CANADIAN PUNJABI PHILANTHROPY IN PUNJAB
CASE STUDIES OF COLLECTIVE PROJECTS

Introduction

A careful examination of the comprehensive profile of CPP provided in chapters four and five suggests a distinct change of direction of Canadian philanthropic activities starting sometimes in the 1990s. This chapter notes this change of direction in CPP through an analysis of some philanthropic projects which show innovation in choosing areas of social welfare previously untouched and also in ways of financing them. Moreover, these ‘new’ are comparatively large scale interventions undertaken by individuals coming together through a specific association or trust to transform a Punjabi village environment. It was noted in the previous chapter that even among philanthropic activities undertaken by individuals, there was a gradual shift from religious institutions towards areas such as health and medical facilities, sports and even arts. In the last chapter we compared two projects undertaken by individuals as part of the new trend in CPP.

This chapter thus examines a new kind of project at Kharoudi village undertaken through Village Life Improvement Foundation – an association that was formed by Dr. Raghbir Singh Bassi and Dr. Gurdev Singh Gill in the late 1990s. While Kharoudi is discussed in some detail, the overall emphasis in this chapter to evaluate such village development projects undertaken by VLIF as a new departure in Canadian Punjabi philanthropy. The first section of this chapter portrays the Kharoudi project; how it was conceived, planned and executed. The following section illustrates how the Kharoudi village emerged as model for other Punjab villages, noting in particular the development of Bahrampur in Ludhiana district. The third section then examines how the Kharoudi Model was adopted for other villages across
different districts of Punjab. In the final section an evaluation of these collective ventures is attempted drawing upon field survey and published materials. It draws out specific features associated with these new ventures in Canadian Punjabi philanthropy and notes some of the difficulties and limitations. An attempt is made to understand factors that might have changed the direction of CPP from its early priorities.

Kharoudi Development Project

Kharoudi is a small village in Mahilpur tahsil, Hoshiarpur district with a population of about 700 living in 150 households. The village has a large Non-Resident Punjabis (NRPs) who are living abroad. Among its early migrants was Kapoor Singh Sidoo – who, as mentioned in earlier chapter, became a highly successful businessman in British Columbia, Canada in the 1930s. Since then, and especially in the 1970s, many others have gone abroad. The village had already benefitted through remittances which were utilised for economic purposes.

The current philanthropic activity was undertaken by two expatriates from this village. Dr. Gurdev Singh Gill migrated to Canada in 1949 and qualified as a medical doctor. He was the first Canadian of Indian origin to receive the ‘Order of British Columbia’ in 1990 for Community Services, and a medal on the golden jubilee of Queen Elizabeth’s coronation in 2003. Dr. Gill had floated a charity called the Indo-Canadian Friendship Society (ICFS) based in New Westminster, British Columbia in 1974. This society aimed to enhance mutual understanding between Indo-Canadians and Canadians at large and provide community services. Dr. Gill was thinking of undertaking a project at his native village for several years.¹ He was joined by Dr. Raghbir S. Bassi, a retired professor and Vice-Chancellor at Alaska Pacific University. Both were also keen to do something for their native land; and as Bassi put it ‘before I retired in 1999, I thought of initiating this programme.’
During visits to their native village, both Dr. Bassi and Dr. Gill were appalled by the state of the village. They remembered how the village practically floated in sewage during the monsoons when it was virtually impossible to cross the street. Stagnant water, overflowing drains and waste piling up ankle deep made the village a health hazard. Both of them decided to join hands to transform their native village.

**Village Life Improvement Foundation: A Collaborative Project**

An ambitious plan to transform the village was drawn up by Dr. Gill and Dr. Bassi through a series of meetings in Canada. They agreed to launch a Village Life Improvement Foundation as a trust to execute their plan. In 1999, a VLIF trust was registered in Punjab with Dr. Raghbir S. Bassi, Dr. Gurdev S. Gill, Ms. Geetika Kalha (IAS officer from government of Punjab) and Mr. H.S. Dhillon and Mr. Iqbal S. Sidhu (another IAS officer) as founder trustees. In order to implement the plan, another association, Village Lifestyle Improvement Board (VLIB), was also formed in December 1999. It comprised leading NRPs, with representatives from the village. Dr. Bassi was chosen Chairperson of the VLIB along with Dr. Gill and Dr. Sukhdev Singh Bassi as Vice-Chairman and Treasurer respectively. The village Panchayat was asked to monitor the progress of the project.

**Mobilising Funds and Implementing the Project**

With VLIB to implement the project Dr. Bassi and Dr. Gill initiated the major task of mobilising funds. Drawing a list of all NRPs from Kharoudi village, they approached them with the plan drawn up by VLIF to transform their native village. Dr. Gill used the good offices and older reputation of ICFS to collect funds from other NRIs too. They used various methods: telephone, letters and organised meetings in Vancouver, Yuba City, Toronto and several other cities. They were optimistic and Dr. Bassi remembers the campaign saying; ‘I believed that since most of the NRPs from the village were well off, they would contribute
generously.’ Dr. Gill recalls how in raising money from NRIs, ‘we are establishing an international development agency; NRIs gave money to NGO like ours, donors could receive rebates up to 15 and 20 percent on income tax. Indirectly, the Government of Canada is helping India so people gave the money through ICFS.’ Soon they managed to mobilise enough resources for their dream project and collected nearly Rs 50 lakh. Of this sum, families of Dr. Gill and Dr. Bassi contributed nearly Rs 20 lakh, the rest came from NRPs hailing from Kharoudi and neighbouring villages. Those contributing One lakh Rupees or more were promised an inscription of their names on the pillar of appreciation in the village square. Eventually the pillar carried the name of 30 NRPs.

