CANADIAN PUNJABI PHILANTHROPY IN PUNJAB: 1900-1947

Introduction

This and the following chapter chronicle a broad history of Canadian Punjabi Philanthropy (CPP) in Punjab from its origins to contemporary period; this chapter is devoted to an historical account up to 1947. Treating the period up to 1947 in a separate chapter is justified as the year 1947 marked the transition from colonial era to post-colonial Punjab. In 1947, the Indian subcontinent was divided into two states of India and Pakistan. At that time, Punjab was partitioned, with large western areas becoming part of Islamic state of Pakistan, while the rest of eastern districts became part of India. Besides these profound and vast political and physical changes of erstwhile Punjab in the post-independence period, the Canadian government also initiated new policies towards its Asian residents starting in 1947. A more liberal policy of immigration saw a slow and steady increase in the number of Punjabis settling in Canada from this year onwards. From a small restricted number of Punjabis, mostly Sikhs, of the 1900-1947 era, by the 2010, the Canadian Punjabis have become a prominent community –indeed the largest component of the Punjabi diaspora. Finally, one can justify treating period up to 1947 separately as the latter era saw several qualitative changes in philanthropic activities undertaken by Canadian Punjabis.

This chapter thus provides a chronology of CPP up to 1947 and is divided into three sections. The first section examines social and economic circumstances of Canadian Punjabis who faced racial discriminatory both in their work places as also in their social lives. Due to severely restrictive immigration policies imposed by Canadian government, early Punjabis also reacted by contributing to several collective institutions and movements with characteristic Punjabi defiance of authority. The building of gurdwaras, rallying around the
Ghadar movement, and support for Punjabi passengers on the Komagata Maru ship are discussed as major events in shaping Punjabis’ philanthropic endeavours. The second section then profiles the channels which were used for sending funds to Punjab. Such institutions as the Khalsa Diwan Society with its strong linkage to the Chief Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar, and Desh Bhagat Parwar Sahaik Committee and role of community newspapers in mobilising funds are discussed. The final section provides a profile of Canadian Punjabis’ role in establishing many educational institutions in Punjab.

For this early period, a special difficulty is noteworthy while trying to build an historical portrait of CPP. The non-availability of reliable data for the period does not allow for precise discussion, thus some broad trends of philanthropic activities are indicated. Another complicating factor is the close collaboration between Punjabis settled in Canada and United States. Indeed, California and British Columbia accounted for most North American Punjabis, and they frequently crossed the borders to raise funds. It should also be noted that much of philanthropic activities in this period were tied up with political movements within Punjab as those in the Pacific States – hence the context of giving is quite characteristic of this period.

However, before we start with a review of CPP during the colonial Punjab, it is important to state briefly the attitude to colonial administration towards overseas Punjabis. It may be fair to say that attitude of British Indian authorities towards overseas Indians was generally indifferent. For overseas Punjabis, the colonial policy was even more stringent and manifestly so after the Ghadar movement of 1914. With the establishment of the Ghadar movement which eventually involved several thousand Punjabis in Pacific States of North America and the Far East, the colonial government was loath to see overseas Punjabis as a liability. Overseas connections were generally discouraged. The administration undertook several
measures to check overseas Punjabis, censoring correspondence, banning the entry of community newspapers from San Francisco and Vancouver and monitoring of financial transactions from overseas Punjabis. For Ghadar activists who returned to Punjab they were given severe punishment. (Josh 1977; Puri 1980; G. Singh 1994). This mutual suspicion of overseas Sikhs and Punjabis continued thereafter and was reinforced again as the Indian National Army was formed in the Far East in which Sikhs again predominated (Mohan Singh 1974; Bose 1996). The administration’s paramount concern was the impact of such transnational events on the morale of Sikh regiments in British armies who were deployed in several British colonies and dominions –in fact army recruitment was a major factor enabling Sikhs to settle abroad as emphasised in the last chapter.

**Early Punjabi Canadians: Earnings and Remittances**

As noted in the last chapter, the settlement of Punjabis in Canada is over a century old. By 1909 the number of Punjabi settlers was at its highest at a little over 6,000 – virtually all of them in BC. Thereafter, further immigration was barred as Canadian government imposed severely restrictive policies. By then Punjabis who had migrated had found work around Vancouver, and a substantial proportion of them had arrived via Hong Kong. Without exception these were single men, many with army service in the Far East, who had left their families behind in Punjab. They shared a common aim to earn enough money and return to their families in Punjab.¹

Engaged in manual work, Punjabis’ earnings were usually small but as single men they saved enough to send a high proportion to their families back home. Few studies are available to reveal how such early remittances were used by recipient families. Early migrants would send money to their families for a variety of purposes: to pay off loans taken from village *baniya* (a petty shopkeeper / money lender in Punjab), to buy land, to marry a sister, to build a *pucca*
house, etc. (C. Kaur 2009; Verma 2002). The families in Punjab would use remittances for a variety of economic and social purposes; some remittances might be given to a local gurdwara or perhaps to a *sadhu* or a popular local deity. Holy men or religious places were patronised as particular families felt grateful that their men had been blessed to go abroad (Tatla 2009a). For instance, Inder Singh, Karnail Singh, Kartar Singh, Harnam Kaur and Meehan Singh from BC sent donations for langar funds at Anandpur Sahib (*Desh Sewak*, 6 December 1928, 6(70): 6). There is report of money sent for orphans by some Canadian Punjabi women.²

However, the overall amount of remittances sent by Canadian Punjabis was determined by small as virtually all of them worked in manual jobs, a great many in the lumber industry in BC. Many Punjabis lived together sharing cooking which saved considerable part of their wages. However, the difference between earnings in Punjab and Canada was substantial, and men worked hard, saved prudently and a few were thus able to acquire some property too.³

For pre-1947 period, it is difficult to offer an estimate of total amount of overseas remittances to Punjab. However, limited information available for some areas is indicative of such trends. Verma (2002: 184-5) has noted data for Nawanshahr tahsil, from where about 1253 men were recorded as residing overseas around 1912; all were from villages located in distinct revenue assessment circle encompassing Dhak, Retli and Dhaia. Between 1910 and 1914, the annual income remitted from overseas to the Dhak circle of villages was Rs 20,00,000; for Retli villages, Rs 82,000; and for Dhaia area, Rs 42,000. Similarly, nearly 820 men from Nakodar tahsil were overseas, the majority hailing from revenue assessment circle of Manjki. During 1913-14, these emigrants remitted at Rs 50,000 to their homes. For Garhshankar tahsil, 1,110 were officially estimated to be abroad during 1910-14; and the majority of them were said to have deposited large foreign incomes in the agricultural banks or to have invested in the
purchase of land. For the later period of 1929-30 oral evidence given to the Punjab Banking Committee by an agent of Imperial Bank quoted about Rs 5,000 as daily average money remitted from overseas through its Jalandhar branch of the bank. Similarly it is mentioned that small number of men in different countries provided extraneous incomes to several families in the tahsils of Tarn Taran and Moga as well.

On the use of remittances, few studies exist for the early period. Reminiscences of old people suggest that buying land was the commonest mode of spending such foreign remittances. Kessinger (1974) also suggests such transactions in his historical study of a Doaba village. In a recent study of Shankar village regarding its early overseas connections, C. Kaur (2009: 175) has noted how various relatives of North American and Australian Punjabis from the village bought land in the early period of this century. Thus Narain Singh, a pioneer who had settled in Australia, bought 10 acres of land in his village for Rs 15,000 in 1900; Rann Singh and Succhit Singh bought eight acres for Rs 12,000 in 1906; Inder Singh bought eight acres of land for Rs 12,000 in 1910; and later, in 1937, Deva Singh bought 25 acres of land for Rs 50,000.

