

**The Incident of Komagata Maru
and the Role of
The Khalsa Diwan Society Vancouver, B.C.**

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“The Nations who forget the deeds of their elders,
are desolate nations.”

K. S. Nadeem Parmar

“When the things are lost forever, their memory attains a flawless,
golden perfection of a dream.”

K. S. Nadeem Parmar

Acknowledgement and commentary

There is a saying, “an incident with a tragic ending leaves its scar in the heart forever.”

The incidence of Komagata Maru is such an incident. As we read, listen or see movies about the Komagata Maru, the heart is saddened. At times, it is so distressed that it is difficult to do anything and it seems as if the world is coming to an end.

You will say that my reaction is perhaps because of the ethnic discrimination done to our community. No. It is due to human empathy.

Ethnic discrimination with the passengers of Kamagata Maru was visible like a landscape, but perhaps the unseen grief, pain and misery faced by those passengers was not apparent to anyone. Their disappointment, the gloom on their faces and their broken heartedness, may have been seen but not understood by the host white community.

I have tried to contribute in every way that I could to this project, limited only by my age, health and courage. I would not have participated had I not remembered that one of the passengers, Hazara Singh, was an elder of my extended family from the Village Panchat. Another passenger, Giani Kartar Singh of Mahili, occasionally came for medical advice from my uncle, who was a physician in the Indian National Army (INA). And, Munsha Singh ‘Dukhi’ from Phagwara, occasionally recited poetry in the Akali Singh Gudwara, Phagwara.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my friends, my relatives and family members of the prominent pioneers who gave tremendous help by contributing information and material about Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver and Kamagata Maru.

Kalwant Singh Nadeem Parmar

Kamagata Maru

Name, Pronunciation and Definition

From the last one hundred years, the word “Kamagata Maru” is not only familiar in India but is famous across the world. It is the name of a ship that is linked with 376 passengers who were not permitted to land in Canada on the basis of ethnic discrimination. When they returned to India they faced gunfire by the police.

In English the popular pronunciation of this word is “KOMAGATA MARU”. But in Japanese it is pronounced as “KOMAKATA MARU.”

KOMA - means Horse

KATA - means Appearance

MARU – has two meanings, 1) Complete solid circle or circumference. 2) Ship

So in this way, Komakata Maru means “Ship that looks like a horse.”

Because ‘Komakata’ is a noun (proper noun) so the ship can be of a company, city or town, village or place. For example, ship of Komakata company, ship of Komakata city, or ship of Komakata town or a village.

According to ‘Wikipedia’ it is called the “ship of Komakata Maru.” Since there are many places named as Komakata, it is difficult to say what particular place the ship is named after. In Japan, there are two famous places called Komakata.

- 1) In Tokyo an area called “Komakata”
- 2) Near Sinsoji Temple, the Komakata-doo Hall.

In my opinion, the name of this ship was given on the basis of Komakata-doo Hall of Sinsoji Temple because around the world, at the end of the 19th and the beginning of 20th century, everything and every act was influenced by religion.

Kalwant Singh Nadeem Parmar

A Brief History of the Khalsa Diwan Society

In the beginning” Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver” was named “The Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver”. It seems to have been based on “Chief Khalsa Diwan”.

In 1883, at Amritsar the “Singh Sabha” of Lahore and Amritsar made a joint organization called, ‘Khalsa Diwan’. The main objective was to secure the rights of the Sikhs, their reputation and also to maintain their religious views and beliefs.

To accomplish this objective “Singh Sabha” movement was started.

On October 30, 1902, a big congregation was held in Amritsar to develop co-ordination among the local organizations. In this congregation “Chief Khalsa Diwan” organization came into existence. Registered on July 9, 1904 under the “1869 Act of Society”, it had four main goals:

- To improve the morale, as well as the social and economic situation of the Sikh community
- To publicize the principles of Sikhism around the world
- To eradicate illiteracy and ignorance, and
- To secure the political and social rights of the Sikhs according to the Indian Act

According to historians, the background of the Khalsa Diwan Society is: In 1904, Arjan Singh, village Malak, Tehsil (county) Jagraon, District Ludhiana, came to Canada and brought the Holy Scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib with him. He lived in Port Moody, became the leader of his countrymen, and started praying in his house. In 1906, he moved to Vancouver and rented a house in the 1900 Block of West 3rd Avenue. The rent was \$32 per month. They kept the Holy Scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib in this house.

On weekends, Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus gathered at the house and shared their hardships and tried to solve their difficulties. On July 22, 1906, they had a gathering at which they passed a resolution to form “The Khalsa Diwan Society”, which was registered on March 13, 1909. The society was registered after establishing the Gurdwara at 1866 - 2nd Avenue West, Vancouver. The request for registration read:

‘We , Sewa Singh of Heap’s Mill Vancouver, British Columbia and Bhola Singh Vancouver resident of above stated province declare that -

1: The name of the organization is “The Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver”.

2: Names of the persons mentioned below are the office bearers of this organization -

Bhai Sewa Singh

President

Bhai Bhag Singh

First Secretary and Treasurer

Bhai Bhola Singh

Second Secretary and Accountant

3: With the above stated office bearers Bishan Singh and Chhota Bhola Singh (Junior) both will do the work as the Working Committee of the Society till the Annual meeting of the Society takes place.

4: Annual meeting of the Society will be held every year on the first Sunday of April or at the decision of the General Body with the voting of the majority of the members.

5: In the Annual meeting, five members of the Working Committee will be elected from the general membership of the Society and three members from its Working Committee, one as President and two as Secretaries.

6: The Working Committee can appoint sub-committee and additional office bearers, as the need arises.

7: The Working Committee can also arrange functions in addition to those duties already written and assigned to it, according to the Subject and By-laws of the Society. These can be changed from time to time by the members of the Society in a General Body meeting according to the By-laws.

8: The Society could be dissolved in the General Body meeting by the majority of the members of the Society through a resolution passed with majority of the votes.

9: The main goal/objectives of the Society are -

a: Appoint preachers of the Sikh religion in British Columbia and in other places

b: Establish messengers or preachers of the Sikh Religion as per the need of the scattered community in the British Columbia and in other places.

c: Running the working of the Sikh Temple (Gurdwara) which is now established at 1866 Second Avenue West, Vancouver.

Signature

Sewa Singh

In the above application, the items should be considered as Rules and By-Laws of the Constitution. On March 13, 1909, President Sewa Singh signed an affidavit on behalf of the "The Khalsa Diwan Society" (Dominion of Canada, Vancouver, British Columbia) in front of the Commissioner of "Benevolent Societies Act & Amendment Act."

Note: Later by deleting word “The” was deleted from the name of the Society, and it became “Khalsa Diwan Society”, and later it became known as “Society.”

From 1909 to 2010, ninety one committees have been formed. The details of the Committees from 2004 to 2010 are –

From 2004 to 2007

<u>Position</u>	<u>Name</u>
President	Gurdeep Singh Gill
Senior Vice-President	Ranjit Singh Gill
General Secretary	Sarwan Singh Randhawa
Joint Secretary	Kulwant Singh Puwar
Recording Secretary	Major Singh Thind
Joint Recording Secretary	Major Singh Sidhu
Cashier	Kuldip Singh Thandi
Senior Vice- Cashier	Gurbakash Singh Bal
Vice Cashier	Sujeet Singh Kalsi
Member	Charanjit Singh Brar
Member	Rajinder Singh Dusanjh
Member	Joginder Singh Sunnar
Member	Sohan Singh
Member	Kashmir Singh Dhaliwal
Member	Gurpal Singh Virk
Member	Jarnail Singh Bhandaal (Past President)

From 2007 to 2011

<u>Position</u>	<u>Name</u>
President	Kashmir Singh Dhaliwal
Senior vice president	Kesar Singh Bhatti
Vice president	Gupal Singh Virk
General Secretary	Joginder Singh Sunnar
Joint General Secretary	Dhiyaan Singh Bansal
Recording Secretary	Ranjit Singh Hayer
Joint Recording Secretary	Kashmir Singh Risoda
Cashier	Kuldip Singh Thandi
Senior vice cashier	Rajinder Singh Dusanjh (late)
Vice-cashier	Sukhwinder Singh Gill
Member	Ranbir Singh Manjh
Member	Gurbakash Singh Bal
Member	Sohan Singh
Member	Boojha Singh Mangat
Member	Kashmira Singh
Member	Gurdip Singh Gill (Past President)

In October 1908, Sant Teja Singh came to Vancouver. He formulated day-to-day working rules for the Gurdwara. Those rules became part of the Constitution of the Society.

Other Branches of the Khalsa Diwan Society.

In 1908, 'The Khalsa Diwan Society, Victoria' was established.

In 1910, 'The Khalsa Diwan Society, New Westminster' became affiliated with the Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver.

In 1915, Khalsa Diwan Society, Victoria became affiliated with the Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver.

Note - In July 1919 though the inauguration of Paldi Gurdwara was also established under the name of "The Khalsa Diwan Society" but it never affiliated with the Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver.

Subsequent Amendments to the Constitution

On February 7, 1915, a General meeting of The Khalsa Diwan Society was called to amend the Constitution. These included amendments to the managerial principles, rules relating to the buying and selling of property and the administration the Gurdwara and its affiliates. In total there were fifty one amendments. On February 12, 1915, President Amar Singh, Secretary Gopal Singh and Gurdit Singh, a member of the Committee signed these changes and registered them in Victoria on February 23, 1915. The basic issues of these fifty one amendments related to membership, voting, codes of conduct, congregation, meetings and office bearers. For example,

- Society will consist of Active and Associate Members.
- An Active Member will pay one dollar per month to the General Fund of the Society.
- An Associate Member will pay 50 cents per month.
- Only an Active Member will be eligible to vote in the General, Special, Annual or ordinary meetings provided he has paid his dues in full at least one day before the meeting.
- Society has the right to reject the application for Active or Associate membership of the Society.
- Society has the right to downgrade the special rights of an Active member to an Associate member.
- To call any meeting a prior seven-day notice must be given to the membership.
- A quorum of twenty five members is required to pass any resolutions.
- The Working Committee will hold a meeting every three months at 1866, 2nd Avenue West, Vancouver or at any other designated place.
- If a society wishes to affiliate with "The Khalsa Diwan Society", it has to give up all its rights and special rights to "The Khalsa Diwan Society."

Change of the Name

On July 13, 1922, with an extraordinary resolution, the name of the Committee was amended to 'Khalsa Diwan Society' by deleting the prefix, definite article "The." Under this resolution it was decided that in future the Society will conduct the elections of the Committee on April 1 instead of on the birthday of Guru Gobind Singh.

Reduction in the Monthly Membership Fee

Due to Economic depression, on February 14, 1932 in an extra-ordinary resolution a decision was taken to reduce the monthly membership fee from \$1.00 to 50 cents. And later, from 50 cents to 25 cents. This was done for the whole year of 1932.

On February 19, 1932 members of the Working Committee were requested to pay one dollar per month and the general members pay 25 cents per month. (See amendment #53)

On February 19, 1933 the Constitution was further amended, and articles increased to 58. If there is any discrepancy in the articles from 1 to 51 and from 52 to 58, then the most recent changes should be considered as the ones that are applicable. These articles were registered under the signature of President Dasondha Singh and Secretary Kehar Singh Gill.

Articles 52 -58 are described below -

52:- Any person who believes in the preaching and guidance of the Ten Sikh Gurus, accepts Sri Guru Granth Sahib as his or her Guru can become the member of the Society.

53: Each member shall contribute 25 cents and the Working Committee member shall contribute one dollar per month.

54: At election time and on other occasions when specific cases are being decided, only the fully paid members (those who have paid for 12 months) can vote. At the Annual election only those who have paid for the full year prior to the election date can vote.

55: A member who has not paid the fee for the full 12 months in a year shall not be eligible to cast his vote. If he has paid the fee for the full year he shall have the right to vote.

56: If a member has gone out of province or for some other reason could not pay his annual fee for 12 months, he shall pay the fees in full prior to the election in order to become eligible to vote.

57: Working Committee has no right to sell, lease or to mortgage the property of the Gurdwara without calling the General convention. Members can only make decisions about this at the General convention.

58: The 'Khalsa Diwan Society' and its existence as a Society has to continue until there are as few as 40 Sikhs residing in the province of British Columbia. A majority vote cannot change the above article. If the Gurdwara has to be shut down, its cash and ownership of the property should go to the Shiromani Gurdawara Perbandhik Committee, Amritsar, Punjab, India. The said property and cash cannot be used for any other purpose. It was passed unanimously at the meeting. A provision was made that in future, this article could not be changed by the simple majority, since there may be some members who do not adhere to the principles shown by the Gurus, and who may use the property for some other purposes.

Changing Article #58

On June 18, 1933, under Presidentship of Sucha Singh and Secretary Mit Singh, an extraordinary meeting was called at which the Article 58 passed on February 1933, which related to the property of Gurdwara being passed on to the Shiromani Gurdawara Perbandhik Committee, was revoked.

