

**PUNJABIS**

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*A Study of Formation of an Ethnic Community*

**Paramjit S. Judge**

The migration of Punjabis, both Sikh and non-Sikhs, though more of the former, to Canada began as long back as the early part of the twentieth century. What began as a trickle became a steady flow after the second world war, and more so, after India's independence. By now they are to be found almost everywhere in Canada, specially in Toronto, Vancouver, and Edmonton, where they have settled in very large concentrations. Consequently, Punjabis in Canada have come to constitute a large ethnic community within the host Canadian society.

This book offers a pioneering study of the internal dynamics of the Punjabis in Canada by focusing on their pattern of migration, intra-family conflicts and socio-political features. In the long drawn process of the formation of an ethnic community, it has developed a certain distinctiveness which would be clearly discernible if the Punjabi community in Canada is compared with the Punjabi society in India as well as the host Canadian society.

The book goes deep into the main underlying factor of political economy of labour migration in the international perspective, particularly in the colonial and post-colonial context, and analyses at length the causes of conflict both with the members of the ethnic community and with those of the host society. These conflicts, the book maintains, are in a large part an outcome of the contradictions between the two value-systems, and delineates not only the intergenerational conflict, but the different levels of conflict among different members of the family.

As a valuable sociological document, the book is extremely readable, for the language is shorn of scholarly jargon, and replete with wit and humour. Both scholars and general readers will find the book illuminating and enjoyable.

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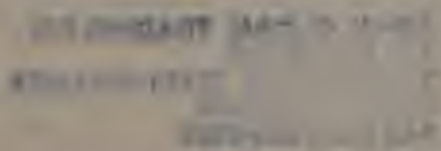
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A Study of Formation of an Ethnic Community

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# PUNJABIS IN CANADA

A Study of Formation of an Ethnic Community



PARAMJIT S. JUDGE



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by

Paramjit S. Judge

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## Preface

In numbers the Punjabis constitute a sizeable population of Canada. The migration of the Punjabis started in the beginning of the twentieth century. Since then there has been an unbroken chain of Punjabis' migration to Canada. At present, they have settled in most of the main cities of the country. In some cities, such as Toronto, Vancouver (including Barnaby and Surrey), Edmonton etc. they are concentrated in large numbers.

This study is an attempt to understand the process of formation of Punjabi ethnic community in Vancouver and Edmonton. In this regard the major attention is given to four aspects, viz. migration pattern, family structuration, community formation and political processes. Obviously, an effort has been made to understand the internal dynamics of the Punjabis as a migrant ethnic community in Canada.

It has been argued that the study of the formation of a migrant ethnic community involves the understanding of political economy of both the countries of origin as well as destination. These countries, by and large, occupy definite positions in the global economic hierarchy. The developed capitalism has developed an area of subsumption of labour in the sense that the underdeveloped countries have become the source of labour for the developed countries. Most of the migrants belong to the working class added to which is their racial and cultural distinctiveness. Thus we find the Punjabis in Canada mainly belonging to the working class but with cultural and racial differences from the host society. The moment the Punjabis began to settle permanently in Canada, the process of formation of an ethnic community started. The class position of the Punjabis in general and their cultural distinctiveness put them at a degree of disadvantage. However, cultural distinctiveness proved to be a blessing in disguise in a situation of discrimination, powerlessness, racism and lower class position as the Punjabis sought protection within the community.

We find an ambivalent situation in which the Punjabis as an ethnic community is placed in relation to Canadian society and politics. As a permanently settled community the Punjabis are making efforts to participate in the Canadian political processes. We also find the changes in living style and relations among them if compared with the original society. At the same time, the Punjabis continue to remain strongly oriented to the Indian socio-political reality. This study makes an attempt to understand the nature and causes of this ambivalence.

The study of this type required the help and cooperation of a large number of people which must be acknowledged. At the outset I express my gratitude to the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute, New Delhi, for financing this study. Shir P.N. Malik, Administrative Director, was of great help in making travel arrangements. My thanks to him. Prof. John R. Wood, University of British Columbia, inspired me to undertake this study. He was extremely helpful during my stay in Vancouver. I am grateful to him. Discussions with Prof. George Kurian and Prof. Ram P. Srivastava, University of Calgary, and Prof. Hugh Johnston, Simon Fraser University, helped me to streamline my data collection. I am thankful to them.

My sincere thanks to Harjit S. Judge and Harbans Dhillon (Edmonton), and Daljit Khatra (Vancouver) for their help in the collection of data. My sister Harjinder K. Gill and her husband Surinder S. Gill in Edmonton and my friend Ajit S. Atwal and his wife Baljinder Atwal did not only provide hospitality but also a rare opportunity to intimately know the Punjabi family's life in Canada. I am grateful to them.

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## *The Alien*

A plenty of pleas after  
Tej Singh landed in Canada.  
Only after I had boarded the plane  
Did my mother breathe again.  
“Son”, she said, “send pots of money from Canada  
To supplant the village hutments  
With bungalows of concrete”.  
Shedding the turban was my first task  
Peeling the beard was the next.  
I knocked around the factories  
And finally reached the C.P. Rail.  
I planned the family with great care  
But the payments overran the pay,  
Robbing me of sleep at night.  
My son ran after blondes  
The daughter confounded more  
But when Bhano (my wife) became  
the Black Beauty  
I would neither laugh nor cry.

The white men shouted, "Paki; Paki"  
None thought me a kin.  
A whole lifetime later  
My savings were still lean.  
Oh Punjab, my beloved land,  
I still dream of you.  
A Canadian citizen though  
I remain an alien.

**Tej Dayal**

*Translated from Punjabi*

*by Rita Chaudhary*

for  
*GURPREET*





# 1

## INTRODUCTION

The migration of Indians to Canada began at the turn of the present century. Between 1904 and 1908, 5,200 Indians reached Canada (British Columbia) of which more than 80 per cent were Sikhs (Buchignani, 1989). After 1908 the migration of the Indians stopped. Most of these Indians worked as labourers particularly in the timber industry.

In 1907, Vancouver, having the largest contingent of Indians in Canada, witnessed anti-Asian riots as a consequence of which the government instead of tackling the issue by understanding causes of riots, turned against the Asians by putting severe restrictions on their entry.<sup>1</sup> It seems that the democracy tended to exclude those who did not have voting rights. However, if the Indians in particular and Asians in general did not have the voting rights, then the government was largely to blame, for it enacted laws which in the case of Asians were discriminatory and aimed at excluding them from the political process as compared with the European migrants in the country.

A major consequence of anti-Asian riots in 1907 was two ordinances of the Government putting two conditions binding on any Asian who sought to enter Canada. First, a migrant must have two hundred dollars at the time of landing; and secondly, he must reach Canada by a direct route. It was obvious when it is known that in those days no ship used to come from India by a direct route that for Indians therefore doors to Canada were closed.

But in response to these conditions, one Punjabi, Gurdit Singh, chartered a Japanese steamer, Komagata Maru, and reached Vancouver on May 23, 1914. Each of 376 persons in the steamer had 200 dollars

with them, but they had not come by a direct route. Therefore, they were not allowed to enter Canada and were forcibly sent back.

After the Komagata Maru incident migration of Indians to Canada was negligible till India achieved independence in 1947.

Two features of the first phase of migrations of Indians in general and Punjabis in particular can be discerned. One, during this period, the Gurdwaras constructed by the Sikhs became centres of social and political activities irrespective of the religious backgrounds of the migrants (Srivastava, 1983). Two, many of them came back to India to participate in the freedom struggle. The Ghadar Party was formed by the Punjabis in Canada and the USA which, as is well-known, waged militant struggle against colonialism.

The second phase of migrations from India to Canada began in 1947 and continued till 1976. In 1974 and 1975, 12,868 and 10,144 Punjabis respectively reached Canada (Wood, 1983). As was the case with the first phase, the Sikh peasants belonging to the Jat caste continued to be numerically preponderant among the migrants. In this phase, however, professionals formed a substantial portion. According to an estimate, Indians in Canada today number between 200,000 and 250,000 (Buchignani, 1989).

This work explores some of the social and political features and processes as these have emerged among the Punjabis settled in Canada. The existing literature on migrant communities or ethnic groups has a great degree of diversity in the coverage of various issues. However, a bulk of literature focuses on the issues concerning whether the migrants adapt or integrate with the host community. We may add assimilation to the adaptation/integration model. The concepts of adaptation and integration place the migrants and hosts in a definite structure of relationships. To put it succinctly, who is supposed to adapt or integrate with whom is generally made obvious. Hiro (1973 : 323) comments upon the way the concept of integration has come to be understood though literally it means " to become united as to form a complete or perfect whole. " Thus, " Its present currency is derived from its extensive use in reporting events in America (beginning in the mid 1950s) concerning school segregation in the southern states. In the American context, integration is used as an antonym for (*de facto* or *de jure*) segregation meaning, more specifically, discontinuation of *de jure* segregation. . "

Ideally speaking, the moment we say that adaptation or integration is occurring, it should be understood that the migrants are shifting their life styles according to the new environment and also the host community has begun to accept them. In no way a complete adaptation/integration is possible without the equal efforts on the part of the migrants as well as the host community. It is not only due to the lack of efforts/ability of the migrants, but also perceptions of the host community which single them out.

It has been generally observed that the migrants are blamed for their failure to adapt/integrate with the host community. The social science literature has a large number of studies indicating how the Chinese, Japanese, Indians, Pakistanis etc. continue to stick to their cultural patterns adversely affecting the process of integration. We have studies making a comparative analysis of two ethnic groups, the Indians and West Indians, showing that some ethnic groups adapt/integrate better and more quickly than others. Such studies have ultimately landed up in identifying key variables which facilitate the adaptation/integration of a particular migrant community. One should not wonder if factors like religion, language, marital practices etc. are identified as key variables in the integration process. In fact, religion and language, to elaborate our argument, are important variables to facilitate the integration process. Religion and language provide an 'intersubjective' world to both the host and migrant communities in which they have 'common communicative environment'.

However, one may put the issue in concrete terms by supposing that a person of European origin not having knowledge of English and an Indian having the knowledge of English reach Canada. What is the likelihood of adaptation/integration of each of them when both are Protestants? The answer would be as expected, i.e. the person of European origin has much better chances of getting integrated/adapted. It is possible to argue that a European will not be perceived as a stranger the way an Indian would be. But the role played by racial origin in this situation must not be undermined. It is, by no means, being suggested that racism or racist bias of the host community is the dominant reason. There may be a latent mental set of this sort, but the point being emphasised here is that in the structure of everyday life, a European has better chances of not being singled out.

Sharma (1989) informs us that "In terms of sheer number, they (Indians) make the third largest group, next only to the British and the Chinese, in that order" (p.iii). Then he adds, "more importantly, they are known for zealously preserving their ethnic distinctiveness as well as cultural identity". It is all very well. We are informed of a distinct and unique feature of Indians abroad. In the existing literature there is no dearth of studies indicating similar tendency and practice among the Chinese. Most of the metropolises of the world have areas known as 'China towns', and we have no knowledge of Indian towns on the same pattern.

It is an irony of history that the issues of British migrants adapting and integrating with the host societies have not been raised. The answer may be simple, i.e. they went as colonial masters who after defeating the natives imposed themselves politically, economically and culturally on the subjugated societies. It should, however, not imply that all the conquerors tend to behave in the same manner. Colonization of Brazil did not lead to the stable identity of the ruling groups, like the one we find among the Anglo-Saxons (particularly).

In the light of the above, it can be argued that the question of adaptation/integration is ideological in principle. The migrant community is blamed for not making efforts to adapt with the host culture implying that it has to make efforts. Secondly, the issue of race is put under the garb of cultural commonality. Finally, it depends upon the status of the migrant community which determines whether the adaptation/integration issue would be relevant. The migrants come either as job-seekers or rulers. As rulers they are not required to integrate. Thus, it is only when the migrants are job-seekers and stay long or tend to settle permanently that this issue becomes important.

Sharma (1989: 2) notes, " In the study of Indians abroad it is the functionalist orientation that predominates. This is evident from the fact that the existing literature is preoccupied with the question of the cultural identity and integration, to the relative neglect of the question of class and power."

This observation enlightens us regarding the use of sociological perspectives in the study of Indians abroad. One of these is the functionalist perspective which, according to Sharma, focuses on integration and identity. This brings in Parsons' functional paradigm in which adapta-

tion, goal attainment, integration and latency or tension management are considered indispensable prerequisites for the maintenance of the system. It has become a common practice among many sociologists to reject a view which has been put forward by using functionalist perspective. One fails to understand the manner in which an argument ceases to be valid if it is made from the functionalist perspective. It is all the more important when functionalism takes into cognizance the process of tension management as a prerequisite to the maintenance of the system.

We do not aim at rejecting the adaptation/integration model simply because in the functionalist perspective it occupies an important place. Its significance in the study of migrant community cannot be underrated in view of the fact that expectations of the host community are equally important. In the ancient period, the migrant communities used to lose their identities with the passage of time. We are living in an epoch which has made people conscious of their cultural identities. The migrants, particularly of the first generation, would like to preserve their identity. The problem comes in when the host community uses the adaptation/integration model to keep the migrants at the lowest rungs. In that situation, it becomes a ploy in the hands of the host community to save itself from the guilt of maltreating the migrants.

Two things are obvious from the foregoing discussion, i.e. adaptation/integration model to study the migrant groups is made to ignore the power dimension, and it is an ideological mechanism to make the migrants responsible for everything wrong done to them.

Linked with the whole issue of adaptation/integration model is the question of diversity, multi-culturalism or pluralism. Indian subcontinent has the unique privilege of not only accepting the colonial ideal of preservation of diverse cultural and ethnic identities but also after independence 'unity in diversity' has been one of the contexts of pride for its rulers. It is perhaps truism to state that the issue of adaptation, integration and assimilation comes to the fore when a state society happens to have different ethnic groups.

We are faced with an ambivalent situation. If, on the one hand, adaptation/integration model with its associated concepts giving rise to some kind of plurality is ideological and manipulative (which incidentally makes ideology a negative weapon), then, on the other hand, forced

assimilation or elimination (we particularly have the instance of Uganda in mind) are not anyway a desirable choice. In the process of arguing against adaptation/integration it is not plausible to argue that the host society should be a melting pot in which one way of life prevails among different ethnic groups. It has been a fashion in social sciences as well as journalistic works to treat the U.S. society as a melting pot. Instead of arguing for or against the issue, it is better to quote a passage from Leonard (1990: 321):

"Federal and state law changed, and treated Punjabis and Mexicans differently with respect to immigration and citizenship. In 1917, Asian immigration was prohibited under the Barred Zone Act. In 1923, the Third decision by the U.S. Supreme Court made Asian Indians ineligible for U.S. Citizenship and therefore subject to California's Alien Lands Laws. These laws provided that "alien ineligible for citizenship" could not own or lease agricultural land, potentially cutting the Punjabis off from their livelihood..."

This quote is illustrative enough, to our mind, not only in demolishing the myth of the melting pot, but also in showing the way a society can exclude certain ethnic groups and can still claim to be a vast ocean where small rivers lost their identity. Limits imposed due to a tendency on the part of a host society to perpetuate its culture are reflected in its legal system which is accordingly biased under the veil of equality and universal brotherhood.

Coming back to the question of multiculturalism and pluralism, certain serious theoretical reflections are required in this context. In general, multiculturalism, for most of the people, means that various ethnic groups are coexisting, may sometimes be having demarcated geographical boundaries, by preserving their own cultural identities including languages. In a way, a state-society having different cultural identities recognises all those and as in the case of India, is proud of having such diverse cultures. It may be polemical to say that cultural richness and multiculturalism are perceived as coterminus. Centuries of coexistence of these ethnic groups have given rise to a degree of stability which has avoided cultural collisions in India if we exclude some provinces like Nagaland, Mizoram etc.

This multi culturalism is different from the one we are witnessing in some 'post-industrial societies.' The migration of different ethnic groups to these countries is a recent phenomenon mainly caused by the pull of affluence.<sup>2</sup> Obviously, most of the migrants are from the third world countries. One unique feature of these multicultural identities is that language has ceased to be a context of assertion of the migrant ethnic groups. They must speak English, or French or any other language of the host. This understanding of multiculturalism, within a given context, is truistic. But what it does not take into consideration is the political and economic content. Dehlie & Fernando (1981.2) argue:

"...A policy of multiculturalism which is devoid of political and economic content can in the long run, be harmful for ethnic minorities. For such a policy is no more than compensation in the cultural domain for political and economic deprivations, it is a mechanism of exclusion in the guise of inclusion. Such compensatory multiculturalism has the danger of making minorities complacent and diluting their struggle for equity, for equal access to positions of power and decision-making."<sup>3</sup>

We find in the above view an element of economic and political power hidden in the conception of multiculturalism. Our submission is that the induction of economic and political power in multiculturalism is also a way out of the paradox we mentioned earlier. It is just not easy for anybody to suggest models to explain the possible and desirable relationship between the host community and migrant communities. Placed in the context is Peter's (1981) attack on the policy of multiculturalism as introduced by the Prime Minister of Canada in 1971, thus

"The denial of any economic and political significance to ethnic groups, which is the essence of the government's policy on multiculturalism, has been adoted by Canadian sociologists and has largely prevented them from analyzing multiculturalism in terms of power and politices." (p.57).

The central thrust of multiculturalism as formulated by the liberal government is a way of bypassing political and economic dimension of inter-ethnic relationships. The issue which is of paramount

importance is why do we understand the interethnic relationship characterised by asymmetrical economic and political relations in terms of adaptation/integration?

Moreover, if in theory multiculturalism recognizes the equal share of various ethnic groups in economic and political power, then how would the same be distributed? One must not ignore the fact that the dominant ethnic group (s) has already monopolized both and it is (perhaps with the exception of South Africa) expected that it is numerically preponderant. One hardly thinks of holders of economic power parting with their privileges. Ultimately, the state, instead of giving ethnic minorities a share in political and economic power, skirts the issue by making overt efforts to make it sure that they are not discriminated against.

The economic and political dimension in the policy of multiculturalism places the migrants at definite class positions. Added to this are racial distinctions between them and the host community. Within the larger framework of integration/adaptation model multiculturalism is reduced to an intervening variable, because it is an intervention of the government in the inter-ethnic relationships at a time when natural process towards integration has not worked. This general understanding would be much clearer when we take the specific context in which an ethnic group interacts with the host society.

In fact, the adaptation/integration model addresses to an issue which has emerged due to reasons related with the arrival of different ethnic groups. Not only that, those groups, over a period of time, decided to settle there. And then followed a chain of migrations of their kins and other people of that region. What is important to note is that when a particular ethnic group goes on increasing in size, the adaptation/integration model becomes relevant. How this phenomenon occurs at the first phase is ignored by this model.

We would start by focusing on the historical specificity of interethnic relations. The post World War II era has been quite unique in terms of the geographical movement of the people transcending national boundaries. Related to this is the nature of movement of the people with the coming of capitalism which led to colonialism/imperialism. These two distinct movements, though interrelated, in fact, revolutionised the entire process of migra-



tions. In other words, the migrations became inseparably linked with political economy of growth in which the respectively developed capitalist economies did not only exploit the material but also the human resources of the less developed.

However, in the dialectical interaction between the two, both benefited in different manners. By the early twentieth century, the developed capitalist economies experienced a phenomenal growth the benefits of which tended to reach the lower classes. The migrants from the under-developed countries made good money, and through their remittances home their families also benefited. The story of migrants during the colonial period in India is somewhat mixed. A section of migrants went as indentured labour, but a considerable number also migrated independently most of whom went to USA and Canada.

To an extent, it has become clear that the developed capitalist economies require labour in two situations. First, when as colonialists they have to develop some areas in a specific manner, such as railroad constructions, plantations etc. In such a situation the skilled and unskilled labour has been brought from other colonised countries. Most of the unskilled labour was indentured. Secondly, as it particularly happened in Canada in the post Second World War period, the pace of development created the demand for labour which could not be met locally.

What is being emphasized is that there is something like historical specificity of migrations. This specificity is a result of the nature of mode of production of the recipients as well as the migrant societies. One may not ignore the possibility of international migrations between contemporaneously developed societies, for instance, a Dutch migrating to U.S.A. But it would be qualitatively different from the one which occurs from developing to the developed countries. The rise of capitalism led to high geographical mobility owing to its inherent tendency to seek larger markets. The manufacturing under the factory system provided an unexperienced level of production. The logic of circulation of commodities changed from that under feudalism. In the feudal system, the people were adapted, in terms of consumption of goods, to whatever was available locally (This, of course, excludes the elite which even in the feudal period demonstrated a degree of appetite for luxury goods). The production of commodities did not only meet the

local needs (of course, confined to those who had purchasing power), but also began to look for new markets. As the mass production went higher, the need for cheap labour also rose. The chain effect of production of commodities was the need for acquiring cheap raw material. The political consequence of rise in capitalism in the early stages was colonialism, the purpose of which was to end all hurdles in the availability of the markets. The economic consequences of colonialism were the remoulding of the colony's economy to suit the local demands of the mother country. Thus, we see in colonized countries the introduction of new crops. Some countries were changed into plantation economies. It is for the purpose of meeting the perpetually growing demand for raw material that the indentured labour was sent to plantations and we find a bulk of Indians in different countries of the developing world.

The post World War II period changed the logic of capitalist production from the earlier one. The Western capitalist countries experienced rapid expansion of economy. Most of the colonies had acquired independence. The need for labour grew and it was fulfilled by getting labour from the former colonies. Our purpose here is not to elaborate the history of migrations but to emphasize a generally overlooked fact that at different points of time, the change in the logic of capitalist development influences the migration.<sup>4</sup> It was for the first time after 1945 that large scale migrations to the developed societies occurred. Whatever might have been the pattern of migrations, we are rather witnessing the formation of ethnically diverse working class in these countries.

When an ethnic group happens to belong to a working class, there occurs an overlapping of the levels of perceptuality of the host community. If all Indians were workers in England, Canada etc., then the Indians and workers became coterminous for the local people. This subversion of perception gives rise to serious problems if the migrants settle in that country. With the exception of Marxism which considers working class as the liberator of the society, common stereotypes about the lower class found among the middle and upper classes are very well known in the sociological research. It rather becomes an issue of acceptance than adaptation. In other words, when the host community should accept, the migrants are supposed to adapt. An element of racial distinctions makes the matters more complex.

In fact the interaction between the host and the migrant is an interaction between two perspectives. These two perspectives entail two existential conditions characterised by differences in culture, language, race, religion etc. These differences having definite overlapping with economic and political power distribution provide a world view of a particular kind to the host community. Furthermore, it is expected that after having decided to permanently settle, the migrants will come across in their everyday life a more marked isolation from the society at large. The world in which they live is not characterised by scarcity in which a stranger shall be treated as a threat to one's own existence. The violence which originates from the world of scarcity between the host and the stranger is expected to be absent in the case of the world of plenty. However, this world of plenty has its areas of scarcity as a consequence of unequal distribution of resources.<sup>5</sup> Thus, if a stranger with different existential background plans to settle at an alien place, he may not necessarily be interacting with the world of plenty. The interaction is rather between the world of scarcity and the stranger.

In other words, the lower class of the host society is expected to be hostile to the migrants. This situation is contextual and linked with the logic of capitalist economy. We are familiar with recurring recessions in the Western economies when the rate of unemployment through lay offs shoots upwards. It is convenient to attribute the root cause of this unemployment to the migrants' influx. Hiro (1973) has cited some studies indicating this tendency to show migrants as being responsible for conflicts in England.

