1909): 'When others are kicking you, you cannot but feel affiliating with others of your kin and country and pulling together' (Puri, 1993:45).

Puri argues that political consciousness emerged due to three factors: experience of hostility and discrimination; development of national/ethnic identity; and British colonialism in India (Puri, 1993:43). These three factors are interrelated. However, it was the recognition of the linkage between the discriminatory treatment and everyday experience in North America and colonialism in India that 'became an important part of the consciousness' of Indian immigrants (Puri, 1997:162). Consequently, many of the Indian immigrants came to the conclusion that they would never be treated as equals in Canada and the US so long as India was a colonial country and they were colonized people. Thus their role and participation

in the anti-colonial struggle is an important aspect of the history of Indian immigrants in Canada.

Appeals for equal treatment based upon consideration of being British and commonwealth subjects and loyalty to the Empire met with failure. It became evident to many that only *ghadar*; a violent revolutionary change could transform the situation of inequality and discrimination. Political work by nationalists and nationalist organizations even changed the orientation of organizations such as Khalsa Diwan Society whose primary initial concern was to fight the 'corrupting influence of foreign environment ... and to maintain the purity of the Sikh religious norms' (Puri, 1993:44). For instance, at its meeting of 23 October 1909, the executive committee of the Sikh Gurdwara of Vancouver not only condemned the British pillage of India, but also resolved not to wear any medals and other British insignia signifying British rule and supremacy (Puri, 1993:53). The cooperative and independent activities of organizations such as Khalsa Diwan Society, Hindustan Association, Hindi Association and United India League contributed to the politicization of the community in the US and in Canada.

The emergence of the Ghadar movement in 1913 and the important political role it played in the mobilization of the Indian immigrant communities for anti-colonial activities has received considerable attention (Puri, 1993). Led by a small group of revolutionary nationalists, most prominent among them Har Dayal and Sohan Singh Bhakna, provided leadership and direction to the movement. The principal objective of the movement was to liberate India from British colonialism through armed struggle. This strategy was based upon the premise that the racial oppression and exploitation of the Indian immigrants was linked to colonial oppression and British rule in India. The secular orientation of the organization without any formal affiliation with any religious organization allowed it to focus on the solidarity of all groups: Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs (Josh, 1977; Puri, 1993). There was widespread support for the Ghadar movement. Membership came predominantly from Punjabi immigrants, mostly Sikhs (Dhillon, 1981; Puri, 1993; Singh and Singh, 1966; Singh, 1977). The newspaper of the party, *ghadar* published in various Indian languages became the principal organ of the party's political writings and served to politicize the community.

The political activities of the Ghadar Party did not go unnoticed by the colonial government, and it started to receive considerable attention and surveillance from secret service agents and agencies. Concerned about the revolutionary potential of the work of the party and its leaders, the colonial

government in India put pressure on the US government to curtail their political activities. The arrest of Har Dayal on 24 March 1914 and other actions taken by the state led to the decline of the Ghadar movement. While recognizing that the party continued its activities under the name Hindustan Ghadar Party up to 1947, commenting on the period 1913 to 1918, Puri (1993:8) states: 'The distinct movement, launched with the formation of the Hindi Association of the Pacific Coast in May and its main organ Ghadar from 1 November 1913, collapsed following a series of conspiracy trials in India and the 'Hindu German Conspiracy' trial in USA'. When the Party was revived in 1919, the change in the international political situation, the different social and political context and the concerns of Indian immigrants, the anti-colonial struggle and strategy under Mahatma Gandhi in India, all led to a change in the political strategy and programme of the Ghadar Party (Puri, 1993). The Ghadarites never received the expected support from the leading political parties in India for their movement and political tactics and strategy to achieve Independence. This and other factors such as British total control of the Indian state and its law enforcement agencies, loyalty of the feudal lords (rajas and maharajas), contradictory and conflicting class and political interests, and lack of class consciousness among the masses in India at the time, made it easier for the colonial government to control and eliminate any direct threat to its rule from the Ghadarites and the Ghadar movement (Josh, 1977).

While the precise impact of the Ghadar movement on pre-Independence politics in India and India's Independence struggle is difficult to determine, this movement clearly had a profound influence on the Indian immigration in the US and Canada. Its political analysis, programme, and strategy were widely disseminated through its weekly newspaper. This greatly enhanced the political consciousness and political awareness in the Indian community. Most importantly, they became aware of the linkage between their material existence and the social inequality they faced in Canada and US, and colonialism in India, the irreconcilability of Indian and British interests, and the anti-imperialist struggles in other countries (Puri, 1993:206–12). The secular orientation of the movement helped to undermine divisions of religion and caste. The liberation of India through armed struggle and call to arms was a frequent theme of political propaganda (see Box 5.2). Brave young men were asked to sacrifice their lives in this struggle to liberate mother India. The response to this call was overwhelming. According to Dhillon (1981:171), 'over 10,000 prosperous Sikhs from Canada and

America had responded to the call and sacrificed their properties worth crores of rupees', The high involvement of the Sikhs is not surprising given that among the large number of Punjabi immigrants who joined the Ghadar movement most were Sikh unskilled workers, farmers, and farm labourers (Puri, 1993:3).

Box 5.2	
CALL TO BRAVE YOUNG INDIAN MEN TO TAKE UP ARMS FOR GHADAR IN INDIA	
WANTED	Fearless brave soldiers to start Ghadar (Armed revolution – mutiny) in India
WAGES	Death
REWARD	Martyrdom and Freedom
BATTLEGROUND	Hindustan (India)
BHARAT MATA	(Mother India) calls her children for her protection (security/rescue) and to achieve independence)

The Hindustan Ghadar (Urdu), vol. 1, no. 18, August 11, 1914

Source: Harish Puri, *Ghadar Movement* (Amritsar, India: Guru Nanak Dev University Press, 1993), (Urdu text p. 216; English translation and commentary, p. 213).

It is apparent from this brief review of the political activities of 'pioneer' immigrants that they did not passively accept institutional racism and social inequality. An important aspect of their political consciousness was the linkage between their material existence and everyday lived-experience, and their experience as a colonized peoples. The Ghadar movement played a crucial role in the politicization of the Indian community.

SUMMARY

This chapter provides historical and contemporary dimensions of Canadian immigration policy and migration patterns from India to Canada. An examination of the history of immigration indicates that Canadian immigration policy has been to control and limit the volume, the demographic characteristics, and legal-political status of immigrants. Various measures used to achieve these objectives ranged from total exclusion based upon racialized hierarchy of preferred immigrants and assimilability of new

immigrants to the continuous journey stipulation and annual immigrant nationality quotas. Under the more recent universal entry regulations, the entry of immigrants is tempered by labour force needs and other demographic, economic and political considerations.

Institutional racism has been most explicit in the immigration legislation and regulations, legal and political rights, conjugal rights and labour market inequalities. The consequences of these measures are manifested in demographic and socio-economic characteristics of Indian immigrants. The early immigrants, for instance, were predominantly single, male, manual workers, largely employed in lumber mills, and railroad and road construction. Because of changes in immigration regulations and requirements, and achievement of legal-political rights the Indian community is now more heterogeneous in regard to income levels, educational achievements and occupational differentiation. The majority of this community are still foreign-born and recently arrived immigrants.

Resistance to racism and racial inequality has been an important dimension of social and political activities of immigrants from India. The pioneer immigrants, in particular, found themselves in a hostile environment and experienced social, economic, and political institutional and individual discrimination. They did not passively accept their situation. The linkage between their material existence and everyday lived-experience and their colonial oppression as colonized peoples formed an important dimension of their political consciousness. They were not only active in Canada in their resistance to inequality but made financial and other sacrifices for India's liberation and freedom for their people.

The explicitly racist immigration policy and overt institutional racism is now replaced by more subtle forms of racism. Our discussion in the next two chapters indicates that racial minorities continue to face socio-economic inequality.

NOTES

1. The first Sikh arrived in Canada in 1904, named Bhai Bakhsish Singh of village Sur Singh Wala (Dhillon, 1981:185).

2. In 1908, Professor Teja Singh, who was studying law in the US, came to visit Vancouver. He was part of the group which, along with Raja Singh and Dr Sunder Singh, went to Ottawa to make a case to the Canadian government on behalf of the Sikh community to allow entry of wives and children of domiciled Indian immigrants. Their efforts were unsuccessful.

3. At the time of our field-work in 1985, Sikhs in Golden, B.C., brought it to our attention that Sikhs had worked in the Columbia River Logging Company during the 1890s and had built a gurdwara around 1900 (a room of 20' by 40' in size). We interviewed Norman King from Golden, B.C., to obtain some information regarding the gurdwara and the Sikh community at that time. In 1900, at the age of six, he visited the gurdwara in Golden. King's parents had close relations with the Sikhs. According to Norman King, there were about 40 Sikh men working in the mill around 1910. King, who was a good friend of the mill managers at that time, visited Sikh homes, the gurdwara and the mill quite frequently. Norman King talked affectionately about these pioneer Sikhs in Golden and described the Sikhs as hard working and diligent individuals. According to him, all but one of these Sikhs was turbaned, and Hardit Singh was their leader. Three of these Sikh men brought their wives to Golden in the 1920s.

The Columbia River Logging Company building burnt down around 1927. All the Sikhs then relocated to Vancouver and Vancouver Island. They left the King family the temple carpet. We consulted the local library in Golden as well as the land title office to determine the ownership of the land on which the gurdwara was built, but we have not been able to establish the exact date of the arrival of the Sikhs in Golden or the year when they built the gurdwara. We speculate that the gurdwara in Golden was built c. 1900 on the property of the Columbia River Logging Company. Some other lumber companies at that time also assisted in building gurdwaras for the Sikhs. According to one report, the Sikh gurdwara in Golden was built on Lot 1, Plan 5874 a dot of land formerly owned by the Columbia River Logging Company and now owned by the Crown (*Golden Gazette*, 11 June, 1980:16).

Sikh gurdwaras and religion played an important role in the everyday lives of early immigrants. They were attended by Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims, and other East Indians. Gurdwaras were places of religious worship as well as important cultural, social, political, and economic centres. In Vancouver, after the Khalsa Diwan Society was established in 1907, Sikhs built a gurdwara at 1866 2nd Avenue West in 1908. Gurdwaras were subsequently built in Abbotsford, Victoria and elsewhere in B.C. and they were all under the management of the Khalsa Diwan Society. According to James G. Chadney, typical leaders of the Khalsa Diwan Society possessed the following characteristics:

He is a Jat male in his mid-forties, who can speak both Punjabi and English fluently, who has adapted western style of dress and appearance, yet can trace his ancestry (if not his birth) to the Doabha region of the Punjab, who has been in Canada for at least two decades, who is a professional or holds an executive position, who has proven himself by performing multiple services for the community [Chadney, 1984:131]

4. Daljit Singh was the great uncle of the Maharaja of Kapurthala and Sir Bijoy Chand Mahtab, the Maharaja of Burdwan), lackeys of the British government.