Formation of the New Constitution

On September 28, 1969, a General assembly of Khalsa Diwan Society was called at 1866 Second Avenue West, Vancouver, per the Articles for meetings, to rewrite the Constitution from the beginning. This resolution was passed unanimously. On November 30, 1970, it was registered (Registration Certificate Number 216) under the signatures of President Gurdev Singh Gill, Secretary M.S. Gill, Treasurer, Bakshish Singh and six members of the Working Committee. (For the re-written constitution, please see the copy of Khalsa Diwan Society's Constitution.) Two noteworthy points are -

- Article 1. Name – “the name of the Society (from now onwards, The Society) will be Khalsa Diwan Society.”
- Article 2. Item Number 4 of Goals and Objectives - “To look after the affairs of the Sikh Gurdwara at 8000 Ross Street, Vancouver.”

On December 5, 1971, an extraordinary resolution was passed at which Section 3, Chapter 11 was changed to read as, “A member who does not pay the membership fee of 25 dollars during the financial year of the Committee, shall not be allowed to vote or take any office.”

On June 27, 1975, President Surjit Singh Gill and Committee tried to make some further amendments which were rejected on November 17, 1975 by Honorable Judge Mr. Craig of the Supreme Court of British Columbia.

On January 27, 1977, Avtar Singh Gosal amended the Constitution under which the elections of the Society would be done by paper ballot.

On December 30, 1979, under the President ship of Bikkar Singh Dhillon, an amendment was made to the Article of Membership. A membership form was created. A person could become a member of the Society by filling this form and without paying the membership fee.

On December 27, 1980, another amendment was done to the membership form. On its basis –

1: Chapter 11, Section 1 and 2 were deleted.

2: Chapter 9, Section 1, which had been amended on January 27, 1977 under Extraordinary Resolution Number 10, was deleted. It was replaced by a Declaration Paper a person could sign and become a member.

On October 18, 1981, under the President ship of Gurdev Singh Johal, an amendment was made to ensure that each person entering the Gurdwara must cover their head.

On September 30, 1982, a land deal was struck under the signature of President Daljit Singh Sandhu.

On December 31, 1983, Mota Singh Jheeta amended the Goals and Objectives of the Society.

On February 15, 1986, under the signature of President Joginder Singh Sidhu, it was decided that the membership form has to be in two languages, English and Punjabi and in addition, for photo identification, one of the following must be presented: passport, driver license, or citizenship card.

Lastly, on October 30, 1993, a new Constitution was passed which is in force to this date.

Financial structure of the Society

In the beginning, the income of the Society was dependent on offerings and membership fees. Only the Account of Income and Expenditures was kept. This was examined at the end of each fiscal year. There was a goal to keep expenditures within the limits of the income. With an increase in income, expenditures also increased. This can be seen from the chart below. In the past, the expenditures such as Langar (free food), electricity, heating, water, office expenditures, phone bill, religious books etc., were lower than now.

Year	Income	Expenditure
1923	\$ 10,424.58	\$ 9,014.76
1931	\$ 17,413.56	\$ 7,837.94
1969	\$ 28,123.22	\$ 18,883.26
1974	\$ 100,924.10	\$ 99,815.94

1996	\$ 2,863, 645.00	\$2,980,291.00
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2007	\$ 1,300,934.00	\$1,028,160.00
2008	\$ 1,240,642.00	\$1,016,681.00

It is said that with the fluctuation in population of East Indians in B.C. and slump in the economy, the income of the Society also decreased or increased. But Indians' tendency of donation always prevailed and no one can match it. In 2007 the Society has the property of more than six million dollars.

Khalsa Diwan Society never gave up the love for its mother land. Whenever, there was agitation or a Morcha in any Gurdwara in India, it always sent a Jatha (contingent). Whenever, there was any earthquake, famine or Indians needed the financial help, Society never turned back. It always helped with money. For example, in 1914 during the famine in U. P. it collected the donation for the U. P. Famine committee.

The names of the Committee members are: Mohammad Akbar, Mr. Omrao Singh, Mr. Ganga Singh, Mr. Meehan Singh, Lala Harnam Chand, Mr. Raja Singh, Mr. Nattha Singh, Mr. Ratan Singh Secretary, Lala Sohan Lal. (May 1, 1914 'Hundustane)

The Khalsa Diwan Society worked as a cementing force to bring all other Sikh Societies together. It remained a central and focal point for joining the Sikhs and guided the Sikhs in every situation and occasion. Khalsa Diwan Society, being the oldest of all the societies in the country has edge over all other societies, its voice is heard over everywhere.

RELIGIOUS ROLE

In fact, to start with, the religious service was its main role.

- On January 19, 1908, the Society built a Gurdwara at 2nd Ave, Vancouver. It was built with the donations from the Sikhs offered from their meager income at that time.
- In 1918 Society immediately helped The California Diwan Society with \$2000.
- Society brought a Sikh priest from India by paying his travel expense. Likewise, a Kirtania Jatha (religious musicians) and Sikh preachers were brought in and this tradition still prevails. According to the Society's account book, it gave roughly \$150, 000 as a help to religious and educational institutions in India.
- In 1910, Society helped Sikh Kanya Mahavidyalaya (Sikh Girls Senior School) Ferozpur with \$200.

- In 1921 Society raised Sri Nankana Sahib Martyr Fund and sent it to Shromani Gurdwara Perbandhik Committee Amritsar.
- In 1922 fund was raised and sent to the Sikhs injured in the Guru Ka Bagh Morcha. Society invited Rev. C. F. Andrew into Canada and paid his fare, who after witnessing the brutality on the Sikhs in Guru Ka Bagh Morcha recommended to Michael O'dwyer who was the Lt. Governor of Punjab at that time, to stop the action taken against Sikhs.
- Besides Hindustan the Society also rendered financial help in Canada and America to build the Gurdwaras. For example Victoria, New Westminster, Abbotsford, Fraser Mills etc.
- In 1927, for building a Gurdwara in Stockton California.
- On July 13, 1924 with the expenditure of \$2,889 Society sent a Martyr Jatha (contingent) of 10 Sikhs to participate in the Jaito da Morcha in Nabha state. Society gave \$4,000 to Jatha for their expenses and another \$700 to the Jathedar (Head Priest) of Sri Akal Takhat, Amritsar for Jatha's further expenses. Looking at the tight financial situation of Shromani Gurdwara Perbandhik Committee, Society sent another \$5,000 separately. In 1925, at the end of the Morcha another \$200 was sent for the Akhand Path.
- In 1924 \$7,700 and in 1927 \$3,000 were sent for the Gurdwara's in India.
- In 1924 a financial aid was given at the appeal of Sri Anandpur Sahib.
- In 1969 at the cost of \$660,000 a beautiful Gurdwara was built at 8000 Ross Street, Vancouver. The land for the Gurdwara was purchased for \$75,000. The world famous Canadian Architect Arthur Ericsson designed the Gurdwara.
- In 1979, the adjacent land to the 8000 Ross Street was purchased at the cost of \$520,000, now there is a Punjabi school, Sikh Library and Sikh Museum. It's empty space is being used as a parking lot.
- In 1979, the Society initiated the tradition of Nagar Kirtan (Vaisakhi Parade) on Vaisakhi. People from near and far come to participate.
- In 1982, a delegation was sent to India for religious preaching at the expense of \$12,000.
- In 1996 Society built "The Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver Resource Centre" whose foundation was laid by the Head Priest of the Akal Takhat On July 24, 1996. This is the only centre of its kind in Canada. It has the Library with 15,000 books and reading facility for people. Along with the Sikh Museum, a separate facility is available to accommodate 150 seniors as 'Senior Centre'.
- Despite Gurdwaras in Greater Vancouver and in the surrounding cities who have their own committees, Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver B.C. has its own distinct status and identity to which the glory of the Sikh Panth is preserved in foreign countries and in Canada.

SOCIAL ROLE: Community Services

Without the religious distinction and regional boundaries, harmony and the community service remained the main consideration of the Society. Whenever a request for social help was made, here in Canada or in any foreign country, Society contributed very generously. For example -

- In 1908 when the Canadian Government deprived Hindustani's from the education of Law, Pharmacy, Medicine, Chemistry and Engineering and agriculture; Society sent the students to America for higher on its scholarships. At the recommendation of Chief Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar, Society helped the Sikh Students of high moral and character and upholders of Sikh Maryada (Tradition) with determination.
- In 1914, Society raised and spent \$50,000. for the help of Kamagata Maru passengers.
- In 1919 Society donated \$500 to the Vancouver General Hospital.
- In 1920 Society contributed towards the Jallianwala Bagh Memorial Fund. This fund was for those families whose unarmed bread earners had been shot dead at General O'Dwyer order.
- In 1920 Society sent \$1,000 to the Sikh League for "Prisoners Families Relief Fund."
- Society helped student from Punjab, especially Sikh students in each and every way:
 - a) In 1921, came to the rescue of Punjabi Students studying in Seattle who had deportation order and court had order to post his bail immediately.
 - b) In 1921, helped the "Pardesi Khalsa" Newspaper with Two thousand rupees.
 - c) 1922, posted bail for two Sikh students Kehar Singh Dhudike and Achhar Singh Dhoot whom government had detained. The lawyer was paid for his services who was hired for this job.
 - d) In 1922, a resolution was passed to arrange rooms for the students. This resolution was passed under the Policy of "Development of Education in Canada and Punjab".
- In 1923, society contributed to the "Japan Earthquake Fund" and donation approximately \$1,800 for charitable purposes.
- In 1924, donated \$2,000 at the appeal for General Hospital, Vancouver.
- In 1925,\$3,800 were given to an orphanage.
- Society had been helping people personally and in their personal difficulties For example, in 1925 the bail security of Aya Singh was posted who had trouble with the Canadian Laws.
- In 1926 through a resolution, Society sent \$3,000 to the Khalsa High School, Anandpur Sahib.
- in 1929, due to the return of Punjabis to their home country, the income of society decreased even then society gave \$100 to the General Hospital, Vancouver and assured the Hospital that this donation shall continue in the coming years.
- In 1935 society sent \$1,500 to the Shiromani Gurdwara Perbandhik Committee. for the earthquake of Kyoto \$1,500 were sent
- In 1978 society contribution to the following funds-
 - \$2,100, Flood Relief Fund, India
 - \$3,000, Amritsar Vaisakhi Martyr Fund.
 - \$8,930, The Government of India, Cyclone Relief Fund.
 - \$2,000, The Government of India, Bangladeshi Indira Relief Fund.
- In commemoration of the Babbar Akali's Martyr's of 1924–1926 Society organizes game Soccer, basketball, Field Hockey, Wrestling matches etc. in Vancouver annually. The total

expenditure come to thousands of Dollars. In 1982, Society purchased 28 Acre land for playground.

- In 1981 Society donated \$31,125 to Gurdwara Hazoor Sahib, \$27,500 to Gurdwara Tarana Taaran Sahib and \$13,500 to other Gurdawaras.
- In 1984 Society donated \$34,000 and \$20,000 in donation in 1987.
- Since its existence, it had been the first and foremost duty of the society to come to the aid of people in need and their difficulties. In this respect, Society bore the expenses of food, residence and other related expenditure for one full week for the Tourists from Ceylon, whose flight was cancelled due to some reason.
- From 1995 with the co-operation of Provincial Health Department, Society has opened a “Day Care Centre” where girls are trained to take care of the children.

The expenditure record of Khalsa Diwan Society from 1904 to 1921 is as follows:

Sikh Welfare \$150,000

Political Prisoners Families Aid \$ 2,100

Political Prisoners Aid \$31,000

Kamagata Maru Passengers Fund \$50,000

Immigration Cases \$30,000

Delegations to Ottawa, London and India \$15,000

Tilak Savraj Fund of Indian Congress Party \$3,333

According to the 2008 expenditure statement, approximately \$170,400 were spent on religious preaching, Donations, Nagar Kirtan (Sikh Parade) and Annual games which is an invaluable service.

POLITICAL ROLE

“Can a citizen be deprived of the right to vote for forty years?”

“No.”

Correct, but Hindustanis were. Especially the Sikhs, who came to this country in large numbers at the beginning of last century.

After their arrival, when Hindustanis decided to make Canada their new Country, they had to face many physical and spiritual difficulties. Although, Hindustanis being British subjects had the right to vote in every Province of Canada except British Columbia. For forty years, Hindustanis in British Columbia struggled to achieve the right to vote and other franchise which

was being enjoyed by Europeans without any effort. (For detail please see – Achievement of Franchise)

Khalsa Diwan Society made “Achievement of Franchise” as its main goal. In its pursuance, they sent delegations to Ottawa, London and Delhi. Society spent thousands of Dollars to achieve it. It approached from Municipal to Provincial and Federal Government. Although, Society received cold shoulder, unjust negative attitude and disappointments at every level of the Governments but it did give up till it achieved the franchise.

In 1914, Kamagata Maru case was another matter of confrontation. Hindustanis were shaken by this incident when 376 passengers were not allowed to land in Canada because, the Provincial Government with the backing of Federal Government, was trying to keep this country as “white man’s country” but determined to do so. In 1908, a plan was made to send the Canadian Hindustanis to British Honduras. To accomplish this, the secretary of Home Minister J.B. Harkin took Mr. Hopkinson with him. Mr. Hopkinson spied for British Government and worked as an interpreter for the immigration Department in Canada. But, the leaders of the society rejected this proposal based on the recommendation of their delegates Nagar Singh and Sham Singh, who exposed the reality and with their far sight, refuse to go and failed the Government plan. This was a skin color discrimination and a strategy to get rid of Hindustanis from Canada.

