

Ethnic Identity in Indian Diaspora: The Sikh Community in Canada

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Abstract

This study aims to map out the making of the Indian ethnic Diaspora in Canada with special reference to the Punjabi Sikh community. The objectives of the paper are to examine the formation of identities in general and ethnic relations of the Sikh community in particular, to analyse the experiences and encounters of the Sikh community with the home and host countries and examine the role of the ethnic identity as a marker of spiritual and cultural means of social and political articulation in Canadian politics. The paper, based on secondary sources, found that Sikh Diaspora played a crucial role in shaping the political dynamics of Canada and the political dialectics of India in general and Punjab in particular. The study argues that the making of the Sikh Diaspora in Canada is an outcome of the historical demands of home and host nations. The rise of the Sikh Diaspora from the working class to political masters is a classic case in Indian Diaspora studies.

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Introduction

Indian Diaspora is one of the largest Diasporas in the world. Sociological Inquiry into the Indian diaspora gained prominence in the post-1990s. The pioneering studies on diaspora studies by Bhat (1986, 2002 & 2003) Kadekar (2005, 2008 & 2018) Rayaprol (2004 & 2006), Sahoo (2003, 2008& 2018) and Sahoo (2002 & 2014) made a systematic attempt to examine the diverse facets of the Indian diaspora across the countries. The history of the Indian diaspora in Canada reflects the different historical continuities and contestation. The infamous Komagata Maru (1914) incident reminds us of Canada's anti-Indian and exclusionist policy towards the South Asian countries. However, over the last hundred years, the perception of the Canadian state and civil society witnessed a paradigm shift. It is fascinating to see the journey of the Indian diaspora from a rejected group to the ruling class elite in contemporary Canadian society. The Indo-Canadians emerged as the third-largest migrant group in Canada. They were generally from the Punjab, who were once the veterans of the British Army (Inderjeet Kaur, 2001).

The micro-sociological study of Indian migration to Canada reveals that most of them belong to the Sikh ethnic community. It is important to analyse the context in which the Sikh diaspora made critical inroads and explore the role of state policy in shaping the nature and direction of the Sikh community in Canada. Canada being the first nation to embrace multiculturalism as an official state policy in 1971, encouraged the workers to join in governmental activities as they perceived to be residents of the nation with

equal rights on par with citizens of the country. The rise of the Sikh ethnic diaspora in Canada is an outcome of multiple strategies derived from their unique religious identity compared to mainstream religions in India, such as Hinduism and Islam. In the beginning stages, the political activities were presented through religious and non-religious affiliations such as Gurudwara boards of trustees, National Association of Canadians of Origins in India (NACOI) and Khalsa Diwan Society. Gurudwaras played a crucial role in uniting the Sikh group as a political community despite the discrimination on race and nationality. In 1988, they took part in the decisions as voters and contenders for citizenship rights and different layers of government administrative bodies. Though the Sikh diaspora became part of the mainstream political system and witnessed the cultural integration into the popular imagination of Canadian society, we hardly find many sociological studies with a special focus on the cultural economy of the Sikh Diaspora.

This paper aims to fill the intellectual paucity on the ethnic diaspora studies with particular reference to Sikh ethnic identity in shaping the cultural politics of the home and host nations. The primary objectives of the paper are to comprehend the role of ethnic identity in shaping the unique identity both as Indian and sub-ethnic community as Sikh diaspora, to examine the role of spiritual and cultural politics in the making of Sikh diaspora in Canada and its implications for the host and home countries.

Methodology

There is no scope for unitary methodological protocols to capture the complex questions, cultural concerns and political and economic uncertainties

associated with diaspora identity. The study has used secondary sources such as books, articles, and newspaper reports to explore the historical events that unfolded in making the Sikh diaspora in Canada.

Conceptual Framework

The paper focuses on examining the Sikh Diaspora in Canada and its gradual evolution from the working class to the political elite visualized within the context of ethnic Indian diaspora in Canada. In the following pages, an attempt had been made to attest to the historical representation of Indian diaspora abroad in general and Sikh diaspora in Canada in particular. It can be seen through demography, educational achievement, financial advancement, and political empowerment. The rise of Punjabi dialect as a non-authority native language, advancement of its religious organizations and social power the Sikh exercises in Canada demonstrates the rise of an ethnic Indian community in foreign lands. It is interesting to consider whether equating Punjabi with Sikh, second who is Sikh, does it represent a homogeneous identity or social diversity is an important sociological question that demands critical exploration of religion and language in the making of Sikh ethnic Indian Diaspora in Canada.