As a corollary to the above, we should see whether in the first place the migrants are accepted by the host society rather than concentrate our attention merely on the process of integration. Added to this is an anticipation in the light of a general view that migrants are hard working and tend to establish themselves well as workers or jobbers in a relatively shorter period than the lower classes of the host society and that therefore after some time the migrants would be competing for better jobs. This is particularly true of the next generation of migrants. It is in this context that we find discrimination, which is invariably racial in form and content, against the migrants.

Nobody seems to ask what forces have helped the migrants to survive in an alien and hostile environment. Perhaps the answer is too

obvious: the perpetuation of their own cultural practices. However, when they manage to survive and progress, they are attacked on the same grounds. It is said that, let us say, Indians stick to their culture strongly, and that they do not adapt well with the local environment, etc. The cultural mode which helped them to survive in the foreign land comes to acquire an importance of great magnitude in their view. It is inevitable for them to stick to the same. But can we really say that over a period of time the migrants' culture and values remain unchanged?

The answer to this query may be affirmatively given: that two modes of cultures in the process of interacting lead to the emergence of a new one. However, the situation being dealt with here is radically different from the assumptions on the basis of which such an affirmation is made. Here, we have a tiny but visibly sizeable ethnic minority pitted against a culturally and numerically dominant community. In such a situation there are three possible outcomes of the interaction between the two.

First, the minority community manages to keep each component of its cultural life unchanged.

Second, in the process of interaction, some elements undergo a change and others are retained.

Third, the change is so radical that a distinct identity of the minority community ceases to exist.

In the light of the fact that no community can live in complete isolation while interacting with the other, as well as the complete merging of the two is not possible due to differences in race and religion, it seems plausible to argue that both change and continuity in the cultural practices would occur. However, the manner of change and continuity in this depends upon a number of factors which render any prediction difficult.

If in the beginning the primary issue was not adaptation/integration but acceptance, then in the later stages it is the emerging new socio-cultural formation in its continuous interaction with the local environment. We know that emergent properties of a social phenomenon may not necessarily be the sum total of its interacting components. It is,

TABLE A: INTERACTIONAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE MIGRANTS

State in the existence of migrant community	Common characteristics giving it a distinct identity	Class position in the host society in general	Primary Objective	Mode of achievement of the objective	Perspective and perception of the host society in general
I. Arrival of a migrant community	Distinct culture, Language, religion, and race. Sometimes appearance	Working Class (Lowest)	Survival	Internal cohesiveness by cultural, religious and ethnic unity	Hostile
II. Settling of the migrants	Same as above	Working class	Better earning	Same as above	Non-acceptance and may sometimes be hostile
III. Coexistence of two generations one of which is born and brought up there	Dilution in the distinctness externally, but the same are emphasised internally	Majority working class, but emergence of middle class aspirations	Acceptance in the host society	Participation in political and organizational activities along ethnic lines	Critical of the presence of Emerging competitive group or a degree of acceptance

Note : a, b The perspective and perception of the host society changes dialectically, in the sense that beginning with hostility towards migrants at the moment of their arrival it ends into grudging acceptance. The manifestation of hostility may occur at the time of recession.

therefore, unreasonable to expect that an ethnic community would completely merge its identity into the mainstream social milieu. It is unfortunate that most of the research in this area has a pro-host society bias, which however, seems to be a reasonably acceptable perspective.

To sum up this part of the discussion, the interactional environment has been stage wise presented in Table A. In this Table three stages have been identified to put forward the summary of views already presented.

We may now describe the method of the present study as well as its organization. This study is based on the collection of primary data through interviews and to an extent, quasi participant observation, both in Canada and Punjab (Hoshiarpur and Jalandhar districts). To collect data participant observation and interview methods were used. In interviewing people a snowball sampling technique was used. In fact, during my stay in Canada, I spent almost the entire period among the Punjabis. Interviews were conducted at two places, viz. Vancouver (British Columbia) and Edmonton (Alberta). In all 40 interviews were conducted of which 26 were from Edmonton and 14 from Vancouver. However, no attempt has been made to compare the Punjabis living in two cities.

So far as the information regarding some aspects which link the Punjabis in Canada with their relatives in Punjab is concerned, a village in Hoshiarpur district was visited and the remaining family members of some of the persons living in Canada were contacted. Furthermore, the relatives of those who were interviewed were also contacted. It is worthwhile to mention that the focus on one village in Hoshiarpur district is in no way similar to Helweg's (1986) Jandiali. It is due to the reasons of difference in objectives of the study. Moreover, a degree of difference can be discerned between the Punjabis of both England and Canada, because the large scale migration leading to the formation of a community in England occurred much earlier than in the case of Canada.

It will not be out of context to point out that the author himself belongs to Hoshiarpur district which is one of the leading districts to send people out of the country. His familiarity with emigrants and 'foreign returned' is more accurate on account of this background. Thus, in order to stress a point without losing objectivity, an attempt has been made to collect information in a systematic way. It may be further added

that in addition to the field work, secondary sources have been extremely useful not only to understand Punjabis in Canada but also in Britain, USA and other countries.

There are four areas which this study aims at covering: the pattern of migration; family formation; community formation; and political processes linked with a situation of powerlessness as well as emerging political situations and aspirations.

A general explanation of migration tends to cover its causes and consequences. We know that the classical paradigm to understand migration is the push-pull factors. This paradigm involves a degree of truism because every migration is characterised by certain causes pushing the person from his place of residence and pulling him towards another particular place. In the whole process we come out with any number of factors causing migration.

Here, our focus is on the pattern of migration in which the migrants and the place of destination are controlled variables. In other words, we have discussed Punjabis migrating to Canada. In what way the Punjabi aspirations to settle in Canada are actualised is the central theme of our discussion on migration. Thus Chapter Two focuses on the pattern of migration of Punjabis to Canada. It has been argued that an unbroken chain of migration has occurred as a result of the use of various legitimate and non-legitimate methods. An attempt has been made to enumerate these methods by taking a case history.

It will be further argued that the pattern of migration has a great bearing on the structuration of Punjabi family in Canada. No permanent structure has so far emerged which typifies the Punjabi family. This is one of the reasons behind the development of conflicts within. Furthermore, intra-family contradictions are also a function of conflict of values of the environment in which two modes of culture interact with and sometimes confront each other. This is largely the theme of Chapter Three.

Inter-family relations based on kinship and common regional background tend to form the Punjabi community. The process of formation of an ethnic community is complex one in which primordial ties rather give shape to the formation of competing extended kinship groups in the overall community formation. An important aspect in the

formation of an ethnic community is to see whether it resembles the one found at the place of origin. This resemblance may be understood in the light of the principle of structuration which is a continuous process. It is, therefore, expected that a degree of change would occur in the social structure of that community. This is particularly true of the young generation of Panjabis born and brought up in Canada. This section of Punjabis gives new dimension to the community formation. It has also been argued that the formation of Punjabi community also bases itself in class divisions in a situation of declining influence of caste on coming generations. In Chapter Four, we have discussed all these issues.

Finally, the political dimension acquires significance when the ethnic community comes to realise that it is going to be a permanent part of the host society. The political deprivation and aspirations develop simultaneously. In Canada, the actual political process is quite different from that of India. Places in the larger Indian context are commonalities and peculiarities of the Punjabi political culture. In what way, the actualization of political aspirations has been taking place is an important issue which needs attention and constitutes the central theme of Chapter Five. In this chapter three aspects have been discussed with regard to this issue. These are; the Punjabis' orientation to Indian political conditions, organized reaction to certain issues deeply concerning the community, and participation in the local political process.

This study, in a nutshell, deals with the characteristic way in which the Punjabis in Canada have come to settle at family, social and political levels. The framework of this study does not adhere to the already existing adaptation/integration model. It has been emphasised that the direction of sociological inquiry should be oriented towards the emerging socio-political formations. We do not aim in this study at showing any degree of adaptation desirable for the Punjabis to live as an ethnic community in Canada a happy and peaceful life without any discrimination. In fact, any ethnic group which comes to stay continues to be identified as a distinct community for the reasons of race, religion and nomenclature.

Finally, it may be added that this study entails political economy perspective. The labour force from the third world migrating to the developed economics is a process in which the global capitalism is earmarking its area of subsumption of labour. However, the superstructural factors like consciousness, kinship, caste and religion are very



important: but their importance comes after the understanding of the labour process in which migration of labour is a historical phenomenon. At what point of time the superstructural elements influence and decidedly interact with the base is the main objective of this work.

#### NOTES

1. Puri, Harish K. (1993), however, is of the view that these restrictions were particularly imposed to prevent the entry of Indians into Canada. According to him, the British thought that "the familiarity which the Indians acquired with the whites made their presence in Canada 'politically inexpedient' to British interest in India, because 'these men go back to India and preach ideas of emancipation which would upset the machinery of law and order...'" (p. 37).
2. This statement does not ignore the role of push factors as it will be evident from the discussion in the second chapter. However, Bolaria (1991) has rightly argued that the push-pull paradigm does not explain much.
3. The introduction of political and economic power in the definition of multiculturalism is also a theoretical trap. The sociological literature is quite rich in concepts and theoretical constructs dealing with economic as well as political hierarchies. If everything is to be loaded with these concepts, then we can very well use the already existing theoretical constructs. However, the issue at hand should be understood in the light of the fact that multiculturalism in a situation where different cultural identities occupy position of economic and political inequality, acquires a strong ideological tool of control.
4. It should also be noted here that even the socio-economic background of the migrants changes with this logic. The demand for unskilled labour would call for the migration of uneducated people and when new need arises, the developed capitalism can have fully professionalised people from the developing countries.
5. A degree of concrete exposition is required regarding this statement. The host society is basically a class society (capitalist society) which has its own dark zones. A sizeable population in the host society belongs to the working class. The migrant and the host are thus put in situation which may lead to a conflict.

## 2

### PATTERN OF MIGRATION

Among various issues concerning the process of migration the most discussed and talked about is the one relating to causes. There is every reason to believe that the migration occurs when a number of factors 'push' the individuals and ethnic groups to leave their place of inhabitation where they might have been living for centuries. It is also well known that there are a number of factors which prompt people to choose to migrate to a particular city or province or country. This set of factors is known as 'pull factors'. The 'push-pull' paradigm is a standard explanatory design to explain the process of migration.

The generality involved in the 'push-pull' paradigm makes it abstract and vague when it concerns migrations recurring across time. The changing reasons for migrating from one place to the same destination at different points of time render 'push-pull' paradigm meaningless. There is no denying the fact that in every case of migration there would be some factors pushing the individual to leave his place of origin and some pulling him to a particular destination. Can we really make a meaningful understanding of the migration process by stating those factors? One important thing to note is that factor analysis has its own problems. All migrations are not caused by a set of factors. A considerable number of wandering tribes, e.g. gypsies in Europe and banjaras in India may not be migrating recurrently due to pull-push factors.

In the specific context of Punjabis migrating to developed capitalist countries, some such factors have been identified by writers, such as Aurora (1967), Kessinger (1974), Ballard & Ballard (1977), Helweg (1986), and Melcod (1986). Some of the important factors delineated by them are :

1. Sub-divisions of land due to law of inheritance.
2. The Punjabi perception of prestige.
3. To buy land and construct big houses in the village.

For most of these specialists, the countries that offered better economic opportunities attracted more migrants.

The Punjabis who migrated to these countries originated mostly from the Doaba region consisting of Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar and Kapurthala districts.<sup>1</sup> The causes of Doab migrations, according to Meleod (1986), were threefold, viz. land, housing, and marriage. He further adds that education which has contributed to recent migrations was absent in the earlier phase.

This remarkable observation suggests a number of features of Punjabi migration to developed capitalist countries. One, a continuous flow of people from one place to another may not necessarily be the function of a constantly affecting variable. Rather changes occur over a time even in the reasons for a particular phenomenon. Two, the migration of Punjabis from Doaba region may not necessarily be caused by pressure on land. In fact it is difficult to ascertain that small landholdings continued to cause migrations to foreign countries, though it may seem a plausible explanation.

Since the present study focuses on migrations which occurred after 1960, but more particularly from 1970 onwards, it is worthwhile to say something about land.

Of the 40 persons interviewed for this study 5 migrated between 1962 and 1969, and the rest from 1970 onwards. We have found two features in the context of landholdings of these migrants.<sup>2</sup>

- i. Small landholdings could not be the major reason as most of the migrants were having family land above 5 acres. Thus, in this situation, something else might have caused the migration.
- ii. In the case of most of the migrants the land size at home village in Punjab did not undergo any change. This means that no attempt was made by them to increase their holding through purchases. It also means that these migrants, in

fact, lost interest in doing something about the house, land and kins in their native villages. It should be pointed out that this happened because nobody was left behind in most of the cases.

A recent study of those Indians who had applied for emigration to Canadian High Commission conducted by Winchie and Carment (1989) indicates that the economic and prestige-related factors are not at the forefront to motivate migration. On the other hand, career-related aspects and better education for children were main considerations for migration. This study has been conducted on those who applied for emigration. Most of them are expected to be middle class persons. The reasons they have given seem to be post facto rationalisation. We have observed that the Punjabis living in Canada have a strong tendency to compare the number of things available and accessible to middle classes and working class in India and Canada. The argument is that most of the things, like cars and other electronic gadgets, are not only available to each class in Canada but also accessible and are utilized. On the other hand, to their counterparts in India these things are not accessible, what to talk of utilization.

The understanding of causes of migrations involves two dimensions as can be discerned from the above discussion. First, the migration from one place to a particular destination at different points of time may not necessarily be caused by the same set of factors. Second, the much discussed economic push may not always be behind migrations.

In the specific context of Punjab, the migrations to Canada and other developed capitalist countries were caused by the economic pull and not by poverty. For a migrant to go to Canada requires a lot of money which is beyond the means of the poor villager. In the preceding observation we have rather jumped over a stage. As Juergensmeyer (1982) has pointed out that well-to-do ad-dharmis who aspired to go to England would not get passports. Many of the peasants were allotted land in canal colonies at the turn of the century. Moreover, recruitment to army was wide open to the peasants most of whom were Jat Sikhs.

In fact, the follow up of the first migrations which occurred in the beginning of this century was the pull of money rather than poverty. One must not confuse between poverty and the rural life of the earlier 20th century of Punjab. Sometimes a retrospective analysis of a period

is made through the eyes of contemporary reality. The contention here is that the Punjabis who migrated to certain countries were not threatened by poverty. They were from the middle peasantry – the class status which enabled them to migrate. In the second phase which began after independence but more markedly from 1970 onward was characterised by the predominance of the same class. It was the middle peasant background of the migrants with one difference, viz. now many of them were well educated. In a way, the reasons for migration of Punjabis to developed capitalist countries at the turn of the present century and after independence were mainly located in the pull of better economic opportunities offered by these countries.

In the specific context of migrations to Canada between 1970-74, still another unique factor pushed a very small number of persons from Punjab, viz. the Naxalite movement. Most of the Naxalites were drawn from the middle classes and when the police repression began some of them were helped by their well connected relatives to leave the country.<sup>3</sup> At that time the Canadian immigration policy was liberal and they were able to reach Canada comparatively easily.

The migration of people to a particular country is to be understood in the light of the political economy of migrant labour. The developed capitalist region always has an area of subsumption of labour. In the case of international migration the third world countries have become the source from which the labour is drawn. Bolaria (1991:7) rightly points out:

Immigrant labour is advantageous to capital in many respects. For a capitalist economy to function its labour force must be maintained and renewed....The usefulness of foreign workers is not first limited to quantitative increase in the supply of labour. Obviously immigrant workers do supplement the domestic workforce and in the short run immigration patterns and fluctuations in economic activity tend to coincide.<sup>4</sup>

This issue will be taken at the end of this chapter also, but it may be remarked that whatever may be the class background of the migrant, it is probable that he will join the working class in the foreign country.

In a manner, an enquiry into the factors behind migration remains partial and incomplete owing to the reasons stated earlier. The

premise that all Punjabis who migrated, even our discussion seems to suggest so, were homogenous in terms of economic and social characteristics, is questionable.

However, it is perhaps possible to discern primary orientations of Punjabi migrants of both the phases. In the first phase, they went to earn money and never meant to stay back. Most of them returned.<sup>5</sup> Among those who returned, a substantial number went back to the USA or Canada. One major reason for their going back was their maladaptation and marginalisation in their own families.<sup>6</sup> In the second phase, they never meant to come back to India. They went with a clear understanding that they would settle in the country of their destination, i.e. Canada.

To understand the pattern of migration of the Punjabis, it is essential to start with those who reached Canada in 1970-74.<sup>7</sup> This was the time when large scale migrations occurred owing to the Canadian government's policy necessitated by its expanding economy. Later migrations were a consequence of the 1970-74 period. The migrations occurred in a definite manner. Those who followed the 1970-74 migrants came in stages and it took 15-20 years for a set of families to migrate. The succeeding discussion on the pattern of migration has been divided into two sections. The first section provides a general account of the pattern of migration and the second deals with a case to elucidate the general pattern.

### **I. General Account of Pattern of Migration**

In general the Punjabis have reached Canada in four stages by adopting different means. It is difficult to find a person who would categorically state that he did not want to migrate. There is, however, a degree of ambivalence towards the whole process. As we have seen in the case of the primary orientations of Punjabis' migrating to Canada that whatever were their desires, it almost always resulted into their permanent stay at Canada.<sup>8</sup> One consequence of these orientations was that in contrast to the first phase, the Punjabi migrants did not send money back for long. In most of the cases, there was no need for sending money because one after the other each member of the family reached Canada in 15-20 years. It will become clear when we discuss this pattern stagewise.

*The First Stage*

Let us start with 1970-74 period which is considered here the first stage but belong to the second phase of Punjabi migrants to Canada. The migrants who entered Canada during this period were largely young males with reasonable education. Some of them, of course, were holding professional degrees. Most of them were from the rural areas of Punjab and they mainly belonged to Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur and Ludhiana districts. In many ways, the migrants of the first as well as second phases resembled in terms of their social background. One marked difference was that in the first phase a substantial number among them were ex-soldiers whereas in the second phase there were well educated people. Most of them were young at the time of migration. Furthermore, they largely entered into Canada as visitors.<sup>9</sup> It may be further added that a major proportion of Punjabi migrants were unmarried at the time of migration.<sup>10</sup>

Invariably, the first destination of a migrant in Canada would be Vancouver. There seems to be a reason for Vancouver as his first destination. As stated above, he was a visitor but with a little money. Legally, a person could not take much foreign currency from India. This generally resulted into his purchasing dollars from the black market. Given the resources at his disposal in Punjab, one may make a conjecture that he could not have more money than is sufficient for his survival for one month. Along with this little money he had got some contacts in Vancouver having the oldest Punjabi population. His reaching Canada meant that he would stay with one of his contacts and look for a job. He would simultaneously apply for the landed immigrant status. Since acquiring immigration was to take some time, he would apply for work permit. However, getting a low wage work without work-permit was not very difficult.

In order to acquire immigrant status, some of the Punjabis had to leave Vancouver. There are provincewise variations in the immigration rules. The Government of Canada encouraged the migrants to go to and settle in a particular province. This led to the dispersal of Punjabis in Canada in the early stages. Interestingly, most of them have remained at those places. But we find some of them coming back to Vancouver after getting the status of landed immigrant.

After becoming immigrants in Canada, they looked for jobs. It should be noted that in the beginning they took up any job available.

However, taxi-driving was among the most favourite for these upstarts. It is particularly true of Punjabis in Edmonton where it was (still is) easy to get into this job. In a span of three to four years a Punjabi was able to establish himself. He was also ready to get married for which he was to return to Punjab.

### *The Second Stage*

In the second stage, two kinds of migrants reached Canada. All of them were related to the first stage migrants in one way or the other. The first kind was that of brothers, cousins, friends or friends' relatives. All of them reached Canada either as a result of invitation from the first stage migrants or were motivated due to the contact recently developed. One may raise a question as to why did the first stage invite these persons when they themselves were struggling against all odds? The answer perhaps is unexpectedly simple. It was due to the concern for security in an alien environment which prompted these people to bring someone closely related. All of them reached Canada as visitors and acquired immigration in due course.

The second kind of migrants were spouses of the first stage migrants. How did they reach Canada? After the first stage migrants settled as landed immigrants in Canada, they came back to Punjab for marriage. However, the process is related with some features of Punjabi society and there is a need to examine it. It may be mentioned that marriage with a *foreign returned* involved social and economic considerations.<sup>11</sup>

From the sociological point of view Indian marriage is regarded as the formation of a relationship between two families rather than the individuals as seems to be the case with western societies. This provides centrality to kinship considerations under which the rules governing marriage are well formulated through conventions. A logical consequence of marriage being a relationship between two families is that the field of spouse selection is well defined and demarcated, in terms of the rules of endogamy and exogamy. Moreover, it is largely expected that the marriage shall be an arranged one.

If we contextualise the Indian marriage in general, then the following picture emerges:



The moment an individual, irrespective of the sex, is to get married, his/her parents inform their kins who, in turn, try to find a suitable spouse for him/her. Even to decide that a person has reached the marriageable age is the prerogative of the parents. However, over a period of time certain changes have occurred in this context. Now a boy or a girl among some sections of the society has stopped recognizing this prerogative. But still in most cases it is always the kinship channels that are exploited to find a match. This is a process of *identification* in which the information regarding more than one recommendations from various kins reach the parents. Then begins the process of *choosing* one among the alternative matches. It is here that the concerned person's likes and dislikes are also taken into account for finalising the match.

Something which has been mainly introduced by the *foreign returned* in the the process of choosing is *meeting each other in a controlled environment*, i.e., a meeting is arranged between the boy and the girl in the presence of parents of the both. In a way, the concerned persons' likes and dislikes are also taken into account in finalising the match.

In the light of the above, the only thing expected from an immigrant in Canada was to write to his parents that he was interested in getting married. As and when he would reach Punjab, he was busy in selecting a spouse among the many identified by his parents. However, in exceptional circumstances the marriage could be solemnised even in the absence of the bridegroom. This was particularly true in the Doaba region during the 1960s in the case of those Punjabis who had migrated to England. The entire ceremony would take place with the photograph of the bridegroom.

The economic dimensions of the selection of the spouse is perhaps relevant in understanding the subsequent stresses within the family in Canada. Though most of the first stage migrants were educated, yet this was not always the case. Furthermore, among those who migrated later there was a considerable number of less educated males.

To put the economics of marriage in a proper perspective, it should be remarked that for a class other than upper classes living conditions in Canada - a post industrial economy - are far better than those in India - a developing economy. Thus, most of the people get

interested in finding *foreign returned* bridegrooms for their daughters. In the process a well educated girl is married to a less educated boy. This marriage ultimately results into the emigration of the whole family of the girl.

As a result of these two factors, an immigrant could get married within a fortnight, go back to Canada and apply for his wife's immigration. In general, the second stage migrants have been the wives of the first stage male migrants.

### *The Third Stage*

The third stage migrants are parents of both the husband and the wife. Who comes first is not very important. The parents may not migrate alone. In most of the cases they are accompanied by their minor sons and daughters. Some of the parents, in fact, come to Canada in order to help their children's immigration. It has been observed that many parents come back to India. The reasons may be many, but two factors have been obvious in contributing to their return.

One, their primary concern is to help their children's immigration which is possible only if they accompany their parents. After their sons and daughters reach Canada, they stay for some time and come back. Second, in the old age they find it difficult to adjust in the new and alien environment. This is particularly true of the father who in Punjab has been actively participating in the social life of the village community. However, it should not mean that all of them come back. In a situation when no one is left in the village to look after them in old age, they tend to stay in Canada.<sup>12</sup> Single parents have stronger tendency to settle permanently in Canada. It is, however, difficult to state whether they would stay or go back to India. In most of the cases, it depends upon specific circumstances of a family.