However, for this early period, most of Canadian Punjabis were mere wage earners, hence small individual remittances reflected their economic status. Those who succeeded in transforming their fortunes from manual labouring jobs to better prospects were few but need special mention regarding remittances. Two men emerged as the most successful after many hardships: Kapoor Singh, a Jat Sikh from Kharoudi village, Hoshiarpur district, who joined in a partnership with Mayo Singh, a Punjabi baniya Sikh (businessman) of a nearby Paldi village, belonging to the Mahton clan. They jointly set up a sawmill company in 1916, called Pacific Lumber and Mayo Lumber Company in the Cowichan Valley of British Columbia. At its peak, sawmills provided employment to 250 Punjabi men, a majority of immigrants from
Paldi village and the surrounding *ilaqa* (area or region). Later in the 1930s, the two parted company, when Mayo Singh became the sole owner in 1935 (Verma 2002; Johnston 2009). As a result of good fortune, the lives of Mayo Singh and his partner, Doman Singh, were changed radically. They could afford to ‘spend money like water, giving food to people many times in the celebration of their marriages, spending freely on gurdwaras, holding *Akhand Path*, and serving food to all at their own expense’ (Verma 2002: 205). With extra income, they bought land, horses, and jewellery for their relatives.

Mayo Singh and others used enhanced business earnings for philanthropic and related social purposes. Money was remitted to Baba Mangal Singh Sahai Gurdwara, to Mahant Gurdit Singh and Mahant Sunder Singh of Paldi gurdwara. Money was also sent to the *Akali Akhbar* -an Akali newspaper from Lahore thereby helping the vital media of the incipient Akali movement. Mayo Singh donated funds to High School for Boys, Mahilpur, and Khalsa Primary School for Boys –the school he had attended as a child and built a Primary Health Unit in his ancestral village Paldi. Later he also endowed a scholarship at University of British Columbia. Both Mayo Singh and Kapoor Singh donated funds to Mahilpur School, Mahilpur Hospital and Khalsa College, Mahilpur.\(^5\)

Punjabi employees at Mayo Mill also made contributions to philanthropic activities in their native village Paldi and then in the surrounding *ilaqa*. In a pioneering study, Verma (2002) has examined the amount of remittances of Paldi men and observed how money order receipts dated 1915 show that all this time emigrants mailed amounts ranging from two to thirty three dollars. Remittances became larger and more regular by the 1920s; some funds were sent directly to People’s Bank of Northern India, Hoshiarpur, National Bank of India, Amritsar, and Punjab and Sind Bank, Amritsar. Such transactions became progressively larger ranging from Rs 2500, then Rs 5250, to the extremely high figure of Rs 1,41,000.
Some of these remittances were meant for *baniya* families who practiced moneylending within the village. Some recipient families used remittances to construct bigger houses - thus Ghanaiya Singh and Thekedar Nagina Singh built four houses using expensive red stone for his three sons and one for himself ostensibly in the centre of the village. The family then built a water tank connecting all four houses with pipes for regular water supply – proud theirs was the only family with this facility.

**Factors Affecting Philanthropic Endeavours**

While many Canadian Punjabis sent home a high proportion of their wages, they had causes to fund in the city of their settlement. As Sikhs got together, their first consideration was to build a gurdwara. Not only as a place to offer prayers but a social necessity to serve as a place for lodging and free meals for the incoming Sikhs. For Sikhs, a gurdwara has always been more than a religious institution and in the first ten years of Sikhs’ settlement into Canada saw the building of two gurdwaras; first in Vancouver and the second in Victoria, BC.

The BC media had continuously and consistently projected the newly arriving Sikhs as poor labourers and unwanted Asians. Building on such common prejudices, Canadian government formulated severe immigration policies and practiced blatant racial discrimination allowing immigration officers as much powers to deport anyone under slight pretext. Most Punjabis in Canada had arrived from Malaysia and Hong Kong, where links with Punjab had remained strong due to far easier communication and frequent travels back and forth. In Canada they faced a radically different situation not only in terms of time and cost of travel but also as a result of severe immigration policies and blatant racial discrimination. This new situation forced Punjabis, many of them ex-soldiers, to unite and resist such policies.
Their first common platform was the formation of the Khalsa Diwan Society (KDS) in Vancouver, BC on 22 July 1907. Its founder members were Balwant Singh (of Khurdpur), Arjan Singh ‘Malik,’ Bhag Singh, Badan Singh and Mit Singh (Pandori). The KDS soon became active as a broad association for all Canadian Punjabis. Through its collective efforts, the first Sikh Temple of Vancouver, a two-storey building, was completed on 19 January 1908. Branches of KDS were subsequently established in nearby towns of Victoria, New Westminster and Abbotsford.

At the invitation of the KDS, a well-educated Sikh lawyer, Teja Singh arrived in 1908 from New York who was accompanied by his family, an exception among single men. Working full time from the Vancouver Gurdwara, Teja Singh initiated a number of schemes to improve the image of Sikhs in BC. In order to impress the host society of Sikhs’ resourcefulness, Teja Singh floated Guru Nanak Mining and Trust Company Ltd in 1909 with the following trustees: Bhan Singh, Bhag Singh, Ratan Singh, Hakam Singh, Hari Singh, Raja Singh, Teja Singh and Hira Singh. This company had 251 members through subscription. Then other two companies were registered under the names of Canada Indian Supply and Trust Company and Canadian Home Builders Company.

Articulating their legitimate demands for just and fair immigration laws Teja Singh shuttled between California and British Columbia’s Sikh community (Tatla 2004). He played a major part in formalising the KDS through registering it as a trust on 13 March 1909 and connecting it to the Chief Khalsa Diwan in Amritsar by sending news and views about Sikhs in Canada. Both the Khalsa Samachar and Khalsa Advocate, two weeklies from Amritsar, started covering news of North American Sikhs. He proposed the building of Victoria Gurdwara and thus, a second gurdwara at Victoria, BC was opened in 1912. The Khalsa Samachar of 14 April 1910 listed how $20,000-30,000 was raised by Punjabis in Canada and the US for
the construction of a gurdwara in Vancouver. The land for the Victoria Gurdwara site had cost $1400 and a further $1000 dollars were collected on the day when a Diwan was held in January 1909 adopting a resolution to build the Victoria Gurdwara.

Meanwhile Punjabi men working in various factories were facing serious challenges in their efforts to settle permanently both in Canada and the United States. Because of immigration restrictions, they could not bring in their families and their social status was marginal. They fought many legal battles on behalf of their colleagues who were stranded at harbours. Then in 1913, a challenge to immigration laws was thrown by Gurdit Singh who chartered a ship, Komagata Maru, in 1913 and sailed from Hong Kong. Most Punjabi passengers of the Komagata Maru were denied entry on their arrival at Vancouver Harbour in May 1914. For the local Canadian Punjabi community it was an opportunity to show solidarity and they offered generous financial help to the stranded passengers. They assisted passengers to fight their case through courts, financed a solicitor’s firm to represent them in the court. Community newspapers published from Vancouver especially Pardesi Khalsa and Sansar made appeals to help ‘Punjabi brothers.’ Rallying in support of the passengers of the Komagata Maru, Khalsa Diwan Society and the United India League jointly organised a large jalsa (meeting) on 31 May 1914 in the Dominion Hall and raised $10,000 – a very large sum at the time. When after protracted negotiations and legal wrangles the ship was forcibly sent back and taken to Calcutta. Canadian Punjabis sent funds to Vadda Gurdwara, Calcutta to accommodate the returned passengers and for the families of those killed when the police opened fire on the passengers at Budge Budge, Calcutta. Despite small fortunes of Canadian Punjabis, they were capable of raising extraordinary sums, as Johnston (1979: 40) puts it ‘these early emigrants were capable of reaching deep into their pockets for extraordinary sums for the right cause.’
Parallel to the Komagata Maru episode, a Ghadar movement was launched from San Francisco. A newspaper issued from its centre, *Gadr* weekly sought funds for revolutionary propaganda and also encouraged its readers to establish welfare projects and schemes to help Indians back home (Josh 2007). Punjabis both in Canada and America contributed funds to this new organisation. Led by Lala Har Dyal and other intellectuals, they soon appealed for return to India and wage a war of liberation against the British rule. As a result of this exodus, fewer than a thousand Punjabis remained in North America. The Ghadar movement was crushed with a heavy hand in Punjab as most activists were interned and a score of them were hanged. Over 2,000 families were made destitute as the government ordered confiscation of land held by Ghadarite activists.