The Emergence of Sikh Diaspora

The defining feature of the Sikh community is their ethnic identity. Though they share a common racial identity with Indians, the language, region, and religion give distinctive identity. Their ethnic identity is derived from Sikh religious values and practices. According to the Sikh religion, every Sikh

has to follow five 'K's. They are Kesh (uncut hair), Kangha (a wooden comb for the hair), Kara (an iron bracelet), Kachera (100% cotton under-garment) (not an elastic one) and Kirpan (an iron dagger large enough to defend oneself). Thus, the presentation of the body separates the Sikh from the rest of the Indians within India and abroad. Though the population of Sikhs in Punjab in India accounts for 65-70%, compared to its shares at the all-India level, they account for hardly 2%. Thus, they are one of the minority religious groups of India. Interestingly when we look at the proportion of Sikhs in the Indian diaspora spread across the continents in general and Western countries in particular, they constitute a significant group.

As opposed to the Indian diaspora, of which Punjab is a political constituent territory, the development of the Punjab Diaspora varies significantly in terms of size and destination. The first generation Punjabi migration to different destinations was guided by the need for security services in the British colonies, especially in the Far East. The primary consideration in the Punjab migration abroad was the migrant authorities' perspective of Punjab as the home of military races suitable for armed force administration. The first unit of Mazhabi Sikhs, known as Sikh Pioneers, was enrolled from Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Lahore by Sir Henry Lawrence, Governor-General, in 1849. Punjabis were known for martial skills thus acquired a racial identity with Jat Sikhs, Punjabi Muslims, and Dogra Hindus. From 1858 to World war-I, the offer of Punjabis in the Indian armed forces expanded forcefully.

They were sent to various parts of the British Empire from Malaya in the Far East to the Mediterranean, British African provinces, and protectorates. A few regiments similarly battled in Europe. (Tatla 1999). As news of chances

in Malaya spread, numerous free Sikh transients landed in Calcutta to take a boat to different ports of Malaya and acquired work in Perak mines. Punjabis in Malaya were utilized in numerous manual occupations. The lion's share kept on filling in as policemen, guards, dairy ranchers and bullock truck drivers until the end of World War- II, while cash giving turned into a vital movement for them from the 1930s. Numerous Sikhs migrated to neighboring countries like Thailand or Sumatra from Malaya. At the same time, more goal-oriented people set out for Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji. McLeod (1980) discusses how Punjabis came to Australia in the 1880s, and this is upheld by Kessinger's (1974) investigation of a town Vilayatpur in eastern Doaba. Gabbi (1998) moreover archives that the most punctual Punjabis came to Australia before 1870.

Additionally, a couple of policemen from Hong Kong entered New Zealand (McLeod 1984; De Lepervanche 1984). Migration to New Zealand was only an augmentation of Australian Punjabi migration and, commonly, Malwais and Majhails relocated in the initial fifteen years or thereabouts. After World War I, Doabias entered the group Punjabi resettlement process. Their migration patterns to different British colonies were guided by their racial features, martial arts and hard work. Thus, most of these people were unskilled workers in the pre-Indian independence era. The political process of decolonization unleashed significant implications for making an independent governance system in the post-second world war-II. India got independence in 1947 from Britain. Decolonization also changed the nature and direction of the Punjabi diaspora from India and different Asian and African countries ruled by the British raj. Various Sikhs moved to the UK and

North America looking for better financial prospects. They were joined by a few more from some British colonies removed by the new patriot pioneers. By the 1950s, few British provinces had gained autonomy, with far Eastern nations halting Punjabi immigration when they picked up the opportunity.

Canadian Sikh Community: Early Beginnings

Punjabis who arrived in North America from Far East nations sent messages to fellow men in Punjab and some of the individuals who could bear the cost of it followed them. There were also guaranteed occupations by Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) operators in Calcutta who were publicized all through Punjab for the early years. Sikh workers replaced specialists of CPR from Hong Kong and China since a higher head expense was postured on Chinese workers. Johnston (1988) refers to one operator Devi Chand who filled bonds for some Punjabis, especially in the Ferozepur area, who touched base with inadequate trusts. Different Punjabis came too freely at their costs and with no guaranteed employment.