### *The Fourth and Subsequent Stages*

From the the fourth to any number of stages is a repetitive process. The minors who accompanied their parents to Canada would be married after some years. They would come to India for that purpose. Then their spouses would reach Canada whose parents along with their minor children would follow afterwards.

In a way, the pattern of migration is an unbroken chain of

Punjabi families immigrating one after the other on marriage and blood relation basis. It was obvious from the information we collected from our respondents. Of the total 40 respondents only two did not have any relative in Canada.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, 22 respondents informed that their and their wives' relatives were living in Canada. Still another important aspect was that 21 respondents had their relatives living in the same city. Thus, the pattern of migration involves the emergence of kinship structure that is coming up in Canada. It will become clearer when we discuss that pattern by focusing on a case.

## II. Case of Migration Pattern

The case given here indicates what has been discussed in the preceding section. There are two aspects of the pattern of migration which this case brings out clearly. One, as compared with the general description of stagewise migration, a specific situation has been delineated. Second, we have so far not been able to capture all methods of migration which this case helps us to do. There is a degree of generality involved in this case history, in the sense that most of the families in Canada have the similar story with very few exceptions.

**TABLE A: PATTERN OF MIGRATION TO CANADA INITIATED BY ONE**

<i>Year of Migration</i>	<i>Status at the time of reaching Canada</i>	<i>Place of arrival</i>	<i>Relation with the first immigrant</i>	<i>Education</i>
1971	Visitor	Vancouver shifted to Edmonton in 1972	First immigrant	B.A., B.Ed.
1972	Visitor	Edmonton	Friend's younger brother	B.E.
1975	Visitor	Edmonton	Friend	B.A.
1975	Immigrant	Edmonton	Wife	B.A.
1976	Immigrant (Migrated from U.K.)	Edmonton	First Sister Her husband and three children	Matric B.A., B.T.

1977	Visitor turned Immigrant	Edmonton	Second sister	Matric
1980	Immigrant	Edmonton	Parents <u>with teenage</u> son	Illiterate Studying In B.A. II.
1981	Immigrant	Edmonton shifted to Vancouver	Sister's Husband's Brother's Daughter	Primary
1983	Immigrant	Edmonton	Second Sister's Husband	B.A.
1984	Immigrant	Edmonton shifted to Vancouver	Sister's Husband's Brother's Daughter's Husband	B.A
1989	Immigrant	Edmonton shifted to Vancouver	First Sister's Husband's Younger Brother with family	Illiterate
1991	Immigrant	Edmonton	Second Sister's Husband's Parents	Illiterate

In Table-A, the pattern of migration to Canada initiated by one person has been shown. In addition to the characteristics given in the Table, certain other aspects have also been described in the preceding discussion.

We may start with the first person 'A' who reached in 1971. 'A' was in defence services in India and had taken early retirement to start his career as a school teacher somewhere near his village. He belonged to Hoshiarpur district. After retirement he joined the college to do his

B Ed - an essential qualification for a school teacher. He came to his village at the end to 1970 and started looking for a job. Even after six months, he could get none. It was during this period that he also began to try for going to Canada which proved easier. By the middle of 1971 he was on his way to Canada.<sup>11</sup>

His destination in Canada was predictably Vancouver. Upon reaching Vancouver he applied for immigration which he could not get. In the beginning of 1972 he left British Columbia and moved to Edmonton (Alberta). He got immigration in Edmonton where he finally settled or seems to have settled.

'A's' migration to Canada stirred many in India among his acquaintances. The first to go was his friend's younger brother 'B' from Ludhiana in 1972 who was an engineer and he got immigration rather fast. Shortly after that, he married a Canadian (white) woman.

In 1974, 'A' came back to India to get married. We have already discussed the process of getting married so far as the *foreign returned* are concerned. After getting married he left for Canada and as usual applied for his wife's immigration. However, before his wife's migration, his friend 'C' and former colleague from defence services reached Canada in 1975. 'C' went as a visitor and he arrived in Canada when the immigration laws were undergoing change. It virtually became impossible for him to acquire immigration as the time passed. Finally, the method used was not very foreign to Punjabis. 'B' divorced his wife and her marriage was arranged with 'C'. When 'C' got immigration he divorced his so called wife who remarried 'B'.

'A' had a sister who had been living in England since 1960s. In 1970s the economic conditions changed in the U.K. Its economy was in doldrums. She immigrated to Canada with her husband and three children in 1976. Since they had British citizenship, their immigration was without any impediment.

The year of 1977 saw the migration of A's younger sister and his wife's brother. Both of them had come as visitors. This simultaneous arrival of two visitors was generally avoided by the Punjabis. When this occurrence was probed, it was found that A's wife did not want her husband's sister's migration. Her brother's arrival was sort of competition between the husband and wife. However, there was one difference

between the two visitors which could (and finally did) have consequences for their immigration. A's sister was unmarried whereas his wife's brother was married. Subsequently, a dummy marriage of his sister was arranged and she could get immigration. His wife's brother had to go back only with the satisfaction of having visited Canada. It seems quite strange when we know that 'A' was married into a rich family from Ludhiana district. His brother-in-law should not have any reason to migrate. He was earning well from his transport business.

Then came the turn of A's parents who immigrated in 1980. They came with their teenage son who was the sole cause of their migration. After six months they came back to India leaving him behind. This ended the migration of persons who were directly related to 'A'. The other persons and families which followed were related to those who had followed 'A'.

In the light of the above, we see the migration of A's first sister's husband's brother's daughter. She could not have migrated but for her relations. Her marriage was arranged with A's teenage brother which enabled her immigration in 1981. She, of course, got a divorce. She got married again as a result to a boy living in Punjab who followed her in 1984. Subsequently, her parents and brothers and sisters immigrated by 1989. This whole group of immigrants shifted to Vancouver.

A's second sister who had got immigration also got married in 1981. Her husband followed suit in 1983 and his parents immigrated in 1991.

Besides the above relatives who followed A in different stages, there are others in whose immigration he has been instrumental. For instance, one of his maternal uncles with his wife and two married sons have also immigrated to Canada. It all began when a marriage was arranged between Uncle's son and a girl who was an immigrant in Canada.

Before we make concluding comments, it is worthwhile to mention certain important features of this whole process. It can be seen that the migration of a person has initiated a large number of other migrations. Can we really say that this is a general trend at such a level? Three more such cases were probed and the story was similar. In all the three cases 16 to 30 persons followed the first migrant. One respondent

in Vancouver commented thus "within 15-20 yrs. nobody is left behind in the village among the close kins to look after the house and land. The responsibility is given to somebody belonging to the scheduled castes traditionally associated with the family to look after both. On top of that he is not supposed to pay the rent to us". This may be an exaggerated reality, but it has every element and possibility of being near to the truth.

In the end we can draw following conclusions on the basis of the discussion made so far :

- (a) Over a period of 15-20 years most of the family members reach Canada in one way or the other. Though 20 years is quite a long period, yet at the apparent level the structure of the family in Canada corresponds to that in Punjab. It also makes the family a cohesive unit within which an area of everyday interaction is formed. It is expected, in such a situation, that a definite set of role expectations are built into the structure of the family.
- (b) On marriage basis other families immigrate. As a result of this a kinship structure corresponding to the one in Punjab is formed. Kinship network is an important dimension of Punjabi social life. This may be a significant element in the maintenance of the value and normative structure of Punjabi society among the Punjabis in Canada.
- (c) A visible size of old persons among the Punjabi immigrants in Canada signifies the emergence of a new set of problems for the Punjabi community. Most of these old persons are illiterate and have peasant background. They may find themselves extremely lost in an alien environment. The coming of old age people also signifies the arrival of powerful custodians of Punjabi values. In the light of what Durkheim (1933) says, it may be stated that there is a force which would be resisting change. However, all this depends upon the nature and extent of interaction between the perceived and actual dependence of the old on the one hand, and their manifest resistance to value change on the other.

- (d) The migration began with largely educated and professional persons, but has culminated into the arrival of dominantly uneducated and unskilled persons. This may ultimately lead to three kinds of processes. First, each of the kinship units may undergo class formation. This phenomenon has the possibility of creating a situation where families within a kinship unit would tend to move out of the given structure of everyday life to interact on class basis. This possibility exists if no intra- and intergenerational mobility occurs. Secondly, these uneducated migrants would tend to confine themselves within the Punjabi community in the initial stages. Upto the time they acquire working knowledge of English, it would not be affecting this interactive environment. Rather, it is possible that they consciously confine themselves within these defined boundaries. Thirdly, as uneducated and unskilled, they would be seeking jobs as per their qualifications, i.e. unskilled labour.
- (e) There is an unending chain of imigrations to Canada on the bases of blood and marriage. It is contributing to make the Punjabis in Canada aware of conditions prevailing in Punjab. This includes socio-cultural formations as well as political conditions. In a way, even after a long stay in Canada, a Punjabi is intimately aware of Punjab. This, of course, excludes his own visit to Punjab after five to ten years. There are some cases of those who return to Punjab, but most of them are old people who fail to adjust in the foreign environment.
- (f) Almost all the immigrants belong to the rural areas of Punjab. In its own way, the situation of the Punjabis in Canada is quite interesting from the sociological perspective. To put it appropriately, the Punjabis come from villages of a developing country and settle in metropolitan cities of a developed country. There is no denying the fact that educated



among them have already been exposed to urban life in India. Even for them the degree of change occurring due to migration is obvious. This degree of change is likely to result in the feelings of insecurity leading to the emphasis on Punjabi identity.

In sum, all these conclusions that we have drawn from the discussion of pattern of migration of the Punjabis to Canada tend to suggest a possibility of predicting their socio-cultural dynamics. The variations in educational levels of the migrants have every likelihood of giving rise to class formation creating a degree of heterogeneity under the ideal conditions.<sup>16</sup> All other aspects of migration pattern point towards the formation of a close-knit Punjabi community. It may, however, have its own inner problems relating to old persons and sons and daughters who are born and brought up in Canada. One important aspect which has not been covered in the whole discussion owing to the nature of this chapter is the division among Punjabis along caste, religious and regional lines providing an ethnic group in a foreign country an altogether different dynamics. It is so because the host society does not seem to be divided on such particularistic lines.<sup>17</sup> Placed in this context is the perception of the Punjabis with different socio-demographic features of this seemingly egalitarian system. It is plausible to suggest that a distinct social formation is going to occur in such a situation.

In the end, we may reiterate our view on the cases of migrations to Canada. Canada is not a unique country to attract a large number of people from outside. A general survey reveals that though migrations have been occurring universally, yet there is a specific context of these migrations to the developed capitalist countries. It is in the logic of economic development of a particular kind that a country requires a substantial amount of work force at a particular point of time. A recent phenomenon of migrations to Middle East countries from the Indian subcontinent may be helpful in establishing a relationship between migrations and economic development. Till the mid-1970s, migrations to Middle East were scanty, but as the petro-dollars were poured into various developmental works by the Sheikhs and Sultans, things underwent drastic change. On the other hand, the socialist

economies did not draw any migrants. The developed capitalist societies have been able to develop a zone of subsumption of labour at the world scale. We have underdeveloped countries which provide labour to the developed economies. An underdeveloped society which invests money to have professionals is mainly serving the developed world. Most of these professionals land up in these countries draining the meagre resources of the poor countries. We may, however, have any number of stories of unemployment, underemployment and lack of recognition in the developing countries but the fact is that economic imperialism is draining these countries of skilled man power. The migration pattern is only an indicator of the construction of a false perception of better wages, education etc. It is rather a process which is never ending so long as the developed countries need work force.

#### NOTES

1. Both Helweg (1986) and McLeod (1986) have pointed towards this fact. Our findings correspond with the above as it is evident from the table-1.

TABLE I : DISTRICT BACKGROUND OF THE MIGRANTS

<i>REGION</i>	<i>DISTRICT</i>	<i>FREQUENCY</i>
Doaba	(Hoshiarpur	- 15
	(Jalandhar	- 13
	(Kaapurthala	- 3
Malwa	(Ludhiana	- 6
	(Mansa	- 1
Majha	Amritsar	- 2
		40

Almost 78 per cent of the migrants interviewed belonged to the Doaba region. Most of them were from Hoshiarpur and Jalandhar districts. If the Tehsil background is taken into consideration, then a majority among the migrants from Doaba belonged to Garhshanker (8), Hoshiarpur (6) Tehsils of Hoshiarpur district, and Nawanshahr (6), Phillaur (3) and Jalandhar (3) tehsils of Jalandhar district.

2. The following table shows that land size has not undergone much change after migration.

TABLE-II

SIZE OF THE FAMILY LAND AT THE TIME OF MIGRATION BY ITS SIZE AT PRESENT

Sr. No.	Land size of the time of migration (Acres)	Land size at present (in acres)					Total
		No land Don't know	Upto 5	5.1-10	10.1-25	above 25	
1.	No land Don't know	7			1		8
2.	Upto 5	1	5		1		7
3.	5.1-10	1		8	2	1	12
4.	10.1-25			1	7	1	9
5.	Above 25					4	4
Total		9	5	9	11	6	40

3. See Judge, Paranjit S. (1982). *Insurrection to Agitation : Naxalite Movement in Punjab*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay.
4. Marx (1977) discusses international migration in two contexts. First, those countries who have higher wage rates attract labour from those countries where wages are low. In the 19th century the migration of labour from Ireland to England occurred due to this reason. He further points out that the countries which have low wages have scarcity of labour whereas in countries where wages are high there is surplus labour. Second, the expansion of capital occurred in the beginning through the international trade marked by colonialism. It involved international migration.
5. The return of Punjabi migrants to the U.S.A. and Canada forms an interesting subject matter of the emergence of militant nationalism among Punjabis. Most of them came as members of Ghadar Party determined to liberate their country through militant struggle.
6. Dhama, Sadhu Singh (1968), *Malooka* (Punjabi Novel) Balraj Sahni Yadgar Prakashan, Amritsar. The writer gives an account of some such cases one of which may be worth mentioning. After a migrant reached his native village and told his brother etc. that he planned to stay back permanently, the whole attitude undergoes a change. After sometime he is beaten. Finally, he retraces his steps back to Canada.
7. A study on migration generally tends to cover the factors in terms of push-pull paradigm. However, it should be worth examining how a particular ethnic group migrates, particularly in the context of international migrations when a host country has definite and strict laws governing immigration.
8. Johnston, Hugh (1990) "Patterns of Sikh Migration to Canada, 1900-1960" in O'Connell, Israel, T & Oxtoby, W.G. (eds.), *Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century*, Manohar, New Delhi. He has given some figures regarding the

extent of Punjabis (Sikhs) coming back to India thus "... In the Autumn of 1914, about half of the Sikhs in British Columbia left the province for India. From the Pacific Coast states of Washington, Oregon, and California, there was comparable exodus... Most of these men were Ghadar sympathisers, but lack of work helped them decide to go home. By March of 1915, 3,200 emigrants had returned to India from overseas, 8,000 came back during the first two years of war." (pp.303-4). He (305) further adds, "The fluctuation in numbers of Indians employed in British Columbia over the course of three decades suggests a continuing movement between Canada and India that immigration figures do not reveal...."

9. Of 40 persons interviewed for the present study 31 were upto 30 years age at the time of migration out of which 18 migrated during the period 1970-74. There were 17 among them who entered Canada as visitors.
10. 28 persons were unmarried out of the total respondents (40). However, all of them did not migrate in 1970-74. This number is quite important in the sense that the purpose of concentrating our discussion on those migrants who entered Canada in 1970-74 is mainly to explain the pattern of migration in a meaningful and focussed manner. It will become clear that all these unmarried males comprise first stage migrants in the theoretical sense of the term.
11. It may be applicable to all those regions or states of India where a considerable number of people have migrated to foreign countries. In this context, Gujarati society may be an ideal one for having a comparative understanding of this process. However, it becomes important for research enquiry to know why within certain regions a large number of families are interested in giving their daughters to the *foreign returned*.
12. As it has been discussed in Chapter-III, some of them returned as a result of conflicts in the family.

#### 13. TABLE-III RELATIVES IN CANADA

	<i>Frequency</i>
1. Respondent's relations	11
2. Spouses' relations	5
3. Respondents' & Spouses relations	22
4. No relations	2
Total	40

#### TABLE-IV PLACE OF RELATIVES IN CANADA

<i>Place</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
1. Same City	21
2. Other City and/or Province	17
3. Not Applicable	2
Total	40

14. He told in interview that he got a letter of appointment (temporary) of teacher the day he was to leave the village for Canada.
15. After this author's return from Canada, he learnt that she has got the divorce from her husband. Husband would be followed by his second wife and all other people mentioned in general. The divorced woman would marry again and another series of migrations can be expected.
16. Ideal conditions here means the absence of job discrimination.
17. There is, however, a possibility that even the developed societies have a degree of division along regional lines. Moreover, caste is replaced by race. Contrary to the prevalent notion that in the western societies caste is replaced by class as a form of inequality, it is rather race which creates inequality among people belonging to the same class.

### 3

## INTRA-FAMILY CONFLICTS

Let us start this chapter with a qualifying remark on conflicts in the family in the particular context of Punjabi society. The family in Punjab must not be considered as devoid of contradictions in its ideal form. Any family entails a degree of constraints on its members. The changing material conditions introduce new elements in familial relationship causing new forms of tensions. Therefore, when we propose to describe the conflicts in Punjabi family in Canada, the intention is not to start it with the pre-supposition that every thing has been all right with the family in Punjab. The objective is narrow, i.e. the identification of emergence of new forms of conflict within the light of the above that the social control mechanisms which had been operating in Punjab could not be replicated in a new environment. Any attempt of this kind by any Punjabi would lead to a threat to the parental authority:

It may also be added that our purpose is not to construct any ideal typical model of Punjabi family. To our mind any such attempt would involve the construction of a static model comparable only to the corresponding period. We know that Punjabi migration to Canada has been a continuous process. A person who has migrated in 1960s will certainly have a different family experience than the one who migrated in 1990.

In the light of the above argument, we find it difficult to accept the ideal typical model constructed by Ames and Inglis (1973-74) in spite of the fact that they accept that the actual Punjabi family may not approximate the Punjabi ideal traditional family which has also not remained static.

<sup>1</sup> One important dimension of any family study is patriarchy. Of the various explanatory variables patriarchy is suitable on account of two factors. One, it helps us to make cross cultural comparison. Second, it is not an ethnocentric variable. In other words, patriarchy as a variable helps us to understand the distribution of authority in the family.<sup>1</sup>

We may proceed with the following observation. In Punjab the family is characterised by patriarchy whereas in Canada it may have a limited authority of the male head of the household. Though there is a common element of the authority of the male in the two settings, yet there is a degree of variation in the actual exercise of authority. The Canadian family is perhaps in the process of change in the sense that the male domination is waning.

The declining character of not only the male domination but also the parental authority in Canadian society (or for that matter in most of the Western societies) has a lot to do with the direct interference of the state in family affairs. The dominant value of western democracies is to consider individual liberty over and above family autonomy. There seems to be a broad consensus, at least at the manifest level, among people on the sanctity of individual liberty. This enables the state to intervene on behalf of any member of the family whose liberty and rights are threatened by other members. Thus, ideally speaking, the family has begun to cease to be an effective agent of a man's domination over his wife and parent's authority over their children.<sup>2</sup> It is rather economic and political spheres external to the family situation where man continues to dominate. From patriarchy the western societies have been moving towards gender inequality. The parent-child relationship has all the characteristics of strains which any system in transition exhibits.<sup>3</sup>

In India the role of state in relation to family has not been crucial. The state has so far been able to touch only the periphery of the institutions of family and marriage. Age at marriage, dowry prohibition, women's succession to family property, etc are some of the areas in which reforms have occurred through the conscious efforts of the state. However, customary law tends to accept the sanctity of tradition. In India, therefore, different religious communities have different laws making it not only difficult to have radical social reforms through legislation but also divisions of the society along communal lines has been further strengthened. As compared with the West the state has not

been very successful in defending the liberty and rights of individuals against family and other oppressive institutions.

In the light of the above facts, it may be stated that Canadian family is characterised by limited authority of the male head of the household. Also, the Canadian society has gender inequalities accompanied by unequal distribution of power. However, there may be a degree of parental authority subject to intervention on the part of the state.

On the other hand, any understanding of Indian family begins with the strong patriarchal relations. Placed in the larger context of Indian society is the Punjabi family which has all the features of patriarchy.

In the light of this we may take note of some aspects of Punjabi family. These may be found among Punjabis in Canada too.

- (1) Patriarchy implies that with the overall decision making power of the male head of the household the role relations are defined. It is, therefore expected that all members of the family behave in that manner.
- (2) The domination of the father, ideally speaking, remains unchallenged so long as he controls family property (land). Breaking of the family means formation of any number of families with new patriarchs. This occurs when there is a division of property among brothers.
- (3) The male members enjoy more privilege than the females. Sons may remain outside the house in late hours, whereas daughters are not permitted such freedom. The built-in logic of patriarchal environment is that a son has to face the outside world.
- (4) Patriarchy does not simply mean the domination of father or the eldest male. It covers more or less every aspect of the life of each member in the family. Invariably, patriarchy is also an abstract authority in the sense that outside the family situation any elderly looking male can exercise a degree of authority to command younger person(s) to behave well. It seems that this kind of authority is derived



from age status. However, it may not hold good in other situations. In sum the authority of the male is derived from patriarchal value structure which may not remain confined to family situation.

There seems to be a confusion on the concepts of patriarchy and gender inequality. Many a time, patriarchy is made synonymous with gender inequality. This conceptual overlapping is more in the case of Indian society than that of the Western. The reason for this is the import of conceptual paradigm in a society where the object of analysis has not clearly made its appearance. The last decade (1980s) is a period of major changes in India. We find equally powerful forces of change as well as revivalism. Coupled with the legal sanction to customs is the reinforcement of religious identities. This has led the social scientists to serious thinking regarding the direction of change. Whatever might be the case, the changing environment in India is giving a scope to utilize different approaches. In spite of all this, family structure is still embedded in patriarchal norms and practices.

In the light of above general discussion on the central explanatory structural component of Punjabi family and the description of the pattern of migration in the previous chapter, following observations can be made regarding the Punjabis in Canada.

1. Except for those who are born and brought up in Canada (we even include those who migrated at an early age) all members of the family are socialised in a patriarchal environment of Punjabi society. This implies the patriarchal values are internalised among most of the Punjabis which influence their orientations, attitudes, behaviour, and practices.
2. Those who are born and brought up in Canada are facing two worlds, a society within society. They may be having ambivalent attitudes towards the one which is linked with their ethnic identity.
3. Since we expect that most of the parents are first generation migrants, their treatment with the sons would be different from that with daughters.

4. A Punjabi living in Canada encounters dual value systems, viz. the one in which he has been socialized and the second which he receives as unnatural. He does not have to wait long to see the actualization of the clash between the two pressing him on both sides.

The above general observations are not hypotheses for this study. However, most of the preceding discussion tends to cover these issues.

Before we focus on the structural and contextual dimensions of intra-family conflicts, it is worthwhile to identify different categories of individuals related to each other in a typical Punjabi family in Canada. These are as follows :

**A : *Husband And Wife***:- In this category either the husband or wife was the first stage migrant. The other got the immigrant status on marriage basis.

**B : *Parents*** :- This category may be formed by parents of either the husband or the wife or both. If the husband has immigrated on marriage basis, then in all likelihood the wife's parents are already living in Canada. However, parents of both may immigrate afterwards. Parents of the wife stay in the family temporarily provided that they have sons(s). In case they have only a daughter, their stay with her is more or less permanent. On the other hand, husband's parents tend to stay permanently if they do not have another son living in Canada. They may also return to Punjab after some time.,

**C: *Brother And or Sister*** : - Brother(s) and / or Sister(s) of either the husband or the wife may be living with them for a period of time. They generally accompany their parents to Canada. All of them are supposed to be minors at the time of immigration.