As the VLIF was registered in Punjab to involve the Punjab government, Dr. Gill and Dr. Bassi approached the Punjab government – an Akali-BJP coalition elected in 1997. The Punjab government had undertaken some steps to attract overseas Punjabi’s attention to become partners in development. Parkash Singh Badal, chief minister of Punjab announced a ‘Mera Pind Initiative’ Scheme C.D. 2.35 in 1998 while organising the first Parwasi Mela at Jalandhar promising ‘dollar for dollar’ grant for overseas ventures. The government also established a new department of NRI Commissioner to handle developmental projects. In a series of meetings with government officials, Dr. Gill and Dr. Bassi apprised the NRI Commissioner of their plans for Kharoudi village and met Iqbal Singh Sidhu, Deputy Commissioner of Hoshiarpur. Dr. Gill recalls how ‘Mr. Sidhu proved to be very supportive and inspiring administrator’ who directed the district administration to provide all necessary assistance and cleared many bureaucratic hurdles.

With a government grant matching NRPs contribution raised by VLIF, this project with a budget of One crore Rupees began in 1999. Its main focus was improvement in sanitation and environment of the whole village. Besides monetary contribution, the ICFS also provided
technical expertise to VLIF, with Dr. Gill handling all aspects of briefing and training to the VLIF contractor. He remained on the ground camped at Kharoudi during the initial stage and handled everything on the spot. The local residents were involved in the project with many able young men pitched in with their labour, some driving tractors and other machinery. The village Panchayat oversaw work by periodically assessing its progress. However, funds were kept out of the ambit of the village Panchayat to prevent any financial irregularity and to ensure transparency. A VLIB formed for this purpose ensured day to day work to complete it on time and, even more credibly, at a cost less than envisaged in the original plan.

Figure 7.1: Kharoudi Village Development Project: Tower House in the Village Park

From September 1999, as the plan was put into operation, the village was transformed within a short period of time. At Kharoudi, water supply was ensured through 1,50,000 litre capacity reservoir with eight hours of daily pumping. A thirty-foot deep pond that overflowed every
monsoon into the village streets was converted into an open banked pool with a large walk-about. Besides this, the marshy land in the village was transformed into three beautiful parks. A crematorium was constructed away from the village and a community centre with guest house facilities was also established. The village park has several plants, trees, and shrubs, while a new room was added to the primary school. A solar operated computer education centre was added with five computers installed for the benefit of pupils. A stone sculpture memorial adorns the centre of the village park with a long list of inscriptions of donors who contributed to project. They are listed under the heading, ‘In Honour of the Ghadarites (Freedom fighters from the village).’

Mr. Ujjal Dosanjh, the first Punjabi-Canadian Premier of British Columbia inaugurated the project on 26 December 2000. The entire village looked clean with all urban facilities for its residents. The modernization has been widely acclaimed and the village attracted the attention of Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, President of India, who visited the village and commended the contribution of VLIF. Two visionaries from Canada and the United States had turned the village into a role model with provision of all modern civic amenities in village.

Adoption of Kharoudi Model: Bahrampur Village

The implementation of Kharoudi Project did not just change the face of just one village in the Doaba region, but had far reaching consequences for Punjab as a whole. Immediately it led to another project by another Canadian Punjabi, Anantpal Singh at Bahrampur village in Ludhiana district. This came after Anantpal Singh made a visit to Kharoudi village and was so impressed by that model as to commit himself for a similar project at his native village. Anantpal recorded his feelings of the visit as; ‘When I saw the exemplary and constructive work carried out by NRIs' donations at Kharoudi village, I was inspired to do similar work in
my village.’ Anantpal immediately approached Dr. Gill and offered money to carry out the work through VLIF as it had implemented the Kharoudi project.²

The Kharoudi project led to a new consciousness among donors, especially those from Canada, to undertake similar projects in their villages. The publicity around the Kharoudi model was gradually disseminated throughout the Punjabi diaspora. Henceforth, several other donors thought of undertaking new kinds of philanthropic projects in addition to usual causes of religious and educational kinds. In the following ten years, there have been almost a dozen more attempts to transform whole villages in the Doaba region and the model is being expanded to Malwa and Majha regions too.

**Implementing the Project**

Bahrampur is comparatively large village in Ludhiana district of about 360 households with total population of 2,000 persons. The village has some NRPs but not as large a portion as of Kharoudi village. Bahrampur became second project in Punjab, and the first in Malwa region, adopted by the ICFS and VLIF for environmental transformation. The initiative here mainly came from Mr. Anantpal Singh, a Canadian citizen and NRP from the village. He offered CDN$58,000 for the modernization of Bahrampur and sought similar environmental change to replicate the model at Kharoudi. The ICFS raised $58,000 while Herb Dhaliwal, a Minister of Agency and Resources in Federal Government of Canada, assisted in acquiring substantial grant from CIDA. A matching grant of $60,000 was obtained from the Government of Punjab, while Kharoudi residents raised nearly $50,000 in kind and cash. A further grant of $15000 was given by EAU2 System Works - a Canadian NGO. The total amount invested in Bahrampur village came to $231,000. As compared to Kharoudi, the cost of project was calculated at just $675 or Rs 25,000 per household. Starting in October 2003, work at Bahrampur was completed within 15 months in January 2005.
At Bahrampur the project consisted of installing a sewerage treatment plant, a deep tube-well for piped supply of safe drinking water, and construction of water storage facility in each household. Further work such as beautification of village lanes by plantation of ornamental trees, painting of street walls and construction of a feet high wall around the village was undertaken – the latter to block the intrusion of diseases originating from animal dung and bio-waste. Care was taken not to cut any tree while implementing this project, with another 250 saplings were planted around the village. Bio-degradation of the waste and cow dung was implemented in a more structured manner. The VLIB now employs two sweepers to clean streets.
However, some aspects of Kharoudi model were modified to have more involvement of villagers. Unlike Kharoudi, each household deposited Rs 300 to get sewerage connection which has given residents a sense of participation. Anantpal says of his experience as:

As we put our minds together, the VLIF came up with a water treatment plant, which treats 85 percent of the waste water. Every street in the village, whether narrow or wide, has been concretised. We have also built two concrete sheds for village gatherings. Bahrampur is the first village in Punjab to have concrete walls not only on the entire periphery of the village but also inside connecting all streets. The walls have convenient small openings for people to dispose cow dung and other waste for bi-degradation. The village ponds have been retained and provide water for the cattle but also add to the beauty of the village.³

Some additional facilities also became part of the project. Ten computers were given to the Government Higher Secondary School backed by a battery-based-inverter to cover erratic electricity supply and a teacher employed to impart computer training to students. The primary school also received 87 desks and chairs for pupils who used to sit on the floor. Girls were given 18 sewing machines and training was given to them. A new mortuary with cemented floor was built. Anantpal also donated money to two gurdwaras. Due to Anantpal’s personal interest in hockey, he has invested in a playground and provided equipment. In addition, he donated a fully equipped ambulance in the memory of his father and brother to the local Hind Hospital. Thirty five streetlights light the entire village. A deep tube-well supplies fresh water to the village for which households pay a nominal charge as the government water supply was not operational for several years. For the long term upkeep of these improved facilities, a Bahrampur Foundation was established.
As the project was completed, Mr. Brian Dickson the Deputy High Commissioner of the Canadian Embassy in Delhi arrived in Bahrampur on 25 February, 2005 to inaugurate it.\textsuperscript{4} Referring to the interest shown by Anantpal Singh and Dr. Gurdev Singh Gill, Mr. Dickson applauded their efforts to transform the lifestyle of Punjabi villagers, saying ‘now when they have been provided with all basic amenities of life, including drinking water and a most hygienic environment, villagers can think of competing with the residents of the towns and cities.’ According to Dr. Gill, ‘Bahrampur is an improvement on Kharoudi where we have installed a re-circulating gravel filter in the waste water plant here. It is the latest technology from the United States that ensures no odour of the sewer water.’ In carrying out this project for Bahrampur, Anantpal is very satisfied with the project:

\begin{quote}
Just donating money would not have satisfied me, as I wanted to see the outcome and the results. Every time I visited my village, it saddened me that nothing had changed. Every successive administration had slogans … but there was no effort to provide them quality life. So I must say that they have done an excellent job of laying the sewer pipes, connecting each house in such a short period.\textsuperscript{5}
\end{quote}

On provision of sewerage pipes, Anantpal feels it had to be a priority as:

\begin{quote}
Proper drainage ensures that there is no stagnation of water, leading to the spread of diseases or serving as breeding ground for mosquitoes. The sewerage will certainly improve the sanitary conditions of the village but that is not enough. We have to perceive a futuristic, wholesome approach to enable villagers to live a healthy life and keep pace with the advanced urban living.\textsuperscript{6}
\end{quote}

We shall see how this ideal is faring in practical terms for village residents in the evaluation section below. Mohinder Singh, a former village Sarpanch, lauded the project saying, ‘though
successive governments have been doing some development work, never did such a massive reform take place in any village in the area.’ Ranjit Singh, Sarpanch, similarly expressed his satisfaction over the cooperation extended by residents of the village, observing how ‘every family did kar seva (voluntary work) for the project.’

**Diffusion of the Kharoudi Model: Some other Punjab Villages**

With experience of two villages behind them, the VLIF had established its reputation for carrying out environmental transformation in Punjab. Dr. Gill then offered the expertise of VLIF to other villages and potential donors from Canada and other Punjabis who wished to undertake such improvement in their native villages. He did this by producing suitable publicity material for potential donors and through personal contacts in Canada, where it was thought there are substantial number of the Punjabi NRIs from Doaba region who are willing to adopt their villages for replication of Kharoudi model. The literature (Gill 2008) emphasised how the high cost involved in the provision of modern sewerage system and upgradation of other services in villages may be beyond the capacity of an individual donor, hence they were asked to pool their resources. The VLIF aimed to extend its domain by enabling Punjabi diaspora all over the globe to pool resources for modernization of their ancestral villages back home (Gill 2008). Whosoever approaches them, the organisation helps them in getting a village development proposal prepared, working out least cost estimates. The package includes contacting NRIs of a particular village in Canada and other countries, finding experienced and approved (for funding) contractors, overseeing progress of work, contacting government officials in Punjab to obtain matching funds and establishing local NGO/VLIB and helping to overcome other hurdles in the implementation of their village development project.
The VLIF also claimed to use its past experience to deal with the government of Punjab, whose bureaucracy had put off many potential donors in the past. The VLIF marketed itself as effective mediator in implementing a project if there is willingness on the part of some donors. This was a novel intervention in the social life of a Punjabi village, where initial steps need considerable convincing as the village communities suffer from considerable factional alliances (Dhesi 2008). Impressed by the remarkable change in villages of Kharoudi and Bahrampur, some other resourceful NRIs approached VLIF in Chandigarh or ICFS in Vancouver to see how they could transform their ancestral villages.