Since the formation of Khalsa Diwan Society, Independence of India and achievement of political rights in Canada remained its main objective. Although, for the independence movement, the honor goes to Gadar party but, most of the main leaders of the Gadar Party were the leaders or members of the Khalsa Diwan Society such as Bhai Bhag Singh, Bhai Badan Singh, Bhai Balwant Singh Khurdpur, Bhai Mewa Singh, Bhai Uttam Singh, Bhai Kartar Singh Nawan Chand, Bhai Pakhar Singh Dhudike, Bhai Sher Singh Waeen Poen, Bhai Karam Singh Jhingar, Bhai Piara Singh Langeri etc. Some were hanged. Some received life sentences and others lesser punishments for the independence of India. A Writer of that time, Dr. Sadhu Singh Dhami, has praised these people with respect in his novel “Maluka”. He writes “ ... not only they stood up with words, but also with arms in their hands.”

During the Kamagata Maru incident Shore Committee, Gadar Party etc or later on, East India Welfare Association or NACOI (North American Citizens of etc. whatever organizations came into existence, the members or leaders of the Khalsa Diwan Society had worked on different positions in those organizations.

Under the political agenda, Society had helped journals like Gadar, Gadar Di Goonj, Sansar etc. and in 1927 gave a grant of \$500 to the Gadar Party.

Besides all this, as it has been mentioned before, in 1920 Society donated to The Memorial Fund of Jalian Wala Bagh; in 1923 Sikh League Jalandar and financial support to the Sikh families of Punjab whose bread winners were murdered by the British Government in the Independence movement.

In 1920's of the Twentieth Century, Akali agitation in Punjab, irrespective of, whether those were religious or political and against the government of that time who wanted to enter it spies or touts in the gurdwaras, Society donated to the agitations whole heartedly.

In 1925 a decision was made unanimously that a relief fund should be raised for the help of political and religious prisoners of Punjab and be distributed equally among their families in Duaba, Malwa and Majha. Similarly, in 1928 \$500, in 1929 \$100 and in 1931 \$500 were sent to the Babbar Akalis from the Babbar Akali Relief Fund and also in 1929, \$1,500 was sent to those families whose addresses were missing and found.

Taking into consideration the freedom of India movement in 1930, Society sent \$1,000 for the 44th Annual Convention of the All Indian National Congress.

In 1909 Society welcomed Annie Beasant, who was the president of the International Theosophical Society (Madras) who pleaded the case of Hindustanis in Canada with the Government of Canada. While in 1910 Society boycotted the visit of H. S. Gayakwad the Maha Raja of Baroda because, he was the supporter of the British Raj and likewise 1910, the Maha Raja of a small state Mourbhang in Bengal.

In 1929 Society welcomed the visit of Reverend F. Andrews who raised his voice for the civil rights of the Hindustanis in Canada. Society welcomed the great poet Rabinder Nath Tagore in the Gurdwara's of Vancouver and Victoria as he, after witnessing the Jalian Wala Bagh massacre, returned his Nobel Prize by stating, "On one side you are give us prize and on other massacre us."

Similarly in 1949 when Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru the First Prime Minister of India along with his daughter Indira Gandhi came to Vancouver, Khalsa Diwan Society fully honored them because Pandit Nehru praised the Society whole heartedly for its contribution in the fight for freedom of India with money, persons and heart.

After this, its being heard when Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India came tro Vancouver on January 23, 1973, she said to be straightaway driven to Sikh Temple, at Ross Street, Vancouver where she offered \$ 500 before the Guru Granth Sahib.

From time to time Khalsa Diwan Society honored personalities with siropas, Kirpan's, purse and gold medals. The names of some of them are:

Great poet Rabinder Nath Tagore, Reverend C.F. Andrews was the president of the Internation Congress (who came to Vancouver and gave lecture on Sikhism in the United Church and did the advocacy with the Governor of Punjab on the massacre of the Sikhs, was the admirer of Mahatma Gandhi and wrote book on him) Chaman Lal Goswami, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Mr. Kharak Singh, Bhai Piara Singh Lageri, Bhai Randhir Singh, Bhai Chait Singh Granthi, Bhai Munsha Singh Dukhi, Dr. D. P. Pandiya, Mrs. Vijay Laxmi Pandit etc.

Besides the political and famous dignitaries Society has also honored writers like Dr. Bhagat Singh, Sohan Surinder Singh angha Sakrulwi for writing the history of Canadian Sikhs, Sarjit Singh Jaspal for writing in English “Becoming a Canadian” and Dr. Darshan Gill.

Here it is worth mentioning that Khalsa Diwan Society especially honored the grand daughter-in-law of Gurdit Singh on November 3, 1996 at 8000 Ross Street Gurdwara who visited Vancouver on October 16, 1996.

Here, another fact worth mentioning would not be out of context that, today those Indians especially Punjabi Sikhs, who were or are MLA's in the Legislative Assemblies; MP. 's in the parliament, Attorney Generals, Ministers in the Provincial or Federal Governments or Premier of a Province, are the results of the political far sight of the leaders of the Society. For example Mr. Naginder Singh Gill, while addressing a meeting of Society had said, “We cannot get the right to vote until we do not associate Canadian people with us.” To achieve this, he set aside his self interest and worked whole heartedly. His statements were published every day in the newspapers. As a result of this, he turned major political parties on his side. Hindus, especially Punjabi Sikh youth, who were conscripted to the forces, he took their letters of conscription and raised the issue of franchise. Apart from this he wrote letters to Victoria, Ottawa, London and even to the Government of India about the pitiable situations of Hindustanis in Canada. The struggle and hard work put in by Mr. Naginder Singh Gill, is a complete chapter in itself, in the History of the Hindustani Community, to come and settle in Canada.

Similarly Comrade Darshan Singh Canadian worked together with the workers Union of Canada, The Irish League of that time and Socialist Party raised their voice in favor right to vote for Hindustani's.

The election of Niranjana Singh Grewal as the Alderman for the Council of Mission B.C. was also the result of the struggle done by the above statesmen.

In 1950, “East Indian Canadian Welfare Association” was established. It Worked with Khalsa Diwan Society and contributed its efforts for the welfare and betterment of the Hindustani Community. Some of the notable names are:

Kartar Singh, Gurdial Singh Hundal, Kashmir Singh Manhas, Meetu Singh Manhas, Mr. mohinder Singh Dhoot, Karam Singh Banga, Mohinder Singh Gill, Dr. Gurdev Singh Gill, Saabu Singh, Kesar Singh Bhatti, Dr. Pandiya etc.

Gadar Party whose actual name was “Hindi Pacific Association” was formed in Canada in March 1913. It moved across the border to the adjoining country America. The Khalsa Diwan Society played a very important role in it. It was named Gadara because of two reasons. Firstly, it published a paper named “Gadara” and secondly, an easy name to pronounce by ordinary people. To describe the role played by Khalsa Diwan Society in Gadara party requires a complete separate chapter.

In short it may be said that Khalsa Diwan Society was, and is, the only organization for Hindustani community, specifically Sikh community in British Columbia who fought at the religious, social and political levels to up-keep their existence, dignity and respect. It struggled for their rights and won at every front.

The most astonishing thing is that this very small community, forget about its roots, which did not even have a foothold in a foreign country, with very low income of its people to lead a good life in those days, collected thousands of dollars, and as a society, contributed to its political, social and religious goals which were more dear to them than their life.

In the end I have full confidence, that had these goals been achieved by the leaders of another community, for their own people, they would have been showered with honour and respect. However, in contrast, in our community to remember our elders is a far cry, their names are never mentioned. If the new Indian immigrants and the new generation is enjoying the comfort and luxuries of life in this country, in my opinion, it is not God gifted. Instead, it is the result of the struggles and hard work of our elders.

Kalwant Singh Nadeem Parmar

Achievement of Franchise

In 1946, Hindustanis (Indians) living in British Columbia did not have any franchise. i.e. the right to vote in Dominion, Provincial and Municipal elections. The election systems was arranged in such a way that Municipal voting right was essential for Provincial voting and provincial voting right was required to vote in the Dominion election.

Part 1

Dominion and Provincial Franchise

Hindustanis (Indians) had the voting right in all over Canada except in British Columbia where 90% of them resided in 1946. The British North American Act had given the Provinces a power of legislation to pass very restricted laws for the foreigners. In fact, the discrimination by the provinces was on ethnic grounds.

European had the full rights under the Naturalization Law after living for five year in Canada; in the case of British subjects by birth, only for one year residency was required.

In British Columbia Chinese and Natives were barred from registering to vote in 1874, Japanese in 1895 and Hindus in 1907 on the ethnic basis.

Although Hindus were British subjects by birth, they were not only denied the privilege of becoming citizens after one year residence but also, after five years residence. Thus they were totally deprived to attain citizenship in British Columbia. Even after the First World War, persons from the above racial groups, who served in the forces were allowed to vote in the provincial and federal elections but not in the municipal elections.

The fact that Hindus could not vote in the provincial election of British Columbia, the Dominion Election Act deprived them Dominion franchise. This denial of the provincial franchise, not only deprived them the basic right of voting but denied the other privileges enjoyed by other citizens. These are twenty six in numbers and non was available to any member of the Indian community. The most important of them- to register to vote or vote and stand for any elected office, Join any profession or bid on any government job or be employed in a work funded by the government.

The Hindus (Indian) shall not vote.

In March 1907 the British Columbian Government introduced an act to amend the "Provincial Voters Act" to deprive provincial voting right for people from the British Indian Empire.

2: Chapter 17 of the statues of 1903-04, "Provincial elections Act" extended with the Amendment in Section 3. It is being amended that- 'the meaning of the word 'Hindu' means, for all the residents born in Hindustan who are not born from the Anglo-Saxon parents and shall include any person whether a British Subject or not: "Hindu".

Amendments s 6 -

3:- Section 6 of Chapter 17 is hereby amended by inserting the word “Hindu” after the word “Japanese” in the first line,

No “Hindu” to be placed on the register of Voters. page 69.

The 1911 R. S. B.C. Chapter 72 reads,

7:- No Chinaman, Japanese, Hindu or Indian shall have his name placed on the register of voters for any electoral district, or be entitled to vote at any election.

2: 1903-04 c. 17, s 6; 1907, c. 16 s.3.

No Chinese, Japanese or Indian to vote.

The 1908 Electors and Elections (Municipal), Chapter 14 reads,

13 (1) No Chinese, Japanese or other Asiatic or Indian shall be entitled to vote at any municipal election for election of a Mayor, Reeve, Alderman or Councilor.

Chinese, Japanese and other Asiatic, and Indian are disqualified.

(2) Although it may be contained in any other Act of this Legislature, no person who is not a British subject shall have his name placed upon any municipal list of voters, nor shall any such person be allowed to vote at any municipal election in this Province. 1902, c . 53 s.1.

British Subjects only entitled to vote at Municipal elections Page 54.

The Hindustani Community in British Columbia opposed this racist exclusionary legislation from the very beginning and waged a campaign against it. Many visiting foreign dignitaries and local notables lobbied on behalf of the Hindustani community in B.C. in Ottawa and Victoria but these efforts were unsuccessful. After the First World War, Mr. Arthur Meighen Prime Minister of Canada pledged to restore the Franchise to Hindis at the Imperial Conference in London but did not fulfill his promise.

In 1922 Mr. Mackenzie King in a letter to Rt. Honorable Mr. Srinavasa Satri promised him as follows;

“ ... At the earliest favorable moment the Government will be pleased to invite the consideration of Parliament to your request that natives of India, resident in Canada be granted a Dominion Parliament franchise on terms and conditions identical with those which govern the exercise of that right by Canadian citizens generally. ...”

This was also not honored in the Election Act amendment then nor in 1939 and 1940.

After the end of Second World War Two, Canadian and people around the world raised their voice to change this racist legislation. The Dominion Franchise for Hindustanis was finally considered in 1946.

Provincial Committee Enabling Act, 1946 and 1946 Elections Act Committee.

The British Columbia Legislative Assembly in its 1946 session under the chairmanship of Mr. R. H. Carson appointed an all party Election Act Committee of Seven members to recommend any necessary changes in the Election Act. This was the opportunity for all minority groups who did not enjoy the franchise to present their case before this committee. This committee was to hold public hearings to receive view and representation from both sides of the public.

The committee met on October 31 and November 1, 1946 at the Court House, Vancouver. Various organizations gave their opinions and recommended to extend franchise to minority groups especial to East Indians who were British subjects by birth.

A delegation of Hindustani Community (East Indians) consisting of Mr. Kapoor Singh, Mr. Kartar Sigh, Mr. Mayo (Mayia) Singh, Mr. Ishar Singh, Mr. Gurdit Singh, Mr. Naginder Singh and Dr. Pandiya met this Elections Act Committee.

The Election Act Committee recommended the necessary changes in the Act extending the franchise to the East Indian and Chinese.