**D: *Sons and Daughters***:- This category includes those in the family who are born and brought up in Canada. It also includes those who come to Canada at an early age.

Every Punjabi family in Canada does not have all categories of persons living together. However, in one way or the other, a majority of them have encountered a situation when all of them have lived together. The process of formation of an extended family continues to be a

permanent feature of the migration pattern. A man immigrating on the basis of marriage is invariably followed by his parents and younger brothers and sisters. Thus, the structure of a Punjabi family in Canada is a process starting from a conjugal unit, becoming extended in between and generally turning nuclear in the end.

It should be added that the foregoing discussion may give an impression that the preceding delineation of intra-family conflicts is based on the hypothesis of confrontation between two value systems. Not denying the fact of this confrontation in the kind of environment we are dealing with, it can be reasonably argued that there could be other causes of conflicts in the family. Some other aspects, like economic considerations in an alien environment and the issue of matrimonial alliance may be equally important in the family. It is plausible to say that factors leading to conflicts in the family are to an extent linked with the conflicting value systems. The following description of conflicts is made in terms of inter- and intra-category interaction.

### **Between A and D**

Kurien (1991) points out that among South Asians the interaction between these two categories is characterised by conflicts. It is related with the way the husband-wife perceived the Canadian environment. For them it has a corrupting influence on the teenage youth. To protect their children from this influence, parents send them back to India where they are enrolled in reputed schools. Or they exercise strict control over children's behaviour. In other words, a degree of enforced socialization occurs. However, some parents give complete freedom to children which according to Kurien (*Ibid*) is the abandoning of discipline.

Kurien's views are largely endorsed by our findings. However, there may be a variable response to specific issues among different ethnic groups of South Asians. Placed in this context are Punjabis who hail from rural areas of Punjab. It is perhaps difficult to expect that the Punjabi parents (who are largely Jat Sikhs) would abandon the exercise of control. Of all the respondents, we found that two had sent their children to India to study in schools. Both of them opined that in Canada the children do not obey their parents. When they were asked to specify, their response was that in Canada the children do not even allow their parents to watch television. Why should the children obey their parents?

It is a question which is difficult to ask without a context. One important aspect of parent-child relationship among Punjabis in Canada has been that the latter would always ask questions whenever they were told to do something. In situations when a family is visited by others, special arrangements are made for children. Interestingly, most of the children remain busy among themselves and they never disturb the elders. This aspect of their behaviour is always ignored by parents, because it is expected that they should always behave in this manner, i.e. they should be convenient.

The exercise of parental authority may not be understood without keeping in mind the sex of the child. Daughters are put under stricter control than sons. As discussed earlier, under patriarchy sons enjoy more liberty than daughters. There are, however, forms of exercise of control. It can be in the form of making efforts for constructing an interactional environment so that children interact with those who are approved by parents. Complete control is not possible due to the simple fact that parents cannot determine the interactional environment in schools. In the case of daughters control is exercised in making them come home straight from the schools. The parents would always be worried about their marriage. In one of the plays by Hundal et.al (1991), the issue of parents' discriminatory attitudes have been beautifully depicted. The mother is worried about daughter's late arrival at home. The daughter is not served food by mother which she does when the son comes. The son has also been shown as being aware of his privileged position in the family as compared with his sister. One of the interesting aspects of this play in this regard is that the daughter has been shown as confronting and challenging this orientation.<sup>4</sup>

The primary concern of the parents vis-a-vis children is invariably their marriage. If a family does not find approval of the parents, then the daughter must be kept away from the eligible boy of that family. It should be pointed out that one may have the mistaken impression that this kind of a thing is confined to less educated Punjabis. Contrarily even in the case of the educated and self-proclaimed westernised Punjabis the things are not quite different. The difference lies in subtlety in which the operation is carried out. In spite of all this, the sons and the daughters defy the parental control in one way or the other.

Marriage is perhaps the most important dimension of the dynamics of decision making in the family. For the purpose of keeping

boundaries of the Punjabi society intact, it is essential that young boys and girls marry within the community. The attempt is generally made to bring spouses from India. This orientation is stronger towards the girls who according to parents must not go out on a date. The following case brings out the contradictions such efforts entail :

A Jat Sikh family from Amritsar has been living in Canada for the last 23 years. At the time of this occurrence it has been residing in Edmonton. The daughter was born and brought up in Canada. She was working in a store when her parents decided to marry her to a boy living in Punjab. Lacking the courage to bluntly refuse this match she took the course of marrying an Ismaili boy. This created a lot of hue and cry within the family. The father consulted and sought the help of other Punjabis. After some time, he had to compromise. Some of the people were of the view that the girl would have married a Punjabi boy born and brought up in Canada had her parents not imposed on her a boy from Punjab.<sup>5</sup>

One major problem which young girls are facing is their failure to understand the motives of their parents in imposing decisions in matters concerning their lives. On the other hand, the boys who relatively undergo less control make it obvious to their parents that they would not marry girls from India. Recently, a compromise seems to have been reached between parents and sons and daughters. Now most of the spouses hail from either Canada or England. To sum up this aspect of parental control, we can say that still the dominant characteristics of marriage are caste endogamy and arranged marriage. With regard to category-D(sons and daughters born and brought up in Canada) selecting spouses from Punjab is a declining trend.

If the sons and daughters permit their parents to select spouses for them from within the caste (or as they desire), then it must be assumed that the parents have been able to inculcate Punjabi values among them. It is, therefore, wrong to assume as generally is done that the children are westernized. In fact, we see a curious amalgamation of values among them. It perhaps is a situation where an ethnic identity compels the individuals not to forget their position.<sup>6</sup> This referring back to the parental values becomes a context of security. What we find are imitative life styles and preservation of ethnic identities. Hiro (1973)

mentions a study conducted by Krausz on the Jews who after a century of living in London have continued to preserve their ethnic identity and cohesion through various means including endogamy. Thus, we have instances where such efforts exist on the part of an ethnic community to preserve itself.

Added to the dimension of emergence of new values is the religious identity. Interestingly, religious activities are so entwined with the social life of the Punjabis that even a self-proclaimed non-believer has to visit the temple or Gurdwara every Sunday. The religious socialization of children makes them distinct from the dominantly Christian population.

The relationship between parents and children is marked by ambivalence. On the one hand, we find mutual suspicion and on the other hand, a degree of affinity particularly among the children towards parents. Such an ambivalence is not new in this kind of environment. Family as an agency of socialization is never an ideal place of love and intimacy. To a considerable extent, socialization as a process is also coercive and repressive because its primary purpose is not only the internalization of values but also the channelization and streamlining of the behaviour. We invariably find a degree of love-hatred relationship in the family. If that is the case, then what is so important about the Punjabi family in Canada.<sup>7</sup> To put this question of general kind in proper perspective, it should be stated that the socialization is much more coercive and repressive for children in the care of Punjabis in Canada. They encounter two environments. The one at home is not available from other sources and seems unnatural whereas the one encountered through television particularly, has been made unnatural by the family. What we find is the growing separation of two as a result of which a Punjabi boy or girl would be radically different in these two settings, i.e. family and outside (school e.g.).<sup>8</sup> This duality may have given rise to a degree of mental tension, but this does not seem to be the case at the apparent level. We have the coexistence of two selves like two channels of television. As per the requirements of the interactive environment one of the two is switched on without any strenuous effort on the part of these boys and girls.

### **Between A and B**

As mentioned earlier, the arrival of old people adds new dimension to the family structure. Invariably parents of the husband live

in the family. But sometimes wife's parents may also live with the family for a temporary period.

The immigration of parents has an existential dimension. They are left alone in the village in the old age with no one to look after them. Sometimes they land up in Canada in the process of helping their minor children who can only immigrate if they accompany their parents.

The husband-wife have their own reasons to bring parents to Canada. Firstly, both of them work. In the initial stage when the children are young, the wife has to either stop working or leave children with a baby-sitter. It is either the decline or the increase in expenditure for the family. As such this is not a serious problem, but it is perceived so by most of the Punjabis. Perhaps, women who have the experience of a subjugated life in Punjab do not want to withdraw from the workforce.<sup>9</sup> However, there is no evidence to prove this conjecture. One of the ways of tackling this problem is to bring husband's parents to Canada. They are generally accompanied by their minor children. Secondly, the husband is interested in getting his parents alongwith his brothers and sisters immigrated to Canada.

This interest is governed by the way the Punjabis have started living in Canada. They form a closed group. The interaction among them is based on the Punjabi milieu. In Punjab the prestige of a person is determined by the strength of his faction whose nucleus is the kin group (in addition to the size of land). Larger the kin group, stronger and more prestigious is the faction. A Punjabi encounters an environment in Canada which is quite familiar to him. If the familiar environment provides security in relation to the larger society on the one hand, then it also gives rise to a feeling of insecurity on account of being alone, on the other. This prompts him to expedite the immigration of his parents, and brothers and sisters. Once the parents reach Canada, the family dynamics undergoes a change.

These elderly people share some characteristics in general. Firstly, most of them are illiterate and know no language other than Punjabi. Secondly, most of them have migrated from the villages of Punjab and have never travelled beyond Delhi. Even coming to Delhi is related merely with receiving and seeing off relatives living abroad. Thirdly, they are peasants and embedded with peasant life and culture. Thus, their perceptions of family, women and religion are derived from

these existential conditions. As a corollary to the above, the elderly males had been enjoying authority in the family.

Coming to Canada entails radical change in the life of these people. However, we have to make a distinction between men and women.

For women, ironically most of the things remain the same. An old woman said in the interview, "Even in the village I used to stay at home and do the domestic work". Thus, in her case the shift is from her dependence on husband to son and daughter-in-law. It is the old men who encounter major change in their life. From a position of authority, they move to marginality and dependence. It is the son on whom the father depends for various needs. A city like Edmonton or Vancouver presents greater difficulties than any city of England. The thin population spreading at a large space makes it difficult to walk down to a place. Everything is so far that car becomes indispensable.

The problem becomes quite serious for the elderly people. In Surrey (British Columbia) many people bought houses at costly prices near the gurdwara. It is informed by respondents that many Punjabis buy houses near gurdwaras for reasons of convenience to their parents. Most of the Punjabi Sikh families assemble in the gurdwaras on Saturdays and Sundays. If one visits the gurdwaras on working days, one may find some elderly people sitting there. In Edmonton there is a Senior Citizens' Hall for Punjabis. Most of the elderly men spend their day time in the Hall. In the case of most of the families the father depends upon his son to go to the gurdwaras or Senior Citizens Hall. Owing to son's difficulties in dropping him at these places everyday, he remains confined to the house most of the time. This perpetual dependence is always resented by the father.

The father finds it difficult to adjust in the new situation. After some months of arrival he starts talking about his village, its people, land and his friends. In a way, he begins to hint at his interest in going back to India. Combined with this yearning is his tendency to exercise patriarchal authority which makes things difficult for him. He resents his daughter-in-law running the house and having more say in day-to-day matters. He is told to forget the Punjabi way of family life.



There is still another aspect which requires attention. A considerable number of elderly people become economically active.<sup>10</sup> In Vancouver most of them work as farm labourers in Fraser Valley during peak seasons. After working for sometime they also become eligible for the unemployment allowance during the lay off period. The author has been informed that some Punjabis in Edmonton send their parents to Vancouver during peak seasons where they stay with the Punjabi farmers. Many of them do work as labourers. But more important thing is that they are registered as farm workers. This helps them to secure unemployment allowance. On top of that there is also old age pension for which a person becomes eligible after he has completed a stay in Canada for some years.

The economic freedom is generally perceived by the father as an instrument of exercise of authority. This is not acceptable to husband-wife. A conflict ensues in the family in which the daughter-in-law is the prime target. The following case though not representative of the intensity of conflict, indicates the extreme limits such conflicts may reach:

An old man of 65 years reached Edmonton in 1989 as an immigrant. He came with his wife and a son. The family hailed from Hoshiarpur district. He had two more sons who were well settled. He and his wife started living with the eldest son. After some months of his stay, he began to quarrel with his daughter-in-law. This continued for some time. He had been visiting Senior Citizens' Hall during this period where he had interaction with other old men facing more or less similar situation. One day in 1991 when his son was out to work, he stabbed his daughter in law with a knife. She resisted. Her mother-in-law came to her rescue but could not save her from the injury. She rushed out, knocked some other Punjabi door and was rushed to the hospital. His old age and her youth perhaps helped her to survive. When he was arrested he began to feign insanity. According to some of the persons interviewed, he learnt from other old men that if you are proved insane, then you would be acquitted of such criminal charges. However, he was released on bail and sent back to India by his sons.

Between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law conflict begins to develop when the children no more need baby-sitting. When there are more than one son living in Canada, parents move from one to the other. This may include that son who accompanied them as a minor.

Sometimes, parents come back to Punjab. There are two kinds of parents who return to Punjab. First, some are left with a son doing farming in the village or working in a city. They always have a hope of being looked after by him. Second, being well off economically, they adopt either a son or a daughter (preferably daughter) of a distant relative and never talk about going back to Canada.<sup>11</sup> Very few stay back and form a separate household depending on pension and (or) farm wages. This last category of parents are perhaps the worst sufferers in the whole situation.

There may be a situation of wife's parents living in the family. It happens because of the immigration of the husband on marriage basis. Or the wife's parents along with their minor children immigrate on the basis of blood relations. In the first situation the husband who is new to the environment and has to find a job, occupies a marginal position in the family. However, as and when he finds a job, he takes a house on rent and moves there with his wife. The chances of conflict in this situation are generally rare because of the logic of patriarchy. Moreover, the manifestation of conflict is an exception. In the second case, the family rarely experiences a situation of conflict.

There are two reasons stated by two sets of respondents for the non-occurrence of conflict in the family. The first reason is that the father of the wife does not try to establish his patriarchal authority. He happens to be the father of the daughter and by virtue of patriarchal principle he is to be polite to his son-in-law and his family. The second reason is provided by those who think that in Canada the Punjabi family is under the control of the wife. She may have conflict with her parent-in-laws, but not with her parents. Thus, the chances of conflict become remote. Whatever may be the reason, there is no evidence to suggest that when wife's parents come to stay with the family the situation would tend to become volatile.

Finally, we may add that an intense manifest conflict between A & B is avoided, or it does not come out of the family. The notion of

family prestige or its public image has a lot to do with this avoidance. One hardly hears about such occurrences in the family.

### **Between A and B**

The immigration of teenage brothers and sisters of husband or wife is a social obligation of each of them. None of them can escape from it. Every Punjabi in Canada relates himself with his family in Punjab. He/she visits Punjab once in five to ten years and expects to be treated well at home. It is all the more important in the case of the husband who represents the family. His interactional environment within the Punjabi community as pointed out earlier is secure if he brings his brothers and sisters.

All brothers and sisters are minors, at least as per their birth certificates, at the time of immigration. Most of them might be studying in colleges and schools at the time of immigration. Their arrival implies an additional economic burden on the family. As a result, they fail to pursue their studies further. They immediately start looking for jobs. Upto this juncture the brothers and sisters share common fate. Later on, the context of conflict or tension is different for each of them.

So far as sister is concerned, the main concern of the family is to find a suitable match for her in Punjab. This itself is an orientation which is linked with the Punjabi migration pattern. In some cases, the girl is already engaged or her parents have already committed to someone. What happens after immigration is that close relatives in Canada look forward to the possibility of bringing a boy from among their relations in Punjab. If the girl is wife's sister, then the first in this recommendation is husband's relative. When parents of the girl or the girl herself do not agree with the match, problems begin to surface in the family. The pressure is strong as it involves the husband-wife relationship. Sometimes parents bow to the pressure. The marriage arranged under pressure is a kind of agreement in which after the immigration of husband's relative, divorce is arranged. In the case of husband's sister, the nature of conflict and its degree of occurrence remain almost the same.

In all those cases where the groom's only qualification is that he is a relative, the premeditated divorce is the best way out of the conflict. It should be mentioned here that such a conflict does not remain confined

to the family in Canada. Its ripples can be seen in Punjab too - in the form of a strain among relatives.

It is an irony inherent in the situation that the girl involved is not consulted. She is generally taken for granted. Moreover, her brother or sister has done a great thing for her to make her immigration to Canada possible. It is, therefore, expected that she should repay sometimes committing her whole life. Her anguish and anger are not considered worthy of attention.

The situation involving husband's brother is qualitatively different from that of the husband's or wife's sister. The intra-family conflict arising out of the issues concerning sister's marriage is not between her and husband-wife category. It transcends the family boundaries and becomes an inter-family issue. Furthermore, the practice of treating sister in this way has become a convention and thus no longer is a generalised bone of contention among Punjabi families in Canada.

The case of husband's brother is also an instance of the evolution of Punjabi community with its own normative standards. Most of the persons interviewed (particularly those who came to Canada in 1970-74) were of the view that teenage boys who come with their parents are the ones who get spoiled (westernised). The argument was as follows: They come to Canada at such an age when they can be easily influenced. The glamour of the Canadian cities catch them quite fast. Moreover, you cannot control them like the way they were disciplined in Punjab. Thus, they become drug addicts, smokers etc. But this was found to be a biased opinion which did not take into consideration the perspective of these boys.<sup>12</sup> They come with definite expectations from their brothers as well as the new world. Let us focus on the specificity of the situation.

The patriarchal environment in Punjab as discussed earlier provides a boy more freedom and autonomy than his sister. When he reaches Canada, he expects that his brother would help him in every way possible. At the same time he is grateful to his brother for making his immigration possible. This gratefulness is manifested through his complete compliance to him. After getting the work, he is particular in handing over the salary cheque to his brother. It all starts when it begins to dawn on him that his brother is becoming more interested in the

cheque than helping him. His request for car is evaded. A time comes when he stops giving his cheque which also implies that his stay in the family is over.

The period between the arrival and the leaving of brother's house is marked by many occurrences. By then his sister-in-law might have managed the immigration of her sister on marriage basis with his help. When the agreed upon divorce materializes, it is the beginning of end of the congenial atmosphere in the family. He becomes a burden on the family and any minor thing is turned into a major issue. One method she adopts is not to cook food for him. His brother is party to all such harassments. The following is the narration of a boy with such an experience:

"My relations with my brother were cordial. He was always kind to me. One of the good things he did was to put me in the school. I was also doing part time work and would always hand over the salary cheque to him. It all went well for a year. I wanted to buy a car. He would always evade my request. Then I began to find that the food would not be cooked for me. When I complained, my brother told me to leave the house. I went to my sister's house and stayed there for some time."

One of the major contradictions in the perception of Category A is that in one situation they talk about changed environment in Canada as compared with that of Punjab. At the same time, they treat their brothers and sisters in the manner akin to Punjabi values. The marginalisation of the younger brother in the family is a general process with a few exceptions.

### **Within-A**

There is a need to give a succinct description of the interaction between husband and wife. It is not our purpose to focus on those strains in the family which are part and parcel of modern family life whether in Canada or in urban Punjab. The aim here is to examine how a particular migration pattern of the Punjabis contributes to the formation of structure of family relations which lead to conflicts. It is worthwhile to add that the context of conflict between husband and wife as described below is not very common.

It has been pointed out in Chapter II that some not so educated men marry educated women due to reasons already specified. When such women reach Canada and begin to look for jobs it may happen that they manage to get better jobs than their husbands. This becomes a factor in giving a degree of authority to the wife in the family.<sup>13</sup> This leads to strain in the husband-wife relationship sometimes leading to divorce.

In sum, intra-family conflicts usually occur when a nuclear family becomes an extended family or expand in size. The reasons for conflicts are many and are largely located in the interaction between the patriarchal values and the new environment in which such values are more or less outdated. One major context of manifestation of patriarchal values is matrimony. The desire to have more relatives in Canada coupled with the preservation of Punjabi culture becomes a basis of conflict in the family. So long as the Punjabis in Canada continue to have these orientations the bases of intra-family conflicts would remain. To put it in other words, so long as the current migration pattern of Punjabis is there, the intra-family conflicts would continue.

#### NOTES

1. It may be added that we do not wish to ignore the presence of matriarchy in certain societies. In India too the Khasi and Garo societies in Meghalaya are described as matriarchal where the mother is the head of the family. She is the one who inherits family property. Even in these societies the role of maternal uncle is quite significant.
2. This should not imply that the decline in parental authority over children and man's domination over woman has attained a degree whereby it can be stated that a process of disappearance of these forms of authority has started. Steinmentz, Suzanne K & Murray A. Strauss (1975) have included some studies in their edited work, *Violence in the Family*, which indicate that the American family is characterised by patriarchy but there is a transition towards its decline.
3. As pointed above, family violence exists. Another notable feature of the North American family which the author observed is that there is a great deal of TV coverage of family violence. It is more marked in the case of the girls accusing their fathers of rape or attempt at rape.
4. Hundal et. al (1991) *Har Umar Da Iko Rona* (Punjabi). In this play the mother is further shown comparing her own life in the village of Punjab with that of her daughter. She expresses the view that her daughter is enjoying much more freedom than she used to at her age.
5. The author has an experience of interacting with Punjabis in England in 1987. Some of his acquaintances in Midlands told him that the girls had begun to refuse

marriage with a boy from Punjab village. In this connection, they mentioned that three sisters committed suicide because their parents were adamant on this issue.

6. Ballard, Roger & Catherine Ballard (1977) have picturised this situation in the case of England beautifully. We may quote them here thus "... It is widely assumed by outsiders that there will inevitably be major problems of 'culture conflict' between 'traditional' repressive parents and their freedom-seeking, anglicised children. However, it is our experience that although many Asians go through a period of rebellion against their parents' values (as do most adolescents in Britain), for the time being at least, almost all of them are returning to follow a modified version of Punjabi culture norms in their late and early twenties" (pp.43-45). They have pointed out two factors which contribute to the young Punjabis' coming back to the family fold, viz. the family socialization and racial discrimination.
7. If we assume that any family would be interested in safeguarding its public image, then this characteristic of Punjabi family ceases to be an emergent phenomenon. However, a Punjabi family, as has been made clear in the subsequent discussion, is facing other Punjabi families as well as the dominantly white society making the case important for the family.
8. Ballard & Ballard, op. cit., indicate that the children have been able to manage both the worlds effectively.
9. The women in rural areas live under the complete control of the family. In Punjab villages it is expected from them to be obedient and faithful. Their interaction is controlled. Though changes are occurring fast in Punjab, yet the conditions of women would take long to change.
10. There is a lot of variation among them in terms of age. The range is between 55 and 75.
11. The understanding is that when the girl would reach marriageable age, they would spend all money on her marriage.
12. The author is grateful to Sadhu Vinang (Baraby) for putting this issue in a proper perspective which helped him to evolve an appropriate line of enquiry in subsequent interviews.
13. It should not be concluded that the husband loses his authority. Rather he feels that his authority is eroded.

## 4

### FORMATION OF A COMMUNITY

We shall now focus on the Punjabis in Canada as a community. To reiterate our perspective it may be mentioned here that we are not taking up the issues of integration and adaptation. One of the ways to understand an ethnic group as a community is how it has been able to develop its societal patterns different from not only the host society but also the society to which it belongs. However, the starting point should be an understanding of the society to which an ethnic group belongs. In many ways a degree of resemblance is always expected between the two. We, therefore, start from a brief description of the Punjabi society.

The Punjabi society is divided along caste lines. One of the important features of caste system is that the intercaste interaction is restricted. There is both social as well as ecological segregation of castes in rural Punjab. Intercaste interaction is characterised by asymmetrical relations between upper castes and lower castes. All castes practise caste endogamy. There is a degree of correspondence between the caste and economic hierarchy. Most of the upper castes are landowning castes whereas the lower castes are landless. Owing to their numerical preponderance and landownership, the Jats are a dominant caste in Punjab.