However, to attract government funds, continuous canvassing was also necessary. There were several meetings with government officials and politicians. In November 2007, for example Mr. Herb Dhaliwal along with Dr. Gill, Director, Indo-Canadian Friendship Society (ICFS) apprised Mr. Parkash Singh Badal, chief minister of Punjab, about planned projects by ICFS that offer facilities such as running clean drinking water, underground sewerage system connected to each household, wastewater treatment, paving of streets with concrete, solar lighting, creation of parks where possible and computer education in local school in a sustainable manner for some villages. Appreciating the efforts of ICFS, Mr. Badal, it was stated, gave an assurance of government’s fulsome support and cooperation. As a result VLIF was extended to some more villages. Gradually, projects were started at Deingrian in Nawanshahr district; three villages of Hoshiarpur district (Jian, Jandiali and Langeri) were taken up in 2006-07. Deingrian comprises of about 90 houses and is maternal village of Herb Dhaliwal, a minister in Federal Government of Canada. Jian has 250 houses and is another village with prominent historical connection with Canadian Punjabis; Jandiali has 110 houses; and Langeri has 195 houses. Dhaliwal has donated $30,000 for the improvement of his village. Two other projects at Dohlron and Awam Ghore Shah, both in Hoshiarpur, were
completed in 2007-08. For the past ten years ICFS has involved in similar projects. For funds, its Canadian-based Board of Directors have sought cooperation of volunteers, NGOs and governmental funds. Some of the NGOs and Associations it has found responsive include CIDA, Brooks and Associates Inc., City of New Westminster, James Hoggan and Associates Inc., John Lefebvre Foundation, Lawrence Hislop and Winsor Gallery and Moe Sihota – a second generation Punjabi Canadian and former member of the BC Legislative Assembly. Altogether according to Dr. Gill, ICFS has spearheaded development projects costing over $1 million.¹⁰

Table 7.1: Village Life Improvement Foundation Projects in Punjab: Vital Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Kharoudi</th>
<th>Bahrampur</th>
<th>Deingrian</th>
<th>Jian</th>
<th>Langeri</th>
<th>Jandiali</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>2500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Households</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>180</td>
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<td>Total Cost in Rupees (1)</td>
<td>5,296,995</td>
<td>10,283,399</td>
<td>5,020,851</td>
<td>4,647,457</td>
<td>8,642,872</td>
<td>4,055,240</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost/Household (2)</td>
<td>35,313</td>
<td>28,787</td>
<td>35,863</td>
<td>17,212</td>
<td>21,607</td>
<td>22,529</td>
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<td>Septic Tanks (3)</td>
<td>400,152</td>
<td>877,447</td>
<td>398,280</td>
<td>464,889</td>
<td>657,285</td>
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<td>Collection Tank (4)</td>
<td>Included</td>
<td>Included</td>
<td>Included</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Sand-filter (5)</td>
<td>4,211,20</td>
<td>952,969</td>
<td>767,954</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>194,070</td>
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<td>Mound System</td>
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<td>Outflow Piping (6)</td>
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<td>Tree Plantation (7)</td>
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<td>Wall Enclosure (8)</td>
<td>359,600</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>1000</td>
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<td>Computer Education</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>250,000</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Street Lighting-Electrical</td>
<td>165,000</td>
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<td>Solar Street Lights</td>
<td>367,787</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>98,800</td>
<td>98,800</td>
<td>197,600</td>
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<td>Solar Water Pumps</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>615,800</td>
<td>107,214</td>
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<td>Sub-absorption Field</td>
<td>124,335</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Parks (9)</td>
<td>119,941</td>
<td>615,800</td>
<td>107,214</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Length of Sewer Line</td>
<td>10,500</td>
<td>17,550</td>
<td>8,474</td>
<td>13,540</td>
<td>22,236</td>
<td>9,376</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Cost Sewer Line (10)</td>
<td>1,377,327</td>
<td>2,632,000</td>
<td>1,021,661</td>
<td>1,576,347</td>
<td>3,083,060</td>
<td>1,171,934</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost Sewer Line/Foot</td>
<td>131.17</td>
<td>149.97</td>
<td>120.56</td>
<td>116.42</td>
<td>138.65</td>
<td>124.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labour Cost/linear Foot</td>
<td>45.17</td>
<td>53.17</td>
<td>39.34</td>
<td>44.56</td>
<td>50.42</td>
<td>52.38</td>
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<td>Total Cost Paving (11)</td>
<td>1,247,000</td>
<td>3,945,668</td>
<td>1,536,349</td>
<td>1,945,497</td>
<td>3,409,484</td>
<td>2,137,175</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost of Concreting /S. Foot (10)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>26.77</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labour Cost Concreting/S.F.</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.96</td>
<td>8.17</td>
<td>7.42</td>
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</table>

