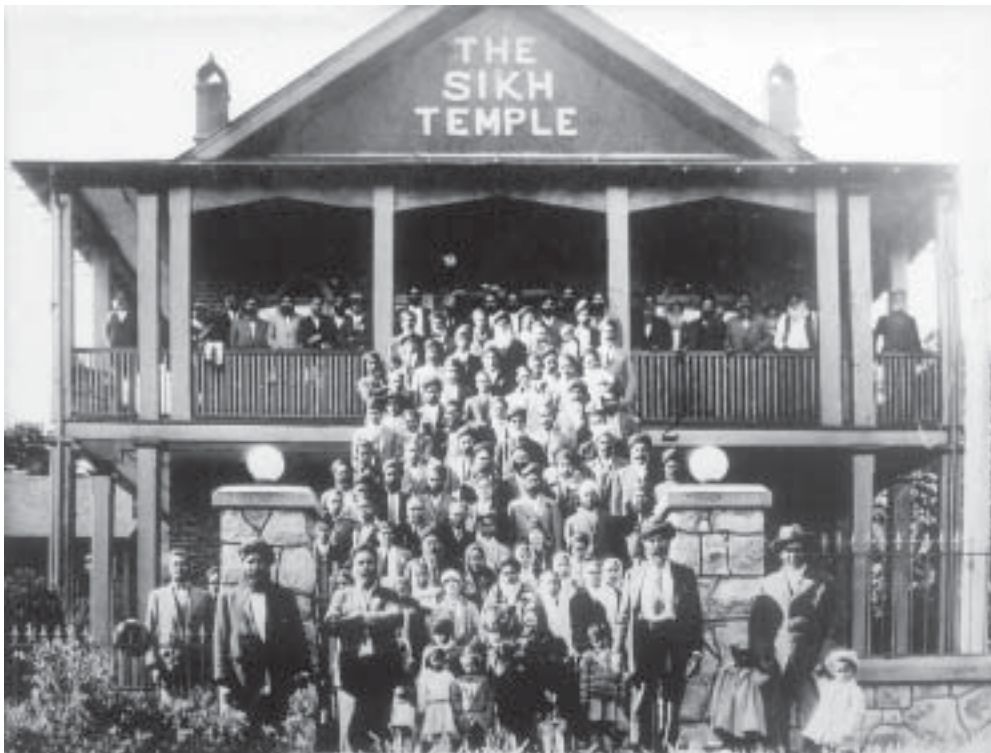


Canada



Khalsa Diwan Society, Early Sikh-Canadian Sangh, 1930, Gurudwara, Vancouver.



Khalsa Diwan Gurudwara at Ross Street, Vancouver (Recent)



Komagatu Maru, a freighter which reached Vancouver on 23 May 1914 with 376 Indian passengers. The Canadian Immigration Department refused to allow the passengers to land except 20 passengers who had resident status



Indo-Canadians celebrating India's independence on 15 August 1947



Sir Ujjal Dosanjh – First Indo-Canadian Premier of B.C. (February 2000-July 2001)



*Mr. Herb Dhaliwal, first person of Indian origin, being sworn in as
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans of Canada on 3 August 1999*

Basic Facts

Total Population of the Country	About 30 million
Estimated size of the Indian community	
(a) Indian citizens	About 150,000
(b) Persons of Indian Origin	About 700,000
(c) Stateless	About 1,000
(d) Indian Community as a percentage of the population	2.8%

The majority of the community is from Punjab, though most of the principal linguistic and ethnic groups of India are represented in the Indo-Canadian population. A survey conducted in 1991 showed that 49% of the Indo-Canadians surveyed were Sikh, 24% were Hindu and 10% were affiliated with other religions. The Indo-Canadian community is highly urbanised and almost 90% of them live in metropolitan areas, especially in Toronto (capital of Ontario), Vancouver (capital of British Columbia), Montreal (the largest city in Quebec), Calgary and Edmonton.