Bill 85 Passage through the Legislation

This recommendation of the Elections Act Committee was presented in the Legislature in March and the Government submitted it in Bill 85.

The main important amendment of the Bill 85 was to amendment of Section 5a of the Elections Act, which states- “the following shall be disqualified at any elections and shall not make application to have their names enlisted in any list of voters.

(a) Every Chinese, Japanese or Hindu or Indian: Provided that the provision of this paragraph shall not disqualify or render incompetent to vote any person who has served in the Naval, Military or Air Force of Canada in the Great World War of 1914 to 1918 or in the present war.”

Bill 85 amended this section in clause 14 by striking out clause (a) regarding the exclusion from voting of Hindu and Chinese from the franchise.

With this change in the Elections Act, a long-standing political discrimination was ended and the Hindustani Community in B.C. at last was able to exercise the valued privilege of citizenship, *the right to vote*.

It is to be noted that the Provincial franchise automatically grants the Hindustanis the Dominion franchise and eliminate almost all the obstacles which hindered them to enjoy these rights.

April 2, 1947 will always be the memorable day in the history of East Indian Community which brought political freedom and equality with Canadian citizens under the Dominion and Provincial laws.

Part 2

Municipal Franchise

Even after the achievement of Dominion and Provincial franchise there still remained one obstacle namely, the right to vote in municipal affairs'. The municipalities of British Columbia with the exception of the City of Vancouver, are ruled by the Municipal Elections Act. They are autonomous in their civic affairs including municipal franchise. The City of Vancouver has its own Charter under the Vancouver Incorporation Act". This Act and Municipal Elections Act contain clause which exclude East Indians from the right to vote. These clauses can only be changed on the recommendation of the joint municipalities which are then implemented by the Provincial Legislature.

On September 15, 16 and 17 1947 the Legislative body of the Municipalities met at Harrison Hot Spring. It presented a motion to the Union of B.C. Municipalities to change the Municipal Act. In its meeting, the East Indian Community had concern to bringing the franchise amendment in this session as soon as possible. The proper procedure to present this motion to the delegates were already taken and secured through the correspondence. Dr. Pandia had contacted the Victoria Municipality and Mr. Kapoor Singh the Burnaby Municipality securing in writing to sponsor them and put the resolution to the Secretary of the Union of B.C. Municipalities for inclusion of motion before July 15 on the agenda of the Convention.

Under mentioned is that resolution whose surety was given by the Mayor of Victoria Mr. George and was put in the agenda of the convention of the Municipalities.

Following is the Resolution 35 sponsored by Mayor George of Victoria and embodied in the agenda of the convention.

WHEREAS by recent legislation enacted by both the Dominion and Provincial Legislatures , Hindus are now eligible to become voters in the Dominion and Provincial Elections and may also vote on Municipal By-Laws if properly qualified ; but are subject to the resolutions contained in Section 4 of the " Municipal ; Act," Revised Statues of British Columbia, Chapter 83; And whereas by said section 4, "No Chinese, Japanese or other Asiatic or Indian, shall be entitled to vote in any Municipal election for the election of Mayor, Reeve, Alderman or Councilor."

AND WHEREAS the Hindus with in the Province of British Columbia have requested the Municipal Council of The Corporation of the City Victoria to bring a resolution before the

forthcoming convention of the Union of B.C. Municipalities for its consideration, and if it thinks advisable, to recommend to the British Columbia that said Section 4 be amended;

AND WHEREAS the said Municipal council has consented so to do;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the forthcoming convention of the Union of B.C. Municipalities be requested by adding after the word "Asiatic" in the first line thereof the words except Hindus."

There was a possibility that resolution 35 would not be dealt with at the convention but would be postponed to the next year because it was presented but not sponsored by a member municipality, as required by the by-laws of the Union of B.C. Municipalities. Intensive hard work was done by the representatives of the East Indian community. They had interviewed the delegates on the spot and presented the urgency of their case to them to secure the consideration of the resolution immediately.

Messrs Kapoor Singh, Mayo Singh, Kartar Singh and Dr. Pandia participated in this convention. Members of Khalsa Diwan Society Vancouver and Victoria gave full assistance. Beside this, many East Indians lend their moral support.

At the Invitation of the president of the Union, Dr. Pandia addressed the delegates on two occasions pleading the case of East Indian Community he said:

"Indians are British Subject and are Canadian Citizenship under the Canadian Citizenship Act of 1946. They are taxpayers and property owners and it's a fundamental principle of democracy that there should be no taxation without any representation. Indians had been pioneers in developing the Canadian economy particularly in lumber and agricultural Industry. Pointing towards Mayo Singh he said, "This person has more than six hundred workers of all races (Chinese, Japanese, European and Indian) but he has no right of franchise."

"Indians are loyal people. They have given half million Dollars towards the Sixth Victory Bond Issue and have contributed generously to the Red Cross and hospitals."

Dr. Pandia also indicated that the extension of Municipal franchise would be in accordance with the policy of two senior Governments.

India as a Dominion, is a member of British Commonwealth of Nations and there must be equality between all people of these countries.

He also explained that the word Hindu is used as an Idiom difference between East Indians and American Indian, and it include all the people of India irrespective of religion.

He concluded his lecture by saying that the removal of this discrimination would be consistent with the United Nations charter, to which Canada subscribe, and which uphold the rights of racial minorities everywhere.

Mr. Loutet, the Mayor of North Vancouver, formally moved this resolution with one amendment: that the word Hindu be used as defined in the Provincial Elections Act, to indicate persons from India' instead of members of the Hindu religion.

The resolution, as amended was seconded by councilor Johnson of Penticton and was passed with one opposed delegate who thought the resolution did not go far enough. It should include the native Indians also.

The above resolution applied to all the Municipalities in British Columbia, with the exception of its leading city of Vancouver, which is ruled by a special Charter under the Vancouver Incorporation Act. This charter contains a clause prohibiting Hindus from exercising the Municipal vote. To correct the situation and delete the exclusion clause and amend the charter, a recommendation from the city council sitting in the legislative committee is necessary.

On October 23, 1947 City of Vancouver Council met as a Legislative Committee to recommend the amendment of the Charter.

Representatives of the Hindu Community consisting of Dr. Pandia, Mr. Kapoor Singh, Mr. Kartar Singh and Mr. Ishar Singh participated in the meeting. Before the discussion of this Issue, Dr. Pandia was asked to address the Committee in favor of the required amendment.

The R. S. B.C. 1939 Chapter 83 reads as follow:

4. No Chinese, Japanese or any other Asiatic or Indians shall be entitled to vote at any Municipal Election for the election of a Mayor, Reeve, Alderman or Councilor. R. S. 1936, C.83, S.4, Chinese, Japanese, other Asiatic, and Indians disqualify.

1948 S. B.C. Chapter 19 reads as follow:

2. Section 4 of the "Municipal Elections Act" being chapter 83 of the "Revised Statues of British Columbia, 1936," is amended by striking out the words "or other Asiatic." Amends S.4 page 61.

The R. S. B.C. 1948, Chapter 105, s.4 reads as follows:

4: No Chinese, Japanese or Indians shall be entitled to vote at any municipal election for the election of a Mayor, Reeve, Alderman or Councilor.

R. S. 1936, C.83, S.4; 1948, C.19, S.2

Chinese, Japanese, other Asiatic and Indians are ineligible.

Hindustani (Indian) Community owes gratitude to those Canadian who foresaw these issues ahead of time, helped and raise their voices with courage, spoke on their behalf and presented the concept of

"ONE EARTH and ALL HUMAN ARE EQUAL."

Hindustani (Indian) Community is also owes gratitude to Indian leaders who worked hard, day and night, to accomplish this goal task and took others difficulties as their own.

To achieve the franchise and on behalf of the Khalsa Diwan Society Vancouver, United India League and East Indian Welfare Association, the names of the delegates who went to Ottawa are as follows:

November 1911

Professor Teja Singh Mastuana M.A. (Harvard) LL.B.

Dr. Sunder Singh M.D.

Raja Singh

Reverent I. L. W. Hall (Presbyterian Missionary)

This delegation met Mr. Roger the Home Minister who consented to enquire about the concern raised by this delegation. After fifteen month when no action was taken, East Indian community held a big gathering at Dominion Hall, Vancouver.

14th March 1913

Mr. Balwant Singh Khuradpur

Mr. Narain Singh Theekriwala and

Mr. Nand Singh Seehra

A three member delegation left to met the Government of Britain and India. On May 4, it met the “Under Secretary of Colonial office (A. D.C. of colonial Minister). On May 14, it held a public meeting in Caxton Hall, London. On August 4, it held a convention in Bradley Hall Lahore, met the Governor of Punjab Michael O’Dwyer and returned to Canada in the beginning of 1914.

1939

Mr. Battan Singh Dhoot

Mr. Ishar Singh Bains

Mr. Narain Singh Kandola

Dr. D. P. Pandia

This delegation met the Canadian Government to grant amnesty to 250 illegal Hindustani resident in Canada. Most of them were the students whose visa had expired due to the World

War and were the nephews of pioneers who brought them as their sons. Finally, this delegation won in the case.

Mr. Battan Singh Dhoot, Mr. Duman Singh and Ratan Singh Dhoot helped to the delegation financially.

1953

An eleven Member “East Indian Citizenship Committee” was formed. Prominent persons of the community like Meetu Singh, Karam Singh Banga and Mahinder Singh Dhoot (Beadal) were its members.

1946

Mr. Naginder Singh Gill Secretary of Khalsa Diwan Society Vancouver, Mr. Kapoor Singh, Mr. Mayo Singh and Dr. Pandia fought for the right of vote and finally won in 1947.

1950

Under the leadership of Nephew of Duman Singh, Meetu Singh alias Malkit Singh a delegation of ‘East Indian Welfare Association” from time to time, would go to Ottawa for franchise, citizenship and to increase the Hindu families immigration quota and succeeded in increasing the quota.

1964

A four member delegation of East Indian Welfare association –

Sabu Singh

Dr. Pandia

Kesar Singh Bhatti

Dr. Hardev Singh Gill

met the leader of opposition party Mr. John Diefenbaker.

For details, see the reference books.

A Brief Account of Khalsa Diwan Society's Legal and Monetary Support to Komogata Maru, Upon Arrival and During Stay in Vancouver

May 22, 1914 William Head, Victoria, B.C.

Dr. Nelson examined the passengers. After finding no medical certificate from the last port, Dr. Nelson informed the Director-General of Public Health, Dr. Montizambert in Ottawa. Dr. Nelson asked the Department Minister (Public Health) to inquire about the ship's medical certificate from Moji (Japan). After receiving the certificate, Dr. Nelson gave the ship and passengers a "clean bill of health." (The Daily News Advertiser, Vancouver, May 23, 1914)

The editor of 'The Victoria Times' met the passengers In the Port of Victoria. His views regarding the passengers appeared in next day's paper as follows:

"The ship's passengers presented a brilliant spectacle as many different coloured turbans moved around quickly and silently. They were dressed in various garbs. There were some in complete European outfits others wearing riding breeches and helmets; numbers with the Mohammedan red caps pressed tightly down on their thick black hair; still others in native costumes, and a few wearing khaki uniforms were walking around the vessel briskly. They were dressed in a variety of clothing styles. Some in European, others had on colourful turbans, others wore Muslim-style caps, some were dressed in their national costumes, and others wore their old British military uniforms."

"The majority of the men have served in the British army and they are a tall, broad and handsome lot. They seem superior to the class of Hindus which have already come to this province. They stand very erect and move with an alert attention. All their suits were well pressed and their turbans spotlessly clean. The most of them know a little of the English language and some of them converse in it remarkably well."

When the ship arrived in Vancouver the City's Superintendent of Immigration, Mr. Malcolm Reid did not allow it to dock and he stopped it about a mile offshore in deep waters, no passengers were allowed to disembark. Even relatives and local community were barred from meeting the passengers. Those reporters who accompanied him (Mr. Reid) onboard the ship were not allowed to meet Mr. Gurdit Singh. Reporters were also not allowed to approach the passengers. Instead, the ship was surrounded by armed police and under surveillance for 24 hours.

When Gurdit Singh protested the harsh restrictions, Mr. Reid's responded, "This is harbour master's decision, not mine."

Following this, from the main deck, Gurdit Singh responded to the editor of The News Advertiser,

We are British citizens, and we consider we have a right to visit any part of the Empire. We are fully determined to test this entitlement. If you refuse to admit us into your country, the matter will not end here. We will charter more ships and my people will continue to cross the Pacific Ocean until we are given our justified rights.

Gurdit Singh said, "All this will be aggressively pursued in Canadian courts and he remains very optimistic. (The Daily News Advertiser, Vancouver, May 23, 1914)

The immigration officers sent for the ship's owner Shinyei Kisen Goshi Kaisya of Kobi company's agent company, Santo and Co. of Kobi, assigned representative Mr. Gardner Johnson, to see Gurdit Singh and ask for \$22,000 Hong Kong dollars for the fare instalment, with a deadline of June 11, 1914.