Source: ICFSBC (Indo-Canadian Friendship Society, BC).
Notes: (1) Includes seven percent administration fee (2) Kharoudi has three parks. New water supply for Deingrian includes tube-well (3) Cost variation due to size and numbers (4) Also a room for electric equipment for pumps in some cases (5) Price variation due to size, type of filter etc. (6) Outflow pipe to a drain far away from the village in case of Bahrampur and Deingrian (7) This applies to Bahrampur only. (8) In an innovative idea, Bahrampur had a wall constructed all around the village on its periphery road separating manure compost and road (9) Kharoudi had three new parks within the village common land (10) Variation due to type of pipes, price of cement .includes septic tanks.
Table 7.2: India Canada Village Improvement Trust (ICVIT): Projects in Progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village and District</th>
<th>Total Cost in Rs</th>
<th>15% Share Spent by ICVIT</th>
<th>Total State Share</th>
<th>1st instalment of State Share waited</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jandiali Kalan</td>
<td>11,265,000.00</td>
<td>1,689,750.00</td>
<td>1,734,526.00</td>
<td>5,632,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District: Nawanshahr</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bamboi</td>
<td>9,325,000.00</td>
<td>1,398,750.00</td>
<td>1,538,000.00</td>
<td>4,662,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District: Gurdaspur</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20,590,000.00</td>
<td>30,88,500.00</td>
<td>32,72,526.00</td>
<td>10,295,000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source Dr. Gill’s email dated 13 December 2010 and Interview.
Note: These two projects were under governmental scheme of 75:25 shared funds policy.

A detailed information sheet is provided on the completed projects by VLIF as shown in table 7.1. An examination of the table reveals diversity of work undertaken at each village under the overall improvement of the village environment. All villages have now sewerage facilities, covered pavements and street lights. In addition there is water facility for each household. Arrangement for supply of water varies, as also energy source for street lights. At some villages solar energy has been used while others use conventional electric supply. Average cost per household of each project at different villages varies from about Rs 17,000 to Rs 35,000. This reflects both the experience gained over years as also the number of facilities available for each village.

Among other projects undertaken, but not listed above, include Kakkar village (Amritsar) in 2009 and Guru Ki Dhab (Faridkot) and Narur village (Kapurthala), which are in progress at this stage. Other projects in progress include Sahri (Hoshiarpur), two villages Chaheru and Thakarki (Kapurthala); Ratanda and Jandiali (Nawanshahr); Bhompai (Gurdaspur), Saila Khurd (Hoshiarpur), and three villages Kalra, Uppal Khalsa, Uppal Khurd (Jalandhar).

However, in case of two villages, Jandiali Kalan (Nawanshahr) and Bamboi (Gurdaspur), both projects have suffered major delays from 2010. Further details of these two projects are shown in Table 7.2 with data provided by ICVIT – a new organisation established by Dr. Gill.
as successor to ICFS. The status of work at these two villages was stated to be at standstill as ICVIT had applied to the D.C. in May 2010 after audit of expenses. The deputy commissioner was to send his approval to NRI Commissioner in August 2010. Meanwhile the work remains suspended. Delays occurred mainly due to bureaucratic hurdles in releasing further instalment of government share of funds. According to Dr. Gill, ‘Punjab government, in recent months, has been reluctant to release further funds despite full audit and local level verification of work in progress.’ He issued an urgent appeal and met concerned officials and despite all his efforts work had to be stopped as funds dried up, in his appeal Dr. Gill said:

The Chief Secretary told me that there will be no funds for us till March. Even then he was not sure…. These gentlemen are not really interested in our rural development projects and at least I get the impression they are not very enthused [sic] or supportive of our work… Those of you who have any influence on the politicians or bureaucrats, I say, please help in any way you can. I will be writing to donors of different villagers a separate e-mail.\(^{11}\)

As there are five other projects under this 65/35 scheme, and those too might come to standstill. These five projects have received the first instalment of government funds which have been spent already. Thus, work at Ratanda is still going on, while according to December 2010 communication of VLIF, ‘other projects at Chaheru (Kapurthala), Deingrian (Jalandhar) and Sahri (Hoshiarpur) remain standstill and will remain so until ICVIT gets some more funds.’\(^{12}\) Unless the government clearly rationalises its procedures and earmarks special funds for NRI Commissioner for such collaboration ventures, potential donors are bound to feel frustrated with the bureaucracy. For example, several of the latest collective ventures undertaken by VLIF are in a flux awaiting government funds. We now turn to
examine how such collective ventures are a departure from an established pattern of 1970s through 1990s phase and possible reasons for it.

**New Kind of Canadian Punjabi Philanthropy: Accounting for Changes towards Collective Ventures**

From 1970s to 1990s, there were mainly individual philanthropic projects, when a new tendency based on formal collaboration appeared. We saw how, for VLIF, some like-minded people came together with specific objects in their minds to collaborate. They aimed at an association with a view to transparency and accountability in their work and sought cooperation. Besides forming a formal Village Development Committee (VDC), local people were consulted at each stage of the project and worked towards the execution of the work.