Economic Profile and Contribution

- 14.2. No detailed information on the employment characteristics of the Indo-Canadian community is available. It is estimated that over 30% of them have jobs in professional and managerial positions, both within the government and the private sector, whereas 23% work in manufacturing. The average annual income of immigrants from India is nearly 20% higher than the national average. Immigrants from India are more likely than other groups to possess a university degree. However, the community also has more non-matriculantes than other immigrant groups. In part, the latter is explained by the family sponsorship scheme of Canadian immigration policy.
- 14.3. Indian immigrants have a larger component of persons with mathematics, engineering and applied sciences background than other groups. In general, Indian students and those of Indian origin do well in Canadian universities, particularly in technical faculties like computer science and engineering, medicine, basic sciences, etc. Only the Chinese-Canadian community competes with Indo-Canadians in the educational field.

- 14.4. With the expansion of the knowledge-based industry, the Indo-Canadian community is likely to gain in importance and strength. This would also expand bilateral ties between India and Canada in the hi-tech and information technology fields. While PIOs/NRIs can be expected to donate to charitable causes in India, the Indo-Canadian community will invest in India when the investment climate there is made more attractive. Extra effort will need to be made, both by the community and India, to maintain their special ties and links.

Socio-cultural Profile

- 14.5. Nothing demonstrated how the destinies of the Diaspora and India were bound together, as the fact that Indo-Canadians won the right to vote soon after the same time India won its Independence from colonial rule. Thus Indian Independence awakened the pride of the Indo-Canadian community, which gave an unprecedented welcome to the first Indian High Commissioner Shri H.S. Malik. Nehru strongly advocated its cause during his visit to Canada.
- 14.6. Today, Indo-Canadians are organised on the basis of linguistic, regional, religious and other characteristics. Indo-Canadian organisations with an overarching character are not as cohesive. Government agencies like Heritage Canada and Canadian International Development Agency also fund religious, quasi-religious and cultural activities as part of their official mandate of supporting multiculturalism. Many institutions/NGOs have been set up by NRIs for the promotion of Indian arts and culture, some of which have affiliations with their counterparts in India. The Lal Bahadur Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute has made excellent contribution in facilitating interaction between the academic communities of the two countries. Various seminars, fellowships and research programmes under the aegis of the institute have helped in promoting Indian studies in Canada and vice versa.
- 14.7. Every area with an Indo-Canadian concentration has produced excellent Indian dance schools. Every year several concerts by Indian musicians, singers, film artists etc. are held at prominent venues in cities like Toronto, Vancouver, Ottawa and Montreal. The Indo-Canadian community has also produced some distinguished writers, artists, dancers, film-makers & TV personalities. Some of them like Rohinton Mistry have won a long list of prestigious awards like the *Hart House* literary prize, the *Canada Governor General's Award*, the *W. H. Smith/ Books in Canada First Novel Award*, the *Commonwealth Writer's Prize for Best Book*, the *Giller Prize*, the Royal Society of Literature's *Winfried Holtby Prize*, and the 1996 *Los Angeles Times Award* for fiction. *A Fine Balance* made the short-list of nominees for the *Booker Prize*, on which a film was also made. Toronto-based Robin Sharma's *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* has also won acclaim. Other luminaries like Ms. Ruby Bhatia, Mr. Mansa Ram and Ms. Deepa Mehta have also made a name in India.
- 14.8. A number of Indo-Canadians have received the Order of Canada, which is awarded to distinguished Canadians who have made an important contribution to the community. One of them, Asa Singh

Johal, who arrived as a semi-literate worker and went on to become a leading figure in the forestry industry in British Columbia, established a Chair on Forestry at the University of British Columbia, for which he received an Honorary Doctorate and later was awarded the Order of Canada.