Multiple factors enabled the Sikhs who worked for the British Indian army to play a critical role in North America. The pioneer organization built up a robust system of transport offices, extended its rail line system, acquainted irrigation system ventures with remote zones and areas in Western Punjab in the 1880s. These historical factors facilitated their migration and worked as a means of social mobility to Punjabi labourers, moving a large portion of them towards the Badlands of the Western regions (Ali 1988; Calvert 1936). Various Punjabis had enough money to consider migration. Along these lines, independent migrants from Punjab could pay Rupees 200 fare

from Calcutta to Hong Kong and afterward from Hong Kong to Vancouver. From a stream of Sikhs in British Columbia in 1903, their numbers climbed pointedly to more than 5,000 in 1908. This was an unconstrained development also from 1903 to 1908 was relatively unregulated migration.

A large number of men worked at sawmills and shingle factories, especially in the lower Fraser Valley. Others were employed on rail line development or as caretaker gangs on construction areas, cow's ranches, plantations, and salmon canneries. Nonetheless, in the fall of 1907, as wood factories laid off their work, foreigners from China, Japan and India confronted threats against oriental mobs in Vancouver. The Canadian Government enacted laws to check Asian migration and attempted to prevent it totally from India (Ward 1978; Bolaria and Li 1988). Punjabis were compelled to challenge such restricted movement laws through different petitions, courts and other legitimate cases. However, Punjabis held protest gatherings and fought cases in the courts.

The Sikh group held several public gatherings against racial segregation and humiliation in various cities of Canada. However, the authorities in Punjab and Delhi had received notices for their requests. Incredibly hit by the movement confined to the Pacific States, numerous Sikhs felt stranded in the Far East. Inability to perceive Sikhs' right to convey families had offered extensive intensity inside the group activists. Gurdit Singh of Sarhali, a Sikh businessman who challenged the cruel laws of Japanese ship, the Komagata Maru in 1913. Taking about 300 Punjabi travelers from Hong Kong, the boat cruised to Vancouver with 376 travelers landing in May 1914. Despite satisfying all the (formalities) of Canadian migration laws,

the ship tied down at Vancouver harbour on 23 May 1914. However, after extended deliberations, the ship was coercively returned.

As a consequence of the bad experience made by the persuasive take-off of the KomagataMaru back to Calcutta, where there was a confrontation between returning travelers and the police, numerous Punjabis joined a radical political party such as the Ghadar Party, propelled by LalaHarDyal from San Francisco in 1914. Only 700 Sikhs stayed in Canada, working principally in wood plants and logging camps, some as illegal migrants. By March 1915, 3200 travelers had come back to India and the Punjabi group dwindled to little numbers. The Census of 1921 recorded only 1,016 East Indians in Canada. They were limited in occupation and strict migration laws; a couple had their families with them. In the late 1940s, both Canada and the US turned their before laws on Asian migration. In the US, the Luce Celler Bill (Public Law 483) in 1946 evacuated Asian Indians from Barred Zone classification and allotted a portion of 100 outsiders for every year.

The foregoing historical events inform how the Punjabis migrated to North America. An overview of the facts and figures unveils that Punjabis played a critical role in developing infrastructures such as roads and railways and extended safety and security to the predominantly white Canadians until the Second World War.

Canadian Sikh Community since 1947

Though there was constant migration to Canada in the post-independent era, the new phase of migration to Canada started in 1967. New migra-

tion regulations permitted talented specialists from India. From the 1970s, a continuous migration occurred from Punjab by bringing their immediate families. (Johnston 1988). The post-1970s migration is fundamentally different from the early phase of migration. The 1970s represents the young, educated, professional expertise in diverse fields, including higher educational institutions. As per Basran's study (2003), Canada has profited from this "brain drain" and contributed immensely to the development of Canada in diverse spheres of life, ranging from small business to bureaucracy. The number of South Asians had increased from 6,774 in 1961 to 67,710 Sikhs and 69,500 Hindus in 1981. By 1991, Canada's Sikh populace had witnessed phenomenal growth to 147,440. Many migrants are related to each other eventually, organized easily and formed associations in host countries and those unions made them settle easily.