At this point, Gurdit Singh submitted a written request to Mr. Reid, stating that as a merchant as well as the ship's leaser, it was within his rights under Section 14 of the Port of Vancouver's Corporation of Harbour Centre's regulations that he should be allowed to present documents regarding the goods on board the Komagata Maru in person. Gurdit Singh's aim was to sell the coal on board and then pay the instalment. His request was not only ignored and denied but also dismissed by Mr. Reid.

According to the immigration doctor, among the passengers were two women, four children. In addition, twenty-two passengers were returning to Vancouver. After having shown the proper documentation, twenty-two passengers, two women, and three children (the latter two being members of Dr. Ragunath Singh's family) were allowed to disembark. The fourth child was Mr. Gurdit Singh's son.

"The Immigration Laws will be applied with full force." declared the Minister of the Interior, Honourable W. J. Roche on May 24, 1914. The newspaper headlines read "Government to shut-out Hindus" and "Hindus to pass medical tests."

Upon receiving a request for help from Gurdit Singh, Mr. Mit Singh, the Secretary of the Khalsa Diwan Society (KDS) called a meeting. K. D.S. President Mr. Bhag Singh approached Mr. Husain Rahim, the President of the United India League, in order to establish a fifteen member "Shore Committee". The names of the members: Mr. Bhagat Singh of Bhikhe Wind [Village], Mr. Husain Rahim, Mr. Balwant Singh Khurdpur, Pandat Sohan Lal Aulakh, Mr. Mitt Singh Pandore, Mr. Kartadar Singh Navan Chand, Babu Harnam Singh Sahri, Mr. Batan Singh Kahre, Mr. Munsha Singh, Mr. Rattan Singh Raipur Dabba, Mr. Mohammed Akbar, Mr. Gurdit Singh

of Bilga, Mr. Natha Singh of Littran, Mr. Partap Singh Purewal of Shankar, and Mr. Ganga Singh.

Mr. J. Edward Bird, a Vancouver lawyer was retained by the Shore Committee, and was instructed to prepare a case against immigration officials, for forcibly detaining the passengers of Komagata Maru. Mr. Bird requested permission from Immigration officer Mr. Reid to go onboard the Komagata Maru to meet his client Mr. Gurdit Singh but permission was denied. Mr. Bird expressed his astonishment and gave the following statement to The World, published on May 23, 1914,

““The Immigration Department officers are abusing their authority by forcibly denying these British subjects the entry, using Russian-Government style tactics. There is no such law that would not allow the Komagata Maru and its passengers in this manner. The ship is surrounded by armed police. They neither allow anyone to go onboard the ship nor do they permit anyone to disembark.”

You may read about Mr. Reid’s behaviour in Mr. Ted Ferguson’s book, A White Man’s Country.

May 26, 1914, in the same Newspaper an editorial was published under the heading, “Hindus and Japanese”. It was written regarding a recently agreed immigration treaty between the Government of Japan and Canada’s Laurier Government. “ ... Although Indian migration was very small compared to Japanese migration, it still discriminated against Indian British subjects.”

On May the 30th the Society [KDS] had a meeting in the Gurdwara basement in which Mit Singh, Mewa Singh, Nazar Singh, Dalip Singh, Munshi Ram, and others decided to raise funds to help the Nanak Jahaz [Komagata Maru ship]. The Society and the Indian community called a meeting at Dominion Hall located at 337 West Pender Street, Vancouver. 500-600 local Indians, 20 Whites, and a few newspaper correspondents attended. Mr. Hopkinson was also present with his steno. Leaders explained the plight of the Komagata Maru and its passengers and requested the assistance of those in the audience. \$5,000 in cash was collected that evening and additional \$66,000 was pledged by attendees.

A copy of the appeal for help by KDS and the Shore Committee as follows:

SHIP’S JOURNEY

We do not need to mention as to why our Indian brothers travel painfully through Calcutta, Hong Kong islands, etc. Last year about 200 countrymen stayed at Gurdwara in Hong Kong waiting for when any [shipping] company would sell the tickets so that they could reach Canada. Unfortunately, no company would sell the tickets to Indians. As luck would have it however, Gurdit Singh arrived at this time in Hong Kong for personal business. After seeing the plight of his countrymen at the Gurdwara, he offered to serve their cause and said “I will get you to Canada, somehow.”

For this Sardar Ji [Gurdit Singh] chartered Komagata Maru. He faced numerous obstacles from the police captain when planning for the ship's journey. However, police backed off once it became clear that his actions have not broke any law. He stayed in Hong Kong for 5-6 days experiencing numerous painful problems just to obtain a passenger certificate. For this reason, he served a civil notice to the Government of Hong Kong, claiming damages of \$20,000 per day. Finally, the Colonial Secretary issued him a certificate. At the time of ship's departure, astonishingly, Army bands played and many Army companies were present. The ship sailed amidst salutes of "Sat Sri Akal!" and "Yaa Ali Yaa Ali!" slogans.

Brothers! that was the time, when Indian communities were fighting from their religious places of worship and hatred tore them apart. And today there's a Gurdwara on one end of the ship and a Masjid on the other. After experiencing numerous hardships, this ship has arrived closer to Vancouver Harbour. The decision about this ship is not only about 376 passengers onboard, rather, it's the fate of 330 million Indians. All eyes of India are focused on the fate of the ship. Oh all Indian brothers! Let us wake up from the sleep of ignorance and let us get ready with determination to challenge the Canadian immigration. And let us not rest until this battle is won.

Please send donations to Mr. Bhag Singh and Mr. Rahim Vancouver, B. C. at the following address-

Bhai Bhag Singh and Mr. Rahim 1866 - 2nd Avenue West Vancouver, B.C..

Note: If you have a fellow villager or friend, among the passengers please send a minimum of \$25. Others please send a minimum of \$5 and or as much as you can.

For those who wish to donate the list of passengers is attached herewith.

On June 3, 1914, Gurdit Singh refused to make a payment of 2 months rent to Mr. Gardner Johnson. On enquiring from the newspaper correspondents, Mr. Gardner Johnson replied, Gurdit Singh has 1,500 tonnes of coal. After selling 900 tonnes out of it, even then he still will have enough coal to go back."

Mr. Bird replied, "As far as I'm concerned I'm certain that they have strict orders from Ottawa to deny these Hindus entry in to Canada on any basis."

Last night, the passengers were upset because of the 24 hour surveillance by the armed police on the deck. Mr. Reid assessed the situation, removed the guards from the Ship's deck and put them on a separate boat.

On June 4, 1914 Gurdit Singh and the passengers went on hunger strike to protest against their mistreatment. Mr. Bird met Gurdit Singh in the presence of immigration officers. On behalf of the passengers Mr. Bird sent an appeal through Mr. Reid to the Governor General of Canada, his Majesty and the Duke of Connaught, regarding their miserable plight, food and water rations.

Here it is very important to explain and worth mentioning that any communication, message, and letter between the ship and anywhere else, had to go through Mr. Reid.

Here, it is worth mentioning also, that not all Whites were against Indians. Among them many had raised their voices in favour of their cause. You can see this in the letter written to the editor of the Daily News Advertiser, by Ernest Manning on June 4, 1914.

Dear Sir,

As a city and a country, we are writing a new history we are writing a very bad page just now. Our treatment of the Hindus on the Japanese ship anchored in our harbour is a disgrace to any civilized nation. ... Are there no white men in Vancouver? Not one white enough to cry out shame on the meanness and dirtiness of the attitude we assume, and the acts we practice? None white enough to see that fellow men shall be treated as men, and not as animals.

On June 4, 1914, 'selected few individuals including Balwant Singh, Bhag Singh, Husain Rahim, Sohan Lal, Mit Singh, Udam Singh Kasale, Bhan Singh, Arjan Singh, Jagat Singh, Batan Singh, Jawala Singh, and Mewa Singh met secretly. They decided to supply food to Nanak Jahaz. Under a cover of darkness, Mewa Singh and Harnam Singh, with the help from two Japanese fishermen, succeeded in delivering food supplies to the ship. However, there were spotted due to a passing fire boat noise. This alerted the police stationed at the CPR [Canadian Pacific Railway] peer. Mewa Singh and Harnam Singh were apprehended by police and questioned. After truthfully admitting of the delivery, they were released.

On June 6, 1914 Mrs. Annie Besant, English born activist and international president of the Theosophical Society from Madras, appealed on behalf of the Indians. "The way the coloured people are being provoked, Britain will suffer a great loss."

Gurdit Singh writes to the Governor General, "There's nothing to eat or drink for the last four days. Mr. Reid is delivering no rations. The renters and the passengers are sitting as hungry detainees." In response to a question regarding Gurdit Singh's letter, Mr. Gardner Johnson declared in a statement, "I have given the price list of the groceries and water to Mr. Gurdit Singh and it is his responsibility to supply the provision."

June 7, 1914, The Daily News Advertiser, in its editorial writes in favour of the Hindus, "We allow, without any criticism the Turks, Balkans, Negroes, and their wives to enter into Canada. Amongst these are those who keep multiple wives. If that were not bad enough, they are not even Christians. But we have barred the Indian wives. Then we have selected that country which is so vital to the united British Empire, to be treated like animals."

Dr. Munroe, the Department of Immigration's medical officer, went to see the passengers on the ship and told them to buy medicine, which Gurdit Singh refused to pay for.

June 8, 1914, Gurdit Singh ended his hunger strike.

June 9, 1914, the passengers declared that they were going on hunger strike again to protest the lack of food supplies provision but Gurdit Singh's secretary, Daljit Singh, accepted Mr. Reid proposal with a condition that Mr. Hopkinson will accompany them to buy the food supplies. Daljit Singh accepted his terms and quickly added his condition that if Mr. Hopkinson accompany him to buy food then, the groceries has to be delivered to the ship.

June 10, 1914, fourteen Indians were allowed to disembark.

Same day, Husain Rahim presented a cheque for \$11,000 to Mr. Gardner Johnson and told him that he would pay the full rent for the ship, provided, the ship's lease is transferred into his name. Mr. Gardner Johnson sent the proposal to the ship's owners, which was accepted, and the ship's lease was transferred to Bhag Singh and Husain Rahim.

June 11, 1914, Khalsa Diwan Society sent several tonnes of food supplies to the Komagata Maru.

A board of inquiry was established to investigate the case of the Komagata Maru passengers. Mr. Robin L. Reid was himself, the chairman of the board. Representing the government was Mr. B. A. Ritchie, a lawyer for the Department of Immigration. Mr. Bird represented the passengers. After some time, Mr. Reid, citing a shortage of staff to carry out daily administrative work, abolished the board.

June 18, 1914, owners of the ship demanded 2 months rent to be paid in full by 24th of June or they will order the return of the ship. On receiving this demand, on 20th of June, Husain Raheem and Bhag Singh delivered \$4,000 to Mr. Gardner Johnson and declared that from this day onward, "they are the lesser of the ship."

June 21, 1914, Khasla Diwan Society and United Indian League together called a meeting at Dominion Hall, to help Nanak Jahaz (kamagata Maru). 400 local Indians and approximately 125 Whites gathered in this meeting. Mr. Bird was the key note speaker in this meeting. He shed light on the uncalled provocations by the government.

June 23, 1914, the Whites in opposition to the Komagata Maru, held a meeting at Dominion Hall. MP Harry Stevens was the key note speaker. Mr. Stevens spoke a great deal against the Indians and the Komagata Maru. When a number of Indians came to attend the meeting, the police stopped them at the door and turned them away.

On the same day, when Husain Rahim and Bhag Singh (New leasers) and fifteen other Indians forcefully tried to board the ship, they were sent back. At this point, the passengers on the ship formed a committee, to talk to the immigration officers.

Mr. Reid was unhappy with the transfer of lease of the ship to the new leasers. With many different accusations, he bothered the new renters. For example, he demanded the installation of wireless onboard the ship, payment of docking fees for June to July, payment for the expense of the passenger's rations, and the fees for the lawyer.

Mr. Reid asked Ottawa to grant him the permission to forcibly remove the passengers and return them to India onboard the HMCS Empress, which was leaving on the evening of 24th of June at 11 PM but the Prime Minister, Mr. Borden refused. At this point, Mr. W. D. Scott directed Mr. Reid, "You should not take any actions that violates the law. If the passengers take refuge in the law, then it's necessary that you get assistance from the court, where the law is applied based on true legal points."

The Board of Inquiry's lawyer suggested to Mr. Bird that instead of taking every passenger's case for inquiry, they should proceed with a test case. Choosing one parson for test case will save time. On June the 24th, on the advice of the society (K.D.S.), Mr. Bird reluctantly, accepted this suggestion, because ninety passengers had already been failed in the medical exam on June the 1st.

June 25, 1914.

On June the 24th, Manshi Singh of village Gurpur, District Hoshiapur was selected for the test case, and brought in front of the Board of Inquiry.

Mr. Reid, Inspector Howard and Mr. Elliott were members of the panel. On enquiring by the board, Manshi Singh told that he is a farmer, not a labourer. The board ignored him and gave its decision that he did not travel directly from Calcutta to Canada, nor did he have \$200 dollars on him. He was not a farmer, rather he was an untrained labourer and therefore should be deported. Manshi Singh explained that there was no such facility in Calcutta to buy a ticket that would allow him to travel directly from Calcutta to Canada. And, there was no ship that sails directly from Calcutta to Canada. The board ignored his explanation and gave decision to deport all the passengers. On hearing the board's decision, Mr. Bird went to Victoria to prepare for an appeal against this deportation order.