- 14.9. Indo-Canadians celebrate their religious festivals with much fanfare. Canadian government ministers and even the Prime Minister appear at functions organised by the Indo-Canadian community. During the celebrations of the 300th anniversary of the Khalsa Panth, the majority of the Canadian Cabinet made an appearance. In the annual Baisakhi functions organised in the Canadian Parliament complex, it is not uncommon for the Prime Minister to be present.
- 14.10. There are more than a hundred Gurudwaras and temples throughout Canada, which provide a psychological haven for Indo-Canadians. Many Indo-Canadians feel they are unable to fulfil their potential owing to hidden racism in a white-dominated society. Thus the covert racism found expression in the aftermath of the 11th September terrorist attacks in the US, when a Hindu temple in Hamilton was burnt down. Another problem cited by Indo-Canadians is that their Canadian-born children are losing touch with their country of origin.
- 14.11. These sentiments have the same psychological roots – a mixture of insecurity, desire to assert a distinct identity, and alienation – as observed and described in the previous section on the Indian American community in the United States. However, they are accentuated in Canada because of the distinctive character of the community, a sizable section of which has traditionally been composed of first generation rural migrants. The culture shock faced by such immigrants has been far greater than that faced by their counterparts in the US, as they have had to make a double adjustment – from rural to urban and from developing home country to a highly developed host society. At times it gets manifested in an inflexible adherence to community traditions and religion, marriage and dating taboos, and even psychological/behavioural problems brought upon by alienation and discrimination. These can then be manifested in an increasing emphasis on one's own separateness and religious affiliations.
- 14.12. When misperceptions of home country policies designed to fight the *cross-border* terrorism in Punjab in the 1980s were added to this volatile mixture, the results were heartbreaking for all the parties concerned. Some places of worship in Canada began to be frequently misused for political purposes. The extremist movement found an echo among certain misguided sections of the community, resulting in the tragic event of *Kanishka* in 1985. However, following the defeat of the *cross-border* sponsored terrorism in Punjab, these militant trends have abated significantly.
- 14.13. However, despite the above problems, with each passing generation, the community is becoming more integrated with the mainstream as Canada pursues more liberal and enlightened policies on immigration. Inter-marriage between second generation Indo-Canadians and white Canadians is not uncommon. Therefore, it would be reasonable to expect a progressive dilution in the attachment that the Indo-Canadian community feels for India.

Political Profile

- 14.14. The political prominence of Indo-Canadians is growing. As a result Canadian politicians avidly cultivate Indo-Canadian ethnic groups. The Liberal Party of Canada, which has ruled Canada for most of the past century (70 out of 100 years) is known to attach great importance to the ethnic vote.
- 14.15. Indo-Canadian have made their presence felt in mainstream Canadian politics in a relatively short time, partly owing to the nature of the Canadian political system and the importance of the ethnic vote in a country of immigrants. Barring Moe Sihota, Minister in the NDP government in British Columbia, *all other prominent Canadian politicians of Indian origin in public life are first generation immigrants.*
- 14.16. Thus the province of British Columbia on the West Coast had the first Indo-Canadian Premier (roughly equivalent of a Chief Minister in India), Ujjal Dossanjh of the New Democratic Party. Dossanjh is India-born and migrated to Canada in 1968. Indo-Canadians are represented in the British Columbia, Ontario and Alberta legislatures and in the British Columbian Cabinet.
- 14.17. There are 6 Indo-Canadian MPs out of 301 Members of the Canadian Parliament. These are Herb Dhaliwal (Liberal Party; India born but Canadian educated; also, the first Indo-Canadian Cabinet Minister), Gurbax Singh Malhi (Liberal Party; India born and educated), Rahim Jaffar (Canadian Alliance Party; East African origin), Gurmeet Grewal (Canadian Alliance; India born and educated), Keith Martin (Canadian Alliance; originally from Goa but born in the UK), Deepak Oberoi (Canadian Alliance Party; East African origin but educated in India).
- 14.18. The community wants India to be strong and play a role in the world commensurate with its importance. Its leaders keep abreast of Indian developments and maintain close personal ties with politicians in India, particularly in Punjab. The Canadian Sikh community also maintains close ties with the Sikh community in the US and UK, a trend spurred by the erstwhile separatist movement.

Demands and Expectations of the Diaspora

- 14.19. The level of expectation from India on issues concerning the Indian American community remains very high in North America. There are several overlapping issues that have been raised by the Indo-American community both in the US and in Canada. Hence the following demands and expectations refer to the Diaspora in both the countries:
1. Grant of dual nationality. This has been a long-standing Indian-American community demand, which they feel would strengthen ties between the Diaspora and India, and facilitate transactions such as investment, dealing with property matters including agricultural property etc. The Sikh community in Canada in particular has strongly pressed for this demand as they have a stake in agricultural property.
 2. Reduction in the fees charged for a PIO Card, as the current fee – US \$ 1000 – is prohibitive, and accounts for the poor response.