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Colonialism and Indian Labour

Work and Life in the Colonies



INTRODUCTION

The early years of influx of Indian labour to Canada and the conditions that both structured their emigration from India and their work and life in Canada, needs to be discussed in the context of the increasing demand for workers within the British empire. The urgent need for an alternate source of cheap, easily controllable and exploitable workforce arose with the abolition of slavery. The Indian colony became the primary source of such labour to meet the needs of British capital in various parts of the empire. The British colonial authorities developed wide-ranging policies, including legal contractual obligations of Indian workers overseas, conditions of employment, duration of the indentured period, and their legal-political status in various colonies. Their entry and legal-political rights varied considerably between the white dominions such as Canada and non-white colonies. An understanding of the historical context and the structural conditions of labour transfer and its use during the colonial period are essential to fully understand Indian migrations.

It is in this broad framework that the early period of Indian immigration to Canada is analysed. The first part of this chapter examines the structural necessity for the importation of Indian labour within the empire and the conditions for emigration of such labour from India. The labour force participation, work experience, and life of immigrants are then discussed with particular focus on migrants to Canada. Our discussion is based both on primary and secondary sources. A major part of the findings is based on our own research into the history of early Indian migrants to Canada (British Columbia Study).¹ The qualitative data reported here is entirely from this study (Bolaria and Basran, 1986). While details of this study are

reported in note 1, a brief comment here, we hope would help readers to fully appreciate the content of responses. The interviews were conducted in English, Punjabi and sometimes in both languages, and were taped. Taping helped us to report the responses in verbatim, that is, 'in the words of the respondents' without editing, and in translation from Punjabi to English every attempt was made to present a 'literal translation' and capture the intention and context of the responses. All transcription and translation was done by one person, other than the authors, who was fluent in both languages and was familiar with the use of both languages in Indian and Canadian cultural and social contexts. The authors, who are also fluent in both languages, made every attempt to ensure that consistency was maintained in the translation and transcription of the interviews.

COLONIALISM AND INDIAN LABOUR²

While Indian workers have been migrating abroad in small numbers, primarily as artisans, tradesmen, and merchants; large-scale, organized, and systemic export of Indians began with the abolition of slavery in 1833–4. The need for such labour arose out of the demands of British capitalists for a cheap and ample supply of workers and an easily controllable workforce (Gangulee, 1947; Tinker, 1974; Saha, 1970; Sandhu, 1969; Kondapi, 1951; Gillion, 1956).

After the abolition of slavery, it became necessary for various colonial plantations to look for a supply of labour elsewhere (Tinker, 1976). An attempt was made to use other labour sources, such as 'freed' slaves and Chinese labour, but in many instances the newly freed slaves virtually refused to work on plantations; and the experiment with white European labour also met with failure (Kondapi, 1951; Saha, 1970). The cost of introducing Chinese labour was high, and there were legal and other difficulties (Saha, 1970). As the plantation economy could not survive without a secure labour supply, planters now looked to the Indian colony as a source of assured cheap labour.

Labour migration to plantation economies in particular took the form of indentured labour because of its many advantages for employers (Sandhu, 1969). The indenture system 'bound' the worker to a particular employer and/or plantation under a contract, usually written and 'voluntarily' agreed to, which bargained away the freedom of the employee for a specified period of time (Sandhu, 1969). At the end of the indenture period the worker

could have the status of 'free labour', or be reindentured, or return to India. Of course, the employer would want to renew the contract if the worker was still productive, or to 'dispose' him of if he was not (Cumpston, 1956; Gillion, 1956; Sandhu, 1969). In this regard, the indenture system was preferable to slavery for employers, because they could rotate the healthy and productive labour force, either by hiring new indentured workers or through renewing old contracts, and discard unproductive workers.

The labourers recruited under the indenture system were known as 'coolies', and worked under conditions not dissimilar to those of slavery. Indian workers inherited all the features of plantation slavery (Tinker, 1974; Sandhu, 1969). Even if the work was intolerable, they had no freedom to withdraw from the contract. The worker could not change his employer or place of employment. Breach of contract was placed in the category of criminal liability. The system clearly had many of the characteristics of slave labour (Gangulee, 1947; Kondapi, 1951).

The general attitude of the British colonial governments was that Indians were accepted as a labouring or subordinate class and not as competitors with European interests. As Sir Thomas Hyslop, a South African planter, said: 'We want Indians as indentured labourers but not as free men' (Kondapi, 1951:7). The conditions for the recruitment of indentured labourers were created by colonial policies and practices.

By the mid-nineteenth century, virtually the whole of India had come under the political and economic control of the British empire. Henceforth, the interests of India were subordinated to the interests of the empire and 'India was to be an economically vassal state' (Sandhu, 1969:32). Particularly after the industrial revolution, the political economy of the UK required the, 'conversion of India from an exporter of manufactured goods to that of a supplier of raw materials to the British industrial complex and a market for the consumption of the products of those machines' (Sandhu, 1969:32). Through various restrictive tariffs and legislative means, industrial and commercial enterprises in India were made subservient to British enterprises (Sandhu, 1969:33).

British policies in India brought about the decline of the domestic handicraft industry, throwing many craftsmen out of work (Sandhu, 1969). British rule also had a profound effect on the agrarian structure. Agriculture was transformed from a subsistence to a commercial enterprise, and land became a source of investment and income for the money-lenders and landlords. Subsistence farmers were obliged to borrow money to pay heavy

taxes; as their debt burden increased a large number became tenant farmers, while many others were simply thrown off the land (Kondapi, 1951; Sandhu, 1969).

Destruction of their traditional sources of livelihood and famines in some parts of India created conditions for labour recruitment and exploitation (Cumpston, 1956, 1968; Saha, 1970:73; Tinker, 1974). Recruitment was done through deception and false promises of prospects in the colonies (Kondapi, 1951:5; Saha, 1970). The mode of recruitment differed in detail but not in substance. It was not an escape to opportunity. Many found themselves exiled into bondage and servitude and many only found death and disease in 'a lifeless system, in which human values always mattered less than the drive for production, for exploitation' (Tinker, 1974:177).

The recruitment of male individuals and not families was the norm under the indenture system (Kondapi, 1951; Tinker, 1974). The conditions of transportation were appalling (Gangulee, 1947), and mortality was high during transportation and at the workplace (Tinker, 1974). To be sure, the forms of legal bondage varied, but the basic conditions of existence were the same. Living conditions were degrading and segregated in what was referred to in some countries as the 'Nigger Yard' (Tinker, 1974:177). The exploitation and degradation of their labour were reflected in low wages, cruel punishments, and high rates of suicide. Many workers were obliged to wear convict uniforms, and many Indian women were driven into prostitution (Tinker, 1974, 1976).

The bonded Indian labourer was sent overseas to serve the interests of the colonial masters who despised him. The statutory colour bar was in operation in many colonies, providing a series of political, economic, and social restrictions to maintain the supremacy of the ruling classes (Gangulee, 1947). Economic exploitation 'lies mainly at the root of racial problems and brings into play the colour bar in social and political relations. The colour bar is, in truth, an economic weapon' (Gangulee, 1947).

The establishment of British rule in many areas also required the service of English-speaking clerks, small businessmen, and white-collar workers to perform services that were needed for the empire to work (Sandhu, 1969; Tinker, 1976). The British brought the Indians as subordinate administrators, clerks, and other junior staff to work in railway stations and post offices as caretakers, policemen, and the like. Due to lack of opportunities in India, the English-educated Indians, like their less educated brethren, were following the path of labourer compatriots (Sandhu, 1969). Indians in these

positions served as buffers between the colonial masters and the indigenous population in various parts of the empire, and performed a dual role. As buffers, the Indians had contact with the natives; though they were in positions of subordinate administration, they were seen to be in positions of authority. People did not see the colonial masters who were really controlling their destiny. They were also despised by the natives and were seen as the pariahs who performed the most menial tasks, which the natives would not undertake (Tinker, 1976).

It is obvious that through deliberate colonial policies and practices conditions were created in India to assure a steady and continuous source of labour to meet labour force needs after the abolition of slavery. The labour procurement systems and the conditions of their employment varied depending upon the production requirements and administrative needs of various regions and territories. Some commonalities are, however, evident, including recruitment of male individuals and not families, legal-political subordination of Indians in colonies, the colour bar and segregation, and exploitation.

Colonialism and the concomitant racial ideology which facilitated and rationalized domination and exploitation of people and resources in India, also justified their differential treatment and exploitation in other parts of the empire. Of particular significance in the present context are the policies and practices that governed the migration and settlement of Indians in white dominions. There has been a great deal of similarity regarding Indian immigration to these dominions, characterized by two main features: (1) to strictly regulate the volume of Indian immigration, and (2) to deny full citizenship rights to domiciled Indians in various dominions (Gangulee, 1947). This, however, violated the official proclaimed principles of the empire, which, to quote Chamberlain, 'makes no distinction in favour of, or against any race or colour' (Huttenback, 1976:278). The way out of this contradiction was found in regulations that appeared not to be directed specifically against the Indians, such as language dictation tests in English or other European languages, and health-screening tests (Gangulee, 1947). Another way out of this dilemma used by the imperial government was to give autonomy to various dominions in matters concerning the composition of their populations. The 1911 Imperial Conference agreed to the resolution: 'His Majesty's Government fully accepts the principle that each of the Dominions must be allowed to decide for itself which elements it desires to accept in its populations' (Tinker, 1976:28). This principle was

reaffirmed at the 1918 Imperial Conference (Gangulee, 1947:73). Dominion governments exercised this prerogative to take steps to restrict the entry of Indians into their respective countries. The dominions also used this autonomy to define the legal and political status of domiciled Indians and impose restrictions and constraints in other areas, such as labour force participation and conjugal family life.

In sum, colonial policies and practices forced many Indians to migrate to sell their labour power overseas. However, they soon found that emigration from their country did not substantially change their colonial status. They remained in a disadvantaged position and were subjected to political and legal control, economic exploitation and racism, discrimination and social subordination. Their experiences in Canada were not dissimilar to their treatment in other parts of the empire, in particular in white dominions. Migration to Canada did not change their colonial status. Even in their passage to Canada they faced many obstacles and discriminatory treatment on the ships.³ When in Canada many of them found that it was not an escape to opportunity.⁴ The following sections discuss the work and life of early migrant workers from India. In particular, the focus is on the structural conditions under which Indian workers were incorporated into the labour market and the policies and practices that kept them as a low-cost, subordinate, and a highly exploited segment of the workforce.