The aftermath of both the Komagata Maru episode and the Ghadar movement laid the foundation for much of charitable works in Punjab during the 1920s and 1930s. As far the political impact is concerned, overseas Punjabis brought many ideas and modes of organisation from abroad. Thus, it was on the advice of Communist International in Moscow that Kirti Kisan Party (Labourers and Peasants Party) was organised in Punjab aiming to achieve complete independence from British imperialism. Substantial funds for it came from North America. Punjabis in Canada also sent funds to commemorate the death of martyrs. Bhagat Singh and his comrades’ martyrdom also attracted funds from the Canadian Punjabi community.

Punjabi diaspora’s role in social life during the colonial era was significant not only through the well-known Ghadar Party activists who returned to launch a revolutionary movement, but also by those who stayed abroad and made substantial contribution establishing religious institutions and added to education facilities by sending money.
**Institutions and Channels for Funds to Punjab**

Much of early funding of various philanthropic projects was channelled through the Chief Khalsa Diwan (CKD) which almost grew parallel to the settlement of Punjabis in Canada. The Chief Khalsa Diwan was formed in 1902 as part of the Singh Sabha movement. Until 1920s, the CKD played a very active role in education and social welfare of the Sikhs as a whole. Its first charitable cause, the Central Khalsa Orphanage at Amritsar, established on 1 April 1904, was a residential centre for orphans. From an early period, the CKD leaders had consciously sought cooperation of overseas Sikhs. This was encouraged by formally aligning overseas gurdwara committees (i.e. Khalsa Diwan Societies) to the Chief Khalsa Diwan. At the inspiration of Teja Singh, the KDS in Vancouver was also formally aligned to CKD in Amritsar for sending news of its activities. Regular contact with such overseas Diwan societies was maintained through sending missionaries and *Khalsa Advocate*, the CKD weekly newspaper (although *Khalsa Samachar*, edited by Bhai Vir Singh, played even a more significant role in this interconnection).

The CKD sought funds for many of its initiatives in education and other *panthic* causes from overseas Sikhs who responded with donations. A list of donors and causes to which they gave were regularly published in newspapers. Thus, for example, *Khalsa Samachar* lists Rs 145 sent by Bhai Bakhshish Singh America for langar at Central Khalsa Orphanage. As the Khalsa Orphanage was expanded in later years the Khalsa Diwan Society (KDS) of Vancouver also contributed with funds. As the CKD floated a Sahaik Trust in 1908 - a permanent trust with fixed capital, an appeal was made to overseas Sikhs for contributions. Several Far Eastern and North American Sikhs responded, which enabled the CKD to undertake further educational projects in Amritsar and elsewhere, while the Khalsa Orphanage Trust thereafter generated enough annual interest to meet its running costs. In
1917, interest income from the Sahaik Trust was put at Rs 200,000 a considerable sum at the time (Tatla 2009a: 35).

However, not all funds passed through CKD alone, nor was there just one way of sending money to Punjab. Returning Punjabis were also involved in local Punjab political parties. The Central Sikh League emerged as a new political organisation inaugurated in Amritsar in December 1919. The Central Sikh League launched a crusade known as the Gurdwara Reform Movement in the 1920s to ‘liberate’ Sikh historic shrines from mahants -its traditional custodians (Grewal 1994).\(^{16}\) The Central Sikh League called a general meeting in November 1920 where 10,000 Sikhs gathered who elected 175 members to form a new organisation – the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC)– to look after historic Sikh shrines. As the momentum gathered to divest Mahants’ hold over historic shrines, this led to a major tragedy at Nankana Sahib on 20 February 1921 when some Akalis forcibly tried to expel Mahants from the premises. They were attacked by supporters of Mahant Narain Dass, and in the resulting clash a dozen Sikhs were burnt alive.\(^{17}\) As the news spread of this ‘massacre,’ like other Punjab Sikhs, Canadian Sikhs also responded with emotional and financial aid. The Punjab Government under considerable pressure conceded the right of handing over historic shrines to a representative Sikh body, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee by passing the necessary legislation of ‘Gurdwara Act’ empowering the SGPC to possess and control historic shrines in Punjab. The SGPC started functioning from 1 November 1925.\(^{18}\)

It’s also well known that overseas Punjabis contributed generously for gurdwara reforms movement.\(^{19}\) By the 1920s parallel to CKD, Akali Dal became a forceful political body that directly arose from the Gurdwara Reform Movement of the 1920s.\(^{20}\) The Akali te Pardesi
The role of overseas Sikhs in the current Akali movement is of great significance. It will be no exaggeration to say that with their hard earned money sent to Punjab in such large amount has ensured the kind of support that one could say the Akali movement was born through their efforts . . . Without the help of Canadian and American Sikhs in funding Panthic papers like Pardesi Khalsa and Desh Sewak, the movement would have lost its momentum. Support for many Panthic Ashrams,
schools, and to SGPC which is coming from abroad is of inestimable value . . . we want to let them know that many overseas brothers who returned to homeland and waged struggle for independence and suffered in the process, are now very much at the forefront of the Akali movement (Akali te Pardesi, 1 October 1924: 3).

While the Gurdwara Reform Movement was concerned with religious reforms, the Akali Dal’s aims were much wider embracing revolutionary activities against the British raj and thus attracting many Ghadar members into it.\textsuperscript{21} The KDS Vancouver accounts show regular funds flowing for Panthic causes. One such prominent cause was the Gangsar Jaito Morcha. The Shiromani Akali Dal and Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee launched a campaign for the restoration of Maharaja Ripudaman Singh, head of a Sikh princely state of Nabha, to his throne after he was forced to abdicate in favour of his minor son on 9 July, 1923. The issue was taken up in August 1923 and took the form of sending \textit{jathas} from the Akal Takht (seat of Sikh temporal authority), Amritsar to Jaito for the completion of an \textit{Akhand path} which was interrupted by the British authorities. This campaign garnered an enthusiastic support from Canadian Sikhs who decided to send a delegation of five Sikhs as a show of solidarity. The KDS Vancouver formally sent ‘Canadian Shahidi Jatha’ of 11 Sikhs under the leadership of Bhagwan Singh Dosanjh by paying the travel fare.\textsuperscript{22} This \textit{jatha} started on 17 July 1924 from Victoria by ‘Empress’ of Australia Aeroplane from Vancouver Canada, via Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore, Penang and reached Hindustan with volunteers now swelled to 42 as more Sikhs joined on the way. This \textit{jatha} was welcomed enthusiastically at various places of Punjab, as \textit{jatha} members offered themselves for arrest and several volunteers served two years in jail and others fined.\textsuperscript{23}
Desh Bhagat Parwar Sahaik Committee

Prior to Kirti Kisan Party (KKP), and almost parallel to it, another exclusive organisation aimed to help many families of Ghadarites who were interned, was formed which mobilised funds from abroad among the Punjabi diaspora. Desh Bhagat Parwar Sahaik Committee (DBPSC) was formed to mobilise financial help for the families of Ghadarites in jail or in distress. Among the first batch of Ghadarites released, Wasakha Singh proposed to form a relief committee while attending the Central Khalsa League session in October 1920 and listed ‘to help financially to the families of Desh Bhagats and especially care for education and protection of their children’ in its main aims and objectives. He also issued an appeal for the help of families of Desh Bhagats through a poetic appeal:

देश भागत जाने दे धनी धरती समझे, तथापि दूध रोज़थ्वद नी दीव मरे।
मनं देह दे मरे दिललिखितं तुम, में हैं देह प्रेम दूं सिंधे दें दीव मरे।

. . .