Sikhs, Hindus, Christians and Muslims comprise the population of Punjab. However, Sikhs and Hindus are numerically more preponderant than others. Except Hindus all the other religious groups are expected to be egalitarian so far as their religious ideologies as enunciated in their scriptures are concerned. This, however, is an ideal expectation. Sikhs are as caste ridden as the Punjabi Hindus are. Among



them four major caste groups can be identified, viz. Jats, Khattris, Ramgarhias and Mazhbis.

Besides the caste and religious groupings, the Punjabi society is also hierachised along economic lines. The recent developments in agriculture have influenced the traditional class relationships. The increase in the number of occupations combined with a rise in education have broken the hereditary character of occupations. However, the privileged in the earlier period more or less continue to occupy higher positions despite these changes.

The above description of Punjabi society is general to the extent that most of the regional societies in India can be discussed in terms of caste, religious, and class distinctions. This means that the Punjabi society shares a great deal with what we in general state as the Indian society. However, what makes it distinctive in its ideal delinca-tion in that caste hierachy is not very rigid. On top of that the influence of Islam in general and Sufism in particular, and the emergence of Sikh movement and its subsequent establishment as a religion have contrib-uted to the decline in traditional rigidities of social structure.

It may be expected that our discussion of the Punjabis in Canada would follow a predictable path of understanding these characteristics among them. For instance, caste, religion, education, occupation, kin-ship relations in Canada are some of the features which we will take up here for discussion in this chapter. All these features, in fact, indicate only one aspect of Punjabi social life. The equally important dimension is the interaction pattern among the Punjabis on the one hand and between the Punjabis and the host community on the other. This would involve the discussion of neighbourhood pattern, visiting each other and racism.

In the light of the above comments of general kind, we have divided this chapter into three sections.

The first section deals with those particularistic aspects which we believe are crucial in understanding the Punjabis as a community in Canada. Such aspects are: caste, social interaction, ceremonics etc. Moreover, this aspect can be regarded as isolative in the sense that it has to be seen as an exclusive characteristic of the Punjabis providing them a distinct identity.

The second aspect is universalistic in the sense that it understands Punjabis in terms of features such as class, neighbourhood relations, etc. In a way, this aspect is relational as it cuts across the boundaries of Punjabi community.

The third aspect is restrictive in the sense that it tends to understand the way the interaction between the Punjabis and the host population is perceived as characterised by racism, discrimination, etc.

### Isolative Aspects

The information regarding the caste background of Punjabis is helpful in two ways. First, the knowledge of those castes who have migrated more is of great assistance in locating their motivation to migrate. Secondly, one can anticipate the nature and content of interaction among the Punjabis. At the same time the understanding of a migrant community with regard to certain characteristics that had social structural functionality at the place of origin is an ideal typical construction. This also involves a degree of bias on the part of the researcher. He has already assumed that such characteristics are the bases of understanding a community. However, one way of justifying caste as a point, to begin with, of discussion of the Punjabis in Canada or for that matter Indians abroad is that some of the earlier studies on Punjabis, e.g. McLeod (1986), Helweg (1986) etc. have used it.

In this section we are aiming at understanding the caste based interaction pattern to the extent it occurs among the Punjabis. It is worthwhile to point out here that the possibility of the Punjabi community being free from the influences of caste is there if it is insulated from its place of origin, i.e. Punjab. Our understanding is that the Punjabis keep strong links with the village even when most of their family members have migrated. This is particularly true of first generation migrants. The caste may not have the same influence upon that category of the Punjabis who are born and brought up in Canada. Interestingly, the people living in villages of Punjab have good knowledge of what is happening in Canada in this regard. This requires an understanding of horizontal groups within the caste in a village.

Two kinds of villages can be distinguished in Punjab with regard to the *gotra* of the dominant caste.<sup>1</sup> First, all members of the dominant caste of the village have common *gotra*.<sup>2</sup> This means that all

families have descended from the common ancestor. In such case all families constitute what in Punjabi is known as *shareeka bhaichara* (fraternity based on kinship). Secondly, as a result of displacement of a large number of Sikhs and Hindus from the western Punjab (Pakistan) in 1947, some villages have people of different *gotras*. All families in each *gotra* become *shareeka bhaichara*. Thus, within the caste *shareeka bhaichara* becomes the most important unit of social interaction next only to the family.

The horizontal divisions of caste along the lines of kinship fraternity expand the individual relationship beyond family ties. The continuous links with the village keep this caste based fraternity alive which helps revitalizing the caste based divisions among the Punjabis in Canada. In the light of above, caste becomes an important social characteristic in understanding Punjabis as a community. This is all the more important when we come to discuss marital status of the respondents.

As a corollary to the above, equally important is the religious background of the Punjabis. In the specific context of Punjab, there are two major religions, viz. Sikhism and Hinduism. Sikhism as a religion has its origin and development in Punjab. To an extent, Sikhism becomes an important element in the case of Punjabis in Canada. Though Sikhism and caste are antithetical in theoretical context, yet as pointed out earlier, castes are found among Sikhs as well.

It has been found that most of the Punjabis are Jat Sikhs.<sup>3</sup> In other words, Jats also constitute a caste, and are numerically dominant among Punjabis. Most of the Jats in Punjab are Sikhs and are largely peasants. There are other castes such as Khatri, Mehtons, Brahmins, Ramgarhias, Sunars, Chheembas and Chamars. Most of them are Sikhs. In Canada the division along caste lines can be observed among the Sikhs in two ways.

First, the informal interaction is largely confined to the caste. The interfamily relations seem to be affected by the caste background. However, certain qualifications are required because the restriction in intercaste interaction may not necessarily be present. It may so happen that even without the prevalence of caste ideology the interaction may remain confined within the caste. As was noted in the second chapter, the pattern of migration contributes to the continuous expansion of the

kinship network. In many ways, these kins constitute the space within which informal interaction occurs. It was noted that among the respondents only two did not have any relatives in Canada.<sup>4</sup> Moreover most of them had relatives living in the same city.<sup>5</sup> It goes without saying that there is a frequent interaction among them. The change which has occurred in the interaction pattern is linked with the Western work culture. Most of them are busy during the week days. One finds people visiting each other on the weekend. One may also notice that the arrival is announced on phone.

In addition to the kins as the immediate space of informal interaction, we have the category of friends. To say that most of the friends belong to the same caste so far as the Jats are concerned will amount to truism. Since a majority of the Punjabis in Canada are Jat Sikhs, it is expected that the friendship is largely confined to the same caste. Furthermore, as and when one asks a Punjabi about his friends, he always seems to be above caste considerations. In terms of observation, it was found that if we put all those who visit the family and are not kins and so fall in the category of 'friends' then most of the Jats have friends within the caste.<sup>6</sup>

The second way of understanding the caste pattern is endogamy. In this respect it may be mentioned that there are studies which indicate that the male Punjabis have not observed caste endogamy.<sup>7</sup> However, these cases of marriage were governed by specific existential circumstances of the Punjabis as mentioned in these studies. The present situation in this regard indicates that there is caste endogamy among the Punjabis in Canada.<sup>8</sup> Most of the respondents had an arranged marriage irrespective of their marital status at the time of immigration.<sup>9</sup>

The above information though limited yet indicates that the caste element has become, consciously or unconsciously, an important characteristic of the Punjabis in Canada. But there are certain qualifications needed to modify this general statement. First of all, the caste factor is evidently confined to the Punjabi community. In its interaction with the host population, the caste consideration becomes irrelevant. Thus we find a cognitive experience in which a subject has the empirical proof of cultural and historical specificity of the caste. In other words, he begins to perceive individual in non-fixed categories. However, as we shall see later, in fact an element of racism reinforces

fixed social categories among the Punjabis. In spite of this, caste ceases to be a universalistic basis of identity.

This means that if a Punjabi moves away from the Punjabi milieu, he would also drift away from this basis of identity. What we find is that a Punjabi is ambivalent towards caste division. When he comes back to his village he would give an elaborate discourse on the absence of caste (which means egalitarianism) in the West. At the same time within the Punjabi community, he is conscious of his caste identity.

The second aspect narrows down the caste consciousness. The second generation Punjabis have not been sufficiently socialised so as to internalise caste identity the way their parents have. This has happened in spite of all efforts on the part of their parents. The exposure to the host society is much high in the case of the second generation as a consequence of mass media and schooling.

Thus, caste as an identity and a factor in the formation of Punjabi community presents two mutually exclusive tendencies. One, with the coming of new immigrants in Canada the caste basis of Punjabi community is becoming reinforced. Two, the second generation of Punjabis is moving away from caste identity. In the light of this phenomenon, we can very well imagine the intensity of the motivations of the parents to get their sons and daughters married with spouses living in Punjab. The arrival of the spouse from Panjab would mean that a degree of assurance has been achieved in making the caste a factor within the community.

Before we elucidate some other isolative aspects of Punjabi community, it is relevant to digress from logical sequence of the discussion by narrating the following case :

This happened in 1991. X was living in Vancouver (British Columbia). He was later on joined by his cousin and both of them began to stay together. X was interested in bringing his sister to Canada. Finding no legitimate way to secure his sister's immigration, he asked his cousin to bring her in Canada as his wife. Thus subsequent to his application for her immigration as his wife she reached Canada. She began to live with her brother as well as cousin. It may be mentioned here that though marriage between the cousins is not prohibited among the

Sikhs, yet the Hindu and Sikh Jats do not practise this. Some of the non-Jat castes among the Sikhs, e.g. Aroras, have the tradition of cross cousin marriage. If among the Jats that happens somewhere it is treated as an aberration. But this method of having a family member in Canada as an immigrant is not an exception. It has been quite a normal practice among the Punjabis for a long time. Therefore, no one would have taken the notice. After some time divorce would have been arranged subsequent to which the girl would have got married to someone in Punjab. In this case the things took a different turn as the boy and the girl (both cross-cousins) found that they loved each other and decided to continue as husband and wife which was, in fact, their legal status. This however, presented two difficulties. First, socially they were brother and sister.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, they were not sure of X's reaction. In anticipation of strong reaction, they quietly left Vancouver and went to Calgary (Alberta) and settled there. When X came to know this, he was very furious. For him his prestige in the Punjabi community was lost. Anybody could make a verbal offence against him and he would remain with a bowed head. Thus he decided to do something. He bought a revolver, went to Calgary, located them, shot them dead and confessed to the police.

This case may be an extreme instance of rare occurrence, but it provides some insights into the cultural context of the Punjabi community. Helweg (ibid) mentioned *izzat* (honour) as one of the important concepts to understand cultural reality of the Punjabis in England. He writes:

"An individual's *izzat* is especially vulnerable as it is considered largely in the context of group membership. A Punjabi may possess *izzat* but the unbecoming and shameful behaviour of his children can certainly detract from his honour and place him under censure for not enforcing his high principles on his off-spring. Therefore, personal prestige is subordinated to communal evaluation of his group, whether it be family, *biradari*, or other unit..." (p.13).<sup>11</sup>

It may be added that such a course of action to save one's honour is not very common. We have already mentioned a case in Chapter-III where in a similar kind of situation, the father did not undertake such a

step. This may not be that rare a phenomenon among the Jats in Punjab. Such cases though becoming less frequent can be still observed in Punjab.<sup>12</sup>

Punjab has undergone lot of changes after independence. As a process the change is a continuous phenomenon. Those Punjabis who came in 1960s have the first hand experience of Punjabi society for the corresponding period. The same is true of other decades. Interestingly, for each Punjabi the understanding of their own community is static in time and space. One may find every Punjabi boasting of his familiarity with recent changes. But in actual practice, the overseas Punjabis are slower in changing their perceptions than those living in Punjab. Agricultural changes, education and increasing occupational mobility have brought many changes in Punjabi cultural practices. These changes are more visible in urban areas. However, we are aware of the fact that most of the Punjabis in Canada belong to rural areas.<sup>13</sup> There are certain practices which seem to have evolved in Canada. This is concerned with religion as a social basis of Punjabi community. Before we discuss this, it should be remarked that this process has been largely observed among the Sikhs who are an overwhelming majority in Canada.

One important isolative characteristic of the Punjabi community in Canada is its owing allegiance to different religions than the host population which is largely Christian. Religion as a factor puts Asians, viz. Chinese, Indians, Pakistanis etc. in a distinct category as compared with Africans, Latin Americans, and Europeans who are invariably Christians (some of them are, of course, Muslims). Religion is an important sociological concept to understand an ethnic community. It is a commonsensical fact that religion and culture may not necessarily correspond with each other. The Hindus of Uttar Pradesh are culturally distinct from Hindus of Tamil Nadu. However, religions tend to control and impose certain uniform values on their adherents through clergy and political support. Over a period of time, we sometimes find a degree of commonality among the adherents of a religion. In the specific context of inter-ethnic relationship, it is plausible to argue that common religion between the host and the migrant facilitate adaptation and integration. However, ethnic identities may not necessarily merge in the process.

As a corollary to the above, those migrants who belong to different religions may face a great deal of difficulties in integration.

Rather at the outset such an ethnic group may feel a threat to its religious identity. Such a situation has every possibility of reinforcement of religious values. Or, it may so happen that religion becomes the centre of social organization of a community. Since the main function of religion in this context is to safeguard the ethnic identity, the social character of religion may have emergent properties. In other words, religion as a social formation may come out to be stronger and more emphasized reality than it has been the case at the native place.

Among the Punjabis<sup>14</sup> religion seems to be a reinforced reality in Canada. As we stated in our first chapter, in the beginning of the present century when the Punjabis settled in British Columbia, they constructed gurdwara around which their social life revolved. Even when we see the contemporary situation the religious centre is also the locus of social interaction. Visiting a religious place is not necessarily out of strong religiosity, but it may be a social compulsion. Whatever may be the basis, the religion seems to be dominating the life of the Punjabis though only apparently. Some of the characteristic behaviour patterns among the Sikhs, which could be observed, are detailed below:

1. In Edmonton (Alberta) as well as Vancouver (British Columbia) there were two or more gurdwaras. It was understandable in the light of the fact that the number of Sikh Punjabis has been considerable. If the number of gurdwaras in proportion to the Sikh population is compared with the number of the churches in proportion to the Christian population of the all denominations in these cities, then we may have an idea whether in terms of this objective criterion the number of gurdwaras is high.<sup>15</sup>

2. Recently there has been an increase in the collections of gurdwaras. This increase in the collections is a result of a strange factor. The Federal Government has stopped the production of one dollar currency notes. Now there are one dollar coins. Most of the people consider it below their dignity to offer a coin when going to the gurdwara. As a result, most of the persons have shifted to two dollar note. A major beneficiary of this phenomenon is the gurdwaras.

3. Most of the gurdwaras are facing factional fights. These fights are generally for the purpose of controlling the gurdwaras. In one



gurdwara in Edmonton the factional fight to control it became so intense and manifest that most of the people began to visit the other gurdwaras for their socio-religious requirements.

4. All the gurdwaras are full of people on Saturdays and Sundays. During the weekdays, one hardly finds anybody in the gurdwaras. Few old men can be seen sitting in the gurdwaras during week days. However, the Sikh festivals like Sangrand,<sup>16</sup> Gurpurab<sup>17</sup> and Martyrdom Days may not necessarily fall on Saturdays and Sundays. Most of these days are observed on the weekend. In addition to the days of religious significance, and Sikh family may organize a function as a part of its religious observance. The conclusion of these occasions is invariably held on the weekend. Then we have marriage ceremonies, invitation for lunch (*langar*) etc. All these things occur on the weekend. This seems to be a new phenomenon when the compulsions of work life change the religious practice in a particular manner.

5. Most of the gurdwaras had a modest beginning and one among the Sikh immigrants used to act as *granthi* (priest). However, over a period of time, most of the gurdwaras have professional wholetime *granthis*. On top of it, there has been an unbroken chain of *ragi Jathas*<sup>19</sup> coming to Canada for temporary periods. Some of the members of the *Jathas* stay back as *granthis*.

6. In accordance with the Sikh principles of equality, the gurdwaras are opened to the Sikhs belonging to all castes. In this context, all gurdwaras observe this ideology and any Sikh is welcome. However, the principle of equality may be violated because of different reasons. We have sectarian tendencies in the construction of gurdwaras in Canada. For instance, the gurdwara at Richmond (Vancouver) has been constructed by the followers of Baba Mihan Singh. Still another gurdwaras is coming up at Edmonton. This gurdwara though open to all, is confined to the followers of the Baba in terms of its specific observances. The Sikhs who are not followers of the Baba are extremely critical of the way he is being worshipped by them. In fact, this is a reflection of what has been happening in Punjab where within the framework of Sikhism a large number of sects have come into being who have gone out of the fold of Sikhism to recruit followers. For instance, Radha Soamis, and Nirankaris.

At the level of having a gurdwara of its own, we find that there is caste principle involved. The caste basis of gurdwaras could be observed in Edmonton. The division was between Jats and Ramgarhias. The gurdwaras run by Ramgarhias do not have any other caste person in the management committee. It is most likely that as the population of different caste groups grows, the caste based religious centers will emerge.

It may seem intriguing but it has been reported that in Vancouver some kind of class basis could also be found. Whenever an enquiry has been made, there is a mention of rich men's gurdwara in Richmond. The impression one gets about this gurdwara in the light of the comments made by the Sikhs in general is that a few rich Sikhs have built it and they have kept a membership fee which only a well off could afford. However, the reality is somewhat different. Johnston (1988) has attributed the building of this gurdwara to the struggle between the old group and new group among the Sikhs. The old group was displaced from power in the gurdwara management of the original gurdwara in 1979. The struggle between these groups continued till 1984 when "the old group began a withdrawal from the Khalsa Diwan Society with the purchase of land with a house in an area of Richmond south of Vancouver that falls within an agricultural reserve. The house has been redesigned and enlarged as a community centre and gurudwara and a high fence runs across the front of the property to disguise the size of the parking lot and the non-agricultural use of the land. The total cost of over half a million dollars has been carried by a group of 75 or 80 who have constituted themselves as a club with an entrance fee of \$ 3000" (p.9).

The above comment is sufficient to show in what way a gurdwara can be an exclusive property of the few. In fact, this is in violation of the Sikh principles of not only equality but also the spirit of welcoming the devotee.

7. We have mentioned earlier how a quirk of chance has led to the increase in the collections. The fifth point has given some insights into the conflict and competition within the Sikh community over the control of gurdwaras. It was found in Chapter II that the pattern of migration among the Punjabis is creating a kinship network similar to that in Punjab. Thus in all likelihood each set of families are having their leaders. What we have regarding the competition within the Sikh

community is based on the configuration of these kinship networks. In fact, we have inter family competition in controlling the management of gurdwaras.

Both in Vancouver and Edmonton the Sikhs were largely critical of some of the managing committees. Some of them went to the extent of saying that one term of the Presidentship of the gurdwara is equivalent to one big house.

On top of that certain changes have been discerned in the gurdwaras. Owing to the current Punjab crisis, definite divisions have developed among the Sikhs on the question of the desirable status of the Sikhs in the Indian polity. More militant and vocal among them have been able to control most of the gurdwaras. This has led to the alienation of the moderate Sikhs who though visit gurdwaras yet do not take an active interest. Moreover, this phenomenon has led to the withdrawal of the Punjabi Hindus from the gurdwaras who now have not only their own temples but have tended to associate themselves (at least religiously) with non-Punjabi Hindus.<sup>20</sup>

Some of the isolative aspects we have discussed and which provide a succinct picture of the evolution of Punjabi community which tends to correspond with the socio-cultural milieu of Punjab. There are different ways of explaining this process of community formation. One way of understanding it is in terms of identity formation. Secondly, it may be argued that by keeping their original normative patterns, the Punjabis will find it difficult to adapt themselves. We have already discussed the problems with multiculturalism which in the specific context of Canada seems to be more of an ideology than what it proclaims.

We would rather raise an issue of a different kind to suggest that such characterizations are problematic in the general theoretical perspectives available on macro-social formations. A major reason for this problem is result of a tendency among social scientists to divide societies into different categories or stages either on the basis of the nature of dominant value or the level of economic development. Certain indicators are perceived to be crucial in the characterisation of a particular society. We have Marx's historical materialism according to which societies move from primitive communism to different stages of development of productive forces in a linear progression.<sup>21</sup>

Since the 19th century, philosophers of social change in Europe and America have tended to build models of society by taking into consideration macro-issues. Tonnie's community-society, Becker's sacred-secular, and Linton's ascribed-achieved are attempts in terms of dominant values and social structure. However, it was left to Talcott Parsons to give a general theory of action in which he made a comprehensive attempt to characterise the orientation of an actor in terms of the prevailing value-system. Interestingly, the choice left to an actor, in Parsons' theory, can be interpreted in the category 'either-or', viz. universalistic or particularistic, quality or performance, affectivity or affective neutrality and so on.

The problem with this way of characterising societies lies in ignoring micro-reality which may have its own logic of development. So far as these categories used to describe a phenomenon are concerned, one may find their usefulness. The moment these categories become ideological, a degree of theoretical crisis develops. If the isolative aspects of Punjabis in Canada are largely particularistic, then one must not jump to the conclusion that owing to the cultural backwardness these aspects are maintained by them. It is because of these reasons that sometimes description of a phenomenon is better than its evaluation. However we shall return to the discussion as to why an ethnic community tends to cling to its particularism towards the end of this chapter.

### **Relational Aspects**

In this section the focus is on two aspects, viz. occupation and neighbourhood. It is generally considered that in the post-industrial society, the social differentiation is a result of some universalistic criteria such as occupation, education and income. Neighbourhood pattern is expected to be influenced by one's occupation and income. Most of the cities have posh areas where rich live and slums or ghettos where poor live. In many ways, occupational and neighbourhood patterns in a multi-ethnic society establish relationship among different ethnic communities. Divided by occupations we have individuals cutting across ethnic boundaries at the workplace based on class situation. We have families cutting across restrictive boundaries and live side by side in the neighbourhood.<sup>22</sup>

In the light of the above, we may now focus on the occupational patterns among the Punjabis in Canada. We noted in the first chapter that

most of the pioneers were lumber workers. They were ex-soldiers of the British Indian Army with the peasant background. The post independence phenomenon of migration, as observed in Chapter-II, involved the arrival of well-educated persons who were needed in the expanding capitalist economy of Canada. As compared to the Punjabis in Canada who migrated in 1960s and 1970s, the Punjabis in England largely worked as unskilled labour. The onset of immigration on sponsorship brought in relatively less educated Punjabis in Canada. At the same time, most of such Punjabis were from the old age group. Among our respondents 2 were illiterate, 12 were educated up to matric, 16 upto graduation, 4 held post-graduate degrees and 6 had professional degrees. Among the professional degree holders, two were engineers and four were teachers.

Placed in the context of educational level of persons is their occupational status. It is generally expected that occupation is directly related to the educational level. In other words higher the educational level, higher will be the occupational status. This conjecture presents a problem in the case of a migrant community. For migrants educational level and occupational status may not go together. The first problem is generally related with the knowledge of language. This is in spite of the fact that a well educated Indian may not face problem in any English speaking country. Moreover, to get a suitable job according to one's qualification in the other country may take some time. Most of the migrants might be doing some job in their own country. A way of understanding their occupational status is to have a comparative view. We found that among our respondents, most of the respondents were either involved in agriculture or studying in schools and colleges.<sup>23</sup> At the time of collection of information they were either doing business or working as unskilled labourers.<sup>24</sup> There were other occupations in which the Punjabis have been involved, but to our mind business and labour are the most important for having some insight into the relational dimension of Punjabis in Canada.