SIKH WORKERS: REPRODUCTION OF LOW-COST LABOUR

Capitalism and employers seek every means to reduce labour costs and to increase the output of workers so that they reap even larger surplus (profits). To preserve the rate of profit against labour shortages and higher labour costs, the strategies used include: increasing the intensity of labour exploitation (increase their productivity) and having recourse to sources of low-cost labour (Portes, 1978a, 1978b; Dixon et al., 1982; Buroway, 1976; Braverman, 1974, 1975). The search for low-cost labour takes two primary forms: (1) locating enterprises to areas of cheap labour, and (2) importing such labour to replace or supplement the local labour force. In the present context, our focus is on the immigrant and migrant workers and the use of this labour to check labour costs.

Immigrant labour is advantageous in many respects. In the case of imported labour, labour renewal costs are borne in other countries; immigration laws facilitate the externalization of these costs. Immigration laws,

for instance, are often designed to separate workers from their families, they come alone and remit small amounts to their families to support and reproduce labour. The circulation of workers across the borders helps to reduce the cost of renewal of labour at the point of production (Burawoy, 1976), and emigration is considered by some as 'capital export' similar to the export of other factors of production (Berger and Mohr, 1975). In short, the countries of immigration transfer a substantial cost of labour to countries of emigration.

The usefulness and importance of immigrant labour goes beyond mere quantitative increase in the supply of labour; it is to increase the supply of particular labour: cheap, docile, submissive, socially subordinated, often confined to undesirable, arduous, and dirty work (Portes, 1977, 1978a, 1978b; Dixon et al., 1982; Castles and Kosack, 1972, 1973; Cockcroft, 1982). Subordination, docility, and cheapness of immigrants is not inherent in the personality of the immigrants, but is achieved through deliberate legal-political manipulation and immigration laws.

There are other specific strategies used to highly-exploit this segment of the workforce. These include: racial labour policies in workload assignments, promotion and training, colour line and segregation into different work areas and work shifts, unfree labour and single male/female workers (Bolaria and Li, 1988; Bolaria and Bolaria, 1997a, 1997b; Das Gupta, 1996; Trumper and Wong, 1997; Sassen-Koob, 1978, 1980).

These preliminary observations provide the framework for the discussion of employment patterns and work experience of the early Sikh workers and the structural constraints and labour processes that made them an easily exploitable workforce. These workers came to Canada with many of the features that typically make foreign born labour especially useful and desirable to the employers.

SINGLE MALE LABOUR

From the vantage point of the receiving countries, immigrants are ready-made workers, with the cost of labour reproduction borne by their countries of origin. Immigration laws, accordingly, are designed to recruit the required labour at the lowest cost possible. In this sense, immigrant laws and regulations are in fact labour laws used to regulate foreign-born labour by controlling their conditions of entry. The restrictions on immigrants from some countries and on preventing racial/ethnic minority workers

bringing their families may be seen as a measure to reduce the cost of labour reproduction. As Table 6.1 indicates, the Indian workers, almost all of them Sikhs, were primarily males. Only a few adult females were admitted to Canada. For instance, prior to 1920, 5,252 males, but only 23 females came from India. This pattern of entry of Indian immigrants continued even after 1919 when immigrants from India were allowed to bring in their wives and children. Even after this change, few could afford to take advantage of the situation because of lack of financial resources and the fear of racial discrimination. The social cost of maintenance of workers without families is quite low. The recipients of this labour force save on a whole range of social costs: housing, schooling, and so forth. These workers commonly lived in logging camps or cookhouses with other males, and were denied a conjugal family life (Smillie, 1923; Srivastava, 1974). Separation from their families produced a marginal existence for many without emotional and social support from immediate family members. Also, given such living arrangements there was no physical separation between the workplace and the personal lives of these workers. This situation potentially extends control

TABLE 6.1
IMMIGRATION TO CANADA BY SOUTH ASIAN ETHNIC ORIGIN,
ADULTS, 1904–66

<i>Years</i>	<i>Adult male</i>	<i>Adult female</i>	<i>Total adult</i>
1904–9	5,167	16	5,183
1910–19	85	7	92
1920–9	89	144	233
1930–9	26	90	116
1940–9	142	69	211
1950–9	1,214	525	1,739
1960–6	728	336	1,064
1904–66	7,451	1,187	8,638

Sources: Canada Division of Immigration, Immigration Statistics 1896–1961, Immigrants Admitted to Canada by Ethnic Origin, *Annual Reports*, Sessional Papers, Fiscal years, 1904–5 to 1907–8, calendar years 1908–66. (Compiled from Helen Ralston, *The Lived Experience of South Asian Immigrant Women in Atlantic Canada: The Interconnections of Race, Class, Gender* (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1966). App. A, pp. 122–3.)

and surveillance by employers over workers' lives even after the working hours.

There were other consequences for the workers and the community. Exclusion of females was also intended to ensure that Sikh workers did not become permanent settlers with families (Doman, 1984), and were largely viewed sojourners (Trumper and Wong, 1997). This policy did have the intended effect. Under the circumstances of their reception the workers saw themselves as sojourners. Speaking of early migrant workers, a Sikh respondent described their orientation as follows:

... thinking that they [workers] would make money in Canada, spend four or five years and whatever debt we have to pay we can return and buy some land and put in the well, do the farming when we go back.

Another respondent stated:

The white people had turnover rate quite a bit but our people ... wanted to work steady four or five years, did not want to lose any time.

This has also meant a considerable delay in the development of a native-born Indo-Canadian community. As temporary transient workers (sojourners), with families to support in the 'home country', they faced additional pressure to accept any available job and at any wage level in order to enable them to meet these normative obligations and expectations. In short, importation of foreign-born workers as temporary transient workers, in particular without families, is advantageous in many respects for the labour importing countries. The racialized segment of this workforce is subject to additional constraints which makes it even more vulnerable.

COLONIAL STATUS, RACISM, AND LEGAL-POLITICAL RIGHTS

Racist ideology, which justified imperial expansion and colonization, also provided rationalization for economic exploitation of racial-minority workers (Brown and Cook, 1974). The notion of racial inferiority and non-assimilability of colonial immigrants justified both their restricted entry and differential treatment of those already in Canada. The state and its representatives propagated this notion through immigration laws and denial of legal-political rights to non-white immigrants. For instance, Indian immigrants like other Asians were denied the right to vote. As a consequence, they could not enter certain occupations such as law and pharmacy, because eligibility to those fields was limited to those on the voters' list

(Krauter and Davis, 1978; Bolaria and Li, 1988; Trumper and Wong, 1997). This formal legal subordination of workers not only restricted their labour market opportunities, but also reaffirmed their unsuitability as citizens and permanent settlers. This was in reality legalization of racial oppression, differential treatment, and subordination of Indian workers (Bolaria and Li, 1988). Denial of legal-political rights made Indian workers more vulnerable to threats and repression by the employer than workers who had these rights.

The role of the state is significant in this context. By making their position legally weak, the state creates the conditions for employers to potentially make use of political threats, including threats of deportation, to discipline the workers and obtain docility and compliance. These workers can be easily deported if they 'cause trouble' or are no longer needed. Their tenuous legal-political status and its associated powerlessness has special significance for the employers to impose discipline on alien defenseless workers.

Immigrants from India were conscious of the link between their colonial status and legal-political rights in Canada. As one of the respondents stated:

When I came our country was still under British rule. ... We did not have our own government, no support from our own country, so we did not have the rights ...

This theme was evident in responses by other respondents:

They did not accept us as citizens of this country while our India was under British rule, we were mere workers; since we got our own government, we got these rights.

[They] used to call [us] Hindus. When we got the freedom they started calling us East Indian but not before that ...

They [employers, white people] used to say that you are slave [colonized people]. They used to hate [us] because they would say we are slave.

Other respondents were cognizant of the change in their status in Canada after India's formal Independence. One respondent remarked in stark terms:

... with freedom the conditions became better, it made a difference, before that [they] would not think that we are also human beings ...

Furthermore, these foreign-born workers could be forced to work in undesirable and low-wage sectors. These conditions would not be socially acceptable in other sectors of the society and the indigenous workers would

not put up with these working conditions. Ascribing inferior characteristics justifies the presence of these workers in low-wage sectors and masks the deliberate policies and practices that confine them to these sectors and extend employers' control.

RACIAL LABOUR POLICY

In addition to denial of normal conjugal family life (single male labour) and denial of legal-political rights, workers of Indian origin also faced other structural constraints and obstacles in the labour market and at their place of work. An understanding of the characteristics of the labour market inequalities, enforced racial segregation in the labour market and at the place of work, and the maintenance of social differentiation is essential to an understanding of the structure and process of labour exploitation. Labour market segmentation and stratification and allocation of workers in different sectors creates differential opportunity structures, with different working conditions and differential rewards within each sector (Gordon, Edwards, and Reich, 1982; Bonacich, 1972; Piore, 1975; Szymanski, 1976; Phillips, 1989). Allocation of workers in different sectors and within the same sector is often based upon social ascriptive factors such as race and gender. Non-market sanctions may be required to procure and retain workers in the lower strata of the labour market characterized by low-paying, arduous, and dead-end jobs (Bolaria and Bolaria, 1997a). Foreign-born workers with tenuous legal-political status and unfree labour help to supplement and sustain the workforce in the lower stratum.

The early Sikh immigrants filled jobs in the segmented and lower strata of the labour market. They were employed predominantly in lumber mills and farms, working under very undesirable conditions and extreme exploitation. Racism, discrimination, both at the workplace and off-work, made them particularly vulnerable. The organization of the workforce and work on racial and ethnic lines further created conditions in which Sikh and other racial minority labour could be utilized at the lowest possible cost. Various dimensions of these processes are of particular significance and are discussed below.

Racially Segregated Labour and Living Conditions

The early Sikh workers mostly lived at their place of work, such as logging camps and bunkhouses. As they were not allowed to migrate with their

families, these 'unattached' males lived with other males, at or near their place of employment. This was also necessitated by racial discrimination in housing (Smillie, 1923). These bunkhouses were segregated by race or nationality groups. As one of the respondents in our study stated:

... and the company built the bunkhouses for the people to live there and there used to be [a] cookhouse in there where people would eat their meals. Usually the white[s] had the houses in the city but they would also live in the bunkhouse. These bunkhouses were separate for all different kinds of people: the white people had their own bunkhouse and the Chinese had their separate cookhouse, Japanese had different, and we Hindustani [Indian] had a separate bunkhouse, at that time families were not many and so we would live in the bunkhouse.