सुशोष गाँवों में भूलता दी में हैं मंथल, बरे दूरतां दी दुम पॉर्ट मरे।
शान कंधे सी खेत भगवत हेडी, चटे दूरतां दे दुमीं वक्ताभ करे। (M. Singh 2001: 103-4)

Share the sufferings of patriots’ families

It is common cause for us all in all regions

. . .

Those who have served the country, need looking after now

Their families, children need care, you should protect them

DBPSC was re-organised in 1924 as more Ghadarites were released from jails after serving their terms. DBPSC was accordingly reorganised when Udham Singh Kasel suggested re-naming the Sikh Kaidi Parwar Sahaik Committee as Desh Bhagat Parwar Sahaik Committee to widen its scope in the second annual gathering of the Sikh League in 1920. Accordingly, it
was reorganised on 21 November 1924 with Baba Wasakha Singh becoming its President and Kartar Singh Latala as the Secretary. Besides appealing to North American Sikhs in particular, Wasakha Singh visited Calcutta and other parts of India to mobilise support for DBPSC. Sohan Singh Bhakna, the leading Ghadarite on his release joined DBPSC in 1931 as its Secretary while Bhag Singh ‘Canadian’ played active role. On appeals launched by DBPSC several hundred dollars were sent to Desh Bhagat Parwar Sahaik Committee from North America.24 Sadhu Singh Dhami narrates in his semi-autobiography novel how funds were mobilised through appeals at various gatherings in Punjab villages:

You have contributed to this aim (education) according to your sources. You are supporting economically for opening the schools in the villages of Punjab, to run the newspapers to fulfil your aims and to strengthen the Workers Associations whole heartily. But why are you ignoring the families of brave leaders who are either behind bars or are hanged . . . . So I appeal you whatever you can donate to the families of those who have sacrificed their lives for the country . . . . I also appeal that there should be memorial to honour our martyrs, a building with a big conference hall, well equipped library and rooms for reading and meetings…. (Dhami 2008: 227-8).

The KDS also sent money for the families of Ghadarites as well as for their court cases in 1923-24.25 Through the years of 1920-40, the DBPSC is estimated to have raised and distributed two million Rupees.26 Later, the Committee’s scope was extended to families of Akali detainees and Babbar Akalis as well.27 A large portion of these funds came from North American Sikhs centred on the Stockton Gurdwara, as it became the new centre of reorganised Ghadar Party.28 Udham Singh Kasel, Gurmukh Singh and Vasdev Singh went to North America to collect money. In 1925 Vasdev and Himat Singh Kasel brought donations
worth Rs 50,000 and 200 gold coins (pounds) for Bhai Santokh Singh Dardeo. Similarly, Kapoor Singh of Kharoudi issued an appeal for the relief of the families of the political prisoners in India in April 1923.

Although funds for political activities are obviously not classified as philanthropy, hence not elaborated here, both these movements were catalyst in generating many kinds of welfare activities in Punjab. Bhag Singh ‘Canadian’ who was elected Secretary of the Kirti Party in August 1927, mobilised large financial resources from Sikhs in America and Canada. The KKP became a nucleus of Punjab-based Ghadarites and their overseas sympathizers. In July 1931 Bhag Singh ‘Canadian,’ Baba Sohan Singh ‘Bhakna’ and Piara Singh Langeri were the members of the Working Committee of the Provincial KKP and in January 1932 when ‘Canadian’ was elected President of Doaba KKP with Ujagar Singh of Bilga (Jalandhar) as General Secretary. The Hindustani Young Men’s Association, BC also became famous in a short time (Dhami 2008). In September 1934, the Kirti Kisan Party was one of several organisations which were declared illegal and dissolved (Grewal 1994: 166).

**Community Media as Fund Mobilisers**

During the 1920s and 1930s, much of funding for political as well as educational causes was mobilised through community newspapers and magazines. A number of weeklies were established through financial assistance by Canadian and American Punjabis. Thus Bhagwan Singh Dosanjh, Bhag Singh ‘Canadian,’ Karam Singh Cheema and Piara Singh Langeri floated an American-Canadian Press Society under the presidency of Langeri to start national newspapers to propagate against the British Empire (Kangniwal 2010). In 1922 *Akali Khalsa* weekly was launched by American-Canadian Press Society. Then it published *Akali te Pardesi* weekly from Amritsar, as it changed name from *Pardesi Khalsa* established earlier by Master Tara Singh from Jalandhar. Also in 1922, Bhag Singh, Karam Singh and
Batan Singh Sahri launched *Desh Sewak* weekly from Jalandhar. Bhagwan Singh Dosanjh, a treasurer of American-Canadian Press Society was key man to collect finance from Canada for these weeklies. *Mazdoor Kisan*, a monthly similarly received subsidy from abroad. Mit Singh of Pandori for a short while launched *Quomi Dard* financed by Sikhs in America and funds were deposited with SGPC. Partap Singh of Kairon launched *New Era* from Amritsar in 1931. Soon the Punjab Kirti Kisan Party asked him to become editor of *The Sunrise* an English paper. All these titles received financial help from North American Punjabis. They also served as a common bridge to connect overseas Punjabis with their homeland as news were exchanged through the Punjab based papers.

The KDS also appealed to Punjabis abroad for financial help of these newspapers started through American-Canadian Press Society and also for the *Hindustan Times*. Punjabis in North America contributed funds to the Canadian American Press Society directly or by subscribing to its newspapers. Then Pardesi Khalsa Diwan organisation was started by Canadian Punjabi diaspora for the improvement of working of Akali Press and DBPSC. Bhagwan Singh Dosanjh became its President in November 1926. *Kirti*, a monthly magazine was launched by Santokh Singh after his return from the USA via Moscow, received overseas patronage especially from North America. Bhag Singh Canadian became managing director of *Kirti* newspaper after the death of Santokh Singh in May 1927. The Punjabi community in Canada subscribed to Ghadar party on behalf of *Kirti* fund. In August 1929 it received $1,151, and in January and March 1930 it received $1,196 and $5,576 respectively (G. Singh 1994). *Kirpan Bahadar and Sangat Weekly*, Amritsar, 1 October 1921 noted ‘Shahi d Sikh Missionary College: S. Kharak Singh donated Rs 9000. Canadian and American Punjabis are with Central Sikh League: Canadian Punjabis donated Rs 2000 and American brothers gave Rs 2669.’ Similarly *Khalsa Samachar*, 5 March 1914, noted how at a Diwan celebration of
Guru Gobind Singh’s birthday in January 1914, Rs 4800 was raised for local and Punjab charities. Another report in *Khalsa Samachar* of 18 September 1913 stated how Vancouver Sikhs formed a Khalsa Committee to establish a high school in Jalandhar. They collected over $2000 and pledged a total of $11,000 if the CKD would supervise its construction. According to *Khalsa Samachar*, 18 September 1913 and January 1914, ‘favourite causes among North American Sikhs were Sikh Kanya Mahavidyalaya and another girls’ school near Patiala.’ It was Sikh Kanya Mahavidyalaya, Ferozepur whose high reputation led to much overseas patronage and parents sent their daughters to enrol there. Of its 275 girls, many had come from abroad, including from Malaysia, Hong Kong and China.36

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Figure 4.1: Canadian Punjabis’ Donations for *Kirti Lehar*

*Source: Kirti Lehar, 20 February 1938, 2(2): 5.*
Some estimates suggest that overseas Sikhs’ donations were more than $2,00,000 to Punjab’s educational institutions during the colonial era. However, without systematic records and extensive tabulations, estimates of funds transferred are anecdotal, but in 1913, based on CKD reports, over a hundred thousand rupees were sent to various Punjab and Sikh causes. If one takes into account two other channels, soldiers’ contribution and funds from abroad that were transferred to Punjab and Sind Bank, such external funds exerted a significant impact on many rural areas of Punjab, although little is known in the absence of detailed studies.

