

# Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society 1912-2012

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## Abstract

Migration of Sikhs started right when Punjab was experiencing a great turmoil. Maharaja Dalip Singh's death in 1893 after many efforts to enter Punjab and create a rebellion among Sikh soldiers had created a great stir. The British were afraid of total transformation of India on principles of equality, liberty and fraternity. Ironically, in an effort to stop it, the British promoted 'alternative Indian Nationalism.' Punjab became a center for the British Great Game, Christian missionaries, Hindu sects, Sikh heretics and secret lodges of freemasons and theosophical societies. The object of all these societies was to create imaginary profiles of Sikhs for the consumption of the general Indian public and to a large extent of the western world.

Sikhs started coming to the Pacific Coast in 1890's; and it is very important to understand their minds, their work habits, their social attitudes, and their search for common patterns of life. They were mostly turban wearing Sikhs, accompanied by some other Punjabis of Hindu and Muslim origin. They learned core values of life: hard work, remaining always grateful, and sharing with others without any prejudice. They didn't learn tricks of their time and very least understood 'Cloak and Dagger' of the British, the jugglery of Mahatma Tricksters, the spiritual sham of theosophists, and the military manipulation of the supremacists. They didn't need much of this information in their daily lives, because their conviction to succeed with their sweat and blood was more pronounced than the temptation to act as sweet-tongued conmen for illicit goals.

After Sikh pioneers settled, they set up their social, religious and political institutions. Gurdwaras became sites of Indian freedom mainly because Gurus' philosophy urged human dignity and freedom of spirit in all walks of life. Prof. Teja Singh's role, a Harvard alumnus, in organizing the community remained unrecognized and unappreciated. He prepared them to face extreme discrimination and live their lives as true Sikhs. As the very principle of race (Aryan) was antithetical to Gurus' teaching, the ideal of Indian Nationalism, the dream of

Ghadris, too was compromised. After Sant Teja Singh left, highly patriotic Sikhs of North America got in the trap of 'race diplomats,' who used them for continuous financial support for a cause that was evidently pro-Aryan and anti-Sikh. Race diplomats in subtle hands of the British became 'reciprocal rebels, or freedom fighters.' My paper will trace the role of Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society from 1912-2012 in influencing India's battles for freedom and establishment of a pluralistic society based on universal brotherhood. In 100 years of its history, it encountered several upheavals and pogroms, and each time its response was to provide logistic support to preserve human dignity and freedom of spirit both in the country of Sikhs' birth, and the country of their adoption. Continuing the tradition of Sikh martyrdom, they recorded their names among true freedom fighters and inspired others like Vishnu Pingley, Kanshi Ram, Sohan Lal Pathak, Rehmat Ali to die for their country.