As Canadian laws permit a family member to settle under the new legal framework, numerous Punjabi families have discovered marriage as the best way to reclaim the family in the new nation. Though the Canadian state has unveiled this policy as a symbol of human dignity, shockingly, it led to the "fake marriage market" and human trafficking from Punjab to Canada. This entire process is known as kabootarbazi (fake marriage). Because of such shocking practices, currently, a few hundred Punjabi women have had spouses in Canada who have been cheated by Punjabi NRI men in the name of marriage. The issue has to turn into a matter of public policy. Both governments need to develop legitimate procedures to control the agencies that promote such marriages. Thus, Punjabis have taken advantage of the law related to family and marriage to encourage the migration of relatives from Punjab.

What is the current situation of Punjabis in Canada? How did they reach the top position in the political order of Canada? What are the spiritual and material means used by the Punjabis to consolidate their position? What are the implications of the rising diaspora in shaping the domestic political and cultural articulations in India in general and Punjab in particular? To answer the above questions, one should refer to their profile and political arithmetic and cultural dynamics in shaping the policies of state and society in Canada

Canadian Sikh: A Social Profile

Punjabis constitute one of the significant ethnic communities in Canada. According to Canadian statistics 2011, they include (1.4%) of Canada's population around 35 million. They became the dominant community in some of the states/ provinces in Canada like British Columbia, Vancouver, Toronto, Alberta, Ottawa, and Ontario. From a little group of more than 800 in the 1940s, the Canadian Punjabis have risen as the biggest Punjabi group abroad, making it the most significant part of the Punjabi diaspora. Much of this migration occurred after the 1970s and proceeded unabated. In 1981, the Canadian enumeration listed 67,710 Sikhs. As indicated by the Survey of 1991 of the Indo-Canadians (Indo-Canadians and East Indians are equivalent word terms), Sikhs constitute 49 percent, Hindu 24 percent, and different religions 10 percent. The 2001 Census of Statistics Canada gauges the number of individuals who recognized themselves as East-Indian birthplaces at 713,330. 50% of the East Indian populace in Canada is Punjabi. The other Indian ethnic groups are Gujaratis, Indian Tamils, Keralites, Bengalis, Sindhis and a couple of others. In 2001, the number of Sikhs at 278,415

was almost one percent of the number of inhabitants in Canada, a striking increase from under 0.04 percent in 1961.

The High-Level Committee (HLC) Report (2002) on Indian diaspora gave the span of the Indian group as 851,000, breaking them into classifications of Indian residents at around 150,000, Persons of Indian Origins at 700,000 and Stateless persons at 1,000. Punjabis have entered Canada in the early part of the 20th century in which many of them were men. Later, with immigration laws, the women were permitted to enter Canada with their kids. Thus, early Punjabis worked in Canada while keeping up families in India returning intermittently. Passage of women and their youngsters was made conceivable by passing a resolution at the Imperial Conference of 1918. A Request in-Council passed that determination in the next year.

In this manner, following 20 years or so, men started to bring their families. Then again, very few women moved to Canada. At World War- II, for 5,000 Punjabis in Canada, there were 400 ladies and 423 kids (Basran also, Bolaria 2003). It is characterized by the Punjabi community's initial 60 years, and its gender unevenness continued until the 1970s (Johnston 1988). In 1961, women made up 40 percent of the population, and their share grew to 48 percent in 1971 and 49.3 percent in 2001. The undoing of Canada's prohibitive migration laws in the 1960s again created a deluge (Influx) of youthful grown-ups, although this time with a more adjusted female movement.

This was seen through the enumeration of 1981 when the Indo-Canadian

populace was about 60 percent between 15 and 40. According to the latest demographic data (2019), the Indian population in Canada accounts for one million, out of which the Punjabi Sikh population constitutes 50%. The following section deals with demographic diversity and the spread of Punjabis in different provinces of Canada.