Another respondent said:

They [mill owners] had bunkhouses for Chinese, Japanese, Germans and East Indians. For all kinds of nationalities.

These bunkhouses were shabby places, poorly constructed. 'We used to put newspapers on the walls ... The wall had the single layer of planks', noted one respondent.

The living conditions were not very different for those who were farm workers.

People who came first: they used to work in the fields and used to sleep in the cow barns. They used to throw or spread their cloth on the hay or grass and they used to sleep there.

It was hard to get work at that time; living was in the barns; used to spread hay on the ground in the barn and used to sleep on it ...

The strategy to separate and segregate the workforce on racial and ethnic bases is not uncommon in some sectors. One of the authors experienced this in the early 1960s when he had a summer job as a farm worker in California.⁵ The labour was segregated in different camps usually referred to as 'Mexican camp', 'black camp', 'white camp', and 'student camp'. Almost all of the workers in the 'student camp' were from the Third World on student visas who had to obtain permission from the Immigration and Naturalization Service to work during the summer months. Living and working conditions for student workers were only marginally better than those experienced by early immigrants. The foreman responsible for hiring was aware of the students' vulnerability, given that they had only a short summer period to earn money and limited alternative employment opportunities. A

large number of students lived in somewhat crowded bunkhouse(s), with inadequate toilet and shower facilities. Often student workers had to wash in the nearby river. Workers were exposed to toxic sprays at work and sometimes while they had lunch breaks in the fields, because spraying was done from planes. To be employed one was required to eat in the 'cookhouse' owned by the foreman for which he deducted a substantial amount from individual wages. Indeed, this amount was levied by the foreman regardless of whether or not an individual ate 'meals' there. In addition, an Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) representative sometimes made 'surprise' visits in the field to verify if student(s) had legal permission (work permits) to work. This also served as a reminder to the students of their temporary status with restricted legal access to work in the US.

Workers in one camp had virtually no contact with their counterparts in other camps, and in the field at the place of work. This was thus a workforce segmented on lines of race, ethnicity along racial, ethnic, and nationality, analogous to the situation of early Punjabi/Hindustani migrants in Canada. Workers in different contexts and different periods of time faced similar working and living conditions.

Racial Preference in Employment and Blocked Alternative Opportunities

Labour market opportunities for Sikh workers were constrained due to racial discrimination. This meant that they only got the job if white workers were not available or were jobs they would not accept because of the nature of work and terms employment. This also meant that the Sikh workers were vulnerable to exploitation by employers at places where they had a job, because the employers were aware that these workers did not have very many alternative employment opportunities.

One respondent describes the labour market practices at the time in the following words:

... The difficulty was finding work, like if the white would go to apply for work then it seemed that he would not have any problem, if there would be a job, because he would get it if there was one. But our people and all the Asiatics would feel that they give us the jobs which the white men would not like to do. Specifically, there were white people's companies which were in great or large numbers, Japanese or Hindustani companies were very few ... so white people had the first preference, and we would get job the last. If the white people would not do that job then they [white mill owners] would give

us the job, ... so this was the one factor, the other was the wages, and the third dissatisfaction was advancement at work, ... become millwright or any kind of technical machinist.

Blocked labour market opportunities and racial preference in hiring by some white mill owners also created objective conditions for exploitation by some Hindustani (Indian) mill owners. As one respondent stated:

... It was not only the white owners who would get more work from us with less wages but our Hindustani mill owners would do the same thing. They would take as much advantage of us as the white mill owners.

According to another respondent:

... at that time our people who were owners of mills used to get the time mixed up. Like if somebody had worked 50 hours they used to write 40 hours.

Another respondent said that the bookkeeper (a relative of the mill owner) in one of the companies 'cheated' workers by falsifying their work hours and thereby their wages.

... We had [number deleted] companies or mills which were owned by our own people, they would not treat our people right ... Our people used to show less hours worked. Especially in [name deleted] company, the bookkeeper used to cheat like that ... He [the bookkeeper, name deleted] told about cheating when he got in a fight with the mill owner or something, his name was [deleted].

The general situation of exploitation is reflected in statements like: 'work for our own people [Indian] was harder', 'used to pay less', and 'used to mix up the hours'.

Limited and blocked employment opportunities created conditions for exploitation of early immigrants irrespective of place of employment, employers often taking advantage of the workers' vulnerability.

Differential Wages: Racism and Price of Labour

Differential labour market opportunities for white and non-white workers and vulnerability of non-white workers forced them to accept lower wages than their white counterparts. In other words, a split labour market operated where the price of labour for racial minority workers was less than that for white workers. Hindustani [Indian] and other Asian workers were paid substantially lower wages for doing the same work. This was a common

practice at the time, and of course helped to keep the wage bill low for the employers. The following representative statements from the B.C. Study describe the situation well:

Paid less because one thing the colour, and second from a foreign country. And they [employers] were thinking that if they would give the same wage as to the white people then they would mind about it ... They used to hate [Indian workers] because they would say we are all slaves.

We did the work for less money because we had to and we needed the work. They [employers] used to discriminate [against] us on these things. That game was going on, 15 cents less. We [Indians] would accept whatever they [employers] would pay us.

They used to discriminate against our people at that time.

The minimum wage legislation was understood to have in fact legitimized the differential wage rate. As one of the respondents described it,

Yes, there was difference in wages ... and the rate of pay it was higher for the white workers and the Asians, Chinese and others including Hindustanis [Indians] it was lower than the white workers. But the first Minimum Wage Act, I do not remember the exact date of it, I think it came in 1935 or 1936, it was made by the government, in that Act they put minimum wage 35 cents an hour but along with it they wrote that the companies could pay 25 cents to the 25 per cent of people. Usually that was the interpretation, that the Asiatics are 25 per cent here, so the government would say pay 35 cents to the white workers and 25 cents to the Asiatics. So, that was the difference.

Even in some instances where Sikh workers were paid at the same hourly rate as white workers, the foreman and/or the mill owner managed to 'take back' part of the wages paid to them. One method often used was to charge the workers a 'fee' for cashing a cheque. The official wage cheque would be issued for the correct amount that the workers were entitled to, yet when the cheque was endorsed by the workers they would receive cash payments with considerable deductions for 'cashing fees'. Sikh workers were also 'cheated' on the number of hours they worked—'owners used to get the time mixed up'—and did not receive any different wage rate for overtime work, and in addition most of them worked six days a week. They worked 'for less money' because they 'had no other alternatives' was a common characterization of the situation of vulnerability for early Sikh workers. Because of the absence of any collective organization of workers at the time, they were at the whim of the employers:

Whenever they [owners/management] wanted they would kick you out, like sometimes at 3:30 p.m. they would bring the slip and give it to you and tell you not to come tomorrow.

Increase in any wage rate was also clawed back through rent for bunk-house accommodation. As noted earlier, Sikh workers were single males who lived in bunkhouses at the workplace. While the accommodation was crowded and poor, it was usually 'free'. However, in some cases where the wage rate increased, the owner started levying rent for such accommodations. As one respondent stated:

We did not have to pay the rent. As soon as the pay increased more than 40 cents an hour then they [mill owners] started getting the rent from us. Whatever more wages we used to get actually it used to go to rent, and we would receive the same 40 cents an hour.

It is evident that the employers used various methods to keep the wage bill low. This low-cost labour was primarily foreign-born, the Sikhs and other racial minority workers. The differential wage rate, it would appear, was legally sanctioned by the state. Some of the practices of unequal treatment continued in the lumber industry even in the 1950s; for instance, unpaid labour performed during 'training' shifts and overtime work (Bains and Johnston, 1995:62). Workers of Indian background often had to give gifts to their bosses to keep their jobs; jobs which entailed hard and arduous work under poor working conditions, and when at times the worker did not even have the use of the wash room for an entire shift (Bains and Johnston, 1995:62,79). Differential work assignments and workloads and segregation of workers in different work areas within the same company/mill on the basis of race and nationality are discussed below.

Racialized Work and Segregated Work Areas

Sikh workers also faced discrimination and exploitation in other respects at their place of work. They were assigned physically demanding and exhausting work to be done under difficult and undesirable working conditions. In lumber mills, they usually worked outside in uncovered open yards (referred to as 'green chain' by the respondents), in rain and cold. It would appear that workers were segregated on the basis of race in different work areas. Race was also an important consideration in the division of labour and social differentiation at the workplace. Several respondents in

the B.C. study described this differential treatment in lumber mills in the following terms:

They [employers] used to give us quite hard and heavy work and the whites used to get good and light work.

Another respondent stated:

In those days they [employers] were not giving good work to our people. [We] used to work outside to load the lumber: the work was heavy and hard. It improved when we got the Independence. Before, our people always got work outside.

Another respondent noted:

[Our] people used to work outside in the yards ... in the winter. In the rain they used to wear plastic clothes and plastic caps. [They] used to feel hot. ... It was very hard.

Yet another respondent commenting on the nature of work, workplace, and the division of labour stated:

No, they [mill owners] would not put them on better jobs or work. The hard work was outside on the chains, there was no roof, it was open. When there was rain they used to work outside lifting the lumber and carry it around in the water, the work was very heavy and hard. The conditions were very bad and hard. ... Our people would not get the work inside the mill, they worked outside in the lumber yard.

It is evident that in the lumber mills, the employers exploited the vulnerability of Sikh workers not only in terms of differential wage rates but also in assigning to them the hard and heavy work to be performed under difficult conditions. There was obviously racial segregation of workers into different work areas: white workers had better jobs inside, whereas Sikh and minority workers were relegated to poor jobs in the lumber yards, which white workers would not accept and with working conditions that would not be socially acceptable.

The characteristics of workers appear to conflate with the characteristics of the jobs. Yard work was largely done by 'our people'. The assignment to them of low paid and inferior work reinforced and sustained their inferior status and perpetuated the notion that Indian workers were only capable of and suitable for certain work. This self-fulfilling prophecy was also evident in other aspects of social differentiation and social stratification of labour at the workplace.

Racialized Occupational and Social Hierarchy

The labour force was also stratified along racial lines with respect to technical/skilled jobs and positions of authority and power. Sikh and other racial minority workers rarely occupied positions of manager and foreman, and rarely held jobs as technicians, electricians, and millwrights. These jobs were 'reserved' for white workers. As one respondent stated:

The ones who were technicians they were all white people. Engineers were white workers in the mills, electricians were white people, and millwrights were white men, and all technical jobs or work were for the white men or the white men were in these jobs, the jobs which were not technical or ... dangerous ones, in those jobs were Japanese, Chinese and our Hindustanis.