**Canadian Punjabi Philanthropy for Educational Institutions**

A major initiative of the CKD was the propagation of formal education among Sikhs, as the colonial administration opened many schools and colleges throughout the province. A Sikh Educational Committee was set up in 1908 when an annual conference was launched at Gujranwala for this purpose which became part of its biannual gatherings. For its second and subsequent Sikh Educational Conferences, the CKD consciously invited overseas Sikhs’ cooperation, asking specific number of delegates from different overseas locations. All subsequent gatherings were advertised in advance through the *Khalsa Samachar* weekly, and much publicity was given to overseas delegates and their contribution to charitable causes. At these annual conferences, the CKD leaders pledged more ambitious educational opportunities, seeking more Khalsa schools in major towns and cities across the province. Thus for instance, Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver sent its delegate, Bhai Balwant Singh Missionary for one such conference paying his fare and gave funds to be announced among the gathering. As a result of CKD initiative, many Punjab towns and villages were able to establish schools.

Until 1908 there were only a few Sikh educational institutions in the whole of Punjab province. Besides Khalsa College Amritsar, there were just four Middle Schools and a
Primary School for Boys and Girls each. In the next five years, CKD managed seven such schools and established a Gurmat Parchar (also known as Khalsa Parcharak) Vidialya at Tarn Taran (1906), a Gurmat Vidialya at Gharjakh, and a Khalsa Updeshak College Yatimkhana in Gujranwala district (1912-13). The latter became well-known for training *granthis* for overseas destinations.39 By 1920s, the CKD was administering nearly 200 Khalsa Schools in the state; and in 1935 the number of schools it operated or helped to establish were 427. These consisted of six colleges (four for boys and two for girls), 65 high schools (60 for boys and five for girls), 60 Middle Schools (34 for boys and 26 for girls), and 300 primary schools and *pathshalas*.40 As the CKD celebrated its Silver Jubilee Sikh Educational Conference in 1941, the number of educational institutions under its patronage was put at 431 (G. Rekhi 1999). Currently, the CKD manages 40 schools, four hospitals, including the Bhai Vir Singh Birdh Ghar and Ashram for the Blind.41

In establishing schools, the CKD relied heavily upon overseas Sikhs’ patronage and financial help. This exchange was facilitated through formally affiliated Khalsa Diwan Societies in several countries of Sikh settlement. The CKD regularly sent news about its activities through its own newspaper, the *Khalsa Advocate* or through specially sent delegates. In several gurdwaras abroad, *granthis* were either trained through CKD institutions or knew them intimately. The CKD and overseas KDSs thus provided mutual support to each other and sought cooperation in launching or sustaining philanthropic ventures in Punjab. The initial idea of establishing a new school in a particular village would usually come from its emigrants abroad. The CKD would then launch an appeal through its own media and usually send a dedicated missionary or *sant* to collect funds from abroad. Often the CKD also oversaw the construction of the building and provided early administration by appointing teachers. In some cases, these schools were left to the local people to manage.
For instance, Chief Khalsa Diwan Amritsar opened a Khalsa Middle School in 1908-9 at Mahilpur. It was named as Khalsa Anglo-Vernacular Middle School. The Canadian Punjabis contributed funds to this school as the CKD launched an appeal for it. Kartar Singh of Badala (Amritsar) was sent to America and Canada to collect funds for this school. The *Khalsa Samachar* of 24 March 1910 noted how in California where Ala Singh of Pandori Ladha Singh (Hoshiarpur) had died in a rail accident and at his bhog ceremony, Rs 130 were specifically collected for Khalsa School Mahilpur and transmitted through the Chief Khalsa Diwan.\(^{42}\) Canadian Punjabis’ contribution to this school already exceeded Rs 12,000. This school was upgraded to High School in 1922 and then to Higher Secondary School. Later *Desh Sewak* of 24 May 1928 reported an appeal by Secretary of Khalsa High School Mahilpur to ‘Canadian and American brothers’ which enabled the school to repay its loan. Much later, through the initiatives of Principal Harbhajan Singh, Shri Guru Gobind Singh Khalsa College, Mahilpur was also established when Piara Singh Langeri raised substantial funds through his overseas trips which included Canada (Banbeli 2010). Several rooms were constructed by the generosity of Canadian Punjabis and specific plaques can still be seen at this site. In 1926 a Kanya Pathshala was also opened for girls in Mahilpur, which was handed over to District Board in 1931 which renamed it as District Board Girls Middle School in 1936. Kartar Singh of Bundala went to Canada to raise funds for this school, now called Sardar Baldev Singh Mahilpur Govt. Secondary School (Boys) and handed over to the government in 1961. The village also has Sant Baba Bishan Singh Memorial Civil Hospital started by Sant Baba Mann Singh of Nangal Khurd (Hoshiarpur) in 1915-16 who raised funds from Canada and the US through a personal visit. The hospital is currently under government control and its services have been reduced.
Inspired by the Singh Sabha branch at Ferozepur, a young man, Takhat Singh was moved to open a girls’ school in the city, known as Sikh Kanya Mahavidyalaya. Established as the earliest venture in Sikh women’s education, it opened its gates in 1890. However, the school ran into a grave financial crisis some years later when Takhat Singh in a dramatic move left for Malaya in 1911 and returned with sufficient funds to ensure its survival and indeed expand its buildings to house a large library also. The Sikh Education Society (SES) formed in Lahore which established a Sikh National College in the city also received much encouragement from overseas Sikhs. The College was shifted to Qadian after the partition and the SES also established two colleges and a school in Chandigarh starting in the 1966.

The Singh Sabha also opened schools for girls. Dosanjh Kalan School was one of the first boarding schools for girls in rural areas of Punjab established by Singh Sabha at that time. Canadian Punjabis also donated US$2,800 to Khalsa High School Dosanjh Kalan and to Khalsa School Bundala with initiative taken through the CKD. Dosanjh Kalan school was subsequently named as Government Kanya Secondary School, Dosanjh Kalan. Johnston comments on such donation from Canadian Punjabis as follows:

Some emigrants came from more progressive villages than others. Among the former were people from Dosanj Kalan who sent home money for a girls’ boarding school in their village. They were doing this in the second decade of the 20th century when one could find only three girls’ schools in all of rural Punjab. Similarly, emigrants from the villages of Nangal Kalan, Namane (Jagpalpur), Adampur, and Langeri (joined by emigrants from adjacent villages) were funding village schools (Johnston 2009: 173).

Some noteworthy schools which were established through Punjabi Canadian funds are listed in the Table 4.1:
Table 4.1: Canadian Punjabi Philanthropy: Funds for Educational Institutions: 1900-47