Early and modern settlements: Location and Demography

The early Punjabis settlement was kept in the Pacific Coast area of British Columbia. Since the 1970s, they have spread to other regions such as Ontario. Like different immigrant groups in the last half-century, they have been attracted to the biggest urban areas of the three areas that have delighted in the best financial development: Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta. Like most gatherings, they have built up themselves in somewhat more prominent numbers in British Columbia than in Ontario's focal Canadian region. More than 33% of Canada's Sikhs live in metropolitan Vancouver, British Columbia; another third are in metropolitan Toronto, Ontario; and one-twelfth can be found in the consolidated populaces of the Alberta urban areas of Calgary and Edmonton. The Rural districts of Surrey in Greater Vancouver and Mississauga in Greater Toronto are the two important areas of the Sikh populace (Johnston 2005). The HLC report estimates that the Indo-Canadian Community is very urbanized and just about 90 percent of them live in metropolitan areas.

Table1: Population of Sikhs and Hindus across the Province in Canada

Sl. No.	Cities (Province) Population of Sikhs and Hindu*	Population	Sikhs	%	Hindu	%
1	Toronto (Ontario)	4,682,897	90,590	(1.9)	191,305	(4.0)
2	Ottawa (Ontario)	1,063,664	2,645	(0.2)	8,150	(0.8)
3	Montreal (Quebec)	3,426,350	7,930	(0.2)	24,075	(0.7)
4	Vancouver (BC)	1,986,965	99,000	(5.0)	27,410	(1.4)
5	Victoria(BC)	311,902	3,470	(1.1)	765	(0.2)
6	Abbotsford (BC)	147,370	16,780	(11.4)	930	(0.6)
7	Calgary (Alberta)	951,395	13,325	(1.4)	7,260	(0.8)
8	Edmonton (Alberta)	937,845	9,405	(1.0)	7,825	(0.8)
		671,274	5,320	(0.8)	3,605	(0.5)

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2001.

<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/profil01/CP01/Index.cfm?Lang=E>

*: Percentage to the population of the same metropolitan areas is shown in brackets.

Table 1 demonstrates the demographic details of the Punjabis settled across the different provinces in Canada over the last 120 years. The Punjabis consist of Hindus and Sikhs. The data informs that Sikhs account for a significant population in Abbotsford (11%) followed by Vancouver (5%). The Punjabi Hindu population is substantial in Toronto (4%). Sikh community spread across the provinces compared to Hindus in Canada. However, the presence of Sikhs and Hindus enables cultural transmission and cultural relativism.

Education and Employment Status

Early Punjabis were all employed in commercial wood enterprises of lower British Columbia. Even the majority of Sikh worker's pattern has continued for a century because of its working-class character. Cohen (1997) also suggested coining the Punjabi diaspora as a labour diaspora. Later entries to British Columbia worked at railroad development ambling, dairy homesteads, natural product ranches, logging operations, and in little retail organizations. More than 75 percent of Punjabis were involved in preparing timberland items. A couple figured out how to wind up factory proprietors among the transcendently unskilled workers. The best proceeding with Punjabi-possessed timber organization is Commercial ventures, the second-biggest forest administrator in the British Columbia waterfront area (Johnston 2005).

Further Punjabi movement in the 1970s implied a few specialists, architects, Educators and different experts additionally settled in Canada. This prompted a more prominent financial expansion in the Canadian Punjabi community. By the 1980s the Punjabi immigration had included many university educated and professionally prepared individuals. They are progressively diversified into different occupations such as traders, educators, medical attendants, civil servants, designers, attorneys and specialists. Sikhs have made a critical commitment to mechanical and proficient life. Despite anti-migrant atmospheres in Canada, Punjabis have discovered multiple livelihood options such as taxi business and trucking deals in Vancouver and Toronto, which widened new economic avenues. With sheer hard work,

they were in a position to own a sizable retail marketing and service industry in Canada by the 1970s.

In 1976, a Sikh financial organization 'The Khalsa Credit Union' was formed at the activity of some leading Punjabis. They made economic in-roads in diverse small and large business outlets. With the growing economic prosperity, they started articulating their linguistic identity in overt form by displaying the Panjabi and English language signs and names from the early 1990s (Singh, P.2012).