Most of the Punjabis who are doing business are involved in ventures such as Punjabi food restaurant, sweet shop, insurance, immigration, travels agency, real estate, Punjabi grocery shops, cloth shops etc. Obviously, the Punjabis do not come to these restaurants for having their meals, but they certainly come to buy sweets. Insurance, immigration and travel agency are some of the ventures in which a majority of

the clientele is Punjabi. The old and illiterate Punjabis need somebody who has the knowledge of Punjabi language. Thus, there are a considerable number of Punjabi business men who are doing well in this area. Real estate is another area in which the Punjabis largely cater to the requirements of their own people. So far as grocery and cloth shops are concerned, these have come into existence solely for the Punjabi population.<sup>25</sup> In a way the Punjabi businessmen are not universalistically relating themselves to the host population. Rather their clientele is largely the Punjabis who have developed definite requirements which may remain stable over a long period to time.

It is those Punjabi labourers in the industries who, from the universalistic perspective, relate themselves to other workers drawn from different ethnic origins. Most of the Punjabis who are involved in unskilled work in Canada have been farmers in Punjab. As we pointed out earlier, it is the peasants of Punjab who are a majority among the immigrants in Canada. As owner cultivators they had high prestige in their rural setting. For them it is a downward mobility to take up wage labour as an occupation. However, this is by choice. Among workers we have two categories, viz. factory workers and farm workers. The agriculture work is mainly available in Fraser Valley (British Columbia). According to our information, old persons form the bulk of the Punjabis who do farm labour. Many young Punjabis who had visitor status in Canada without work permit used to be farm workers on low wages. Most of their employees have been Punjabis, but the nature of relationship between the farmer and the worker does not undergo any qualitative change when both of them have the same ethnic origin. In this sense, the farm workers cease to be particularistic in their economic activity but become a universal class. It is perhaps the logic of communication (knowledge of language) which compels some of the Punjabis to work in the farms of their compatriots.

So far as the industrial workers are concerned, the Punjabis are a part of the working class of Canada. None of the Punjabis who were industrial workers tended to perceive themselves differently. They seemed to be clear on this aspect that they were not the only ethnic group who work as labourers. For them there are also (white) workers with whom they interact at the work place. The following case indicates some of the salient features of the Punjabi workers.

'X' (respondent) was working in a factory in Edmonton. There were nine other Punjabi workers working in the same factory. In this factory one of the supervisors was a Punjabi. All the ten workers had definite reservations against this supervisor. He was considered anti-Punjabi workers. According to their experience, the Punjabi supervisor never reported objectively regarding their output. He always understated their output as a result of which their pay would be affected. On the other hand, whenever there was a white supervisor, they never faced such a problem. They finally decided to inform the manager that they were not willing to work under him. However, the manager did not change the supervisor. Subsequently, all of them quit the job.

'X' remained unemployed for some months, but could get a job in another factory. The vacancies created by their leaving that factory were filled in by the Punjabis. This supervisor has almost been excommunicated by most of the Punjabi families. The Punjabis who got the job in that factory were facing unemployment and were also related to this supervisor.'

The above case shows certain interesting features of the Punjabi workers. It is not necessary that every Punjabi will favour any other Punjabi in a work situation. The supervisor versus workers is a typical conflict that has been the subject matter of most of the works on industrial sociology. However, this is a special case where a Punjabi supervisor tends to show more loyalty than necessary. The Punjabi workers rather find the white supervisor objective in assessing their output. All these things suggest that the Punjabi workers are acting as a group conscious of their interests as a class.

This relational aspect of the Punjabis who become a part of the Canadian labour force should be taken with a pinch of salt. The experience of Great Britain shows that the white British generally resent the presence of the coloured workers in the factory. In a situation where coloured workers are retrenched without justification their white counterparts do not protest against such retrenchment (Hiro, 1973).

The second relational aspect we have taken is neighbourhood. It may be noted that the focus is mainly on the neighbourhood pattern and not the interaction pattern. Theoretically speaking, the housing pattern

is determined by the economic status of the people. In India the traditional housing pattern has been characterised by segregation based on caste and there has been a great degree of correspondence between the caste and class situations. In urban India it has been observed that the cities with the history of communal riots have also segregation based on religion. In spite of its being a function of economy, the settlement patterns of houses are affected by other factors.<sup>26</sup>

The settlement pattern of Punjabis in Canada indicates a mixed trend. The Main Street in Vancouver is considered equivalent to Southall in England. Surrey, a suburb of Vancouver, has recently attracted a large number of Punjabis. The availability of relatively cheap land has helped the Punjabis to build big houses. The humorous side of the development of Surrey among Punjabis is: 'there are three Surreys, viz. Urban Surrey, Sub-urban Surrey and Turban Surrey.' In Edmonton there is a greater concentration of Punjabis in Millwoods. The quest to build big houses is as strong in Edmonton as in Vancouver.

Among the Punjabis to have a big house is a matter of prestige.<sup>27</sup> The following example makes it clear:

'X' was a businessman. He was doing real estate business. He belonged to a well-to-do family in Punjab. As such he always kept his interaction with Punjabis limited. It is evident from the fact that when his brother-in-law immigrated and became factory worker, he made his visits to his house less frequent. His social interaction remained confined to the better off among the Punjabis. One of his friends was a scientist. In fact both of them were among the pioneers in Edmonton. As is sometimes the case with real estate business, he suffered a great loss in one of his deals. Consequently, he had to sell his house. He took a basement on rent. His hardships, however, were shortlived and after a couple of years, he established himself again. However, so long as he lived in the basement, his scientist friend never visited him.

The trend to buy big houses has become so common that it is now a matter of honour for each Punjabi. A house without a living room is beyond imagination. Moreover, a big house is not necessarily a variable in determining the status on a universalistic principle. The competition is more among the Punjabis than between them and other



ethnic groups. A Punjabi respondent told in the interview that for whites having a house is not that important as it is for a Punjabi.

Information was collected from the respondents regarding their neighbourhood. What we find is quite interesting in this regard.<sup>28</sup> Though most of them were living in a locality where Punjabis dominate in number, yet the pattern was mixed with different ethnic groups also living in the same area. Some were living in white dominated locality too.

Chadney (1989) discusses the formation of ethnic communities by basing his formulations on the Vancouver Sikhs. He talks of four phases through which the Sikhs in Vancouver have passed. These are, alteration of the social environment, the formation of ethnic boundaries, ethnic competition and ethnic adaptation. The final stage Chadney regards as "the practice of retaining some traditional ideological and behavioral patterns while modifying or abandoning others and replacing them with alternatives available in the altered social environment." (p. 196). The problem, however, is that even those ethnic groups who settled after conquering a territory had to undergo a degree of adaptation. Though his generalization is extremely useful, yet he does not take into consideration the complex interaction between consciousness, ideology and relations of domination. The Punjabis have no doubt emerged as an ethnic community, but saying that Punjabis and Sikhs are coterminus is a misleading formulation. Both the Sikhs and Hindus whatever may be the proportion of each in the total population constitute an ethnic community known as Punjabis. However, if religion and not culture is the basis of dividing people into ethnic categories, then there is no problem. The definition of what is an ethnic community has never been static. Consequently, a degree of shifting emphasis in the centrality of the concept has been occurring. From a cultural group including some other variables such as region, language etc. it has moved to any criteria including religion to define ethnic community. In this respect Chadney's treatment to the Sikhs as ethnic community is not out of context. Moreover, if we treat Pakistani Punjabis as a part of ethnic identity we call 'Punjabi' then obvious problems enter into the scene. However, in spite of all these problems it seems more plausible to treat Indian Punjabis who are largely Hindus and Sikhs as an ethnic community.

## Restrictive Aspects

In this section the discussion concentrates on racial discrimination as a restrictive element in the free interaction among different ethnic groups. The Punjabis, of course, are a central ethnic community in relation to whom this discussion has followed. Before we offer any conceptual understanding of racism, it is pertinent to quote Chandwani (1992) whose journalistic account offers an insight into the whole issue thus :

Japan Airlines is taking a public beating for a policy that results in its Indian economy class passengers being seated together in the back of the planes.

Billie Mortimer, an 11-year (sic.) employee of Canadian Airlines, which is ground handling agent for JAL, blew the whistle on this policy three weeks ago, sparking accusations of racism and illegal segregation against JAL.

Mortimer alleged that during her futile attempts to alter this policy she was told by a JAL supervisor that the Indians' "odor offends other passengers". (If true, the allegation conjures up to bizarre job description for a ground agent. "Must be able to identify and segregate Indians by their smell, color, name and accent...").<sup>29</sup>

In the light of the above news reporting, it seems that even the understanding of racism provided by Bolaria & Li (1985) is incomplete. They write, "... we consider race as a social construct produced and maintained by differential power between a dominant group and a subordinate group." (p.15). It goes without saying that such power relations became racist only if the two groups can be distinguished by the colour of their skins. In that respect it may be a relationship between two cultural groups. But this seems to be a definition with certain limitations because it assumes that both the groups are coexisting within a given territory.

We are of the view that as a socio-historic construct, racism has an intimate link with economic development. Suddenly we find Japan, as an industrialised country, indulging in segregating people on the basis of colour or odour. We are fully aware of the fact that eighty-eighty five

years back the Japanese migrants in Canada were not treated much differently than the Indians. Moreover, in the contemporary societies we do not live as groups only in a given territory; rather the nations and states live side by side. A variation in their level of development has every likelihood of influencing people's perception of each other.

In the light of the above, if the Punjabis are segregated by JAL, then it should not be interpreted in terms of their offensive odour. Rather it is the country of their origin, i.e. India as an underdeveloped country that perhaps is the basis of this segregation. In spite of the fact that well educated and professional Punjabis have migrated to Canada, their status continues to be influenced by their being Indians. It is the upwardly Punjabis with professional degrees who face the pangs of racial discrimination more strongly than those who belong to the working class.

A Punjabi told the author (rather proudly) that the education system in India is not upto the standards of that of the West and even a graduate has to get into the university to get the same degree. This myth has so strongly worked among many Punjabis that they fail to understand why does a developed country behave towards the new migrants like that? No body seems to have raised to question that what is the difference between the educated from India and Canada? One can very well understand the common-sensical aspect that a migrant may not be well versed in the language for which he may have to undergo schooling. But by derecognizing their education a large number of aspirants for high status jobs are rendered unskilled labourers so long as they do not get a degree from a local university.

It goes without saying that all the Punjabis interviewed expressed the view that racial discrimination was there in Canada. To an extent, some of them equated themselves with the migrant labour which comes to Punjab from neighbouring states such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. They were of the view that the Punjabi farmers do not treat them well. Obviously, this migrant labour get better wages in Punjab than they get in their own states. Similarly, the Punjabis in Canada get better wages and have better living conditions as compared with the situation when perhaps they were farmers in Punjab. Such an analogy, however, has its limitations and there are lot of problems of arguing along such lines. For instance, even after perceiving themselves to be discriminated they do not plan to go back to Punjab to live honorably. Furthermore, their

attitudes towards India and its people undergo a change. They tend to believe that everything is wrong with that system. When a western TV man is shown having a ride on an elephant, many Punjabis think that most parts of the country still have such a mode of transportation. This seems to be an unconscious justification of their not going back to India.

The combined effect of racial discrimination and orientation to settle permanently in Canada is the formation of an ethnic community relatively distinct from the host culture as well as the Punjabi culture. It may however be pertinent to remark that as part of the Indian society the Punjabi society is also characterised by caste segregation. For a Punjabi to interact within one's own ethnic milieu may not be perceived as unnatural. Even then the universalistic values of equality would affect the community and it would strive for equal status as a part of the broader society. In such a situation, one can only think of the emergence of an ethnic community with distinctive characteristics not only from the host society but also the native society. In the case of Punjabis, as our findings indicate, this has happened.

The discussion in this chapter has focussed on three aspects, in a limited way, that have contributed to the formation of the Punjabi community in Canada. The complex interaction between isolative, relational and restrictive aspects that have characterised the Punjabis has given rise to an ambivalent situation. Any migrant community is not expected to get rid of its isolative aspects as it derives its cultural (ethnic) identity from it. The factor of caste may not remain functional in another society but caste as a nomenclature may persist. The loosening character of isolative dimension may become visual only if restrictive aspects do not weigh heavily on the the migrants. Since an element of being in continuous interaction which establishes relation between the migrants and hosts is always present, the absence of restrictive aspects would always reduce the strength of isolative characteristics. However, this might have happened in the case of Europeans (including Ukrainians), but may not be in the case of Asians and Africans. Within the larger context of racial boundaries, the Punjabis remained identified in terms of their isolative aspects.

The formation of an ethnic community presupposes that there is a semblance of emergence of a society within the society. One can contend this statement by saying that in fact, a multiethnic society is a

multi-cultural society too. Whatever may be the argument we stress on emphasising that an ethnic community has its distinct socio-cultural patterns from the larger society. Why does this phenomenon occur? Is it because the integrative and adaptive mechanisms have not been effective to prevent such a distinction? Or can we characterise such a distinction as a form of integration/adaptation?

At the end of this chapter, an attempt is made to understand the ambivalent situation of the Punjabis as an ethnic community. The important dimensions in understanding the emergence of distinctive characteristics in this context are social formations, consciousness and relations of domination. It is the complex interaction between these three dimensions which shapes the formation of an ethnic community. The interaction between the three dimensions is linked with the history, culture and traditions of a society.

By social formation we mean any practice and relationship which have their cultural and material basis. Thus, marriage and family are two distinct social formations. In the light of this the Punjabi community is an ensemble of social formations. These social formations they have brought with them in Canada. The host society can be distinguished from the Punjabi community in terms of its social formations.<sup>30</sup> After the migration from Punjab, the basis of continuation of these social formation undergoes a change. The material and cultural environment of Punjab in which the social formations have been existing is no longer available in Canada. The change is obvious. From developing capitalist economic formations, the Punjabis move to a developed capitalist society. Is it plausible to argue that in such an environment it is pertinent for the Punjabis to adapt with the developed capitalist society? But this requires an investigation into the perceptions of the Punjabis in Canada. These perceptions are derived from their consciousness both as individuals and collectivity.

In the words of Marx, social being determines consciousness. This implies that if there is a presence of different levels of social being as we find in stratified societies, then there are different levels of consciousness. Furthermore, one's state of being as a species is a specific form of consciousness. However, a state of being as a species invariably combines with social being and may sometimes be perceived and interpreted as permanent and natural (ideology). This combination has its dialectics in the struggle between different levels of consciousness.

In spite of these different levels of consciousness, all the members share at least one level. They are spread in a geographical space, and share common language and culture. This may be termed as collective consciousness.<sup>32</sup>

As a sequel to the above, a distinction can be made between an individual migrant and numerous migrants who may form a collectivity in relation to the new environment in the host country. The individual consciousness has greater scope in absorbing diverse elements in a given society than the collective consciousness which remains stable for long periods. However, with migration social existence undergoes a change. What happens is that individuals at an aggregate level and social existence undergo a change influencing the corresponding consciousness whereas collective consciousness continues to persist. In what manner we can possibly understand the direction which incompatibility between different forms of consciousness would influence? This may be understood by taking into account the specific historical condition, viz. capitalism.

In the capitalist system, the nature of individual consciousness is more marked than that of the feudal society. Reason and relationality provide an environment in which individual consciousness can be self-critical and reflective. But once the capitalist system established its ever expanding power through imperialism all societies became contemporaneous to the extent that they were exposed to the capitalist logic. Freedom of reasoning contributed in retaining the elements of specific identities.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, one of the most important contributions of the capitalist system historically speaking, is its making the individuals conscious of their identity in space and time. New ways of living have been questioned and identities are revitalised. No wonder, racism awakes time and again, and religious revivalism occurs.

The reasons for such recurrences are many and may be related with the specific problems of a society. It can be argued that the nature and structure of consciousness of a migrant community is not that simple to the extent that it can be predictable. However, they have to live in the new environment and must develop a coping mechanism. It is the forms of consciousness interacting with the socio-cultural and material environment

that different ethnic communities cope with it differently. An added complexity is provided by the relations of domination, that is the position of the migrant communities in the power hierarchy.

We argued at length in the first chapter that the migrant ethnic communities occupy a low position in the power hierarchy. The migration of Punjabis was a consequence of the need for labour of the expanding economy of Canada. The factor of racial discrimination has been exhibiting the powerlessness of the Panjabis. Obviously, the factor of relations of domination has been affecting the Punjabis' social existence in Canada as a result of which the consciousness is emerging with the accepted fact of powerlessness.

We have now arrived at a situation where it is possible to argue that the formation of Punjabi community has occurred with its distinctive features. The interaction between social formations (both Punjabi and Canadian), and consciousness of different forms and power relations has influenced this community formation.

#### NOTES

1. Here the Jat caste is of more significance than others. The Jats are largely the peasant proprietors and are also politically dominant.
2. Sometimes, a village is divided along mohallas (*pattis*), this happens when the village is large. In such a case even if all the families have the same *gotra*, the social interaction is limited within a *patti*.
3. According to the data collected for this study, the following Table shows the caste and religious background of the respondents:

Caste	Religion	
	Sikh	Hindu
Jat	30	-
Brahmin		1
Khatri	1	-
Mehton	3	-
Ramgarhia	1	0
Suniara		1
Chhenba	1	-
Chamar	1	12
Total	37	3

Other studies conducted on the Punjabis also indicate that Jat Sikhs are more preponderant than any other caste in respect of emigration to various Western countries.

4. The following Table shows the status of relatives in Canada.

<i>Relations</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Own blood relations.	11
Spouse's blood relations	5
Own & spouse's blood relations	22
No relations	2
Total	40

5. The following Table reveals the place of inhabitation of the relatives

<i>Place</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Same city	21
Some same	6
Some other city	
None lives in the same city	11
Not applicable	2
Total	40

6. The personal experience of the author is that most of the Jats have their friends from the same caste.
7. Leonard (1988) and LaBrack (1988) have shown that the Punjabis who were predominantly Sikhs married Mexican women in the United States. Most of them had already been married in Punjab. Furthermore, all these cases refer to the first quarter of this century.
8. The Table given below shows the caste endogamy among the Punjabis

<i>Caste status of</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
The spouse	
Same Caste	37
Other Nationality	2
Unmarried	1
Total	40

9. Out of 39 married respondents 28 were married at the time of immigration. 11 married after settling in Canada. 36 had arranged marriage and only two, who had married non-Indian women, had love marriage.
10. In Punjab the terms for cousin are 'Veer' or 'Bhra', both are equivalent to the English word 'brother'. Since among Jat Sikhs the cross cousin marriage does not occur, the brother sister relationship is reinforced. It may be mentioned here that if a boy and a girl have the same gotra, then they cannot marry. There has occurred a lot of change in this dimension in recent times.



11. To our mind, the Punjabi words *izzat* or *mann* which Helweg mentions to denote honour are problematic. In the everyday life it is *naq*, literally meaning nose, which signifies honour. *Izzat* or *mann* very used in ery general context.
12. It is our view that there is not any need to give evidence in this context. One has to live in Punjab to have the feel of the situation. In such cases, the girl is generally killed.
13. The author has a personal experience of Punjabis in England in 1987. When he visited a family he experienced two things as a shock. First, no woman of the house came to the sitting room to talk to him. Secondly, when the dinner was to be served, one of the persons told him in low tone that the way to eat was different in England and started telling him the meaning of buffet. Later on, the same person at whose house he stayed overnight gave him the lesson on the use of shampoo. When the author asked him when did he migrated to England? The answers was: 1962.
14. Here we have mainly focused on the Sikhs as they constitute a majority among the Punjabis.
15. The author is thankful to Prof. Hugh Johnston, Simon Fraser University, Barnaby (B.C.) Canada for this comment. He has been of the view that in terms of this proportion there are more churches than Gurudwaras.
16. The first day of the month under Bikrami Calender.
17. The birthday of any Sikh Guru.
18. The unbroken recitation of Guru Granth Sabib, the Holy book of the Sikhs.
19. *Ragi Jatha* implies a troupe who sing the hymns from the Holy book.
20. Hugh Johnston: "The Development of the Punjabi community in Vancouver since 1961" *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, XX,2 1988. He makes the following comment on the whole process: "It is not surprising that, as the Sikh Community has grown and fragmented the Punjabi Hindu community has grown and found a separate focus. From the beginning. Sikhs in Vancouver have outnumbered Punjabi Hindus by ten to one, and for more than sixty years, in the absence of any temple, Punjabi Hindus went quite naturally to the gurudwaras.... with the exception of a Shiv Mandir, supported by Fijians and a Hari Krishna temple, supported by occidentals, the Vishva hindu Parishad is the only community place in Vancouver for Hindus to worship. Of necessity, it has drawn together Punjabis and Gujaratis with a small number of Bengalis and a few South Indians". (p.11).
21. It is perhaps this tendency which led Marx to laud colonialism in India.
22. This may not necessarily be the case. In most of the Indian cities we find that Muslims and Hindus live in different localities. In the USA a degree of racial segregation in the housing pattern may be found. The economic factor tends to mix with ethnic factor in such a way that it is left to the social scientist to give appropriate reason for segregation. This may depend on ideological considerations (sometimes) of the social scientist.
23. The following Table compares the present occupation with that of at the time of immigration.

## Occupation at the time of immigration

Present occupation	Agri-culture	Busi-ness	Govt. serve-ice	Teac-her	Prof-essi-onal	Stu-dent	Not-hing	Tot-al
Business		2	2	2	-	4	-	11
Worker	6	1	-	1	-	3	1	12
Bus driver	1	-	1	-		2	-	4
Clerical	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	3
Railway worker	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	3
Professional	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2
Taxi driver	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
No work	2	-	-	1	-	1	-	4
Total	11	3	5	6	2	10	3	40

*Note* : It should be noted here that these occupations are not ranked hierarchically.

24. Bolaria & Li (1985) have provided the following information. "The 1981 data shows that Indo-Pakistanis have well above average levels of education. Almost 30% of the males reported holding a University degree, as compared with about 10% for all Canadians - - -

"As of June, 1981, there were 12 million persons in the Canadian labour force, of whom 59% were males . . . Only a little under 6% (57%) of the labour force participants reported a non-European ethnic origin.

"The Indo-Pakistani labour force is now represented in diverse occupations. About 45% of the males were in bluecollar occupations". (p. 155). The information provided by Bolaria and Li from Royal Commission Report on Equality in Employment, 1984, largely corresponds with our limited information.

Chadney's (1985) study of Vancouver Sikhs also indicates that occupationally they occupy different positions as a result of which each category has different ethnically defined needs.

25. This does not mean that Punjabis' business persuasions have occurred as a result of the growth of Punjabi population. Some have really done well as business and industrial entrepreneurs. For instance, Domans.
26. Ballard & Ballard, *ibid.*, have quoted some studies indicating that some times the choice of an area to buy a house may be voluntary and nothing to do with a person's economic capability.
27. The latest trend in this context is to have a jacuzzi in the house. However, the traditional habits of Punjabis is to have a shower bath. A majority does not have even tub bath on weekend. In many cases the jacuzzi is used to keep washable clothes. Same is the case with the maintenance of large houses. All rooms are not kept warm in the winter. In many ways, the big house is a result of competition with fellow Punjabis.