Starting with Kharoudi, as we have seen above, the model village project has been completed in Bahrampur, Jian, Jandiala, Langeri and Dohlron. Satnam Chana who has conducted a study of NRIs’ investment in 28 villages of six blocks of Doaba region in the last five years from 2002 to 2007 compared results of the study of same villages conducted in 2002 of NRIs’ donations from 1980s, revealed that focus of NRIs have shifted from religious places to social sectors like education, health and infrastructure amenities. He also notes that earlier their efforts were at the individual level, now these are shifted to organised philanthropy with the involvement of development committees or Panchayats of the villages. As Muzondidya and Chiroro state:

Diaspora philanthropy, like any other forms of giving, does not occur in vacuum. It occurs within specific historical contexts and complex economic, political, religious, social and cultural influences which shape people’s giving behaviour. Changing political and economic environments in both the diasporas’ host and home countries also continuously shape diasporas’ philanthropy. The political and economic contexts
influencing diaspora philanthropy, for instance, could be the political and economic situation in the home country, including governmental policies that might work against maintaining ties between the diaspora and the home country and making philanthropic investments difficult; the reasons for original migration, and the economic and political situations of the emigrants in the host country (Muzondidya and Chiroro 2008: 6).

It is a ‘public good’ without any commercial angle altogether although stakeholders get funds from the Government of Punjab under its scheme of ‘Mera Pind Initiative’ and also financial and technical help from international agencies. It has now covered all three regions of Punjab through a selection of villages. So this project has a different orientation than was possible with the ‘traditional’ philanthropy of the 1970s when choice of location was usually an NRP’s own village or nearby town. The new framework offered by VLIF for an NRP is to seek co-operation from others to establish Village Development Committee of five or six persons with high credibility in conjunction with the Panchayat to implement a developmental strategy for the village. The VLIF offers to prepare and monitor this modernization program as a ready-made model and expands the vision to Punjab as a whole. So, the new kind of venture has advantage of superseding the locality as predominant focus of individual philanthropist. Dr. Gill speaking of his experience in gathering funds for such projects recalls:

People donated generously. Even those who had sold off their properties in the village and had no visible links with the village came forward to contribute. The bonding with the motherland was too strong to be ignored.13

This bonding is what VLIF tries to diffuse towards whole of Punjab. Although Dr. Gill and Dr. Bassi started this village transformation project from their ancestral land, their approach
was not limited to their own village only. They offered to extend this model to transform all Punjab villages into model villages like Kharoudi.

It is also interesting to see how Kharoudi experiment owes its origin to Canadian Punjabis’ past involvement in this region of Doaba. Historically, the area from Banga to Mahilpur had a very strong association with Canadian Punjabis, with older philanthropic projects in villages such as Paldi, Mahilpur and Aur. In the 1930s, the belt of Kharoudi-Paldi ilaqga had seen almost competing efforts at collective philanthropic activities by an earlier generation of Punjabis. As discussed in previous chapters, Kapoor Singh Sidoo, a Jat from Kharoudi who migrated to North America in 1907 had business alliance with Mayo Singh, a Manhas Rajput from an adjoining village Paldi (Johnston 2009). Whereas Mayo Singh donated money for his village school and built a hospital now known as Mayo Singh Primary Health Unit Paldi, Mayo Singh and Kapoor Singh Sidoo collectively gave donations to Khalsa College Mahilpur. In late 1950s Kapoor Singh Sidoo established a hospital at his wife’s village Aur, not far from Kharoudi. Thus Punjabis abroad from this area generally and Canadian Punjabis particularly of this vicinity are saturated with a spirit of philanthropy. Thus well-educated and mindful overseas Punjabis of the second generation from Kharoudi, Dr. Gurdev S. Gill and Dr. Ragbir S. Bassi, have continued the earlier tradition of social work in 21st century. So, whereas one can see the Kharoudi Project as a continuation of pre-1947 philanthropic ventures in this area, new efforts have a different direction.

As we have seen in Chapter 4, some of pre-1947 philanthropic activities were also collective ventures; then, the main organisation involved was the Chief Khalsa Diwan of Punjab while on Canadian side it was the Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver through which funds were channelled. There is apparent commonality among colonial period philanthropic ventures and post 1990s development projects as far as funding is concerned. It might be a good conjecture
to suggest that in the absence of such meddling organisations, individual philanthropic projects came to dominate during the period from 1970s to 1990s.

Still, how to account for the appearance of new kinds of Canadian Punjabi philanthropy in the last decade? Briefly, this is due to social factors operating both in Punjab and in Canada. First let us examine how social scientists working on Indian diaspora philanthropy have formulated the issue. Geithner, Chen, and Johnson (2004: xvi) find that typically, first and second generation Indian Americans tend to ‘follow the pattern of homeland counterparts’ and ‘prefer to give to their regional, linguistic, or religious compatriots rather than “to India”.’ However, there is substantial evidence that third-generation immigrants are less parochial in their giving and more inclined to respond to national needs in countries of origin. Kapur et al (2004: 193) note that the philanthropy of the knowledge diaspora appears to be drawing ‘its lessons from the patterns of the culture it is imbedded in (the United States) rather than the culture in which its origins lie (India).’ According to Viswanath (2003: 15) giving patterns among this diaspora are ‘more or less established and divided along the lines of generations or professional groups.’ Shiveshwarkar (2004: 136) has noted ‘the propensity of a diaspora to give is largely influenced by its wealth, its community organization, and the length of time its members have resided outside of India. It also appears to be affected by the philanthropic culture in which the diaspora resides.’ Taplin (2002: 4) describes them as ‘bicultural philanthropists – they give to India and (to) the (US) though proportions vary.’ Other studies have cited several reasons for this generosity, perhaps the most important being that liberalisation of the Indian economy has affected the Indian psyche and options for returning home are more real: ‘There is a strong sense of connectivity and investing in India (is) viewed as an investment in individual futures’ (Viswanath 2000:13).
Applying such explanations to Canadian Punjabis can throw useful results. We have seen new kinds of ventures in health and sports by Canadian Punjabis in the last chapters. Although Budh Singh’s investment in philanthropic activities are certainly inspired by his religious piety and convictions, but his exclusive concern with health and education are underlined by his exposure to Canadian social life. It can be argued that Budh Singh and many of compatriots were forming a new kind of Punjabi community in Canada which coincided with the green revolution strategy in Punjab. The 1970s brought a new consciousness among Punjabi rural peasantry exposing them to new agrarian technology and synthetic fertilisers. Punjab was undergoing rapid economic and social transformation with many rural young men and women going into technical courses and professional education amidst rising level of literacy. The rural society was turning into semi-urbanised townships, electricity and modern gadgets of life were filtering to rural population. The political life of Punjab was also undergoing considerable change, with the Naxalite movement in the late 1960s engulfing many students – many of whom fled to Canada. The Punjab peasantry, through the Akali Dal, also tasted political authority by forming the first provincial level government.