3. Liberalisation of venture capital rules to enable Indian Americans to finance start-ups in India.
4. Deepening and accelerating economic reforms in order to encourage investment and other economic links.
5. Urgent and pressing need for greater transparency, reduction of bureaucracy and corruption.
6. Increase in the frequency of flights to India to overcome the difficulty in getting reservations, particularly during holiday seasons.
7. Establishing an organisation to provide single point contact to NRIs/PIOs for facilitating investment, technology transfer, philanthropic activities, voluntary work and lodging of grievances. Such an organisation should also have Field Officers in the States with large numbers of overseas Indians.
8. Related need to simplify the procedures for transfer of funds for philanthropic activities in India. FCRA clearance needs to be speedier and less troublesome. Authority could be delegated to the Mission for giving FCRA (Foreign Contributions Regulation Act) clearance. In case this is not feasible the Mission should at least have a major role in facilitating transfer of funds and philanthropic activities.
9. Flexibility in execution of philanthropic projects to which PIOs make full or partial contribution. Many PIOs wish to fund small infrastructure projects like roads, bridges, etc. in their villages. However, because of fear of corruption they would prefer such works to be assigned to reputed NGOs or corporations, in which both the PIOs and State/Municipality authorities could participate, rather than have the projects executed by PWDs or government departments.
10. Flexibility in funding small infrastructure projects. Several PIOs wish to fund infrastructure such as bridges and roads in their home towns, but given their experience of widespread corruption and extortion do not wish to entrust it to a Government agency like the PWDs. They have approached Indian authorities with a request to route such funding through trusted organisations, firms and NGOs nominated by them.
11. Simplification of formalities regarding income-tax clearances. Most PIOs are not aware of the necessity of obtaining an income-tax clearance in case of stay beyond the mandated 120 days. On departure they are harassed at the airport where arrangements for redressal are highly unsatisfactory.
12. Setting up of budget hotels near airports/ports of entry. Many visiting Indo-Americans spend extended periods in hotel accommodation and cannot afford the exorbitant five-star rates.
13. Establishing convenient air connections between Delhi and Punjab, or at least making convenient transport arrangements between airport, bus and railway hubs.

14. Provision of reliable and safe transportation from airport to residence from where they are frequently taken literally for a ride has been requested.
15. Tackling corruption at the customs and immigration counters in the airports. The Sikh community has pleaded for pruning of the blacklists as Sikh militancy has long become a thing of the past. Sikhs are also harassed at immigration counters because they carry like sounding names with people on the black list.
16. Abolition of the dual rate of charging Indians and foreigners, at least for PIOs.
17. Assistance in checking bank fraud. A new class of impersonators forging and encashing FDRs (fixed deposit receipts) sent home by PIOs through fake power of attorney has sprung up.
18. Assistance in legal and property matters to deal with illegal occupation and takeover of property in their absence.
19. Assistance and mediation in family disputes in which one partner is an Indian citizen. Apparently, some Indian partners harass PIOs on fraudulent grounds (however there are cases in which the Indian partner has been tricked and abandoned; care will need to be exercised in this regard).
20. Assistance on divorce related custody issues when one partner is an Indian citizen.
21. Setting up Cultural Centres in order to encourage second generation Indians to familiarise themselves with their ancient traditions.
22. Posting Indian teachers in various community centres or schools and provide audio visual material to support Indian language and cultural studies. Launch courses in Indian languages and studies in open universities or other institutions.
23. Instituting specialized one semester and short-term courses in prestigious Indian universities designed to familiarise second generation Indians with India. Courses should be recognized by US Universities.
24. Nominating an NRI to the Rajya Sabha who could represent overseas community interests and act as a liaison at the highest legislative level.
25. Greater freedom in establishing and managing institutions of higher learning in India. Flexibility in hiring and working conditions of Faculty members and fee structure for various categories of students. Freedom from excessive bureaucratic control and regulations of academic institutions.
26. Facilitate greater interaction between cultural organisations of the community and Indian cultural organisations. Facilitate exposure of NRI artists to Indian audiences.

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