28. The following Table show the neighbourhood pattern among the respondents:

<i>Neighbourhood pattern</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
1. Punjabi	3
2. Mixed but Punjabis dominate	24
3. Mixed but other non-Punjabi Asians dominate	1
4. Mixed but whites dominate	12
Total	40

29. Ashok Chandwani "JAL's seating policy is racist, and it stinks". *The Edmonton Journal*, April 10, 1992 (Page No. not known). What Chandwani has not mentioned is that the Indians are not treated well by hostesses too. The author has the personal experience of travelling from Vancouver to Tokyo buy JAL. Almost all the Indians who were predominatly Sikhas were at the rear. Generally, the smokers are put at the rear. Sikhs, who are religiously speaking, allergic to cigaratte smoking to the extent of strong dislike, had to sit at the rear. The behaviour of the air hostesses was one of scorn and dislike. Their smiles were grins.
30. It, however, goes without saying that social formations can only exist when we have collectivity. An individual Punjabi cannot exist in his social milieu in an alien environment.
31. Marx, Karl (1859) 'Preface to' 'A contribution to a critique of Political Economy'. Social being is a broder term, according to our view, and must not be made coterminus with the economic structure as is generally the case with many social scientists when they interpret Marx.
32. The consciousness determined by one's social being and the collective consciousness have been distinguished. The need for this distinction is due to a tendency in some sociological works to treat the members of a society as consisting of a homogenous mass in terms of their consciousness.
33. Lukacs, G. (*History and Class Consciousness 1971*), argues that in the capitalist system, man became 'conscious of himself as a social being', that is, both the subject and object of 'the socio-historical process'.

## 5

# POLITICAL PROCESSES

In the process of interaction with the mainstream society every ethnic community develops its approach and perspective to tackle its problems. The migrant ethnic community which takes time to come into being, as its formation depends on the migration process, faces specific situations out of which its problems emerge. The arena of politics presupposes a sizeable collectivity to make its presence felt. It is extremely difficult to establish the exact size of an ethnic group that would be sufficient to exert a degree of pressure on the polity vis-a-vis certain issues.

Three broad characteristics of the political processes with regard to a migrant community can be identified. First, the degree of relations a community may have with its native place. One can take into consideration a situation where no relations with the native place are possible. But there is also a possibility of strong links with it. This is a historical category in the sense that it depends upon two factors: viable geographical gap between the places of origin and destination; and the degree of interaction at different points of time. The more frequent is the interaction, stronger may be the relations. The capitalist development has made possible not only the migration of a large number of people but also their continuous contact with the native place. In many ways, capitalism has at a historical juncture produced conditions in which the area of subsumption of labour transcends geographical distances. On top of that, it has made it possible that the movement of labour does not become a problem.

The second characteristic is challenges and threats which a migrant community faces from time to time. These threats have a great

degree of variations for a community. Over a period of time it learns to cope with these. As a result a degree of understanding develops about that community.

The third characteristic concerns the development of a belief in the migrant community that it would be a permanent part of the host society. Since it occupies a marginal position in relations to the host society, it develops certain mechanisms to become an equal partner in power relations.

All these characteristics assume that a migrant ethnic community occupies a lower position in the power hierarchy of the host society. In the present world of developed capitalism most of these migrants constitute the labour (cheap) reservoir of the host society. Thus this powerlessness leads to some consequences in the political process among the migrants with certain peculiar results.

On the basis of the above discussion it can be stated that the political processes among the Punjabis in Canada may involve three aspects :

- (1) Owing to their relations with Punjab which are well maintained by the first generation migrants, the Punjabis might be taking keen interest in the political conditions in India in general and Punjab in particular.
- (2) Collective responses to specific issues and threats which the Punjabis have faced over a period of time such as racism, discrimination, etc.
- (3) Participation in the formal political process in order to influence governmental decisions. This may range from provincial level to federal level elections. This becomes possible if they join a political party.

Before we discuss these aspects, a few comments are needed on the political sociology of Punjab. As of now, there is not much written material available in this area. The recent Sikh extremist movement has proved to be a fillip for journalists and political scientists in their endeavour to understand the political sociology of Punjab.

However, up till now Pettigrew's *Robber Noblemen* (1978) is one of the few books on this subject. Pettigrew examines the political

system among the Jat Sikhs in Punjab. This becomes all the more relevant when we are aware of the fact that a majority of the Punjabi immigrants in Canada are Jat Sikhs. According to her, the tendency and practice among the Jat Sikhs to affiliate themselves with one or the other factions provides a unique dynamism to the political process in the state. The structure of factionalism is characterised by vertical links and horizontal ties. The concepts, such as loyalty, group affiliation, honour etc. constitute the most important elements in the making of relationships that start from the village level and culminate at the state level. Combined with factionalism are militancy and a sense of vengeance making the enmity and rivalry enduring. All these dimensions manifest in the political system of the state. One thing which should be emphasized is that the vertical links are characterised by equality and not asymmetry.

It is our contention that factionalism and vengeance as central features of Punjab political system have been over emphasised by Pettigrew. These features are generally important in understanding the behaviour of the economic and political elites who compete for power and privileges. For a common man, life is a struggle for reasonable living.

We have time and again argued that the features of the original society should not be treated as a model to understand a migrant community. But at the same time these features are important as a starting point. The analysis put forward by Pettigrew indicates certain unique features of Punjabis in general and the Jat Sikhs in particular. However, Pettigrew also suffers from what we should call 'the poet's tendency to exaggerate' reality to the extent that it looks as if it is imaginary.

One must not ignore the fact that Punjab has been under the democratic rule for the last forty years or so. The educational levels of its people have gone up. Moreover, the Punjab has also experienced the highest growth rate in agriculture in the country. All these factors have made an impact on political processes in the state. However, at the same time, Punjab has remained devoid of democratic political process for long times between 1984 to 1992 owing to the Sikh extremist movement. All these features are likely to influence the political behaviour of a Punjabi in Canada depending upon his period of migration, but the fact that they are largely familiar with the democratic process cannot be just

put aside. At this juncture we would do well to delineate political processes among Punjabis in Canada in terms of three aspects detailed earlier.

### **Orientation to the Native Place**

The Punjabis migrated to North America at the turn of the present century. In Vancouver (Canada) they were mostly lumber workers whereas in California (USA) they became farmers. The political reality of India was British rule and most of these Punjabi migrants began to realise the significance of being citizens of an independent state. At the same time all were convinced that one day they would return to India with lots of money which, however, did not happen. All these conditions and perceptions combined to produce an orientation which acquired an operational character in the form of militant nationalism. What is known as Ghadar Movement in Punjab was organized by the Punjabis living in North America. Many of them returned to India in 1914, when the First World War began, to stage uprising.

It is not our primary concern to know what happened to Ghadarites. What is important is that the first among the Punjabi migrants to Canada remained oriented to the Indian reality and reacted to that. However, after the Ghadar movement, we do not find an empirical manifestation of the interest of the Punjabis in India till 1947 though they remained intensely concerned for independence of the country.

Between 1947 and 1967, their political orientations were characterised by indifference. Ghadar movement after its initial phase (upto 1918), remained on the scene as an ineffective force with the exception that many of the Ghadarites were influenced by Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and turned to communism.<sup>1</sup> The Ghadarites, whatever the extent of their achievements, are highly respected in Punjab. In many ways the beginning of militant nationalism in Punjab was made by the Ghadar movement that was later on emulated by Babbar Akalis and others.

It should be understood here that most of the migrations to Canada occurred in 1970s. From 1947 onward till this period no doubt there was a constant flow of Punjabis to Canada but it was scanty. During this period most of the Punjabis had been migrating to U.K. However, even in the late 1960s the Punjabis in Vancouver were in considerable numbers.

In 1967 one important incident occurred in Indian history, i.e. the peasants' revolt in Naxalbari in West Bengal. The subsequent development was the emergence of the Naxalite movement under the leadership of Charu Mazumdar. This movement adopted Chinese models as the model of Indian revolution and waged armed struggle. Punjab which has always been one of the moderately strong base of the communists also became one of the states where the Naxalite movement established its foothold. Some of the notable districts of Punjab where the movement was very strong were Ludhiana, Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur. These were also the districts from where most of the migrations to Canada have occurred (Judge, 1992). However, this might not be the reason for some of the Punjabis abroad to support the Naxalite movement in India.

“The Hindustan Ghadar Party (ML) was organized in Canada by Indian communists in support of the Naxalite movement in India in general and in Punjab in particular. During the annihilation period these communists had been contributing money for the movement. Even when the annihilation line was withdrawn by the CPI (ML), this group continued to support the line. Later on, in the late 1970s it rejected the annihilation line. Afterwards the Ghadar Party (ML) turned to Albania as its ideological source. Though this group was not very important in terms of its functioning in Punjab, it contributed to various ideological issues which had repercussions on other groups... The Hindustan Ghadar party (ML) organized a group in Punjab and this group had limited influence in Punjab” (Judge, 1992: 145).

In many ways the contribution of the Punjabi communists in Canada to the Naxalite movement in Punjab was limited but tended to be repetitive of the Ghadar movement.

The Ghadar movement and the Naxalite movement presented two manifestations of orientation to different historical situations surcharged by political circumstances. Not all Punjabis got involved in them and, as we shall see, that would never be the case. National liberation or fight against colonialism and communist revolutions were two different but secular goals. In that sense the movements transcended religious identities of the Punjabis.



The third political movement which attracted Punjabis overwhelmingly has been the Sikh extremist movement implying that all these Punjabis were Sikhs. Before we discuss the Sikh extremist movement in the context of the Punjabi Sikhs in Canada, i.e. movement from secular to communal emphasis, it is relevant to point out another dimension which has largely been ignored but is necessary to understand: politicisation of the Sikhs abroad along communal lines.

The moment a political process is explained in the context of movements one tends to understand it in terms of discontinuities and ruptures. No doubt, the sociopolitical movements are instances of ruptures but in the making of such ruptures one expects a degree of accumulation of factors. In a sense discontinuity becomes capable of being understood in a context if the processes prior to its occurrence are observed or taken into account. Our submission is that the Ghadar and Naxalite movements or any other movement do not present the whole picture. These movements were reactions among the Punjabis living abroad to the prevailing political conditions back in India.

To have a better understanding of the orientation of the Punjabis to India we have to first take into cognizance factors which may or may not be exclusive. First, the nature of mediation between the Punjabis and the Indian socio-political reality; and, secondly, the year of migration of a Punjabi. Let us see how these two shape the orientation.

Right from the beginning, the *foreign returned* were always perceived as rich. This has been amply demonstrated by their lavish spending on various occasions such as marriages etc.<sup>2</sup> This impression prevails without taking into consideration the type of their occupation in USA or England or Canada. This is true even today which is evident from the fact that Indian government has made a lot of schemes to attract their money. During the period between 1960 to 1980, we find various categories of important persons visiting U.K. and Canada. Thus there were writers, godmen, singers and politicians visiting these countries quite frequently. Most of them would stay with one or many Punjabis making their tour almost free. To begin with, the yearning for motherland motivated many Punjabis to invite particularly writers and godmen. Later on, it became a trend. Money played the most important role in this process. Most of these invitees and visitors would return with a considerable amount of money in Indian currency.

Three things were common in the efforts of these people to collect money. First, they emphasised Punjabi culture and language and sought their help to promote it in India. These immigrant Punjabis were invariably praised for still having among them what may be labelled as Punjabiness.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, a lot of emphasis was invariably made on religious conviction. If we have elementary knowledge of arithmetic, it would become obvious that in a majority of cases it was the emphasis on Sikh religion. This is in spite of the fact that most of these Sikh immigrants (whether in UK or North America) had cut their hair after settling in these countries. One reason for cutting their hair was that in some jobs as for example in food industry only clean shaven persons were preferred - owing to the very nature of job. Abandoning the religious symbols but maintaining religiosity sometimes may cause guilt consciousness leading to a reinforcement of religious enthusiasm. Because such persons may try to show that even after abandoning the religious symbols they are religious. Such a population was quite receptive to the religious emphasis. It may however be argued that reinforcement of religiosity is also a result of the marginalisation of a group in an alien environment.

The third thing in these efforts was less open and discrete: emphasis on discrimination against Punjab, Punjabi language, and the Sikhs. All these three things though distinguishable merged in these visits and we find a conscious attempt to make Sikhs synonymous with Punjab and Punjabi. In a way, at the level of propaganda, all non-Sikhs were excluded so far as the protection of the interests of Punjabi and Punjab were concerned. Thus those who gained maximum out of it were godmen and pseudo-saints and politicians (excluding, of course, the communists who were limited in number and used different emphasis for the same purpose). Thus, what we find is an indirect and subtle attempt at communalising a considerable number of immigrants in the U.K. and North America. What vindicated their beliefs was, ironically, the treatment they would get at Air Port (Palam) and later on, (Indira Gandhi) at the hands of the Custom Officers.<sup>4</sup>

The second factor concerns the year of migration of a Punjabi that has been playing an important role in building the political orientation of the Punjabis abroad. This should be understood in two ways. First, it must be assumed that if not all, then a considerable number among the immigrants might be having political affiliation before migration. In the

context of Punjab one could have one or more of the three dominant political affiliations, viz. the Akali Party, the Congress Party and any of the communist parties. The year of migration of a migrant has invariably implied that a person generally arrives with certain convictions about the then prevailing conditions in Punjab. He would be asked by others about the native place. His convictions would work in the portrayal of the events and relations. The political perception of a Punjabi did not only help him to hold his views but also to circulate among others.

The complex interaction between the Punajbis abroad and the Indian socio-political reality mediated by these two factors led to a belief among the Punjabis that they could contribute positively to change Punjabi society. Remittances played a role in fostering this belief further. What role an immigrant can play for his native place in the improvement of its economic conditions is well commented by Arvind N. Das (1992: 6-7) thus

The predominant logic of the labour market today is one of emigration rather than of operation within the national economy. Brain drain through manpower export is the flip side of brain drain. And, when eyes are firmly fixed Westwards, as one metaphorically stands on the beaches of Bombay searching for ships to take one away, the back is turned on the nation, the imagined community. It should be instructive for those who pin India's hopes on the remittance economy and NRIs to note that no nation in history has been sustained by those for whom the grass is immeasurably greener on the other side of the green card...

It has also been argued (Helweg; 1986, for instance) that remittances have played an important role in the success of the Green Revolution in Punjab. This is, however, very difficult to establish. The Green Revolution started in the Ludhiana district from where the migrations to foreign countries have occurred later. Remittances might have played a significant role in helping those farmers to mechanize their farming whose relatives had gone abroad. It seems that even the Punjabis living abroad also began to believe that the agricultural prosperity of Punjab was an outcome of their monetary help which was confined to their close kins only. Believed facts did not remain stagnant. From

them emerged some of the leaders of particularly the Sikhs who started propagating against 'the discriminatory behaviour' of the Indian Government against them.

But what is more significant is that this belief became stronger among overseas Punjabis than the people living in Punjab. These are the circumstances in which Ganga Singh Dhillon, Jagjit Singh Chauhan and others find sympathetic listeners. Since they had nothing to lose in becoming more vocal about Khalistan than the Sikhs in Punjab, they became its most important spokesmen. This was the time when even in Punjab it was treated as a vague concept.

The main purpose of the entire discussion is to show that the Sikh immigrants in U.K. and North America began to develop a belief which was a populist slogan of particularly the Akali Party in Punjab, that the discrimination against the Sikhs is a conscious policy of the central government. The role played by the touring petty politicians who had money making through donations as their primary goal remained very important. The second contributing factor was the attempt to reinforce the Sikh identity through the godmen who were not different from politicians in their aims. All these factors combined to push a large number of Sikh immigrants to support Sikh extremist movement.<sup>5</sup>

It has also been indicated that the Sikhs in U.K. and North America have sent a lot of money to the extremists. This seems to be true.<sup>6</sup> The emotionally surcharged environment among the Sikhs in Canada vis-a-vis the extremist movement could be easily observed. All the same the people were found sceptical towards contributing money. One respondent related during the interview that in 1984 at the time of the Operation Blue Star one priest in a gurdwara made an emotional speech and appealed to the *sangat* (all the people gathered at the congregation) to contribute money towards the Sikh cause. According to him, all the women present there gave most of their jewellery which they had put on. Ironically, later on, that priest constructed a house with that money. Subsequently many Sikhs stopped giving contributions for the Sikh cause through such people.

Most of the Sikhs in Canada have continued to have sympathetic view of the extremist movement in Punjab. Gupta (1992) has analysed Sikh extremist movement by using Lacan's concepts of 'imago' and 'correlative space'. He has come to certain interesting conclusions

of which one is worth mentioning; in the environment of continuously changing perceptions, the majority of the Sikhs tend to believe in an exaggerated reality. This may or may not hold well in Punjab, but this is certainly true of most of the Sikhs in Canada. The belief in discrimination against Sikhs, the idealistic faith in the purity of the acts of violence of the extremists, and the plausibility of Khalistan fall in this perceptual realm. Placed in this context are the interpretations of the experiences encountered in India particularly with the customs officers.

Helweg (1989: 317-8) traces the developments from 1971 beginning with Jagjit Singh Chauhan's and Ganga Singh Dhillon's activities followed by the visits of various prominent Akali leaders and argues that

The Khalistan movement was primarily an emigrant endeavour. It did not gain prominence in Punjab until receiving the support of Bhindranwala in 1982. Even then, its support abroad was small and centred in Canada until June 1984, when Indian army troops entered the Golden Temple premises. That one act united Sikhs around the World against the Central Government of India.

He further adds,

Canada is considered the major off-shore base of the Khalistan movement. Vancouver Sikhs had borne the initial brunt of Western racism and have been the centre of agitation of their rights... Sikh politics has been faction-ridden and influenced by their homeland, but the Golden Temple operation brought a degree of unity not previously present (pp.318-9).

In his entire discussion, Helweg ignores the factor of a continuous interaction between the Sikhs abroad and the politicians and godmen who had been visiting them. Moreover, the Sikhs in Canada or anywhere in the Western World could afford to be more vocal about Khalistan whereas the Sikh extremist movement did not have overtones of the Khalistan at the ideological level at the moment. The 'emigrant factor' could only play the determining role if certain conditions were prevailing in Punjab. This even included the interaction between the leadership of the movement and the foreign factor and the subordinate role of the movement leaders in relation to the 'emigrants'. Interestingly the districts to which these 'emigrants' originally belonged were less affected by extremism than others like Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Ferozepur.

What is important here is that the Operation Blue Star in 1984 turned the Sikhs against the Indian government worldwide implying that the relationship between the Sikhs abroad and the Sikh extremist movement in India was complex. In this way, it was a dialectical relationship where we find that both have been influenced by each other.<sup>7</sup> On top of that (as Helweg also mentioned) the Sikhs' perception of themselves in an alien environment contributed a lot to the reinforcement of Sikh identity in the form of Khalsa from which most of them had deviated in terms of five symbols.<sup>8</sup>

Visits to various gurdwaras in Vancouver as well as in Edmonton provided certain important insights into the Sikh orientation and action with regard to extremist movement in Punjab. The dining hall in the basement of the gurdwara building in Surrey (B.C.) was full of pictures of extremists 'who laid their lives for Khalistan'. However, there were emphases on the preservation of Sikh symbols, but no obvious remarks were made on 'the plight' of the Sikhs in Punjab which according to many respondents used to be the case after Blue Star Operation in 1984 till recently. At the same time many Sikhs were found to be sympathetic to the extremists.

In 1991 when the data were collected in Canada the extremist movement was quite strong in Punjab.<sup>9</sup> The discussion with most of the Sikhs in both Edmonton and Vancouver led to the impression that most of them were sure of the authenticity of the awareness about what was happening in Punjab. They knew about extortions and kidnappings, but they were not connecting these with the Sikh extremists. They were extremely critical of the Indian government. They wanted to hear those things which were suited to their held beliefs.

But the number of Sikhs who were critical of the extremist movement was not insignificant. One such respondent remarked, "The nationality and sub-nationality question and the desire of some of the nationalities to have their own sovereign state is an issue which can be debated, but I cannot support the demand for a sovereign state on a theocratic basis."

If the Ghadar movement and the influences of the Naxalite movement made the Punjabis a community with a secular base, then the Sikh extremist movement contributed to the fragmentation of this community. What we have is a disjointed Punjabi ethnic identity slowly

asserting itself in terms of ethnic groups based on religion. The gurdwaras which had been receiving both Sikhs and Hindus ceased to be so. The only silver lining is that of a number of Sikhs and Hindus who have remained committed to secular politics and have been unfailingly condemning extremism, communalism and Khalistan.

One may raise a question here as to why do those who have left Punjab feel so strongly about it? At the empirical level it can be understood in the light of factors such as :

- (a) frequent interaction between the immigrants and the native place irrespective of the geographic distance;
- (b) the background of the people who come in contact with the immigrants;
- (c) the role of money in a tagential manner in the sense that the belief that these immigrants are rich and must give donations for a cause invented; and
- (d) the relatives who are living in Punjab and are affected by the prevalent socio-economic and political conditions.

At the theoretical level two dimensions seem important. But before that it should be mentioned that theoretical explanations concern certain historical contextualizations only. The pioneer Punjabis who migrated at the turn of the century had all intentions of coming back to Punjab. They had not turned their back on India. Now the situation has radically altered and we have immigrants permanently settling in Canada. In this context two things are important. First, they occupy lower position in the class relations in Canada, and so as permanently settled immigrants they are powerless. Thus they tend to establish themselves as an ethnic identity. Second, in relation to the general population of their native place they have better quality of life. Thus the identity which they establish may have subaltern position in the Canadian situation but gives them perception of being privileged in relation to those who share that identity at the palce of their origin. The dialectics of the two situations is such that the possibility of over enforcement of certain religious values and practices of cultural forms is always there. What we have in the case of Sikh extremist movement is a manifestation of the this overenforcement. It is because of a degree of mystifications which have taken place making religious values and cultural forms as

one and the same thing despite their distinctiveness even at the semantic level.

Ideologically, the reinforcement of native culture always suits the host state (dominant classes). We know that even the developed Western world is not free from periodic recessions, unemployment, inflation etc. During recessions a high rate of lay offs occur. Correspondingly, the anger of the working class people of native origin<sup>10</sup> turns against the immigrants. This nativism is a convenient device for the capitalist state to argue that the failure of immigrants to become part of mainstream has led to attacks on them. No attempt is made to understand that the very existence of the immigrant working class is a result of capitalist development process and this class is fully integrated with the economy.

By way of concluding this section of the chapter it should be pointed out that the Punjabi orientation to Indian political conditions may continue in future. What turns and twists it takes will largely depend upon the operation of factors enumerated above. It has become all the more important when the Indian Government has started looking forward to the investments of Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), the prodigal sons of India—the expression used by Arvin N. Das to tackle its balance of payment crisis. As a natural corollary to this, we shall have the NRIs taking keen interest in the political affairs of the country.

### **Organisational Responses to Specific Issues**

This small section focuses on those aspects of political processes where the Punjabis or a section among them organised themselves to struggle for specific reasons. In fact the scope of this kind of discussion is large, but we would confine ourselves to some issues which evoked collective responses among the Punjabis for obvious reasons of lack of comprehensive information.

Any immigrant group is faced with a degree of insecurity and so devises mechanisms to cope with problems that it faces or may face any moment. The best way is to get organised to meet the challenges. This is in spite of the fact that in the Western World the legal process is held in high esteem. The Punjabis have been responding by organizing themselves to the problems they faced since the turn of the century. We would do well to describe some of them as recorded in the existing literature.



The first among the various incidents concerning Punjabis was the Komagata Maru in 1914.<sup>11</sup> When upon the arrival of the ship on the shores of Vancouver it was refused entry into the port, the Punjabis living in Vancouver responded to the situation. Puri (1993: 91) writes, "Leading Indians in Vancouver formed a 'Shore Committee', with Husain Rahim, Sohan Lal Pathak and Balwant Singh as leaders. Funds were raised and protest meetings held both in Canada and the USA. At one of the meetings held at Dominion Hall in Vancouver it was resolved that if the passengers of the ship were not allowed to land, they should follow them to India and start the rebellion with their help..." As we know the ship was forced back and Indians reacted to it in Vancouver. As Puri further informs, "In Vancouver, the departure of the ship resulted in a 'trial of violence', and became an accelerator for the demand for immediate armed action against the British Government in India" (1993: 93). The famous Mewa Singh case belongs to this period. He shot dead a Calcutta policeman hired by the Canadian government.<sup>12</sup>

"Shore Committee' was an outcome of the rising awareness among the Punjabis in North America of the possibility of succeeding through legal battles. It also signified the emerging nationalism among the Punjabis. The Komagata Maru incident gives a local context though connected with the colonial situation of India in which collective response occurred.