Religion, Language and Punjabi Culture in mediating ethnic diaspora

The Punjabi diaspora in Canada comprises Sikhs and Hindus. While Hindus constitute more than 80 percent of India's populace, the percentage of Hindus in Canada is just 27 percent. In contrast, Muslims and Christians account for 17.5 and 16.5 percent respectively, the rest are Sikhs (50%). Even though Sikhs are just two percent of the Indian populace, they constitute more than 33% of Indian foreigners to Canada. The predominance of Sikhs in the Punjabi diaspora is additionally demonstrated through the number of Sikh worship places (the gurdwaras) in Canadian urban centres. Until the 1940s, there were only three gurdwaras in Vancouver and Victoria.

One could observe a pattern in a growing number of Gurudwaras with the rise of the Sikh population and their prominence in diverse spheres of life. The data reveals that in 1967 there were only ten gurdwaras. The principal Sikh area of worship in Canada was built on 19th January 1908. In 2002,

the most seasoned standing Sikh Temple at Abbotsford dating from 1911 was announced a national memorable site of Canada. Currently, different websites give several Sikh societies and Gurdwaras at around 200, of which 151 are Gurdwaras. It provides details about the geographical spread of Sikh and Hindu places of worship in different provinces of Canada.

Table: 2 Number of Gurdwaras and Mandirs in Canada

Sl.No.	Cities (Province)	Gurudwaras	Mandirs	Total
1	British Columbia	64	05	69
2	Ontario	54	45	99
3	Alberta	14	6	20
4	Quebec	8	6	14
5	Manitoba	6	3	9
6	Saskatchewan	2	2	4
7	Nova Scotia	2	2	4
8	Newfoundland And Labrador(NF)	1	1	2
Total		151	70	221

Source:www.infopunjabidirectory.com/GURUDWARAS.htm

The diverse religious communities of Indian origins tend to reproduce their spiritual practices and sentiments despite locating in foreign lands. Their love for religion often reflects in the spread of worship spaces wherever they live. Table 2 presents the data related to the worship places in Canada. Most of the worship spaces belong to the Sikh and Hindu groups. Hindus prevail in Ontario territory, Sikhs are all the more uniformly spread in the middle of Ontario and British Columbia, with Alberta advancing as the

third significant destination for Sikhs. As religious groups of Canada, Sikhs and Hindus are structurally organized in nearby areas. Occasionally there have been bodies at the national level, yet no successful stable association has shown up. Among the Sikhs, the most established religious organization is the Khalsa Diwan Society (KDS) in Vancouver, started in 1907. From the 1970s, Gurdwaras administration has taken no less than three structures.

A couple of Gurdwaras have a place with the adherents of a Sant with administration confined to a trusted inward gathering. Others keep running by a small closed membership. Gurdwara social orders usually keep open enrolments and pick their administration councils by-elections. Gurdwaras have continued to be the focal point of group mobilization over the last hundred years. Thus, diverse religious spaces work as vehicles of spiritual emancipation and cultural mediation. It remained their unique identity as Indian Hindu, Indian Sikh, and Indian Muslim.

Punjabi language

Another important feature of the Punjabi diaspora is the Punjabi language. It tends to encompass the religious boundaries and cultivate the spirit of the regional identity as the people of Punjab state. Most of the languages share secular and sacred dimensions. When an ethnic group settles in another country, the love for language acquires much more importance. The growing prominence of the Punjabi language is reflected in the emerging convergence between the domestic and public sphere of the language.

One of the key developments is the rise of Canadian Punjabis as an eth-

no-semantic group in Canada, with Punjabi as the first language. Since the census statistics of 1996, Punjabi was accounted as the home dialect of 182,000 individuals, situated in Toronto and Vancouver. From that point onwards, the number of Punjabi speakers has risen by 32.7 percent. In the 2019 statistics, there were 0.7 million Punjabi-speaking people in Canada, making it 5.3 percent of non-official first language speakers and setting this group of speakers as 4th among the list of most continuous non-authority mother tongues. In the midterm review of 2006, Punjabi speakers were specified at 382,585 or 6.1 percent of non-authority native language speakers. Punjabi dialect constituted the primary language of 2 percent of Canadian inhabitants.

Punjabi is the primary “non-authority mother tongue” in Abbotsford, where 20,290 reported Punjabi as their first language in 2006, framing 16.8 percent of the city’s populace. Punjabi involves second and third places separately among non-official dialects in Vancouver and Toronto urban communities. Sikhs view learning Punjabi as a component of their religious convention and numerous Gurdwaras have Punjabi schools where classes are generally held at weekends. Sikhs have additionally campaigned nearby leading schools to give directions in the Punjabi dialect once in a while.