The racialized occupational hierarchy and social subordination of racial minority labour were commonly practiced in mills owned by whites. Because of the segregated workforce, even if Sikhs were appointed as foremen, they were foremen of Indian workers only. At the time in a few 'our mills', 'Hindustani mills', as respondents referred to mills owned by Indian entrepreneurs, 'our people' usually held jobs as foremen and managers.

... In our mills [Hindustani mills] our people would be the foremen too, but they [our people] were not the top ones. They [Hindustani mills] used to hire the white men for the higher positions where they would think our men could not do that work. But, usually [in] our mills, the Hindustani mills, they had our people foremen and the manager ... they were our Punjabi Sikhs.

It is important to note that in 'Hindustani mills' the workforce was predominantly and perhaps even exclusively, composed of workers of Indian origin. These workers would not be opposed to a foreman of Indian background. White workers, on the other hand, were often unwilling to accept an Indian as a supervisor/foreman. One of the respondents described a case in point:

... one man ... [name deleted], he knew quite bit grading and knew the language too, there [in the mill] they had the opening from grading to foreman, so he applied for that job, they [mill owners] offered him that job. But at the same time the white workers went to the company and said, we would not take [accept] him, we will not be here, we would go [quit], so he was fired from that work ... so he had to quit that work ...

Thus, there was racially stratified social hierarchy where white workers would not accept positions where they were subordinate to a non-white

foreman. White workers also would not accept jobs in Sikh-owned mills and farms, obliging the owners to rely upon racial minority workers. As one respondent reported, 'Chinese were working on our farm. At the time these people [white] did not like to work for us'.

Race was also the criterion in the selection of workers for further occupational and skill training. Sikh and other minority workers were denied such opportunities which would make them eligible to become graders and the like. Even those who already had professional education and training faced discrimination in the labour market. Many could not get jobs congruent with their education and training. As one respondent noted:

It was even harder for educated people to get jobs. Some educated people were working with us in mills. There was one man named [name deleted] who was an engineer, he was a pilot too. He could not get any job ...

Other evidence indicates that professional Hindustanis [Indians] faced discrimination and often were compelled to work on the green chain (Jagpal, 1994:90).

Race also played a part in evaluation of one's ability, capability, and capacity to undertake certain work and assume certain responsibilities. One respondent stated:

You had to be satisfied with the job because you could not do anything about it ... One time I was working in [name deleted]. There was some kind of opening which paid more money. I said to the superintendent that I want to take that job, he said that you would not be able to do that, he said you cannot do it ... they would not give our people the work where the pay was more.

In the above case, the job for which the respondent wanted to be considered paid 25 cents more an hour than the job he held at the time. Jobs with better pay and working conditions were often denied to Sikh workers. Because of blocked opportunities for occupational mobility at the place of work, and limited alternative opportunities in the labour market, these workers often worked at the same jobs throughout their working lives or at a similar low-paying job at another mill.

The racially stratified occupational and social hierarchy thus kept the Sikh workers confined to only certain jobs in the mills and kept them in socially subordinated positions vis-à-vis the white workers and bosses. These policies and practices also reinforced and perpetuated the colonial and racist views concerning the intellectual (ability and capacity) and social superiority of whites over non-white colonial subjects.

UNDESIRABLE IMMIGRANTS, PREFERRED WORKERS

The greater exploitation of foreign-born workers in various countries is repeatedly documented (see Bolaria and Bolaria, 1997b). This exploitation is not inherent in their personality, their cultural background, their social and cultural practices, and lower aspirations, but is conditioned through the structural vulnerability of these workers. The legal, political, and social subordination of workers creates objective conditions which make them a vulnerable and easily exploitable workforce. In Canada, while state policies and practices often characterized immigrants from India as 'undesirable' and 'non-preferred', and they faced racism and discrimination, they were at the same time preferred workers because they were relatively cheap, stable, and docile workers. As one of the respondents stated:

... Our people used to get less pay and would work very honestly and always had the fear too. Our people would not say anything no matter where they were being put for the work or job, but white people used to be very pushy and used to argue. So these qualities [less pay, honesty, accept any job] made them likeable but otherwise they did not like our people ...

Employers preferred Sikh workers because of their availability and readiness to do any kind of work at any time. As one respondent recalled:

They [mill owners] would prefer these people [Sikh workers]. Sikh immigrants would do any kind of work ... and our people [Sikh workers] would never ask how much money they would get for the job. They would accept whatever was given. The employer would get as much work as he could with the least wages. This is how our people used to work. They never said no if the employer would ask them to work in the middle of the night. They would go and do any type of work at any time.

Along with Indian labour, Chinese workers were also exploited. As the following responses demonstrate, Chinese and Indian workers were preferred because of 'less pay and more work'.

Our people and the Chinese used to get less pay and work more, they kept on working.

Yes, less wage to the Chinese too. That is why there were more Chinese and our people who worked for them. When the unions came to power they had to pay the fixed wage for the same work to everybody.

Chinese and Hindustanis were 'preferred' by the mills: 'less pay and more work'.

Yes, that is true. That is why there were so many of our people and the Chinese working over there [in mills]. They got less pay and did more work. That 'willingness' to accept the work without inquiring about the wage rate and not questioning the actual payment—'our people would not say anything no matter what they were paid for the work or job'—are mentioned frequently as characteristics that 'made them likeable' as workers, even when 'they [employers] did not like our people. ...'

Respondents point out the contradiction between racism and the need for labour. While some employers harboured racist beliefs and attitudes toward Sikhs, they preferred them as workers because of their availability, docility, stability, and low wages. For these reasons they were 'much sought after' as workers (Srivastava, 1974). At the same time they were often accused of working for low wages and scabbing, and were frequently assaulted by white workers (Reid, 1941).

Racism and racial discrimination meant low wages for racial minorities, on the one hand, and a split between white and non-white workers, on the other. One of the respondents in our B.C. study describes this situation:

... that white people, the ones who worked with them, used to hit them. It was because our people used to work for lower wages. But the white people would get mad and say why you have agreed to get less money [wages]. On the other hand the owner of the mill wanted them to work and offer them the job. So, our people always used to think, what we will do by sitting around without work, and used to accept any kind of work for less wage.

At that time there were no unions and things like that. So that was the case. Those white people used to say that you should get full wage, why are you willing to work for half or less wage. These white people used to get mad ... Because when the white man was working for full wage, then our countrymen used to agree to work for less money. The mill owner wanted that.

While the availability of cheaper racial minority labour was profitable for the mill owner, it threatened the wages of white workers and split the workers along racial lines. The unions began to transform this situation. The union organizers were quite aware of that without the cooperation and involvement of Sikh workers they could not effectively organize at the workplace and would not have successful and effective unions. The Sikh workers also clearly recognized the potential benefits of labour unions to protect their own and the collective interests of all workers. After unionization at the workplace the racially stratified occupational and social hierarchy began to weaken. As a respondent stated:

Unions did useful things for all kinds of people or nationality, Chinese, East Indians and Japanese too, any nationality they belonged to, the unions did very good work. The unions had them pass the law that whether someone is Japanese, Chinese, East Indian or any nationality he belongs to he should get the same wage for the same work as the white people. So that is why with the help of the unions we would get the grading work, machinery work ... so, unions helped everybody.

Another respondent stated:

No, before the unions they [mill owners] would not give any good work to our people. After the unions they used to give better work to our people, and the other reason we got our own government [Independence] in India. With the freedom the conditions became better, it made a big difference'.

The unions also provided job security for the workers and support in case of grievance.

First the foreman was all in all then the unions came in power, so when the unions came if you had any trouble to go to the union and they had to back you up ...

Respondents attributed the improvement in working conditions primarily to unionization in the lumber mills. Unions also mediated antagonisms and hostilities between white and non-white workers.

Our discussion of the early Sikh migrants to Canada indicates that the Sikh workers were a racially stratified and extremely exploited segment of the labour force. Racist immigration policies and practices, the structural constraints under which they entered Canada, and racial labour policies and practices which limited their opportunities, created conditions for extreme exploitation of these workers. Economic necessity, social and cultural isolation, and denial of legal-political rights contributed to their vulnerability. These juridical weaknesses and their precarious status in Canada made them docile, submissive, and easily exploitable. Racial labour policy was manifested in segregated living accommodation with poor living conditions, racial preference in hiring and blocked opportunities, differential wages, racially stratified work and segregated work areas, and racially stratified occupational and social hierarchy.

Sikh workers were in many respects a sub-proletarian, marginalized, and subordinate segment of the working class. Leggett (1968:14) described the marginal working class as, '... a sub-community of workers who belong to a subordinate ethnic or racial group which is unusually proletarianized and

highly segregated'. Oppenheimer (1974:10) defines sub-proletarian labour as 'unskilled, physically exhausting and uncomfortable (as in a hot kitchen, stoop labour) working utilizing a minimum of machinery ... unionization tends not to exist, hence there is a low level of job, wage and safety protection ...' To be subordinated means to be 'disadvantaged with regard to the labour market or labour process in comparison with another group of workers' (Berrera, 1979:39). The working condition of the 'sub-proletarians' are markedly different from those of even many unskilled manual workers, and the work is regarded as the least desirable and 'dirtiest' (Oppenheimer, 1974).

While these pioneer workers from India were seen as undesirable immigrants, they were preferred workers. Because of the structural conditions of their existence in Canada, they were mostly a docile, submissive, reliable and low-wage workforce. These workers faced no less racism and discrimination in their daily lives beyond the workplace.

EVERYDAY LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SIKHS

Sikh workers also faced racism, discrimination and social subordination in their daily lives beyond the workplace. They were called 'ragheads'; in trains people would not sit beside them, and they could not go to a movie in their native attire. They even faced physical abuse (Smillie, 1923; Norris, 1971; Scanlon, 1977; Raj, 1980) and could not own property in some sections of Vancouver (Norris, 1971). Because of discrimination in housing, many of them lived in miserable conditions (Smillie, 1923:229). Proposals were even made to relocate them in British Honduras (Ward, 1978). In short, they faced what (Essed, 1991) refers to as 'everyday racism', daily insults, and humiliations. Sikh workers had to endure and cope with discrimination in housing, restaurants, hotels, and bars. The general social environment in some communities was quite inhospitable and even downright hostile, and personal abuse and insults were a common occurrence. Respondents in our B.C. study almost uniformly referred to the discriminatory policies and practices of various business and service establishments.