The first in the series of collective efforts did not begin in Canada but somewhere else, i.e. England. It is here that Krishna Menon and Akbar Ali Khan formed Indian Workers Association (IWA) in 1938 (Chandan, 1986). After 1947 it began to be dominated by Punjabis particularly the Sikhs. According to Ballard (1989: 220) the IWA was largely comprised of the communists. "From the early 1930s the communist party had been very active in Jullundur district. In particular it had caught the imagination of many younger Jat Sikhs, not least because the Communists, rather than the Congressites provided the most vigorously articulated and militantly organized opposition to the British Raj..." One may point out that IWA has not remained confined to the local issues. Rex (1983) informs that "When one looks at the political consciousness of immigrants, however, there is another even more important factor to be noted. This is the reference to the affairs of their homelands in much of their organised activity. In England, if one looks at the Indian community one finds that one of its main organisations,

namely the Indian Workers' Association, is not purely and simply a trade union for Indian workers, though it is that, but also an organisation which is concerned' with the revolutionary transformation of *colonial* society..." (p.195).

IWA, with the passage of time, got identified with the Sikh workers whose cause it articulated. In the 1970s its influence declined (Chandan, 1986; Ballard, 1989). However, the formation of IWA in Britain had great significance. On the one hand, it was an organization of the workers who could articulate the class based demands and on the other hand, it signified that a degree of specificity was also involved so far as the problems of Indian workers were concerned.<sup>13</sup> The unfortunate aspect was that it began to articulate the interests of one section of the Indian workers.

These two organizational responses from which the political awareness of the Punjabis began were secular. If one had specificity of time, the other had durability. Moreover, these tended to concern all Indians, instead of confining to one regional group though this is how it happened.

There were certain collective responses which solely concerned Sikhs in both England and Canada. We would start from England and then move to Canada. The whole issue is related with hard hat versus turban. No doubt, the issue directly concerned the religious freedom of the Sikhs in spite of the fact that in Britain half of the men among them were 'shaven and shorn' (Tinker, 1977).

Tinker (1977:81-82) has given the following comments on the issue of hard hat versus turban in Britain thus

The Sikhs have fought a number of political, legal and industrial battles over their right to keep the turban. A number of bus companies have been crassly obdurate in denying this right, and demanding that the Sikhs wear peaked caps, like other bus crews. The Sikhs have tried negotiation and they have tried militant action: sometimes they have been defeated, but they have not conceded the right of their employers to dictate to them. Similarly, in their effort to defy the law regarding the wearing of crash-helmets on motor-cycles and scooters, the Sikhs have steadily maintained their right and duty to wear the turban,

while not pleading for special sympathy, and without claiming to be above the law. And the community demonstrates its solidarity with the resisters with an unflamboyant determination.

In Canada, too, the Sikhs have tenaciously fought for their right to wear turban. In 1976, the Motor-Cycle Crash Helmets (Religious Exemption) Act was passed to amend the Road Traffic Act of 1972, according to which the requirement imposed on motor-cyclists to wear crash helmet "shall not apply to any follower of the Sikh religion while he is wearing a turban".<sup>14</sup> However, the Workers' Compensation Board had reservations regarding the efficacy of the turban in the personal safety of the worker involved in some work where hard hat is a must. J.P. Berry, Vice-Chairman of the Board wrote to the President, *Canadian Sikh Samachar* on 29.11.1976 thus: "Following your submissions at the public hearings of the Industrial Health Safety Regulations, the Board had some impact and penetration tests performed on Sikh turban. The results showed that even when padded with layers of ballistic nylon the turbans do not absorb impact energy to a sufficient degree to warrant their being considered as adequate head protection.

The Board has therefore not exempted members of the Sikh religion from wearing hardhats in industries where the wearing of hardhats is compulsory". When the Board was reviewing the turban issue in 1976, most of the Sikh organizations had sent their representations including a news item from *The Straits Times*, Malaysia (Tuesday, February 27, 1973) in which the Communications Minister, Tan Sri Sardon was quoted as saying that the imposition of wearing crash helmets on motor-cyclists did not apply on the Sikhs thus: "Since our constitution respects religions of other races, we cannot force Sikhs with turbans to wear crash helmets." But the issue was concerned with industrial safety.

The Sikhs continued their struggle against the imposition of hard hat in certain areas concerning industrial activity. On July 29, 1977 Gordon F. Gibson, M.L.A leader of the Liberal Party in British Columbia raised the issue in legislature. Almost all the Sikh organizations voiced their protest against the enforcement of hard hat on the Sikhs which went against their religious practices. It may be noted that the important issue was that if a turban wearing Sikh met an accident

in the factory, he would not be entitled for compensation as the Board had already established that turban was not safe enough.

Besides the hardhat struggle, the Sikh organisations largely confined to the religious matters. A great degree of politicking is going on in the management of gurdwaras, but that does not concern us at this juncture. We have noted in the third chapter that some of the Punjabis who migrated in the early seventies were Naxalites. Furthermore there is an evidence that the Ghadarites later on tilted towards left after the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917 (Judge, 1992). The influence of the communists on the Punjabis in Canada has been the emergence of secular organizations which fought against various kinds of problems and discriminations. Indian People's Association of North America (IPANA) which emerged under the influence of the Naxalites in Canada concerned itself not only with racism, discrimination and East Indian Workers', but also the problems of the native Indians. Similarly Canadian Farm Workers Union in the Fraser Valley organised the Punjabi farm workers, fought legal battles against the low wages and deplorable working conditions of the farm workers (Jhappan, 1983). The Canadian Farm Workers Union, however, met with a limited success.

There has developed a usefulness of the organisational approach to tackle various problems. In an environment which was alien the only way to survive was togetherness. The construction of gurdwaras was not only a result of religious needs but also the social requirements. Thus we find that the gurdwaras became the social centres of Punjabis irrespective of their religious backgrounds in the first two decades of the present century. This was also the period when the gurdwaras also became the centres of militant nationalism. The Punjabis, particularly the Sikhs, learnt it well that the only solution to their problems was in organized efforts. One respondent pointed out that the Canadian government, bureaucracy, and others would attend to you if you represented an organization. This might have led to the emergence of a large number of societies, associations etc., but we do not have sufficient data to substantiate this proposition.

### **Political Participation**

So far we have concerned ourselves with the Punjabis' modes of political activism either in relation to India or with regard to the on-going problems faced by them. Both these situations help any immigrant group

to a limited extent. In the words of a respondent, "The Punjabis are janitors in the corridors of power." This used to be the case with white non-Anglo-Saxon Europeans (in English-speaking Canada). Over a period of time they ceased to be at the periphery of power relations after they started participating in formal political process. The entry of the Punjabis has been quite late and not without problems. The participation of the Punjabis was belated because most of them did not become citizens even after their stay in Canada for many years. Many of the persons interviewed were of the opinion that in 1980s (1988 to be very specific) the Punjabis began to participate in elections not only as voters but also as candidates at provincial as well as Federal levels more enthusiastically than in the earlier periods. This implied that by that time many of them had developed definite political affiliations. It is in relation to this that we would try to see whether their political behaviour is influenced by their political socialisation in India. However, we must not forget that there is something bigger at stake for a Punjabi candidate than a white Canadian.

Provincial elections in British Columbia were held in 1991. The New Democratic Party (NDP) was voted to power. The NDP had three M.L. As from among the Indo-Canadians who were Punjabis, viz. Mo Sahota, Ujjal Dosanjh and Lally. Of the three Mo Sahota won from Victoria constituency which is one of the most prestigious and white dominated. He also became the Labour Minister. However, Mo Sahota belongs to that category of Indo-Canadians who can be categorised as "born and brought up" in Canada.<sup>15</sup> In this regard, Ujjal Dosanjh makes one of the most important figures among the Indo-Canadians. He at one stage with left leanings started working among the Punjabis. He has been able to establish himself well in the political process by understanding differences between Indian and Canadian sociopolitical realities. He has not been the only one in this regard. Many other communists could understand these differences very well. As one respondent who was a Naxalite leader and a communist of long standing said in the interview, "The Indian society is very different from the Canadian society. In India there is a need for militant armed struggle to transform the exploitative system characterised by poverty, misery, and sufferings. On the other hand, the Canadian society has reached a stage where people have strong faith in the democratic process and they abhor political violence". This was the statement of a political activist who

always believed in the efficacy of armed struggle for social revolution. An instance of understanding the objective conditions objectively.

The Punjabis seemed to predominantly support the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party during the period of data collection. Very few were supporting the Social Credit Party in British Columbia. However, it was the NDP affiliated Punjabi candidates who became MLAs in 1991 B.C. elections. The election of these candidates presupposes that they were nominated by their party. The nomination entails a procedure which is an important democratic process. It is here that we would like to comment upon.

Let us start from the following response of Ujjal Dosanjh thus:

...If you want to run as a candidate in a particular constituency many within the party or within the group you're dealing with might ask you whether all people from your community support you. Somehow if one hundred percent of the community you come from doesn't support you then somehow you don't have the right credentials to be a candidate in the larger society. But you would not ask a white Anglo-Saxon male Protestant whether all the white Anglo-saxon Protestants in that area support him before you think he or she has the right credentials for being a candidate. I think that kind of double standard goes on but it needs education and it's going to disappear with more and more of us coming into politics.<sup>16</sup>

Wood (1981) has studied the electoral behaviour of East Indians in the Vancouver South provincial and federal elections of 1979. What he reveals is something interesting. First, the East Indians do not affiliate with one political party though one hardly finds them members of the Progressive Conservative Party. Secondly, in Vancouver South two Indians sought nomination from the NDP (one of them was Ujjal Dosanjh). This ensued competition between these two and one of them was nominated. The process involved in this was that both of them signed up a large number of East Indians, particularly the Sikhs as new members of the NDP. Not only that, they also sought the help of their kins and friends.

Wood's observations have continued to hold valid in the subsequent struggles for nomination at many places though not in every case involving an East Indian. Our discussions with a large number of persons in Edmonton led to this conclusion that the East Indians particularly the Sikhs sign up a large number of their friends in the party membership and are taken to the meeting for nomination. Such people are not influenced by the personality, speech content, policy orientation etc. of a candidate. They vote for their friend.

This whole phenomenon which seems particularistic should be understood in the light of observations of Ujjal Dosanjh quoted earlier. In a situation, where an aspirant Punjabi seeks nomination but knows that he may be refused due to ethnic reasons may use such methods. This process does not simply reflect on the specificity of the Punjabis, but may also indicate a mechanism of adapting to the political process of the larger society. Another way of understanding this whole process is the election campaign. It is understandable that in the age of communication revolution the best way to influence voters is to use mass media. However, a degree of personal touch is invariably added, the underlying assumption is that the personality of the candidate may influence the undecided voters in his favour. But if we have 'bloc votes' (or the concept of it), then the methods of influencing a 'bloc' come in packages. It goes without saying that most of the Punjabi candidates used the networks to influence the voters which they used for nomination. But this must have remained within the Punjabi community. What about other 'bloc voters'? Similarly the white candidates might have used some methods to influence Punjabi voters. In 1991 some of the women candidates visited the gurdwara at Surrey in Punjabi dresses (salwar kameez). Since they were whites, the argument could still be used to support particularism of Punjabi voters. 'The East Indians can be familiar with the culture of East Indians. Owing to their traditional way of looking at themselves and cultural reality it is better if such methods are used'. Such methods are like double edged swords. One may interpret that the East Indians understand only that political gesture which is prevalent in India. At the same time, it may be argued that these candidates are publically supporting the ethnic assertions of East Indians.

In the end, it can be stated that the political processes among the Punjabis do not show a clear-cut direction at present. It was expected that starting from strong orientation towards India it would move to a greater

participation in the Canadian politics via formation of organisations. Though this seems to be the case, yet orientation to Indian political situation has also strongly been put into practice. Two reasons as plausible explanations of this situation can be given. First, the relative isolation of Punjabis from the Canadian society due to exclusivism of the latter characterised by racism and discrimination. Second, there has been no break in the migration of Punjabis to Canada. Therefore, all commonsensical expectations about them must take into cognizance the fact that we cannot make generalizations about Punjabis. If we have to do so, then 'generation' has to be the factor which would determine the behavioural pattern of the Punjabis. In addition to these two reasons which can be plausibly given, we may argue that whatever form the political behaviour of the Punjabis takes, it should be understood as an adaptation to the Canadian reality.

#### NOTES

1. Jensen, Joan (1983),: *Passage from India*, talks, about the post First World War period in the following manner "... By 1922 Sikhs also dominated a revitalized Ghadar Party which continued its interest in freedom for India throughout the inter war period..." (p.272). We know, however, this revitalization occurred without much direct effect on the Indian situation. However, this shows that the Punjabis who were predominantly Sikhs continued their efforts in the direction of liberating India from colonialism.
2. Besides marriage, *Akhad Path* (see note 18, chapter IV) has almost become a ritual for a *foreign returned*. It is also functional in the sense that a person who has come back after many years can invite all his friends and relatives on this occasion and meet them.
3. The correct expression is *Punjabi*. It may be relevant to point out that Punjabi society and culture like any society is dynamic. Therefore, it becomes very difficult to establish what is *Punjabi*. But in the case of the Punjabis abroad its mention is very frequent not only by others but by them too.
4. This has been irrespective of the fact of what and how much they had been bringing. Most of them coincided their visit to the native place with some important function in the family besides coming to get married. In all cases gold is one item which is preferred. Moreover, selling gold also fetches more rupees. Then we have electronic gadgets. All these things would come under excise and customs law and might have been subject to heavy duties. Thus, we find a duly observed (with corruption, of course) legal process becoming an object of resentment.
5. The author became conscious of this phenomenon when he visited Britain in 1987. Also discussions with all the people he met in Canada indicated that all varieties of people had been continuously visiting of which a large number was financed by the Sikhs. In Punjab also if one visits the Regional Passport Office, Jalandhar (Panjab) for a week or so, one will find the godmen coming there to have their passports.



6. Helweg (1989: 322), informs that money in large sums was sent to the Sikh extremists from abroad thus: "After the Indian army attacked the Golden Temple premises, support and money for the revolutionary cause increased drastically among emigrants. Gurdwaras in the United States, England and Canada gave thousands of dollars a week to support the revolutionary movement in Punjab (Chandran, 1985), and Manbir Singh Chaheru, Chief of the Khalistan Commando Force in Punjab, confessed that he received more that \$ 60,000 from Sikh organizations in Britain and Canada..."
7. It may be clarified here that many incidents which occurred abroad have not been described because most of them are well publicised, e.g. bombing of Kanishka, explosion at Narita Airport, Tokyo, visit of the Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi and Security bandobust, etc.
8. The five symbols a Sikh is supposed to display are 'the uncut hair and beard, steel bangle, shorts of a particular kind (Kachha), sword and comb.
9. After the elections held in Punjab in 1991 and Beant Singh became the Chief Minister the situation has undergone lot of changes in the state. At present the Sikh extremist movement has reached its lowest ebb since its emergence in 1980s.
10. This excludes native Indians in North America.
11. A succinct narration of this incident has already been given in the first chapter.
12. Hopkinson, W.L.
13. Anwar (1979), in his study of Pakistanis in Britain, has informed that his respondents felt the need, for ethnic union. He also informs that the Workers' Union help the whites and ignore the Pakistani Workers, but his discussion of the whole issue is very scanty.
14. All facts regarding this issue in Canada have been cited from a document titled *Hard Hat Struggle and Religious Freedom of Sikhs in Canada* (n.d.) no mention of the publisher.
15. As informed by many respondents, he was very young when his parents migrated to Canada.
16. Cited from "In our own voices" interview with Ujjal Dosanjh by Harji Sangra & Sukhwant Hundal, *Ankur J*, uly-September, 1991, P.25.

## 6

### CONCLUSION

The rise in the studies on ethnic communities and ethnicity has diverted the class bases of social reality. A concerted effort to understand class actions in terms of ethnic question has sidelined the focus on the position of a set of people who distinguish themselves from others in terms of culture, religion and race in the production relationships.

The migration of the Punjabis or Indians or South Asians has been a result of the need for labour in the developed capitalist countries who in the post Second World War period needed a larger reservoir of labour force for their expanding economies. Combined with this need has been the availability of labour force in the impoverished economies of these countries though the people who migrated belonged to middle classes. The liberation of colonised countries of Asia and Africa gave a new focus to the imperialist interests of the western capitalism in which the subsumption of labour from and new forms of economic exploitation of these countries occurred simultaneously.

It may be mentioned here that the logic of migration has its own dynamics. In the beginning the Punjabis went to be a part of the working class. Then the people followed them in an unbroken chain through the kinship network. This process is continuing irrespective of whether Canada or any other Western country requires them. The embourgeoised working class is comparable with middle peasantry. In this comparison the former stands out much better than the latter.

We raised certain issues regarding the integration/adaptation model in the beginning. Here certain comments are required in this

connection. So far as the integration is concerned, the Punjabis are fully integrated within the Canadian economy. They are governed by the market forces as much as any other social group in Canada is. It is our contention that the concept of integration as derived from functionalism is a misnomer. Conceptually, it signifies the harmony among different social groups. The issue is rather of adaptation - a concept borrowed from biology. In this regard it may be argued that we must look into alternative modes of adaptation. These alternative modes are neither simplistic categories nor are these prescribed, but shaped by the socio-cultural and economic relations of the migrants with the host population.

The migrants may, and over a period of time may not, share the similar economic conditions. As a result, class formation takes place within them. However, the subjective conditions prevail under which a distinction into 'we' and 'they' perpetuates due to the underlying forces of racism, cultural and religious differences, and other distinctive characteristics. It is not a situation in which an individual who by losing his identity may merge with the host population. We are dealing with a coloured collectivity with different socio-historical and cultural conditions.

Under the circumstances enumerated above the possibility of transformation of these subjective conditions into objective ones is necessarily there. In fact, that is what does happen in the due process. For a Western social scientist it is quite easy to discuss unique features of the western culture on which its institutional structures are based. We particularly find arguments pertaining to the fact that most of the Anglo-Saxon countries have two party political system. However, when an Indian social scientist mentions that Indians stick to their culture, he seems quite apologetic. This implies that somewhere in his mind two things are working. First, he desires that the Indians abroad should integrate/adapt with the host (Western) culture by abandoning their own cultural identity. Second, the discrimination against Indians is largely due to their failure to adapt with the host culture. Both these assumptions are misplaced fallacies. Such a view fails to take into consideration the process by which ideology is created.

The Indianness of the Indians becomes an ideological weapon which kills two birds with one stone. First, it justifies the ongoing discrimination against them in the sense that it is always argued that their particularism has the cause behind the failure in their adaptation. Second, it justifies their powerlessness. This happens even when it is not very

difficult to comprehend that discrimination and powerlessness of the Indians do not depend upon the factor of maintaining their own culture. It is rather the class position of the Indians who continue to be the part of working class and could be distinguished as a distinct ethnic group which cause that.

The often quoted statement of Marx that the prevailing ideas of the period are the ideas of the ruling class is of great relevance in understanding even the relations among societies. The development of capitalism has been characterised with two significant aspects. First, at the societal level it has created a class of exploited but free wage labourers. Second, on the other side, all countries experienced capitalism at different points of time. The first among the capitalist countries became the imperialist powers on the world scale. Capitalism and imperialism reinforced each other. The colonised, the subjugated and subordinated societies became under-developed due to their economic exploitation. Even after achieving liberation after the Second World War these societies could not develop as desired because these have to compete with the developed capitalist countries which control relevant resources. This situation of economic and political domination of the western world had led to its cultural pre-eminence. When cultural domination prevails on the world scale, it becomes very difficult for any western country to accept the presence of other cultural groups with their distinct identity within its territory. From melting pot it becomes boiling pot.

The cultural pre-eminence of a particular society though rooted in its economic domination in the international relations becomes a hegemonic force. It is believed that the given economic system is inseparably linked with these particular cultural formations. What is missed is that in spite of the corresponding development in the both it is possible that other cultural formations may become functional with that economic system. The whole question of an imposition of a particular culture on an ethnic community formed by migrants is raised only if the developed imperialistic economy has an area of subsumption of labour at the world scale.

Social scientists do not lag behind in characterising societies not in terms of developed capitalism and developing capitalism but as categories of confronting value systems. Thus, the Indians become particularistic in their value patterns because they do not adapt with

(adopt?) the western culture which is universalistic. But no incompatibility is seen between racism and developed capitalism with the same logic. Racism and ethnic discrimination are categories which cover lot of grounds in the developed capitalist societies. Intra-class conflicts particularly are quite useful in diverting the consciousness of the working class from questioning the system to ethnic and race relations.

The thesis of cultural diffusion no longer exists and cultural enrichment has become irrelevant as it has transcended its scope. Now we have politically furbished ideology of multiculturalism in which the immigrant and marginalised communities are allowed to remain powerless. This allowance is rather an imposition in which the subversion of the existential world of these communities occurs unconsciously. Added to this subversion is the relationship which they perceive with regard to their native place. As a working class they are better off than their brethren living in the villages of Punjab. This reinforced suversion and the distorted reality which is internalised as a viewpoint as well ideology entails the following.

1. This is a world where everybody lives well (as compared with the native country).
2. With minor aberrations there is equality of opportunity.
3. This society is considerate of our culture and religion and does not interfere.
4. This is a free country (of course, this is country of free wage labour).
5. Most of the things are accessible to a common man.
6. One can raise one's economic and social status through hard work.

When one begins to believe in these, most of the things are perceived as negative at the native place. Two worlds are compared in terms of whether particular goods are available at the native place. We know that capitalism entails reification at the societal level in which the relationships between the things determine the relationship between human-beings. Here we have a situation where a particular group compares its native place with the country of residence in terms of the

things available at both places. In a way, the relationship between India and Canada is perceptually established in terms of the availability of some consumer goods. What is more important is that those goods are not accessible to them in India because of their class position. But in Canada though their class position has downwardly changed, yet the consumer durables are accessible to them. This is an instance of reification at a level at which the country of origin gets alienated from those people who have already built a geographical distance.

We have an ambivalent situation in which the immigrants (Punjabis or Indians) are placed. In relation to the Punjabis in India they are better off in terms of material prosperity whereas in comparison with the host society they are marginalised both as a working class and an ethnic community. They become privileged in their imaginary categories (as they are comparing themselves with those with whom they have ceased to live making the comparison unreal) and under-privileged in the real sense of the term. What happens is that they start using one against the other in whatever form it becomes possible.

An element of perpetuating one's original culture becomes indispensable in a situation of social segregation and political marginalisation. The divided world does not pose the social psychological threat because it is in this division that collective consciousness could express itself in a comprehensive manner, though not for the outside world. But it is equally important for itself. The migration pattern, family structuration and social formation of Punjabis in Canada all suggest that a greater degree of particularistic features have developed which are not congruent with any of the realities, i.e. native or local. In fact what has happened is that a mode of adaptation has evolved.

Whatever may be the degree of illusion the powerlessness always engenders forms of tactics and strategies for struggle. Generally, it involves either the direct political participation or indirect influence building or both. These ways and methods do not completely help as in the given system three forms of powerlessness intermingle: economic, racial/ethnic and political. To put it conclusively, whatever may be the situation of the Punjabis in their struggle, they would continue to be in the situation of Canadian citizens of South Asian origin, because they went as labourers and not as conquerors like Anglo-Saxons.

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