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the School</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Year of Establishment</th>
<th>Main Canadian Punjabi Donors/ Fund collectors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sant Atar Singh Khalsa Senior Secondary School, Paldi</td>
<td>Hoshiarpur</td>
<td>1915-1923</td>
<td>Mayo Singh, Ghanaiya Singh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalsa Co-Education Senior Secondary School, Badon</td>
<td>Hoshiarpur</td>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Kundan Singh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalsa High School, Nadalon</td>
<td>Hoshiarpur</td>
<td>1910s</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalsa High School, Dosanjh Kalan</td>
<td>Jalandhar</td>
<td>1903-1906</td>
<td>Bhagwan S. Dosanjh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guru Nanak Sikh Kanya Maha Vidialya, Khurdpur*</td>
<td>Jalandhar</td>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Lachman Singh Canadian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalsa High School, Mahilpur</td>
<td>Hoshiarpur</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalsa High School, Jalandhar</td>
<td>Jalandhar</td>
<td>1912-13</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalsa High School, Pakhowal Bihran</td>
<td>Hoshiarpur</td>
<td>1913-14</td>
<td>Chet Singh Bihran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalsa High School, Samrai Jandiala</td>
<td>Jalandhar</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalsa Middle School, Khankhana</td>
<td>Jalandhar</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Stockton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalsa High School, Saran Kajian</td>
<td>Hoshiarpur</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>North America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalsa High School, Shankar</td>
<td>Jalandhar</td>
<td>1920s</td>
<td>Jamadar Partap Singh, NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalsa School, Bundala</td>
<td>Jalandhar</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalsa Girls’ High School, Hoshiarpur</td>
<td>Hoshiarpur</td>
<td>1920s</td>
<td>Hazara S. (Paldi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalsa School, Chakdana</td>
<td>Jalandhar</td>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Canadian Punjabis through CKD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalsa School, Pindi Gheb</td>
<td>Attock</td>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Overseas Punjabis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalsa Middle School, Chuharchak</td>
<td>Moga</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Canadian Punjabis through CKD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalsa School, Nangal Kalan</td>
<td>Hoshiarpur</td>
<td>1906-1914</td>
<td>Ujagar S. (Nangal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalsa School, Bhakna▫</td>
<td>Amritsar</td>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Sohan S. Bhakna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anandpur Primary School</td>
<td>Ropar</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalsa Middle School, Sanghol</td>
<td>Fatehgarh Sahib1907</td>
<td></td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalsa Girls School, Kairon</td>
<td>Amritsar</td>
<td>1912-13</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalsa High School, Garhdiwala</td>
<td>Hoshiarpur</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Khalsa Samachar, 29 March 1917, 18(20): 6; Khalsa Sewak, 18 June 1937: 5; Ghadar Directory; Tatla (2009); Johnston (2009); Fieldwork visits; and interview with Baba Budh Singh.

Notes: * With help from Partap Singh Kairon and Mahinder Singh Randhawa, this school was established as 'Shahid Balwant Singh Shahid Ranga Singh Khurdpur'.

▫ In 1913, one of the first Punjabi newspapers in British Columbia ran a subscription list for this Khalsa High School in Jalandhar with nearly 260 contributors.

▫ This school especially welcomed children of families who suffered in the Komagata Maru episode.
‘*Samaj Sudhar*’ Campaigns in Punjab

In the 1920s, both in Canada and America, some reform societies were formed aiming at major regions of Punjab. Thus two parallel organisations, *Samaj Sudhar Committee* (Society for Social Reform) of Doaba and Malwa regions, came into existence in the 1920s. These associations were formed in Vancouver and were affiliated to and patronised by different leaders. Similar to these, or indeed in some cases inspired by them, similar associations were also floated in Doaba and Malwa regions of Punjab. Thus parallel to the *American Canadian Doaba Society* in Vancouver, Piara Singh of Langeri, Hoshiarpur, (who had returned from Vancouver) floated a new *Doaba American-Canadian Society* with the assistance of Bhag Singh ‘Canadian’ of Uppal Bhopa, Jalandhar in 1921. The chief aim of this association was dedicated to establishing ‘national schools’ in Doaba as also to having rapport with the Ghadarites in Canada and America. Thus *Quomi Dard* weekly reported in 1927 of the
resolutions passed by *Amrika Malwa Sudharak Society* (Malwa Reform Society of America) and report of another *Canadian American Malwa Sudharak Society* to provide help for various schools and social reform schemes in Punjab. Mit Singh of Pandori (Ludhiana) organised the *Malwa Khalsa American Vidiyak Jatha* (Educational Society) and the *Malwa Sudharak Committee* in Vancouver. In December, 1922 he established a branch of the *Malwa Sudharak Committee* at Stockton. Indeed for this period, ‘Sikhism, education and Indian independence were powerfully interwoven in the minds of North American Punjabis’ as observed by a scholar Walton-Roberts (2005: 141).

An outstanding example of educational initiative through the assistance of its Canadian and American settled residents is at Palahi village. First, a Singh Sabha Khalsa School was established in 1917-18 by Babu Kartar Singh, Gulzara Singh, Chanda Singh, Darbara Singh, Bhai Harnam Singh, Punna Singh and others. This school was renamed as Khalsa A. V. Middle School in 1921 and given recognition by the state of Kapurthala with a monthly grant of Rs 25. In 1943 it was upgraded to high school with further cash of Rs 15960 deposited by Canadian and American Palahis. The school underwent many changes in functioning as Shri Guru Hargobind Khalsa Senior Secondary School with an added science Block with further overseas donation of seven lakh Rupees in 2009. Palahi village has through its overseas connections transformed into a prestigious place with all modern amenities as will be seen in the following chapter.

The Ghadar Party sympathisers prominent in British Columbia were also strong advocates of education, which they saw as critically important if India was ever going to throw off the colonial rule. Some activists established the *American Canadian (Doaba) Educational Society* and *Doaba Sikh Educational Committee of Women* in North America to improve educational facilities in Punjab. The *American Canadian Society*, in a further move, also
established a *Doaba Vidiyak Sudhar Committee* and *Doaba Istri Vidiyak Society* besides offering support to the Kirti Kisan Party. Many Ghadarites had turned to improve education as key to changing the social outlook of Punjabis. The *Doaba Vidiyak Sudhar Committee* financed the upgrading of primary schools to Middle Schools in some villages. In April 1926 the Kanya Pathshala of Dosanjh Kalan was upgraded to a Middle School.\textsuperscript{47} Similarly, *Doaba Istri Vidiyak Society* sought to promote girls’ education by opening new schools including the Khalsa Bhujhagan School at Nangal Kalan. It also helped to establish Kanya Pathshala at Jian (Hoshiarpur), Kanya Pathshala at Beas, and a third one, Kanya Pathshala at Bolina (Kangniwal 2009). One of the outstanding campaigners for such funds was Langeri, who visited Canada in 1928 appealing for funds for several Doaba schools while soliciting funds for the Kirti Kisan Party. Another notable figure was Dalip Singh of Nangal Kalan (Hoshiarpur) who had migrated to Canada in 1906 and then made a round of USA in 1911. He collected donations in the United States and contributed liberally to all revolutionary causes, including building a school for imparting ‘political education.’ He was keen supporter of both the Akali Dal and the Ghadar Party. Earlier on he was elected Secretary of *Sikh Amritsar Educational Society* in 1923 and then became Educational Secretary of the reconstituted Ghadar Party in Canada in 1927. There he collected funds for a Mahavidialya School in Doaba. In Malwa region too, there were some philanthropic projects – mainly schools for children. To cite just one case, Ishar Singh of Baghapurana (Ferozepur), who settled abroad in about 1912, transmitted money to various intermediaries for the construction of a Girls School at Alamwala and Chand Nawan.

**Conclusion**

In the pre-1947 period, Punjabi Canadian funds were mainly sent for four purposes: education, religious institutions, aid for some newspapers and help for the families of
Ghadarites. Although the pre-1947 Punjabi Canadian community was quite small, it remained very active in social and political activities largely by harsh policies pursued by Canadian Government. Unable to bring their families or return themselves, these men ensured that part of their earnings went to a school or a gurdwara or another common cause to serve memorials in their ancestral villages. For the period 1900-1947, remittances began to flow from Punjabi Canadians as these men had strong economic and social obligations to their kin and families back in Punjab.

However, the amount of remittances was comparatively small as majority of Punjabis were employed in manual jobs barring two or three enterprising men who eventually became mill owners. Although, the strength of Punjabi settlers in Canada was not large during this period, still, their philanthropic ventures in Punjab were many and varied. It is also clear that a substantial portion of financial resources by the Punjabi community of Canada were directed towards improving its standing within Canada as they faced racially discriminatory immigration policies. As for intermediaries of philanthropic activities in Punjab, it was the Chief Khalsa Diwan which undertook projects on behalf of overseas Punjabis. The Chief Khalsa Diwan through its linkages of newspapers and missionaries highlighted the plight of education and need for such institutions as the Central Khalsa Orphanage. Another kind of ‘nationalist’ cause was propagated through the Ghadar party which affected the diaspora’s way of giving as well its emerging relation to the province and the India as a ‘nation.’