Discrimination in housing, both purchase and rental, was a common and persistent problem for Sikh workers. They were prevented from buying homes and property in certain areas by both formal and informal means. Formal means often involved the use of city and municipal regulations and informal means often involved the use of public meetings and petitions by neighbourhood residents. As one respondent stated:

There were some areas where they had restrictions for us people ... they [whites] were concerned about the value of their land [property]. They used to put the petition [start a petition] if some East Indians bought the house there [neighbourhood, area] ... They used to prevent us from buying houses through petitions.

Another respondent commented that, 'White people used to hold meetings when they would see that the East Indian family bought the house in their neighbourhood'. One of the respondents indicated that the city council objected to construction of his house because he was 'building a house on a high spot where he could look down on other houses'. The city officials would resort to any regulations to maintain restrictive neighbourhoods. It is these formal and informal discriminatory policies and practices that in the long run produce ethnic and racial ghettos.

Sikhs often were unable to avail of overnight accommodation in hotels owned by whites. One respondent stated:

... At first they would not give them room in the hotel. In [name of the place deleted] they could get into the hotel [could not stay] ... For staying there was one Chinese restaurant and they had one room there, if that room was available then you could sleep there, but if it is occupied [taken] then you go to the bus depot and pass your night there ...

The alternative to 'passing the night' at the bus depot where one could find space to stay was some distance away. The same respondent continued:

And there was [name deleted] mill which was four miles away from [name deleted], so you walk there and can stay there overnight, there was our cook in that mill ...

The reference in this instance is to an Indian bunkhouse in the mill where workers would hire 'one of their own' to cook for the bunkhouse crew. In essence, Sikh workers had only a few options for overnight stay.

Many restaurants and bars also followed discriminatory practices. They would not get service in restaurants. One respondent described an 'incident':

... One time one incident happened to us, my dad used to sell the wood in Victoria. We went from here, we had to take the truck from the mill for the wood ... one of my cousins was there, he had his hair and beard, they [his father and cousin] felt we should eat our meal here, there was [name deleted] cookery and we went inside and sat there. I was young at that time. We sat for a long time, they were serving to the white people and they did not give

anything to us ... they would not serve us, they would not look at us. We got up and came out of that place and bought fruit from the corner store and went in our truck.

In bars Sikhs were restricted to certain areas on the premises and were asked to sit in segregated facilities with other racial minorities, such as aboriginal people. As one respondent stated:

... there they had a small beer room in that bar, they used to say to Hindustanis, if you want to have beer, then you go there and sit, they did not let them [Hindustanis] sit with public.

Another respondent described the discriminatory practices of a particular hotel in a Vancouver Island community:

... there was commercial hotel, which is still there, it is on the other side of the railway track. There, if our people with turban and hair would go and wanted to have beer, then these people had the separate place where they put four-five chairs around the table, they could only go to that separate place and sit there. They were not allowed to sit anywhere else.

The same respondent stated that another hotel altogether excluded Sikh workers from its premises.

The other hotel ... I do not remember the name. There was no permission for the people who had hair and beard. So in that hotel they could not even go.

So, in some bars and hotels Sikhs were not even permitted to enter while in others they were restricted to the use of only segregated areas on the premises. Yet, in other places, even if they went in they were denied service by the waiters.

Then in the beer parlours where the people would go with their turbans, they would not serve us. Then we hired a lawyer, there were few others with me, one was [name deleted], his father was my friend, we told him that we want to do this [challenge the discriminatory practices]. So, we went to the beer parlour, the bar tender [waiter] did not serve us. We came out and went to the lawyer and told him the story. He [the lawyer] said, is that right? We said, you can come with us, so we went there [back] and sat at a table. They [the waiter] put the glass in front of him [the lawyer] and we were not served. Then he [the lawyer] called the bartender ... and told him that I am lawyer [and said] why did you not serve these guys? He [waiter] said, I am not allowed. He [the lawyer] asked him where is it written? He [the lawyer] said you put the sign outside, and they would not come inside. Then he [waiter] talked to his boss,

then the boss came and talked to the lawyer who was with us. He said that these people [Sikh workers] make too much noise.

The respondent continued:

Yes, boss said that ... He [the lawyer] said, if you do not want to serve them then you put the sign outside that we are not going to serve East Indians. They [bar owner] would not do that, I [respondent] mean they could not put the sign like that ... This happened in front of me [respondent] so this kind of discrimination they used to do with us.

Racism and discrimination were practiced in various forms: total exclusion; allowed in some establishments but asked to use segregated area or a separate table on the premises; and allowed in but ignored and denied service. Sikh workers, as the above response indicates, did not altogether passively accept the discriminatory practices of hotels and bars.

In cinema (houses), there were also segregated areas for the minorities at the time, and they were not allowed to use swimming pools in some areas and one respondent even mentioned that 'in those days they would ask our people to go to the bottom level' on the Vancouver Island ferry.

Sikh workers also faced racism and discrimination in other areas. For instance, Sikhs who decided to shave their beards and cut their hair were refused service by white barbers, and could obtain these services only in barber shops owned and operated by Chinese and Japanese.

... They [whites] were not cutting our hair. ... There was one Japanese and one Chinese and our people used to go to these places for haircut ... but white people would not cut our hair. So, in [name of community deleted] there was quite a bit of discrimination.

According to a respondent even a very well-off Indian did not get service from a white barber. He, a millionaire [name deleted] 'went to a barber in [name deleted], but the barber said no.' Another respondent also made the following comments on this issue:

... They [whites] would not cut our people's hair. There was one Chinese and one Japanese who would cut our hair'.

On the other hand, those Sikh workers who kept their beard, hair and turban often faced ridicule and insults. They were suspected by some whites of having lice in their hair and sometimes, '... they [whites] would stop the car when they would see the person with beard and hair, and they [whites] would act like [mimic] goat, so this way they used to insult our people ...'

They faced insults because of their religion and 'appearance' and mode of dress. Some had expected that by cutting their hair, ceasing to wear a turban, and shaving off their beard they would escape racism and discrimination. However, at the time, both in official immigration statistics and by the general public, all people of Indian origin were considered and referred to as Hindus. No distinction was made on a religious or any other basis. Sikhs resented being addressed as Hindus. As one respondent commented, 'They [whites] were calling Hindu to everyone whether he is clean shaven or keeping the turban. We used to feel hurt when they would call us Hindus'. Bunkhouses with Indian workers were also called 'Hindu bunkhouses'.

While there was some level of racism and racial discrimination everywhere, people in one community on Vancouver Island were at the time particularly hostile to people of Indian origin. This was attributed to a significant presence of white people of British origin, who had been in India as civil servants or in the army before their retirement in this community. They maintained their colonial attitudes toward the Indians and treated them as 'colonial subjects' and despised them. As one respondent stated:

Actually, most of the officers were the pensioners who came from India. They were majority in [name deleted]. We were their slaves and how could they stand us here.

The link between their colonial background and racial discrimination and differential treatment was almost uniformly recognized by our respondents. In their everyday lived experience, and insults and humiliations, they were constantly reminded of their colonial background. During our interviews words such as *ghulami* and *ghulam* [English translation 'slavery' or 'enslaved' or 'colonized'] and *azadi* and *azad* [English translation 'free' or 'freedom'] were used frequently by the respondents to characterize their status and background. This shared *ghulam(i)* status became a source of unity, cooperation and mutual assistance among Indian workers regardless of their socio-economic and religious background, and united them in the cause of *azadi* for India from colonial rule. In Canada, shared external hostility and racism united the community to fight against the racist policies and practices of the Canadian state, institutions, and employers, and individual prejudice and racism. For instance, Indian workers sent financial aid for the fight against colonialism in India and raised funds to assist passengers on the *Komagata Maru* and to support the Ghadar party.

The Sikh gurdwara became the nucleus of and played a critical and

pivotal role in virtually all the political, social, economic, educational, and philanthropic activities. Indians of all backgrounds and different religious affiliations participated in religious observance and other functions. At the time, communal antagonism and religious conflict in the Indian community was virtually non-existent, as is evident in the reference to 'our people' and 'our Hindustani' in responses during interviews. As noted earlier, they were all as Hindustanis united in the common cause of India's Independence and against racism and discrimination. The contradictions within the Sikh community based on regional origins in India and differences in 'correctness' of religious observance were minimal.⁶ Gurdwara congregations became a source of job information, *langar* (free communal meal), and even for some transients and recently arrived migrant workers and students a place to stay free of any cost. The early migrants, in providing these services, were following the best traditions and teachings of the Sikh religion and its practices.

The discussion presented above indicates that the early Sikh migrant workers were the object of 'everyday racism' enduring racism, discrimination, racial insults, and humiliations. They faced discrimination in housing, were often denied overnight accommodation in hotels, refused service in restaurants and bars, had to sit in restricted areas in some establishments, refused service by white barbers, and were insulted and ridiculed for their adherence to their religious faith, religious observance, and practices. Their common shared experience of racism and discrimination united them as Hindustanis in support of India's freedom movement and in opposition to racism and discrimination. At the time, the Sikh gurdwara became the nucleus of the social, religious, political, and community activities of Hindustanis.

SUMMARY

After the abolition of slavery, the Indian colony became the primary source of labour to meet the needs of British capital and colonial expansion. British colonial authorities created conditions in India to assure a continuous supply of labour and developed a wide range of policies for the transfer and use of this labour in various parts of the empire. The labour procurement and recruitment systems, and the conditions and duration of their employment, varied considerably depending upon the nature of the economy, labour force needs, and production requirements. There were certain

commonalities, however, including recruitment of single-male labour, denial of legal–political rights, and subordination of Indian workers, racial labour policies, and exploitation.

The early Sikh workers in Canada were the most disadvantaged group in the labour market. They were not allowed to bring their wives and children with them and were denied legal–political rights. Racism and racial discrimination limited their labour market opportunities, and racial labour policies at the place of work relegated them to low-paying and subordinate jobs in segregated work areas. They also lived in segregated bunkhouses with poor living conditions. The structural conditions and constraints under which they entered and lived in Canada made them an easily exploitable work force.

These workers faced no less racism and discrimination in their daily lives beyond the workplace. They had to endure and cope with discrimination in housing, restaurants, hotels and bars, and were denied other services. Sikh workers were insulted and ridiculed for their appearance and mode of dress. The common shared experiences of Hindustani workers united them in their support for India's freedom and against racist immigration policy and racism and racial discrimination. At the time, the Sikh gurdwara was the centre of many social, political, religious, and community activities of Hindustanis of every background and faith.

While considered as 'undesirable' immigrants, for employers they were preferred workers because they were docile, submissive, reliable, and constituted low-wage workforce. In short, they were a highly-exploited racial segment of the labour force and in many respects they were a sub-proletarianized, marginalized, and subordinated segment of the working class.