The ship ran out of drinking water and the ship's passengers sent a telegram to the Governor General. "We have sent many requests to the Department of Immigration to supply drinking water but, they all went unheard. Instead of this bad treatment, it is better to shoot us."

At this time, after receiving a promissory note of rent payment from Mr. Husain Rahim, Mr. Johnson delivered 103 tonnes of drinking water to the ship.

On the advice of the Khalsa Diwan Society, Mr. Bird filed a "Habeas Corpus" appeal in the Supreme Court of B.C. Manshi Singh's case was heard in the court of Judge McDonald, Judge Irving, Judge Martin and Judge Philips, from June 26 to June 30, 1914. The court reserved their

decision for July 6, 1914. On July 6, the court upheld the original ruling of the Immigration Board under Section 23, and dismissed the appeal. Mr. Bird argued on the basis of Section 23 of the Immigration Law which says, "British subjects cannot be barred from entering Canada." Even then, the appeal was ignored.

Five passengers who were disembarked from the ship for the test case were sent back to the ship.

On July 7, 1914, Gurdit Singh and the ship committee wrote to Mr. Bird saying, "We are directing you to withdraw the hearing for all the passengers from the Board of Inquiry and start a dialogue for the Komagata Maru's return to Hong Kong." Mr. Bird appointed Mr. MacNeill as a lawyer for the negotiation between the Passenger Committee and the Department of Immigration.

On July 10, the Board prepared all the deportation papers.

On July 14, 1914, the Passenger Committee sent a telegram to the Governor General of Canada requesting him to consider their appeal on compassionate grounds. The Passenger Committee also reminded The Governor General of Canada, of receiving a telegram from the Governor of Hong Kong, inquiring about Canadian immigration laws, while the ship was detained in Hong Kong for one week and was allowed to sail from Hong Kong after this. In the same telegram, the committee also expressed the hardships the passengers endured, difficulties they faced and grieves and sorrows they bore as they were not allowed to dock or disembark and barred to meet their relatives, or even their lawyer.

They also wrote that during this difficult time, they had already spent \$35,000 of their own money, and citing compassionate grounds, they appealed that they had been living like prisoners for two months.

On July 17, 1914, a very strange incident came to light. At the B.C. Sumas Border, Mewa Singh was arrested with two automatic pistols and five hundred rounds of ammunition. On the other side of the U.S.A. border, Balwant Singh, Gurdwara Priest (Granthi) and his friend Bhag Singh, who was the President of the Khalsa Diwan Society, and a partner of the new charters of the Komagata Maru, were arrested. With them was Harnam Singh of Victoria. He was also found with a pistol and ammunition on him as well. The Department of Immigration and the police theorized that the ammunition and pistols were intended for the passengers of the Komagata Maru.

The shipping agent, Mr. Johnson, delivered the deportation papers to the Komagata Maru. Speaking about the food supplies for the ship, he mentioned that it would be delivered once the ship is three miles out of Canadian waters but the passenger committee insisted on receiving the supplies on the ship before departure.

When Mr. Reid was asked about the food supplies by Ottawa, he lied to the local officers by stating that its already had been delivered to the ship.

After that, Mr. Reid only agreed to provide the supplies when The Prime Minister, Mr. Borden, from Ottawa, told him in writing, “The government will pay the expense for the food supplies, as it is difficult for Charter Gurdit Singh to do so. The government will pay \$4,000 for the food supplies on the condition that ship will leave Vancouver.” Only at this point did Mr. Reid agree to provide the provisions. Afterwards, Mr. Bird asked Mr. Reid to provide return passage to the passengers, citing Section 44 and 45 of the Immigration Act, which Mr. Reid denied. Gurdit Singh and the ship’s committee asked permission to dock the ship so that they could unload the coal shipment, and that request was also denied.

Mr. Reid told the Captain Yamamoto and the Engineer Kajiyama of the Ship, who had come request the Japanese High Commissioner for their own food supplies, that the ship be warmed up and forcibly depart by 6 PM, or they would be faced with heavy fines, and the request for food supplies would be cancelled. Also, the agreement between Mr. Borden and Mr. Tupper would be cancelled. At 5:15 PM, Yamamoto, boarded the ship with a promise that, he would wave a red flag, this would mean a signal for the police that the passengers did not allow him to move the ship. Mr. Reid sent a telegram to Ottawa saying, “If no unforeseen incidents occur, the ship will leave today in the afternoon.” But the ship did not leave. When the ship did not leave, On July 18, 1914, at approximately quarter after one past midnight, immigration officers boarded 160 police men on a the boat Sea Lion from the peer and headed towards the Komagata Maru. The Sea Lion hooked on to the Komagata Maru. When passengers saw the Sea Lion, they came out to the deck and made an effort to unhook the Sea Lion off the ship. The police started spraying the passengers with water with pressure hose and the passengers responded by throwing coal rocks, bricks, iron pieces and ship parts. At the end, the Sea Lion retrieved.

In the early morning at 2 AM, MP Stevenson sent a telegram to Prime Minister Borden saying, “The Hindus at the ship are in a rebellious mood and are determined to defy Canadian laws. Now, it is necessary to take bold steps. It is our request that HMCS Rainbow or another Navy warship should be sent to deal with the situation.”

On July 20, 1914, Mr. Hopkinson was sent onboard to deliver a warning to the passengers. It’s as follows- “If you are hurt in any way, we will definitely be sorry for it. But, it is better for you and your interests to obey the law of the land. According to the law, you have been given deportation. Still, the government has done an exceptionally merciful act in agreeing to provide you with food supplies for your return passage. It will only be possible if you let Captain Yamamoto take over the ship, so that he can warm it up.”

After this, he attempted to intimidate the passengers by citing a threatening order, that food supplies would not be provide until the passengers came to their senses and if anyone tried to create a riot, he will be strongly and forcibly suppressed. To back-up this order, he displayed a

letter of a special resolution passed, with the signature of Mr. Baxter, the Mayor of Vancouver. In fact, the letter was addressed to their lawyer, Mr. MacNeill.

Mr. Reid sent a letter to Mr. Rahim asking for his signature and consent for the departure of the ship.

On July 21, at 7 AM, 204 army personnel arrived at the dock. At quarter after 8, the Navy warship Rainbow arrived and anchored approximately 200 meters away from the Komagata Maru. At approximately 10 AM, the ship guns were uncovered and pointed directly at Komagata Maru. Being a holiday and by arrival of the Rainbow, thousands of people had gathered at Burrard Inlet to witness the drama.

From Ottawa, The Prime Minister, Mr. Borden sent the Minister of Agriculture Mr. Martin Burrell who was the Member of Parliament of Penticton, BC. He resided in Grand Forks and asked him to deal with the situation whatever way he could, peacefully and without bloodshed, and to send the ship back forcibly.

At this juncture, a lengthy exchange of telegram and letter can be mentioned between Mr. Borden and Mr. Burrell, as well as, the quiet intervention attempt by the British Government.

Mr. Burrell met Mr. Reid and spoke to the passengers through their lawyer. At 5 PM, Mr. Burrell agreed to provide all the necessary provisions and the passenger committee agreed to go back.

On July 22, 1914, all provisions were loaded on the ship. Mr. Husain Rahim, Mr. Mit Singh, and other members of the Khalsa Diwan Society went to meet the passengers in an Immigration boat. After docking alongside of the ship, they boarded the ship through a gangway and met the passengers. The next day, on the July 23rd, at 4 AM, society members were brought down. At 5:10 AM, the Komagata Maru lifted its anchor and began its journey back. The warship HMCS Rainbow and the police boat Sea Lion followed it until it left Canadian waters.

The painful and problematic narrative of the Komagata Maru and its passengers up until it reached Calcutta is a very disturbing and heart rendering painful story in itself, and is not a part of this account. Yet still, a brief mention follows-

On September 29, 1914, at about 11 AM, the Komagata Maru arrives approximately 22 km away from Calcutta at Budge Budge Ghaat. The Punjab Police, Bengal Police, and with other government officials were wait to welcome it. Here, efforts were made to forcibly send the passengers back to Punjab by train. There were altercations between the passengers and the police. 19 passengers were killed, 23 were wounded and admitted to hospital. Gurdit Singh and many other passengers escaped. Police started searching for the escapees vigorously in the surrounding areas and by October 11, 1914, the police had apprehended 211 passengers. Twenty-nine passengers were declared wanted by the police and among them was Gurdit Singh

also. Out of 321 passengers, 62 passengers went back to Punjab without any resistance. Out of the 19 dead, one was found drowned in the water. On a British Government ordinance, 202 were locked up behind bars.

What happened in Vancouver after the departure of the Komagata Maru, also demands a Chapter of its own. In this aftermath, people who died were directly linked to the Khalsa Diwan Society. In Vancouver, murders of people of Indian descent began to emerge. After this Bela Singh, who, not only in the Indian community here, became infamous with the name of Bela Singh Gaddar (traitor) but also all over India especially in the Sikh community in Panjab. His companions, Harnam Singh and Arjun Singh were killed one after the other. During the last prayer of his friend Arjun Singh, Bela Singh came into Gurdwara and started shooting. As a result, Messrs. Bagh Singh and Badhan Singh were killed. Messrs. Uttam Singh Noorpur, Labh Singh Dhake, Jawala Singh, Shaikh Dolat and Dalip Singh Phala were wounded.

Bela Singh was arrested and tried in the court, but was released on November 19, 1914. On October 21, 1914, Mewa Singh shot and killed Inspector Hopkinson in a B.C. Court. Mr. Hopkinson had come to the court to stand as a witness in the defence of Bela Singh. Mewa Singh was hanged on January 11, 1915 after he entered a guilty plea.

CONCLUSION:

The voyage of the Komagata Maru and the consequential story of its passengers so painful and heart rendering In the history of people who came from the subcontinent of India, that it cannot be forgotten.

Along with it, the good deeds and struggles of the Khalsa Diwan Society is in no way lesser than any major sacrifice. The tireless struggles and selfless sacrifices done by the Society for the Indian community cannot be winked or ignored.

----- THIS IS NOT THE END -----

The Story of Komagata Maru

Arrival of East Indians in Canada

In the beginning of the twentieth century, according to the Government of Canada's Immigration Policy, first preference for immigration was given to farmers. To achieve that goal, the Government of Canada advertised in newspaper, in Europe and in neighboring countries such as America, and sent their agents and representatives to those countries. The government spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on this.

It is learned from a "Study on Canadian Immigration" that these new immigrants became very ill after coming to Canada. In this country, contagious diseases spread every year.

From "Oriental Immigration into Canada", it is learnt that in the middle of the nineteenth century after the Europeans, Chinese migrants from Asia began to immigrate to Canada. They began coming to Canada after working in the gold and metal mines in California. After their numbers swelled into the thousands, in 1903 the Head Tax was passed (\$500 per person) in order to curb this influx.

Around 1881, the Japanese began to emigrate to Canada, and in 1896 alone they came in large numbers.

In the beginning of the twentieth century Hindustanis', especially Punjabi Sikhs, began coming to Canada, after the arrival of the Japanese and Chinese immigrants.

When the population of Asians began to increase in B.C. (British Columbia), the white society began to worry. They were worried because they wanted to keep the land a white man's country. To achieve this goal they often resorted to gang violence, even before passing any laws on the matter. On the 12th of August in 1907, they vandalized and set fire to the houses of the Chinese and Japanese immigrants. Up until 1908, Hindis did not face any problems when trying to come to Canada. In 1908, the 'Continuous Journey Law' which proclaimed, "Every migrant coming to Canada must be carrying two hundred dollars," came into effect. Their strategy behind this was to stop Hindi migrants from coming to Canada. Because of this law, Hindustani migrants had to face many obstacles. Although this law did not mention any country or nation directly, it was still a cunning move on the part of the government. Lawmakers knew that there were neither any ships that did travel or were even able to travel directly from Hindustan (India) to Canada. In truth, this 'Continuous Journey Law' was passed to stop the flow of Indian migrants into Canada.

Although the Hindustanis' were British subjects, because of the passing of the 'Continuous Journey Law', Hindi immigration into Canada had almost stopped completely. In 1914, only 88 migrants from India came to Canada, down from the 2623 immigrants from Hind (India) in 1908.

The Hindustani community faced many obstacles after this. Under a secret scheme, the Canadian government planned on shipping the Indian immigrants to British Honduras; a scheme that did not succeed. In 1910, under the 'Order in Council', two new laws were passed immediately and a total ban was placed on all migrants from India.

In 1913, 56 Hindustanee immigrants reached Canada, out of which 17 were allowed to land, and the rest were detained. A special board sitting of the Immigration [Department] served them a deportation order. The Indian brotherhood in Canada challenged the 'Order in Council' law in British Columbia's Supreme Court through a lawyer, Mr. Bird. In the B.C. Supreme Court, they also entered an appeal against the deportation order. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Chief Justice Hunter, accepted the appeal, and heard the case, and then granted all of the immigrants the right to stay in Canada. This case is known as "Narayan Singh and Associates."