For the period of 1900-47 Canadian Punjabi philanthropy was limited to local causes, among them funds were channelled to some major religious and political movements also. A fairly large amount was sent towards Panthic causes as also to assist many families of Ghadarites. In addition to such causes, Canadian Punjabis played a substantial role in establishing many educational institutions in Punjab. What is particularly notable about Canadian Punjabi
philanthropy for this early period is its collective nature – responding to common causes even though their earnings were not substantial.

**Notes**

1 Verma (2002: 194) notes in the case of Paldi village of district Hoshiarpur, ‘From the perspective of the Paldi immigrants, sending money home was one of the gestures which demonstrated their sense of duty towards their families.’


3 According to Josh (2007: 59), ‘They (Punjabis) owned in Victoria 300,000 dollars worth of property and in Vancouver it was worth 200,000 dollars. The Vancouver Sikhs raised $1000 to establish a night-school and sent home to India $6000 for education of Punjabi children.’

4 Ghadar Directory (GD) entry M-23 notes that Mayo Singh (the directory has Maya Singh as his name), Mahton Rajput of Paldi (Hoshiarpur) went to America in 1906 and worked in lumber mills near Vancouver. In 1918 he started Mayo Lumber Co. near Duncan on Vancouver Island and became successful mill owner. He was one of the largest subscribers to the fund raised by Kartar Singh of Toronto in 1929 for the revival of the political agitation in Canada.

5 Sri Guru Gobind Singh Khalsa College, Mahilpur was built in 1946-48. Mayo Singh from Canada donated for Sardarni Bishan Kaur (wife) Hall in the college; Kapoor S. and Mayo Singh also contributed funds for the construction of rooms.

6 One family had a formal letterhead printed out which read ‘Sardar Bholla Singh and Sons, Money Lenders, Village Paldi, P.O. Mahilpur, District Hoshiarpur [sic]’. Other *baniya* families also acquired a special reputation because they spent money on buying rich clothes and jewellery for their women.


8 *Khalsa*, a monthly periodical was started by CKD from Amritsar which later became a weekly under the new name *Khalsa Advocate* in 1903.


11 On the formation of Ghadar Party, Wasakha Singh in his poetic composition narrated: 

पून यहू छो लाल देख तेंदू कीहटह, में उहो टेंचे तेंच रूंघत रहो।

रंजता फिट्टी अवर हटा दुहे, तेंच रह दिल नम ठच ठिनातुट रहो। (M. Singh 2001: 73)

12 Pacific Coast of America despatched a sum of Rs 3,000 to India in connection with the holding of a political Diwan in October, 1928 to commemorate the death of Babbar Akalis (GD entry B-75).

13 A weekly Punjabi newspaper *India and Canada* in Vancouver raised a strong voice against the capital punishment to Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev. On 30 October 1930 its first page carried ‘Bir Bhagat Singh di appeal privy council London vich, phansi de phaisle de bar-khilaf aakhari yatan.
defence Lahore de madad lai mang’ with passport size photograph of Bhagat Singh. It appealed to Punjabis for help while an editorial note underlined the importance of martyrdom. Appeal for financial help to patriots was sent by People Weekly from Lahore and published in the paper. Many responded and the paper on 13 November 1930 carried their names along with their villages. Among donors were from villages of Sandham, Vadda Pind, Maihadpur, Bhangal Jandiala, Sankat, Khose, Adhkare kathe, Pandori Nijjaran, Jhingar, Rutainda, Kandhola, Purheeran, Jandiali, Kotla etc. (Gurmat Parkash, Monthly Magazine, September 2010, 54 (6): 64-80). GD entry K-30 notes that Kartar Singh of Badala (Amritsar), collected funds for Bhagat Singh and his companions and praised them at a meeting held at Abbotsford Temple on 9 November 1930. Kapoor Singh of Kharoudi (Hoshiarpur), one of the leading officials of the Doaba Sudhar Society also collected funds for the defence of Bhagat Singh (GD entry K-14).

14 The first Singh Sabha was established at Amritsar in 1873. At a special meeting of Amritsar Singh Sabha in November 1901, Chief Khalsa Diwan was established with Sir Sundar Singh Majithia as its Secretary and Bhai Arjan Singh of Bagrian, Ludhiana its President (G. Rekhi 1999: 36).


16 Gurdwara Sudhar Lehar started from Gurdwara Babe di Ber, Sialkot on 5 October 1920 when Sikhs broke the locks of gurdwara and were against Ganda Singh Obrai and on 6 October, the commissioner gave the control of the gurdwara to 13 members committee.

17 In 1921, a jatha under the leadership of Piara Singh Langeri went to Nankana Sahib (Banbeli 2010: 179).

18 ‘On 7 May 1925, a Bill was introduced in the Legislative Council and adopted on July 7. It received the assent of the Governor General in Council on July 28 and came into force on 1 November 1925’ (Grewal 1994: 162).

19 Kirpan Bahadar te Sangat, Amritsar, Bi-Weekly, editor Dharam Singh ‘Kirti’, 7 October 1927, 5 (88): ‘Central Sikh league nal Canada te Amrica nivasi bharawan da piar! Rs 2,000 from Canadian Punjabis and Rs 2,667 from Punjabis in America via telegram to Central Sikh League.’

20 ‘Shiromani Akali Dal was formed at Amritsar in December, 1920 to co-ordinate local Akali jathas. The inaugural meeting of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee came at the Akal Takht on December 12, 1920 and Sardar Sundar Singh Majithia was elected as its President, Harbans Singh Attariwala as Vice-President and Sardar Sundar Singh Ramgarhia as Secretary. It was registered on 30th April, 1921’ (G. Rekhi 1999: 42-3).

21 Bhai Mit Singh Pandori in Canada, leader of KDS said that they were happy because Akali and Congress lehars are both against British raj. After failure of Ghadar Lehar it is matter of happiness to start such public lehars and we send money for newspapers and jathebandis for help (Singh, Ganda 1976: 146).

22 Akali te Pardesi, 1 October 1924: 4: ‘Malwa Sudharak Committee of Canada: donated Gold Medal to Canadian Shahidi Jatha.’

‘Welcome letter: दिल से चैतन्य में पैठ लीजिए लें, तुम्हीं दें दूः देश नमण भावें!’ This welcome address was recited to welcome Canadian Shahidi Jatha; see Akali te Pardesi, 11 November 1924.

24 Punjabi media gives details of donations sent from Canada and other countries. Thus DBPSC was sent Rs 7803 and 12 aane (333 dollars) by Sardar Dalip Singh of USA according to Akali te Pardesi of 18 September 1923, page 4; the paper had a headline as ‘Americi viran da panthic te desh prem’ and underlined the new of Rs thirty seven thousand (37,000) to helpless (dukhi) people of Doaba. The paper then carried an appeal of five lakh Rupees from Master Sunder Singh Ji Lyallpuri. Kangniwal (2009: 73) cites ‘Master Udam Singh Kasel gave ten thousand rupees for the newspaper and Desh Bhagat Parwar Sahaik Committee which he had brought from Kabul. Baba Bhag Singh Canadian clarified about this contribution. Reports of Department of Secrecy reveal that ten thousand rupees were donated by Kabul Ghadar Party whereas American Ghadar Party sent 2700 Rupees.’ Some other donations reported were; Sher Muhammad of Nangal Kalan (Ludhiana) in 1927 subscribed $10 to the Qaidi Parwar Sahaik Fund (GD entry S-42). Gopal Singh of Dyal (Hoshiarpur), who was priest of the Vancouver Sikh Temple in 1930, collected subscriptions for the relief of Babbar Akalis (GD entry G-22). Harnam Singh Giani of Adekali (Jalandhar), who migrated to America about 1907-08 and was priest at the Victoria Sikh Temple in 1920, made appeals to support the dependants of the ‘Glorious dead’ (to commemorate the death of Mewa Singh in January, 1920). In 1926, when he was Secretary of Khalsa Diwan, Vancouver collected money to assist Babbar Akalis (GD entry H-45). Indar Singh of Dosanjh Kalan (Jalandhar), who reached Canada in September 1920 through Shanghai, collected $12,000 in Canada for the family and relations of Harbant Singh, the murderer of Inspector Budha Singh of Shanghai Police (GD entry I-10). Pakhar Singh of Mananwali (Kapurthala State), who was secretary of the Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver in 1925 and an important member of Ghadar party in 1928, sent a cheque of Rs 1363 in February 1926 to Bhag Singh Canadian and Karam Singh Cheema for distribution to the families of Babbar Akalis and another cheque of Rs 1364 to the Secretary, Shiromani Doaba Khalsa Diwan c/o Desh Sewak for the relief of the families of agitators of the Doaba who had been convicted since 1914 for taking part in politics or in Akali Movement (GD entry P-3).