NOTES

1. The authors conducted extensive interviews with respondents to collect information on the individual and collective work experience and life of Indian workers in Canada. In addition, the interviews yielded information about labour policies and practices involving other racial and ethnic groups.

For our initial contact with respondents knowledgeable about the early years we relied on our contacts within the Sikh gurdwaras. These respondents then became the source of further contacts. Given the objectives of our study, we consider this method of selection of respondents to be the most appropriate. Within the limits of our resources and time frame, we conducted interviews with 33 Sikh respondents.

All the interviews except two were taped. All our respondents migrated from Punjab province. Interviews ranged from 50 minutes to two hours in duration. Twenty-two interviews were conducted in Punjabi, 10 in Punjabi and English, and one in English alone. All the interviews were conducted by the authors.

Our respondents had varied socio-economic backgrounds. Before migration to Canada, nine were in agriculture-related work, 16 were students, one a labourer, one a bank manager, one a marketing inspector, three were housewives, and two came as dependant children. There were 30 males and three females in our sample. All the males came alone as immigrants, while all the females came with their families. Most were young at the time of migration (24 under 20 years of age). Among the adults, 19 were single and 13 were married.

Open-ended questions and taping of interviews yielded rich qualitative data from our study. Earlier analysis of this data was also reported in B. Singh Bolaria and G.S. Basran (1985): 'Sikhs in Canada: History of Sikhs in British Columbia: A Research Report', Saskatoon (Saskatchewan: Department of Sociology) and B. Singh Bolaria and G.S. Basran (1986), 'Racial Labour Policy and Exploitation: The Case of Sikh Immigrant Workers', paper presented at the annual conference of the National Association of Ethnic Studies, Fresno, California, 26 Feb.-1 March.

2. Extensive material in this section is used from Chapter 7 in B. Singh Bolaria and Peter S. Li (1988): *Racial Oppression in Canada* (2nd edn) (Toronto: Garamond Press).

3. In our British Columbia Study we also asked the respondents about their travel to Canada and the condition of their passage. Most of our respondents as well as other immigrants travelled by merchant ships from Calcutta (India) to Hong Kong and then by a passenger ship to Vancouver (Canada). Those who could not afford to travel on a passenger ship often took a cheaper freighter. Travellers also had to undergo a medical examination in Hong Kong before they were allowed to travel to Canada.

The primary accommodation (room and board) for many travellers in Hong Kong was the Sikh gurudwara. Respondents spoke highly of the facilities, services, and other assistance which they received from the gurdwara. In accordance with the Sikh tradition travellers received food and accommodation free of any charge, barring for voluntary donations.

Respondents also spoke of the undesirable ('terrible') conditions on merchant ships. They often had to sleep on the deck and did not have enough space to sleep comfortably, sit, and relax. For their travels, Indian passengers often brought their own cots to sleep on and food supplies to enable them to cook their own meals on the ship.

Conditions on passenger ships were better for travellers in regard to food and other facilities. Most of our respondents traveled by economy class (third class),

white passengers largely travelling in the first class or business class cabins. Passengers on some ships were segregated into racial and nationality groups including segregated dining facilities (rooms). Racial discrimination and racial attitudes were common experiences of Indian travellers: 'Some whites used to ignore the Sikhs and treated them as inferior and undesirable'.

Indians living in Canada had to have a return document issued by the Immigration Department before leaving Canada for India for admittance to Canada or were re-admitted on the basis of a medical examination. These early immigrants did not have passports or other travel documents.

4. In our British Columbia Study, data were also collected about reasons for migration (why did they leave Punjab, India?). Many factors contributed to emigration from India during colonialism. For most of them the potential of better economic opportunities in Canada was the primary reason. Respondents in our study, were largely from rural backgrounds, mostly Jat Sikhs (agriculturalists), considered themselves as being middle class ('not poor but not rich either'), with small landholdings providing a 'comfortable' living. Other reasons mentioned for leaving India included: 'Conditions in villages were bad; we did not have easy access to water, there was no electricity. People were living from hand to mouth'; 'Corruption and favouritism in India'; 'religious prejudice against Sikhs'; 'British government in India was not interested in giving Indians education so they could maintain rule in India'.

At the time of emigration, our respondents mostly had low educational achievement (grade school or high school education), with only one respondent with two years university education. The primary source of information about Canada was other family members, followed by information from the mass media.

5. B. Singh Bolaria worked in California picking peaches during the summer months on two separate occasions in the 1960s.

6. One major conflict within the community emerged due to anti-community activities. One of these conflicts involved Bella Singh and his group and their collaboration with Hopkinson, an agent of the state to spy on the community. Bella Singh was also implicated and charged with shooting two Sikhs in the gurdwara around 1913. He was acquitted of these charges and resumed his anti-community activities and spent time in prison. In 1932-3 Bella Singh was killed in India. Mewa Singh in 1914 killed Hopkinson for his activities and was convicted and hanged.

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The Sikhs

From India to Canada



INTRODUCTION

The deracialization of immigration controls in the sixties and the influx of recent immigrants from Asia and Africa have had a profound impact on the composition of the Canadian population as well as the labour force characteristics. The increasing heterogeneity and presence of more diverse and visible groups have refocused debate on issues such as immigration policy, characteristics of immigrants, their settlement patterns and location within the Canadian mosaic, and patterns of social and economic inequalities linked to the racial and ethnic diversity of the Canadian population. The role of the state and state policies and programmes related to immigration controls and managing racial and ethnic diversity and inequalities form an integral part of this debate.

The Sikh immigrants and their Canadian born descendents are an important segment of the visible minority population in Canada. This sociological study and analysis of Sikh migrations and their location in the Canadian landscape are presented within broad political, economic, and social contexts. Their migration patterns are analysed within the broader context of international migrations, history of immigration policy, and the social and economic consequences for immigrants. Major sections of the book deal with procurement and use of immigrant labour, political economy of immigrant and migrant workers, racism, and the consequences of various policies for the formation of social institutions such as the family. The sections on Sikh religion and politics contextualizes the discussion on links between the Sikh community in Canada and their place of origin in Punjab. Historical analysis of immigration policies and controls help us to

understand the contemporary situation of Sikhs and other visible minorities. Within a broad theoretical and contextual framework, the primary focus of this book remains on the historical and contemporary situation of Sikhs in Canada.

RELIGION, IDENTITY, AND POLITICS

Religious beliefs and practices form an integral part of the social structure, and religion continues to be an important part of people's personal lives, their ethical values, their social relationships, and political behaviour. Religion is an important source of community identity, internal solidarity, and cohesion. At the same time, religion is often the source of inter- and intra-group conflict and may form the basis of political divisions and struggles. Religion may often serve contradictory functions in the society; integrative and disintegrative; a conservative force that supports the status quo as well as an agent of social change.

Given the importance of religion and the current diversity of religious faiths in Canada, religious affiliation of a particular group and the knowledge of the beliefs, codes, and practices of that religion become crucial in understanding that community. This is particularly so in the case of the Sikhs, who have a distinct physical identity: the 5 Ks and the turban. Practice of their faith in accordance with religious teachings and strict adherence to the 5 Ks and turban may often come into conflict with the social practices, institutional requirements, and legal codes. For instance, initial strong opposition by some to the recruitment of Sikhs in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) was primarily based on the argument that Sikhs wearing turbans would violate the traditions of the RCMP and traditional codes regarding uniforms. Wearing a small sword by some students (ceremonial dagger) has often created tension in some schools. Sikhs have also sought exemption from bicycle safety helmet laws. They successfully lobbied in British Columbia for such an exemption in 1996, but in 2002 are faced with somewhat similar legislation in Alberta, which they vow to oppose. The Sikhs are asking for an across the country helmet exemption rather than recourse in individual jurisdictions.

Turbaned Sikhs now serve in the RCMP, school boards have made accommodations for practicing Sikh students, and Sikhs have gained exemption from helmet laws in some jurisdictions; all this has been made possible only through legal challenges and political lobbying. A knowledge

of the Sikh faith and religious practices would perhaps help to create a better and wider understanding of these issues in the larger society and avoid future tensions and conflicts.

Thus, the section on Sikhs, Sikhism, and the Khalsa Panth is essential to understanding these issues and contradictions. The social context within which the Sikh religion emerged, the life, contributions, and teachings of the Gurus, religious codes and practices, also contribute to an understanding of the internal conflict within the community between the 'fundamentalists' and the 'moderates', and the links of these factions to the religious institution and place of religious authority in Punjab. The Sikh identity of self-sacrifice, bravado and valour are rooted in their historical experiences since the very foundation of the Sikh religion.

Social, economic, and political links of Sikhs in Canada to the 'old country' are not unique to this community, but are common to all immigrant communities to a degree. However, in the case of the Sikhs, these links have remained strong because of historical and contemporary immigration policy and practices. Even now about two thirds of the Sikhs are foreign-born, with their roots largely in Punjab. Religionization of politics intertwined with the politics of language, caste, class, regional, and communal loyalties continue to be important forces in people's lives. A full appreciation of the current situation in Punjab requires a historical-structural analysis of a number of forces and events both internal and external to the Sikh community. Our presentation covers the social, economic, political, and communal context of the historical and contemporary dimensions of the 'Punjab problem'. While the 'religious factor' has received most attention, the issues of the political economy and the development policies of the state have remained largely in the background. The communalization of politics, portrayal of regional issues as Sikh demands, and the sectarian and secessionist perception of the Punjab problem, helped to divert attention away from the underlying material conditions in the region. Political issues and agitations are rooted in economic development policy and its contradictions in Punjab, and embody broader economic forces of displacement, underemployment, unemployment, and increasing economic disparity.

Contending political interests played an important role in the social construction of the issues and problems. Polarization of politics between the 'moderates' and the 'extremists' in the Sikh community received encouragement even from the secular parties for electoral gains. External political interests and internal politics and contradictions among the Sikhs contributed

to an increasing polarization of Punjab politics. The state, both at the provincial and central levels, also played an important role in shaping the political process and the construction of the Punjab problem and also the state's response and solution to the problems. Oppressive state policies were justified to root out 'extremists' and restore peace and order. While on the surface, the 'Punjab problem' appears to have been stabilized, the basic economic and social issues remain unresolved.

Our central point is that without a historical-structural analysis of the origin and development of the Sikh religion and religious codes and practices, one cannot fully understand the Sikh community in Canada, its internal contradictions and conflicts, and its relations with the larger community. While the communalization of issues remains a factor, the political economy of the province, economic development policies, and class disparities are fundamental to a full understanding of the Punjab problem. This type of analysis also contributes to a better understanding of religious, social, economic, and political links between the community in Canada and their primary place of origin in Punjab. Globalization of production and internationalization of labour and capital is likely to further extend these links.