Sikh Culture in Canada

In addition to religion, language, marriage and media play a vital role in mediating cultural convergence. Especially with the emergence of ICT, the possibility of cultural mediation became feasible for different classes of ethnic Indians in Canada. Literature and music play a crucial role in

defining the Sikh identity. Like any other Indian ethnic community, most Sikhs in Canada are known for reproducing the Indian traditional practices. Their idea of Sikh culture and tradition is reflected in multiple cultural and spiritual platforms. One of the ways to continue tradition is marriage. For Indo-Canadians, marriage is a critical social component. Upkeep of conventional Indian qualities keeps the act of dating, as it is a common practice among other Canadians. As in India, arranged marriages are more predominant among Indo-Canadians. Interracial marriage is not exceptionally normal among Indo-Canadian groups contrasted with other Immigrant groups.

The Punjabi media attained a dynamic role in Canada. The media is broadly divided into print, electronic, and cyber media, including social media. The first generation Punjabi migrants used the print media agencies such as newspapers, books and magazines. The historical account on Punjabi print media in Canada aimed to cover the Punjabi started with Circular-i-Azadi in 1906-07 as the first Punjabi newspaper based in Vancouver. As expected in the post-1947 period, particularly from the 1970s, the Punjabi press acquired momentum. Several newspapers such as Punjab News, Chardi Kala, Hamdard, Ajit, Sikh Times, PanjPani, Amritsar Times, Parvasi, Statesman and so forth are distributed in Toronto, Vancouver and other provinces which had a significant population of Canadian Punjabis. These papers spread news stories from Punjab furthermore, the Indian subcontinent and serve as an extension in the middle of Punjab and Canada.

Realizing the growing power of the Punjabi diaspora, even the mainstream Canadian media has started giving space to the art, literature and aspirations of the Punjabi community in Canada. The rise of the Punjabi press in the

post-1980s is primarily attributed to Canadian media coverage of the Air India Trial, an outcome of the deadliest aviation attack on an Air India flight that killed 329 people, including 268 Canadians, 27 British citizens and 24 Indian citizens. Most of the western media, including Canadian media, gave extensive coverage in editorials highlighting the role of Canadian Sikh terrorists in these mass killings. The Vancouver Sun and Globe and Mail from Toronto also covered this issue.

There are a couple of studies of Punjabi media or Canadian media depiction of Punjabis. Indra's (1979) study highlights the representation of South Asians in the Canadian media. It shows that most Canadian media is known for presenting the stereotyped image of Indians in general and Punjabis in particular. Punjabi media now represents diversity in Canada. Various TV channels with standard TV programs and shows try to reinvent the culture and traditions of Punjab in Canada. These channels telecast various documentaries related to the different phases of migrations and contributions of individuals and institutions in making the Punjabi diaspora a significant community. Several shows related to popular games such as Kabaddi and Hockey highlight the growing popularity of the most famous Punjabi games in Canada.

Punjabi songs are used as means for identity consolidation. The number of radio stations controlled by Punjabis in general and Sikhs in particular plays songs related to religion and folklore. The Sikh pop songs, especially melodies known for attracting a large number of Sikh youth in Canada. Art and literature also bridge the gap between the Punjab and India. Punjabi

Canadians use literary contacts by inviting the best scholars in the Punjabi language and respect their books published in the Punjabi dialect. Various Canadian Punjabi writers have been rewarded with ‘Shiromani Punjabi Sahitkar’. And few Punjabis can write in English, while a few interpretations are accessible in a double dialect format. Often, Punjab-based authors are welcome to gatherings held in different parts of Canada. Canadian authors are routinely welcomed to the yearly Punjabi Language Gathering composed by Punjabi University.

Canadian Punjabi also uses cultural exchange as means of ethnic bonding. Ragis, dhadis (psalm artists) and pop vocalists from Punjab get welcomed to Canada. They perform at Gurdwaras and social functions such as marriage gatherings. Various indigenous Canadian Punjabi artists regularly perform in Punjab. Bhangra - a well-known Punjabi folk dance acquired a transnational character is endeavoring to traverse to non-Punjabi Canadians. Punjabis living in Canada have been caught in dramatization, short stories and books.