Thus, arguably, Punjabis reaching Canada in the post 1970s era were forward looking young men, receptive to ideas of new social life. Unlike previous generation of Punjabis, they did not form a close-knit community but were willing to be absorbed into cosmopolitan urban life. Faced with racist attitudes of Canadian society, they did not resolve to fight the ‘root cause’ as the previous generation had done by returning to India. Instead they took many discrete steps; holding demonstrations in Toronto, forging alliance with Canadian organisations etc. Moreover, heavy immigration to Canada ensured that by 1990s, Punjabi presence in Canada became prominent as seen through election of Punjabi members of
provincial assemblies and eventually a premier of British Columbia. As seen in Chapter 3, in the last decade and recent years, several Punjabi Canadians have become Members of Parliament, or ministers in provincial governments and members of opposition parties especially in two major provinces of Ontario and BC.

Moreover, the steep rise in Punjabi population in Canada has meant they have not looked to Punjab as a place to return eventually but a land with which they should keep connections. Cheap means of transport, easier access to information, and transformation of Punjab into a modern society has meant Canadian Punjabis have looked at Punjab not as a place fit for an occasional trip home but as a location to combine philanthropic activities with social and commercial considerations. Thus Canadian Punjabis, besides being socialised in a different socio-cultural environment, were gradually getting aware of incentives to invest back home. Although not all those who returned to invest in charitable causes were swayed by government policies alone, but the existence of NRI Sabha for example did show them that the government was doing something to count their voices and aspirations too.

If we put a cursory look at other Canadian Punjabi philanthropic projects in Punjab, the pivot of these model village projects can be seen by examining the social status and position of Dr. Bassi, Dr. Gill, or Herb Dhaliwal in USA or Canadian societies. We cannot ignore the fact that Dr. Gill and Dr. Bassi, both professionals, could connect people in Canada and USA with them and could attract money from them. They also collected money from their relatives and people from social circle. Herb Dhaliwal’s good position in Canadian politics might be an extra advantage to get money from international agency like CIDA. Besides financial help, their expertise also benefitted the projects with good planning and on technical aspects. All these gains are not easy for ordinary Punjabi Canadians.
It was thus the foresight and vision of some individuals which brought about a change in the conventional philanthropy in Punjab towards ‘modern projects’ fulfilling new kinds of needs for residents of a village as whole. For the vision and its successful implementation credit goes towards its most prominent pioneer, Dr. Gill, who as an expert worked through all stages of these projects, mending, overcoming various shortcomings and implementing required technology in the village setting. Obviously, Dr. Gill’s socialisation in Canadian society prepared him for such a role. Similarly another donor, Anantpal wanted to reproduce something that he had seen through his travels across the world. He observed ‘each house is painted in Chile in a different colour. This adds natural cheer.’ So he wanted to reproduce this effect in Bahrampur. For this he asked his villagers to participate enthusiastically and get the walls of their houses properly repaired and painted in the colours of their choice. His appeal was taken up warmly and Anantpal noted how ‘we have managed to recreate a mini Chile in Bahrampur. This is an unprecedented experiment and an example for other villages to follow.’ Thus Anantpal’s educational background along with his travels around various other countries has enabled him to implement some of those novel ideas in his native village.

Moreover, implementing the first two projects led Dr. Gill to offer VLIF along with ICFS as the assisting organisations for further projects of this kind. In this he offered his experience and expertise for other potential donors. As president of ICFS and with friends in high places even in Canadian society, he was instrumental in involving Canadian developmental agencies like the CIDA. After mobilising friends and relatives for the first two projects, the task became somewhat easy to mobilise further funds and interest other donors among Canadian Punjabi community. With record of managing matching grant from the Government of Punjab, VLIF was projected as the most suitable body to undertake further projects of this kind. In this way, further projects were undertaken at Jian, Jandiala, Dohlron and half a dozen
other villages. Although the sequence of projects undertaken by VLIF is a good proof of its team-work in raising funds and offering technical expertise, but, understandably, the whole process has remained cumbersome; motivating donors and seeking governmental subsidy while sorting out bureaucratic hurdles. ‘It’s a two way partnership and the government has been more than helpful to make it a win-win deal.’ It was an earlier impression of Dr. Gill when several government officials shared VLIF team’s enthusiasm. The VLIF as a model implemented at Kharoudi has acted as agent of change and augmented governmental resources. Moreover the VLIF’s aims as outlined in its website ‘to stem the increasing income disparities, starting a parallel "bottom up" process of development, beginning with providing basic civic amenities of water, sanitation and computer education to rural folks’ has become true for a small number of villages. However, over time, a dampening of early enthusiasm, mainly due to government unable to meet its promised finance, has come about as some projects are at standstill.