MIGRATIONS AND LABOUR REPRODUCTION

A discussion of the salient aspects of theoretical and conceptual debates in migration studies and perspectives on racism and social inequality is essential to a full understanding of the migration patterns and their location in their places of destination. In the area of migration, theorizing, broadly speaking, falls into micro-level and macro-level perspectives. At its core, the focus of micro-level theorizing is on individualistic reasons or motivation for migration. The primary drive behind the migrants' decision is said to be self-interest and economic rationality to maximize their opportunities. The focus of macro-level theorizing, on the other hand, is on structural determinants in patterned migration movements determined by the dynamics of capitalist development and the interface between the needs of capital and the characteristics of labour. Capitalism as a world system is characterized by gross disparities and unequal accumulation of capital between the core and peripheral countries. Expansion of capitalist economies into the periphery produces disruptions and dislocations, which create conditions for further migrations. Similarly, in the study of racism and racial inequality,

explanations range from individual racism with a focus on prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory actions of individuals, to institutional racism with a focus on institutional policies and practices that exclude racial minorities from equal participation and thus create differential opportunity structures. Studies of socio-economic status and mobility patterns of racial minorities are also guided by divergent perspectives. The assimilationist school sees social and economic inequality as a product of cultural value orientation and achievement motivation differences among various groups and their degree of assimilation into the 'mainstream' society. In their analysis of social inequality, structuralists focus on factors such as differential opportunity structures, labour market segmentation, and the persistence of race, class, and gender inequalities.

Our analysis in this book is informed by theoretical perspectives that see migrations as a product of global disparities and social inequality as a product of institutional racism and differential opportunity structures that create differential life chances for various social groups. Global disparities and internationalization of capital is accompanied by internationalization of labour. These developments have also enhanced capital's structural power over workers and have weakened labour in various countries and regions. In the context of the political economy of migrant labour, the circulation of workers across national boundaries helps to reduce labour costs and provide capital an increased access to labour resources and reservoirs. The state, by regulating the migratory flows and by controlling the legal-political status of migrants creates labour flexibility and judicial vulnerability of the workers, thus creating structural conditions for exploitation. Racialization of a segment of labour provides a pretext for extreme-exploitation of racial minority workers. The labour market allocation and labour market profiles of racial minority workers differ markedly from other workers, the former group more likely to be concentrated in the secondary labour market characterized by low-paying jobs, dangerous and unhealthy work environment, and seasonal work.

Sikh workers, and other workers from India, have been a racialized segment of the workforce in Canada. Racialized immigration controls have ranged from total exclusion to continuous journey stipulation and annual immigrant nationality quotas. In the case of immigrants from India, institutional racism has been most explicit in the racialized hierarchy of preferred immigrants, denial of legal-political rights, conjugal rights, and labour market inequalities. These measures created structural conditions for

exploitation of the early immigrants at their workplace and social discrimination in their daily lives. Their material existence and everyday lived experience in Canada and its link to their colonial background formed an important dimension of the political consciousness of pioneer immigrants. While explicitly racist immigration controls and overt institutional racism are in the past, racial minorities continue to face socio-economic inequalities in Canada.

COLONIAL STATUS, RACISM, AND SIKH WORKERS

The urgent need for an alternate source of cheap, easily controlled, and exploitable workforce arose with the abolition of slavery. The Indian colony became the primary source of such labour. British colonial authorities developed wide-ranging policies for the supply, procurement, transfer, and use of Indian labour in various parts of the empire. While these policies varied somewhat depending upon the labour force requirements of specific economies, there were certain commonalities, including recruitment of single, male labour, denial of legal-political rights, social subordination, and racial labour policies. These policies were meant to create structural conditions for reproduction of a low-cost workforce.

The early Sikh workers in Canada were one of the most disadvantaged, racialized, and subordinated foreign-born workforce. The structural conditions and constraints under which they entered Canada made them the most vulnerable labour force. They were not allowed to bring their families and children with them and were denied legal-political rights. With limited alternative job opportunities, racial labour policies at their place of employment relegated them largely to low-paying and subordinated jobs in segregated work areas. The organization of the workforce and work along racial lines had various dimensions: racially segregated labour and living conditions; racial preference in employment and blocked alternative opportunities; differential wages and price of labour by race; racialized work and segregated work areas; racialized occupational and social hierarchy. They also faced racism and discrimination in their daily lives and had to endure and cope with discrimination in housing, restaurants, hotels, bars, and were denied many other services. Sikhs were also insulted and ridiculed for their appearance and mode of dress. Many of the discriminatory work and social experiences Sikhs shared with other Hindustanis. Their common shared experiences united them in their support for India's independence from

colonial rule and against the racist immigration policy, racism, and racial discrimination.

In many respects Sikhs were a sub-proletarianized, marginalized and subordinated, workforce who were preferred as workers but considered as undesirable immigrants and permanent settlers.

POST-WAR CANADA: SOCIAL MOBILITY AND INEQUALITY

Post-war changes in immigration policy have had a profound impact on the sources of immigrants and their characteristics, and consequently the contemporary Canadian population is more heterogeneous and diverse. The recent arrivals are also better educated with professional qualifications and training than the early immigrants. They also tend to be better educated than their Canadian-born counterparts. While visible minority men and women have higher educational levels in comparison to other Canadians, they have differential labour market opportunities and employment earnings and incomes. Consequently the incidence of low income among visible minorities remains above the Canadian average. However, there is considerable inter- and intra-group variation among the visible minority groups.

The social and demographic characteristics of the Sikh community differ markedly from early immigrants from India. Their labour market opportunities and profile have also improved considerably in recent years. This is primarily due to the pre-immigration class and educational background of recent arrivals and the post-war changes in the occupational structure of Canada. The employment data indicate, however, that Sikhs and other Indo-Canadians still face inequality in the labour market and have low employment earnings and incomes. Notwithstanding higher educational attainment they are less likely to be in professional, managerial, and administrative jobs.

In the media the Sikh community is often 'problematized' and portrayed as undemocratic, conflict- and violence-ridden, a threat to the general public requiring inordinate use of public safety, law and order services. These portrayals have also contributed to the low social status (ranking) of Sikhs.

The visible success of a few Sikhs masks the economic and social inequality faced by many and glosses over the fact that a large number of Sikhs are far from being prosperous.

RACE, GENDER, AND FAMILY

The form and nature of the social institutions of racial minorities is often attributed to the cultural background, values, and practices of these communities. It is common to see family formation as a consequence of individual choice/preference and cultural patterns and practices. This orientation fails to consider the historical and structural forces that have had an important influence on family formation, family structure, and dynamics. Historically, the development of Sikh families was stifled because of racist and sexist immigration policies, recruitment of single male labour, denial of normal conjugal family life, and other restrictions and limitations placed upon their permanent settlement in Canada. The repeal of many of the statutory restrictions and changes in immigration policy saw the influx of better educated, professional-skilled workers, often from middle and upper-class urban backgrounds. Their family structure and family relations differ markedly from those Sikhs who arrived earlier and had relatively low educational levels, predominantly from a rural background and faced discriminatory state policies and a hostile social environment. Contemporary Sikh families show considerable diversity in family structure and dynamics, akin to that of families in the general population. There is considerable variation in cultural practices, gender relations, parent-child relations, and family attitudes toward courtship and marriage.

The incidence of low income among racial minority families remains above the Canadian average, which may limit the educational and other opportunities for their children and even their ability to successfully sponsor relatives to immigrate to Canada.

The economic well-being and internal dynamics of racial minority families are also linked to economic and social status of visible minority women. The socio-economic and labour market profiles of these women differ from those of their non-visible counterparts. In their analysis of gender inequality, most of the mainstream feminists assume a common experience of all women based on gender alone, separate from any other experiences. While gender affects social distribution of privileges it does not operate alone. Women of colour cannot overlook the simultaneity of experiences of racism, sexism, and class inequalities. The mainstream feminist discourse and theorizing largely based upon universalization of experiences of white women have failed to recognize and acknowledge the diversity and complexity of women's experiences. Race and racism continue to structure the experience of racial minority women in their daily lives and in the labour

market. These experiences are, however, far from monolithic because of the diversity of origin and background, cultural practices, religion, educational level, and class status.

CONCLUSIONS

The sociological study and analysis of Sikh migrants and their descendants in Canada are presented within broad political, economic, and social contexts. It is only in this broader context that one can have a full understanding of the migrations and settlement patterns of Sikhs in Canada. Specific issues relating to them cannot be separated from the broader context of racial and social inequality in Canada and state policies to manage diversity which affects all racial minorities.

The sociological analysis in this book is informed by theoretical perspectives that see migrations as a product of global disparities and social inequality as a product of structural and institutional constraints and institutional racism that create differential opportunities for various groups. In short, race and colour matter in the life chances of individuals and groups, and are important bases of stratification in Canada. The structural forces also have a profound impact on the form and nature of social institutions of racial minorities.

We hope to have made contributions in a number of areas, these include our discussion and analysis of the social and economic history of early Sikh immigrants and their experiences in Canada. The structural conditions and constraints on their entry and labour market opportunities and the organization of the workforce and work on racial lines made them the most vulnerable and exploited segment of the labour force. Our presentation of the occupational and labour market data on post-war Sikh immigrants will also serve as a benchmark for subsequent studies of labour market profile of Sikhs. The crucial point to be recognized is that the immigrants enter a segmented and often segregated, racialized, and gendered labour market. The incorporation of immigrants by race and gender markers into the labour market determines their subsequent employment earnings and incomes.

There is no doubt that the labour market profile and opportunities for Sikhs have improved considerably in recent years. This is however primarily due to the pre-immigration class, educational, and occupational characteristics of recent arrivals and the post-war changes in occupational structure in

Canada. Yet the social (status) ranking of the Sikhs and other racial minorities remains low when compared with that of white ethnics. Canadians also continue to attribute negative personal and social qualities to racial minorities.

State policies on immigration and racial minorities also influence the characteristics of immigrants and the nature of social and economic inequality. Many social forces determine state policies, including the demographic imperatives and the labour requirements Canada will face in the future. The policies may also be influenced by the increasing presence of the visible minority population in Canada and their participation in the political process. Thus our discussion and analysis have much larger implications for Canadian society and public policy.

The overarching theme of this book is that the historical structural analysis is crucial for an understanding of the contemporary situation of Sikhs and other racial minorities. Our discussion and findings are more consistent with the view that structural barriers and constraints in the labour market and differential opportunity structures produce economic and social inequality rather than with individual and culturally based perspectives on inequality.