The foregoing analysis highlights that Punjabis became one of the vibrant and influential communities of Canadian social life. Though they began as the working class in the early part of the 20th century, by 1980 they became part of mainstream society. It is extremely difficult to find any field which is not touched by Punjabis in Canada. But their participation in economic, educational, socio-cultural and spiritual life tends to be part of soft power. Still, they can engage with politics and influence the political arithmetic to demonstrate the power of an ethnic diaspora community.

Sikh Community Associations and Political articulation

From the early settlement, Punjabis in Canada were robustly included in numerous political gatherings and public life. Impact of the Ghadar party and a crusade for the right to vote movement in the 1940s highlight the means and methods used by Punjabis to claim equal citizenship rights. Various Punjabis were motivated to join the Ghadar Party's call to come back to India. However, the response of Punjabi groups was not significant because of extremely prohibitive movement approaches implemented by the state all through the three decades. Indians have conceded the right to vote in Canada in 1947.

From the 1950s there have been a few political relationships among Indo-Canadians. An East Indian Canadian Citizens Welfare Association became dynamic in Canadian legislative issues in the 1950s. In the 1970s, the East Indian Workers Association was formed in a few urban areas; among its activists were extreme groups who had fled from Punjab to Canada. Essentially the Canadian Farm workers Union was a Punjabi social development to secure wages and rights for occasional agrarian labourers in British Columbia. One could see some unique developments about the active role played by Sikhs in mainstream political parties in Canada in the post-1980s. However, they reached higher order in the Canadian political office by 2019. Surprisingly, the number of Sikh members of Parliament elected for the Indian Parliament is less (13) than the number of Sikh MPs elected for the Canadian Parliament (18). Over the last two decades, Canadian Punjabis played a vital role in shaping the Canadian political system. Punjabis polit-

ical conspicuousness in Canada acquired prominence when Ujjal Dosanjh was chosen as the Premier of British Columbia in the year 2000.

Conclusion

Punjabis occupy a privileged position in the popular images and imagination of the nation in India. Because of their racial features and martial arts, the British raj encouraged the migration of Punjabis to different parts of British colonies. Based on secondary sources, this study analyzed the role of cultural and spiritual patterns in mediating the Punjabi diaspora as a sub-ethnic Indian diaspora in Canada. Migration to Canada is a 20th -century phenomenon. The patterns of migration to Canada were guided by the pro- active, anti and neutral laws framed by the Canadian state over the last hundred years. Though the first generation migrant went during the early phase of British India, the infamous Komagata Maru incident in 1914 unfolded Canada's anti-immigration policy. However, in the post-1950, the proactive policies of the Canadian state encouraged large-scale migration of Punjabis to different provinces in Canada. By the turn of the 21st century, Punjabis rose to political power in some provinces and a significant number of Sikhs became members of parliament and Cabinet ministers. Thus, representing the highest form of social mobility. They rose from labourers to a political master over the hundred years in Canada.

The paper argues that the making of the Punjabi diaspora as a dominant ethnic group was mediated by diverse ideological apparatuses such as Sikh religious worship spaces. The love for the Punjabi language and popularization of the Punjabi press, Punjabi songs, and games played a vital role

in shaping the political articulation at the provincial and national levels. Thus the paper submits that the Punjabi Diaspora in Canada is shaped by its collective memory of pain and commitment for a better future in the host country tends to instill motivation and dedication. Their ability to use the economic opportunities coupled with the socio-cultural awareness followed by political dynamism gave them a new sense of identity as the achievers class in Canada. Their success story is an outcome of the different struggles for political, economic and social power inside Canadian society by simultaneously building closer ties with the home state back to India.

Framing Sikhs Identity: Towards a critical diaspora studies

Diaspora studies in general and Sikh Diaspora in Canada in particular need to be revisited and revised in light of critical diaspora studies. The construction of non-white as “other” needs to be contested, because the native Canadians are the aborigines of Canada. Thus, the methodological protocols on the Indian diaspora studies in Canada demand a critique of the euro-centric methodology of diaspora epistemology which constructs Indian Canadians as an outsider and ‘the other’.

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