25 Kirti, 13 August 1934, 11 (31): 16. ‘Help to Desh Bhagat Parwar Sahaik Committee is mark of service to country, humanity and to raise the national (kaumi) life’ Table of funds for DBPSC is included in this news: Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan, Stockton (Rs 300), Khalsa Diwan Vancouver, Canada (Rs 2956, it is maximum help out of total Rs 3992).

26 Desh Bhagat Parwar Sahaik Committee di tin sala report, 1 November 1939 to 31 December 1942 tak. n.d. It had distributed Rs 400,000 by the year 1949 to dependents and families of Ghadar Party workers who were jailed for long periods.

27 Babbar Akali Jatha was formed in August, 1922 to vindicate the Sikh faith and to gain political independence (Grewal 1994). Desh Sewak, 13 May 1928, 6 (11): 2. Appeal to American and Canadian Punjabis to help families of Babbar Akalis.

28 Kirti Lehar, 13 February 1938: 15.

29 Gurdev Singh Dhillon of Pandori Ladha Singh (Hoshiarpur), who landed in Vancouver in March 1931 via Panama acted as Secretary and Gurdial Singh of Jhingar (Jalandhar) acted as Chairman at a meeting of the Hindustani Young men’s Association held at the Sikh Temple in Vancouver on 28 August 1932. Puran Singh of Garhshankar (Hoshiarpur), who went to Canada in 1925 and Jagat Singh Mann of Toto-Mazara (Hoshiarpur), were elected office bearers of Hindustani Young Men’s Association, Vancouver in 1927.
Canadian American Press Society of Doaba had its active members as Dalip Singh of Nangal Kalan (Hoshiarpur); Gopal Singh of Dyal (Hoshiarpur), Harnam Singh Giani of Adekali (Jalandhar), Kapoor Singh of Kharoudi (Hoshiarpur), Bhai Sohan Lal of Aulakh (Jalandhar).

Pardesi Khalsa was first issued on 13 February 1922 till 1924. GD entry P-25 notes that Piara Singh of Langeri (Hoshiarpur) started the Pardesi Khalsa newspaper and he returned to Canada in May 1928; Bhag Singh Canadian took active part in the running of Pardesi Khalsa and visited Bangal in 1922 to seek finance for the paper. Akali te Pardesi 1924-26 was a daily paper edited collectively.

Akali te Pardesi, 17 May 1926 listed 27 Kaumi Sewaks who were overseas from Doaba: Bhag Singh Canadian, managing director Desh Sewak, Karan Singh Cheema, Jathedar Akali Jatha, Rachhpal Singh, President Doaba American Canadian Society and Treasurer Akali Jatha, Lal Singh Canadian, Jalandhar, Didar Singh Shankar, Jiwa Singh Canadian, Kabal Singh Canadian Littar, Partap Singh Canadian . . . . Bhag Singh of Mukhsuspur (Hoshiarpur) worked for some time as editor of Desh Sewak Jalandhar and in 1927 was asked to visit Rangoon for collecting funds for Anandpur Sahib Gurdwara (GD entry B-46). Desh Sewak, 22 January 1928, 5 (83): 5. Rs 21 to Desh Sewak by Meehan Singh Canadian.

GD entry B-8 entry on Bhagwan Singh notes with dismay that ‘in spite of his expensive tastes in wine and women, he still commanded great influence among the Sikhs abroad.’ Bhagwan Singh Canadian of Dosanjh Kalan (Jalandhar) went to America in 1906 and was appointed Treasurer of the Canadian American Press Society of Doaba in 1922. He became a subscriber to the Desh Sewak of Jalandhar and collected money for the Pardesi Khalsa and other Akali newspaper of India.

He became a member of the Malwa Pritinidi Khalsa Diwan in 1923 and later elected a member of the Executive Committee of the SGPC.

Iakha Singh of Chimana Kalan (Jalandhar) went to USA about 1908-10 and left for India in the middle of 1926. He brought Rs 22,000 from the Canadian American Press Society for the help of Doaba sufferers and the Desh Sewak newspaper (GD entry L-8). Akali (Akali te Pardesi) newspaper from Amritsar was sent to Vancouver by ship (Dhami 2008: 19). Kirti, 6 August 1934, 11 (30): 16. ‘Appeal to overseas brothers for help of Kirti, From: Manager Kirti, Amritsar.’

Khalsa Samachar, 24 July 1913.

See CKD brochure on educational conferences.

Khalsa Samachar, 10 January 1910, 11 (8): 4. This news item was sent by Hari Singh.

Among its students was Bhagwan Singh Giani, a granthi turned Ghadar radical who was to play a decisive role among North American Sikhs. ‘Bhai Bhagwan Singh had come to Canada sometime in June 1913. The Sansar took notice of him in its issue of 5 August. He was arrested on 30 September on a warrant issued by the immigration officers and was accused of entering Canada under a false name. News of his arrest spread like wild fire. Indian immigrants went there with lawyers and got him released on a bail of $2000 up to 3 October. Later a meeting was held in Vancouver gurdwara where 400 dollars were collected on the spot to defend him. But he was not allowed to remain in Canada’ (Josh 2007: 101).

Chief Khalsa Diwan Di Daswin Varshak Report for the year 1917-18, Amritsar: Chief Khalsa Diwan, Educational Committee.


This valuable collection of Sikh historical tracts and periodicals now forms part of Punjabi University archives.

Only three schools of Paldi, Badon and Nadalon still retain the original Khalsa labels – others have been renamed as government control e.g. Khalsa High School, Pakhowal Bihran is now Government Secondary School, Pakhowal Bihran since 1967; Khalsa High School, Samrat Jandiala (Jalandhar) is Government Secondary School since 1969. Information based on field visits to these sites.

Balwant Singh Khurdpur, who was hanged as Ghadar activist in 1915, had migrated to Canada in 1906 where he became granthi of Vancouver Gurdwara. He was also associated with ‘Hindustan Association’ of Shri Ram Nath Puri who started Circular-i-Azadi a weekly newspaper as also with Tarknath Das’s United India House who published Free Hindustan a monthly from Vancouver during 1908-10. In 1908-09 he was associated with G.D. Kumar and Harnam Singh Sahri who established ‘Hindustan Association’ and published Swadesh Sewak. When Jagan Nath Verma alias Hasan Rahim established United Indian league in 1913-14 and started Hindustani paper, he took Balwant Singh Khurdpur as an Executive member.

Sansar, Victoria, BC, 25 August 1913: These pages are reproduced in Sangha (1999: 202-3). With few exceptions, contributors were of Doaba region, nearly equal from Hoshiarpur and Jalandhar. The range of money they gave was the equivalent of one to ten days’ wages from their labouring jobs in Canada, while a few provided large sums (Johnston 2009: 173).