After this, the 'Order in Council' passed an amendment according to which, "No worker or tradesmen (trained or untrained), can enter Canada through any port.

Coming to this juncture in time, the chapter of the Komagata Maru begins. On May 23, 1914 the Komagata Maru, carrying 376 passengers, out of which 340 were Sikhs, 24 Muslims and 12 were Hindus, arrived in Canada.

Note: At that time, the white society in Canada called all Indian born individuals Hindus, whether they were followers of the Sikh faith, Islam, Hindu religion or any other religion. Here I have used the common term of either "Hindustani" or "Hindi" and that is what the leaders of that time also used, even though there were a great number of Sikhs among these passengers. For reference, please see, "Jahaz da Safar (The Journey of the Ship)."

Public Opinion before the Hindustanis' Arrived in Canada, Prohibitions and Reasons

Hindustanis' began to arrive in Canada at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1905, so many Hindus arrived in Canada, that they became the focus of attention. In 1906 and 1907, when 4700 Chinese and Japanese migrants arrived on the west coast, white supremacists began to riot against the arrival of these immigrants.

In light of these incidents, federal immigration prohibitions significantly reduced the number of Hindi migrant arrivals to Canada. Only 125 Hindus were allowed into Canada over the next seven years. From 1905 to 1914, only 5,300 Hindus were allowed in to Canada, which amounted to 0.2% of the total immigrant pool of 2,500,000.

However many Hindus migrated, none of them travelled to Eastern Canada, but approximately 1,500 went to America (U.S.A.) instead. By the time of the First World War, there were approximately 2,000 Hindus settled in Canada, and their numbers reflected 0.5% of British Columbia's total population. Even though these numbers included some Muslims, Hindus and

Indians of other religions, the majority of the population was made up of Punjabi Sikhs, most of who were original residents of District Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur (Punjab, India).

Why Did Hindustanis' Come to Canada? This is Mackenzie King's opinion about this issue:

- Due to the increased population growth, the unemployment rate increased in these districts of Punjab
- Decreased wages in that province (Punjab, India)
- The trend in Punjabi culture to travel to other provinces and other nations to search out employment and their daily bread and butter
- The escalation of land and food prices in that province
- They embraced the migration in order to improve their financial situation. Only men travelled abroad. Out of the wages they earned, they sent their savings back home to their families to assist with the family expenses and farming.
- Ticket agents representing the steam ship companies sold tickets by attracting would-be immigrants to British Columbia, using propaganda showing them the success of their own country men in Canada

The Indian men arriving in Canada were different. Unlike the Chinese immigrants, their main motive was to earn wages and send their savings back home. When Hindustanis' arrived in British Columbia, the majority settled in Vancouver and New Westminster and surrounding areas, and they worked in lumber mills, lumber camps, railroad gangs, harvesting farms, and they also worked extremely hard on seasonal agriculture crops. The Hindis were not contracted to work only one job. They were considered labourers, and they were easily assimilated into the general labour force in the province. Some of them came together and started their own businesses.

Some Hindis, because of their work and trade, became acquainted with the white community, and began to open their own religious and political institutions. It is because of this that the "Khalsa Diwan Society Vancouver" was founded, and the Gurdwara on Second Avenue was established. It became a place for people of various backgrounds and religions to come, sit, share and meet one another.

Despite dealings with mainstream society and their own community structure, they remained isolated, socially, religiously, and politically from society at large, in part because most Hindis were very private and lacked the courage to mingle with mainstream society.

Because the Chinese immigrants kept very much to themselves, it gave birth to racial hatred and when the Hindis arrived, they also became targets and victims of the same racial hatred.

For the White community Hindis also became the focus of racial hatred like other Asians.

The majority of the population of North America's West Coast adhered to a common opinion about Hindustanis, which was as follows: India was a country of millions of people living in dirty conditions, abject poverty, and in accordance with numerous strange customs. The people of India were seen as an inferior class of humans with a propensity for flattery, and yet spoke and behaved quite immorally. When a great number of Hindis immigrated to Canada, these opinions began to surface quickly. [It was believed that] the majority of Hindis were poor, dependent, and unprepared for the local climate and living conditions.

Because of this opinion, Federal Immigration Superintendent, W.D. Scott was forced to make an announcement:

When out of necessity peoples of warmer climates arrive in northern climates where there is extreme dampness and cold for months on end, with a lack of knowledge of local housing, cuisine, and weather appropriate clothing, they suffer physically and health wise.

Due to this opinion from Scott, Mackenzie King became adamant and wrote in his report on Hindi immigration to Canada, that it is a proven fact that citizens of Hindustan, as people of a warmer climate, are not able to adapt to the Canadian way of life. Their customs and traditions are in direct contrast to those of Canada. They adapt far slower than others. This process of immigration, for those seeking greater opportunities in Canada, gives the individual immigrant nothing other than unaccountable suffering and hardship. Therefore, it is in the best interest of the Hindustanis to stop their immigration.

Racist white people considered Hindustanis' like other Asiatic peoples: dirty, loaded with illness, and therefore a threat to public health. Some critic claimed, "the country these people come from has been considered for a long-time as the home of fatal and terrible ailments, such as smallpox, bubonic plague, Asiatic cholera, and other highly contagious diseases. It does not matter how strict our medical examinations are, these people are the source of spreading disease. Health officers say that these people live in disgustingly filthy and very crowded places. Working for low wages as they are, presents a danger to our peoples' daily bread and butter." This was a strong and adamant voice against Hindustanis' from "The Victoria Trade and Labour Council (TLC)". According to the Council, "To put these cheap labourers to work is to deprive others of their working rights, the ones that are important to the progress and prosperity of this country." In other words, "If white workers are paid appropriate wages, they will stay here, run households, raise families and properly discharge their duties as citizens."

The arrival of Hindis became a threat to British Columbia's white population. From a publication of that time, a columnist said that these people were even different from the Chinese. "The living habits of these people are unsatisfactory. They don't bring their wives with them. They won't

establish homes and households here. They are totally unfit for the white man's country. We fully respect Sikhs at their own home, we give them every respect in their home country, but as far as Canada is concerned, there is no place for a Sikh. To bring this gentleman here will be an extreme cruelty."

The Secretary of Victoria's TLC explained the consequences of assimilating Hindis and giving them equal status, in the following manner: "The Hindustani people's upbringing, like other Asiatic, has happened in a social structure that is in principle totally against the social climate and culture in which we are born in western civilisation. In actuality, we have seen that these people are neither capable of assimilation, nor are they desirous to assimilate amongst the local white residents that are responsible for this country's prosperity. To admit these Hindis into this country, amongst the white people, who deserve to occupy this beautiful wide land and its future, will derail their wishes for this country."

In 1906, Liberal M.P., R.G. MacPherson, to reconfirm his opposition to Asiatic immigration, declared amidst applause, "A race of humans, that cannot appreciate our way of life and system of education, all that makes up Canadian citizenship, are unqualified for immigration." Basically, the Hindustanis' touched a nerve at the center of white racist sentiments. In a way, their presence in British Columbia's social fabric would present a strange minority that would derail the establishment of a racially homogenous society.

In comparison to other immigrants, Hindis had won sympathy among many whites. Their employers had different opinions [of them], some considered them easy learners but became competitive after learning, while others found them unsatisfactory but kept them on because of a labour shortage. Many people arguing about the Hindustanis' said "these Punjabis' deserved police protection and recognition. Many hundreds of these men have served in our armed forces. They display medals of their services in the battlefields. They are subjects of our empire but in large numbers they have been deprived of their rights of citizenship." Many sympathizers of Hindis made such statements while arguing in their favour.

From time to time, out of province protestant churches and social reform charities sided with the Hindustanis' when their entry was completely denied.

In fact, according to immigration law there was no special ban on Hindustani women and children's immigration, but still Oxford graduate Dr. Sunder Singh raised this issue and began to work on inter-racial relations in order to do away with racial discrimination. Due to his initiative the Canada-India Committee came into existence and to some extent did good work. Hindis gained sympathy in British Columbia and throughout the rest of Canada however the majority of those in the West Coast's white community remained adamant. In 1906 when a few hundred Hindustanis' came to the West Coast, then once again, white racist residents, those who wanted to keep this as a "white man's country" raised their voices and government officials did what

they could do in order to halt the immigration of these Hindis. Still by 1907, the arrival of Asiatic immigrants created a racial tension that caused concern in Ottawa for immigration from Hindustan. Although British Columbians and Hindustanis' were all British subjects, Hindis were still not accepted for entry in Vancouver.

Canada and India were British colonies and besides maintaining strong imperial ties, it was important that they stop the open discriminatory disturbance. To address this, Canada's Prime Minister Laurier told the Governor, "In essence I cannot find any other resolution, other than we quietly stop Hindustani migration altogether."

In 1908 to stop Hindustani immigration to Canada, the "Continuous Journey" law was passed.

After this, Mackenzie King travelled to Britain to meet with high-ranking officers of the colonial and foreign Indian office to explain the Canadian position. When he saw them, he tried to convince them that these bans were necessary in order to protect the Hindustanis' and to avoid disturbances and unnecessary laws. His argument was accepted. The Government of India promised to stop immigration to Canada but refused to pass any laws. Mackenzie King was reassured that the Government of Britain and India would not take note of Canada's bans or stoppages of immigrants. He discovered that there were Indian laws in place that banned contract labourer's migration. For this reason, there were enough British and Indian laws to stop immigration of Hindis to British Columbia. "Every immigrant must possess \$25 upon arrival," this was done in order to protect Hindustanis' and "if necessary the amount could be increased."

In 1908 J.B. Harkin, private secretary to the Minister of the Interior visited Vancouver, and met with Hindustani leaders and discussed sending Hindustani immigrants to British Honduras (Belize). He explained the necessity of this by saying, "Instead of exiling all Hindustanis' we are providing the opportunity for Hindustanis' to go to a country that is suitable for them, where, compared to British Columbia, they can succeed by doing hard labour, and these steps are being taken to avoid thousands of Hindustanis' from becoming a burden on Vancouver and the surrounding areas." He assumed that at least one thousand Hindustanis' would leave, but after listening to the eye witness report by Hindustani leaders, people refused to do so and this plan failed.

Note: Saint Puran Singh played a major role in causing this scheme to fail.

In fact the strong racial hatred and opposition sentiments of west coast residents formed the foundation and background of this scheme. It became obvious in 1911 from the statement of Labour Union Leader in Victoria, "The labourer's of this city considered all Hindustani tribes like other Asian people. As long as this sentiment remains so will the racial tension."

Communal tensions erupted when in 1913, 39 Hindis won a case regarding their entry at the British Columbia Supreme Court. As a result, Conservative Prime Minister Robert Borden overwhelmed in opposing appeals. Then on Dec. 8th, looking at the British Columbia labour

market, the Cabinet passed an Order-in-Council in which they banned the entry of all tradesman and workers temporarily. At the beginning of 1914, they declared a new anti-demonstration law, which was without any legal defects.

Despite all of these obstacles, the Komagata Maru, carrying 376 Hindustani-future immigrants sailed in to port on May 23rd, 1914. Gurdit Singh, a rich trader and contractor of Hong Kong, had leased the ship.

Why did he lease the ship and pick up passengers? W. Peter Ward writes about this in his book 'White Canada Forever': "It is not clear why except for three acceptable reasons:

1: Gurdit Singh thought that the Hindustani migration prohibition by the Canadian immigration is insulting all the Hindustani immigrants and he decided to challenge them and enter the country forcibly.

2: If the immigrants are not allowed to enter, he being a very courageous patriot, will create disturbances in India.

3: If the plan to gain entry is successful he may gain financially.

Other than the above three reasons, he may also have hoped that a migration route between India and British Columbia may be established." As far as Canada was concerned, "the ship and its passengers presented a direct challenge to our deportation laws."

The moment Mr. Borden's government found out about the departure of the ship they made up their minds to return it immediately upon arrival in Vancouver. This was achieved. But Komagata Maru sat anchored in Burrard Inlet for two months, only a few hundred yards away from the coast. After seven weeks the provincial Supreme Court upheld the Order-in-Council, thus clearing the way for the ship to be sent back.

The Komagata Maru arrival and the reaction and atmosphere among the host brotherhood

The arrival of the Komagata Maru in Vancouver re-created the conditions of disturbance of 1907. Vancouver once again, because of the Asian minority on the west coast, became the epicenter of racism. In comparison to their behaviour towards other Asian residents of Vancouver, the local White racist community reacted with stronger feelings of animosity towards the Hindustanis, because about 6 months before, the [Hindis] had won a case in the Supreme Court of British Columbia.

The local white residents started crying over two sentiments; the first is against the federal government that was supposed to allow the Hindustanis' entry and the second, many groups of Asian immigrants especially against the Hindis' because of their non-assimilating behaviour.