The new generation of Punjabi Canadians, educated and socialised through greater interaction with Canadian social institutions have seen local charities at work with their accountability, collective decision-making, transparency, etc. Thus Canadian Punjabis are learning new ways and are becoming familiar with local and international charitable bodies (e.g. CIDA, UBC and other agencies). Difference in the cultural capital of the younger generation leads them towards new kind of ventures. New environmental issues in Punjab highlighted for example by Sant Seechewal have alerted people to environmental issues and forced them to think on such new issues as a newspaper put it, ‘The NRIs are more active and aware now, they feel money is wasted in unproductive projects, some of them mere monuments of their egos. That is why they have started considering the usefulness of the project.’

14
If one is looking for donors’ motivation for such projects, we can see this through different kind of socialisation of leading activists of VLIF. Both Dr. Gill and Dr. Bassi are highly educated professionals from two leading western countries of Canada and the United States. Dr. Gill had some experience of managing Sikh religious institutions in Vancouver too. However, it was apparent that he wanted to go beyond religious philanthropy. He and other Punjabi Canadians wanted to contribute the welfare of Punjab society in a more inclusive way and their background in Canadian society alerted them to undertake such projects – to combine social development of the community at local level. Thus, a different kind of thinking has gone into the initiating of new ventures than the usual ‘religious orientation’ as outlined by Dusenbery (2009). Nor the motives of such donors to new ventures can be accounted fully for gaining izzat in the local community of which their family was part, as in the near past. Although leading donors are lauded by residents in their native villages and have their names displayed prominently as part of the projects, some have no interest in returning back or have not visited their villages for a long time. They have donated money as they were approached by other friends or relatives and found a common cause in helping the village they had left behind. It was through the efforts of Dr. Gill and Dr. Bassi, for example, who convinced them that the time has come for the villagers, ‘to take matters into their own hands. The villagers must contribute funds and “own” the development of their own villages.’

Conclusion

The description of projects does not exhaust the list of new kinds of projects undertaken by Canadian Punjabis in their native land. As discussed in previous chapters, the earlier projects were limited to religious institutions, educational and health facilities or at most efforts to promote sports. The Kharoudi Project initiated a new direction of CPP. It was a new experiment in village transformation encompassing many aspects of village life: drinkable
water facilities, environmental changes, sewerage facilities, recycling waste, etc. This project accords with the needs of Punjabi villages as these face severe problems of environment decay, water pollution, and many diseases from unhygienic conditions. Apart from eradicating life threatening diseases, this kind of model village project has brought a new look to the traditional village image with its paved broad streets and boundary walls. This model village projects present a new kind of philanthropic activity when much of philanthropic activities were limited to religious institutions and education. Thus NRIs interest has shifted from ad hoc practices to more strategic philanthropy. We note that before 1990s philanthropy was mainly ‘place-based’ or ‘peer-based’, now it has shifted to ‘collective giving’ and it has become more of ‘issue-based’ philanthropy.

Notes
1 This and subsequent sections of this chapter draws on recorded interview with Dr. Gurdev S. Gill dated 15 November 2009.


3 Based on recorded interview with Anantpal Singh dated 22 October 2009.

4 Although the inaugural plaque says it was inaugurated by Captain Amarinder Singh, but he failed to visit on 25 and came to Bahrampur next day by helicopter – his visit was made possible by Anantpal’s father who had army connections and used such influence over Amrinder Singh.


6 Based on recorded interview with Anantpal Singh dated 22 October 2009.

7 This is based upon long recorded interview with Anantpal Singh. There are many items of news in various newspapers, see for example *The Tribune*, 30 December 2003: ‘NRI, Canadian help change face of village’ a report by Mahesh Sharma.


9 Jian is the native village of Bela Singh who acted as an accomplice of Hopkinson and became a notorious character among Canadian Sikhs. In a fighting which ensued in the Gurdwara, Bela Singh shot dead Bhag Singh (of Bhikhiwind) and Badan Singh (of Dalesingh Wala) in August 1914. Bela
Singh was killed after his return from Canada when he had settled back in his native village, Jian. The Babbar Akalis are credited for his murder.

10 ICFS Website

11 E-mail from Dr. Gurdev S. Gill to supporters dated 11 February 2011.

12 According to Dr. Gill, in his recent email dated 11 February 2011; ‘I have met NRI Commissioner, Chief Secretary and Deputy Chief Minister, Sukhbir Badal. According to Chief Secretary, NRI Commissioner has no funds…. Finally I met Sukhbir Badal about 10 days ago. He seemed to be supportive and told me he will call a meeting of Chief Secretary, Financial Commissioner soon to see if funds can be released. Financial Commissioner is the one who releases the funds from state treasury if there are any and our projects meet the urgency. That was 10 days ago. I am still hopeful but not 100 percent sure. Early on there was minimal bureaucratic meddling in our projects but now we even have to deal with SDO and Junior Engineers. To begin with it was only DC we dealt with but I think very soon we may have go through even peons (chaprasis). It is no more satisfying or rewarding to work on these revolutionary visionary projects.…’

13 Based on interview with Dr. Gill dated 15 November 2009.