Mr. Borden received congratulatory telegrams when the Komagata Maru was not allowed to dock and was instead anchored in deep waters. Provincial news reporters expressed similar sentiments [as the telegrams]. Local Vancouver publication, the Daily News Advertiser claimed, “It is out of question that this special group of Hindoos will be allowed to disembark.” This claim revitalised the racist sentiments once again. “There in India, there are three hundred million people that possess the same rights. If we allow one million to enter, the remaining two hundred and ninety-nine million will claim the same right. Each one of them will cry for the same desire as this little group is doing here now. On top of that, they will complain that they are being treated like animals. The question poised to the people of Canada: whether to allow entry for the people of India, or to stop it completely?”

The non-assimilating nature of Hindustanis’ caused the editor of the famous newspaper, The News Advertiser, to print objections. “It is impossible to make Canadians out of these immigrants, whose traditions and habits are insurmountable obstacles that are standing in between them and the process of becoming Canadian. Hindustanis’ are good men, but there are in a wrong place in Canada. That is all there is to it. Unfortunately for the Hindoos, that is all there is to it.”

The local Methodist monthly newspaper writes about the economic side. “It is not as though people from Asia are inferior, but it is true that they are different. The white race and the brown race do not have anything in common. To try to make the two into one is useless and will result in an inferior society. That will even prove to be very difficult for those who are in favour of Hindus obtaining immigration, without any criticism on the basis of human brotherhood, and who plead for their cases. It will definitely be a folly and stupidity. Every race is better off in their own atmosphere and to put together two races on the same shore will be an economic, ethical and moral downfall.

During this time, Premier Richard McBride put pressure on the Federal Government against their entry. On June 18th and 19th, the Sun Newspaper published an article by Pollough Pogue in which he writes, “Right-minded people know that the Hindustanis’ should not be allowed into this country, other than to be a part of a circus. The Sikhs are like the Irish.... They are cruel political troublemakers. Just for the sake of photographs, I have used some as examples, but those who came later in the Komagata Maru are not even able to be examples. They should be returned just like that.” These type of articles made Sikhs inferior, just like the insult they were dealt on the shores. “These beggars should be sent back to the Ganga [Ganges River].”

On June 23rd, Mayer T.S. Baxter called a public meeting that was attended by 1,500 people. The provocation by the opposition at this meeting reached new heights. Everyone who attended the meeting demanded law “to deport all passengers immediately and to put steps in place to prevent such incidents in the future.” Here Vancouver Conservative M.P., Mr. H.H. Stevens addressed the gathering against Eastern immigration and said, “Today, Canada could have been filled with Asians, and that would have caused total destruction of the culture that we take such pride in.”

Compromises were made. Martin Burrell, representative of Prime Minister Borden's government in British Columbia, intervened. In the end the Komagata Maru raised its anchor and under the watchful eyes and protection of the H.M.C.S. Rainbow, carrying 351 broken-hearted passengers, departed for Hong Kong.

Mr. Gurdit Singh and the Komagata Maru Ship

In 1913, an amendment in Order-in-Council came into effect, "No worker or tradesmen (trained or untrained) can enter into Canada through any port." That spread like a disappointing wave through those who wanted to come to Canada. Looking at this discriminatory law, people began to feel as though all their options to Canada had now been closed.

When Narayan Singh and his fellow plaintiffs won the case and the news got out, these people then saw a ray of hope, but the Government of Canada sent special instructions to all shipping companies not to sell tickets to the Hindustanis. It became extremely difficult to purchase tickets to come to Canada. There was only one way out, "either to have your own ship or to rent one", [both of] which were out of reach of Hindustanis'. One Hindustani, Bihari Lal, even tried to, but failed.

There were two Obstacles to come to Canada-

1. Continuous Journey Law
2. Who is going to rent the ship? Besides this, to have the knowledge to negotiate with shipping companies and knowledge about the ship [were] difficult thing[s] to have.

It was impossible for Canadian resident Hindustani Sikhs to rent a ship, although a locally published English newspaper published an article "Hindoos Buy a Steam Ship", this news ended up being false.

In 1914 in Hong Kong for months on end, passengers frustrated and awaiting travel to Canada, some met Gurdit Singh in Malaya [Malaysia] and told him of their sufferings and Gurdit Singh confirms this in his own autobiography: "I was in Malaya and some individuals came and told me the stories of their sufferings".

A deputation, consisting of Bhai Balwant Singh Khurdpur, Harnam Singh, and Nand Singh was in Punjab. After meeting British government officials in Ferozepur, they particularly went to meet Bhai Thakat Singh and told him about the discrimination against the Hindustanis' and not being able to land in Canada, and or enter Canada.

When Bhai Thakat Singh went to Malaya to improve the financial situation of Khaniya Pathshala Ferozepur [Girls school], he came in contact with Gurdit Singh and he requested Gurdit Singh undertake this sacred cause of improving the conditions of Hindustanis' in Canada.

Gurdit Singh, born in 1859, was originally from village Sirhali, in district Amritsar [India], his father's name was Sardar Hakim Singh and his grandfather's name was Sardar Rattan Singh, who was a military officer of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, fought against the British and when the British occupied Punjab [Rattan Singh] was offered an estate by the British, which he declined. Sardar Hakim Singh left Punjab and went to Malaya, where he established himself as a contractor. Gurdit Singh joined his father at the age of 12.

After meeting Bhai Thakat Singh, Gurdit Singh went to Gurdwara Sahib Hong Kong where they were celebrating Gurburab [(birthday)] of Guru Gobind Singh ji, in order to assess the situation. At the end of the services he met a few passengers. Thereafter he asked them, "Is there anything I can do for my own countrymen?" To which he replied, "... The British government does not consider us men, to this I would say first only, why don't we become men first? That's the only way we'll be able to do something."

In responding to a question about entering into Canada, "There's only one way to enter Canada and that is that we acquire our own ship and this is how we can utilise our rights. By having our own ship we can fulfill the requirement of the continuous journey law." (Autobiography of Gurdit Singh)

During that time, it was not an easy task to rent a ship, as it was necessary to have contact with people who had knowledge of ships, and to have contact with those ticket companies who were refusing to sell tickets to Hindustanis. [But] faced with these obstacles, they decided to rent a ship.

He met two students, Daljit Singh and Vir Singh, who were stranded among passengers in Hong Kong. After meeting Gurdit Singh, they abandoned their studies in order to help him find a ship. After handing over some of his responsibilities to Daljit Singh, Gurdit Singh returned to Malaya to look after his business. Amongst Daljit Singh's responsibilities were to contact passengers, sell tickets, and to establish a contact with Khalsa Diwan Society in Vancouver in order to achieve cooperation and gain knowledge. The society did not have a deep understanding of immigration law.

Following the victory of Narayan Singh and his 38 associates, the Society encouraged Daljit Singh by a letter and Gurdit Singh by telegram to rent a ship as soon as possible, but it did so based on a mistaken understanding and limited knowledge of Canadian immigration policies.

Daljit Singh read aloud the letter and the telegram to Gurdit Singh in the Gurdwara. After hearing the letters, hope and happiness flared amongst all the passengers.

From Malaya, Gurdit Singh contacted Daljit Singh, and instructed him to collect fares and deposit them into a bank account. In order to find a ship he went to Calcutta where he did not find a ship for rent and he went to Singapore. He contacted the manager of the Straight steam ship company. He advised him to meet the agent of Litho & Company. The agent showed him

two ships, the rent was reasonable, but when the agent was told that the ships were destined for Canada, he stalled by saying the ships were too old and it was impossible for them to make the journey across the Pacific Ocean. When finding another passenger ship became hopeless, with the help of a German agent named Younay, they found the Komagata Maru, a cargo ship.

On March 24th, 1914 Gurdit Singh leased this ship in the name of the Guru Nanak Steam Ship Company, for \$11,000 Hong Kong dollars per month, for 6 months. The ship was named Guru Nanak Jahaz. It is said that Gurdit Singh spent \$2,500 to make it passenger worthy. The 392.2 foot long Komagata Maru was made for a German company in Glasgow, Scotland. In the beginning, this ship was named Cecelia and remained with Hambourgh and American lines. In 1914, a Japanese company bought the ship, and it was renamed “Koma Kata Maru”.

Departure from Hong Kong

After renting the ship Gurdit Singh issued an advertisement as follows:

Happy News! Congratulations, Congratulations! Hindustanis' will read this news with joy, that with the Guru's blessing, the Khalsa Panth has established the Guru Nanak Steam Ship Company. This company has leased its first ship, the Komagata Maru. It will depart for Canada on March 28th, 1914. It is a matter of great pride and I congratulate all Hindustanis on this great achievement .

When all preparations were finalized, March 30th 1914 was announced as the departure date. When an application was submitted to the Governor for permission to sail, the government delayed issuing it. On March 25th, 1914 the police arrested Gurdit Singh, accusing him of selling tickets and raising funds illegally. After receiving bail, Gurdit Singh was released after three days in custody on March 28th, 1914. There was a conspiracy behind all of this.

In reality, there were other reasons for stopping the ship from sailing and delaying its departure. On March 30th, 1914, the charges against Gurdit Singh were dropped. Hong Kong's Governor General F.W. May sent a telegram to the Canadian government, informing them that 150 Sikhs had leased a ship to take them to British Columbia. They did not have a direct ticket to Canada. The Governor General of Hong Kong sent the Canadian Governor General a telegram asking if the Canadian Government was going to let the ship's passengers disembark. The Canadian Governor General ignored the telegram.

On April 2nd, 1914, the Governor General of Hong Kong sent another telegram in which he stated clearly that he would not be able to delay the Komagata Maru any longer. There was still no response. On April 4th, 1914 the Governor General [of Hong Kong] gave permission for the ship to depart.

When Gurdit Singh went to pick up the departure paperwork, from the Colonial Secretary's office, he asked him the reasons for the delay. Mr. Severn responded truthfully, that they had contacted the Canadian Governor General, in order to gain more legal information. The ship was delayed and permission for departure was withheld, for this reason.

Gurdit Singh, being a merchant he foresaw a danger in these legal obstacles, contacted a legal firm in Hong Kong for their advice to remove them. He was given the following advice:

You have asked our firm if there are any legal impediments for Hindustanis to enter Canada. As far as we understand, and as far as the Colony of Hong Kong is concerned, if these men are not going in accordance with the Contract Labourer's Treaty, then they face no restrictions for entry into Canada.

Due to Gurdit Singh's arrest and the delay in departure, several passengers became suspicious and decided not to proceed on the journey. Even then, on April 4th, 1914, Komagata Maru left Hong Kong for Canada with 165 passengers aboard. Along its journey, on April 8th, 1914, it reached Shanghai [China], on April 15th, 111 passengers [boarded in Shanghai], on April 19th, 86 passengers [boarded] from Moji [Japan], and on April 28th, 14 passengers [boarded] in Yokohama [Japan]; in total 376 passengers set sail for Canada's Vancouver port.

On May 1st, 1914, "The Hindustanee Vancouver" newspaper published an article on page 5, "Hindustanis' have chartered a steamer ship for Vancouver. It is said that onboard are local resident Hindoos that have been denied tickets by the ship companies, on the directives of the Department of Immigration."

On May 20th, 1914, when the ship had not reached William's Head, Victoria leaders of the Khalsa Diwan Society along with Hindustani community members tried to help the passengers and the Komagata Maru. For this cause, Bhag Singh, of village Bhikhewind, Mitt Singh, Balwant Singh, Baboo Harnam Singh, Rattan Singh, Raja Singh, Hasan Rahim, Uttam Singh, of village Hans, established a working committee. On May 17th, 1914, upon passing a unanimous resolution, Bhag Singh and Mit Singh had been nominated and elected President and General Secretary of the Khalsa Diwan Society, and therefore were included in this committee.

To help their cause, Mr. Bird, a local lawyer, was retained by the Committee to help with legal issues. Based on the Orders-in-Council, Mr. Bird was aware of all the ports in which immigrant workers were banned from disembarking. However, the name of Port of Alberni was not included in the list of such ports. He advised the society about this legal point.

Upon receiving this information, they decided to inform the ship that instead of arriving at the Port of Vancouver, it should travel to the Port of Alberni. For this purpose they hired a fast moving boat, placed in charge of the plan were Raja Singh and Hasan Rahim, however, it did not succeed. Firstly, the Komagata Maru was not equipped with an onboard telegraph system. For this reason the ship could not be located. Secondly, the seas were quite high and rough. Besides

this, police had been informed of the [Port Alberni] plan. Mr. Reid also knew about Port Alberni. He travelled to Victoria, with the police. The harbour police prevented K. D. S. boat from approaching the ship. A second attempt was made but failed.

Some Sikhs, Bela Singh, Baboo Singh, and Harnam Singh along with a Hindu Gunga Ram, considered themselves to be loyal to the King were police informants and were working with William Charles Hopkinson closely. There were others as well.

Mr. Hopkinson was 6 feet 2 inches in height, Hindustani [India] born, and he was able to understand Punjabi in addition to other Hindustani languages. He had worked within Hindustani police as a C.I.D. Inspector and had been Police Chief in Lahore [(present-day Pakistan)]. To spy on Hindustanis', he was sent to Canada by the Indian Government. He was working from Canada and the U.S.A. as a spy and was working as an interpreter for the Department of Immigration.

On May 22nd, 1914 Komagata Maru reached the Port of Victoria, and spent one night there. On May 23rd, 1914 Komagata Maru anchored in Burrard Inlet in Vancouver.

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