

Sant Teja Singh and his Mission in the West

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The first president of Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society was a charismatic personality. His seven years sojourn in the West spanned from 1906-1913. Historians' account of his contribution is sketchy and skewed. In his twenties, his academic achievements were stupendous. A man of his ability, intelligence, and erudition at a tender age could have risen to legendary eminence during his time. Very few would get opportunities that he had at the start of his career as administrative head, civil servant, and the educational leader of one of the best institutions of his time. Similarly, he had many prospects to excel in the West. But he was a class apart. He had no ambition for his personal success after he was touched profoundly by a seer who had considerable following in Punjab. His submission to his spiritual guide was complete and unselfish. His master gave him a mission that ranged from organizing the community to - enshrining freedom, peace and spiritual poise in their lives. He transferred community wisdom to them that gave them a rare courage to face unique challenges in their social and political life.

Sant Teja Singh's name is associated with Sikh Gurdwaras in England, Canada and United States of America. Sant Attar Singh, a renowned saint of Mastuana, sent him to the western world with a message that there was nothing in occult and ridhi sidhis. Swamis from India were swarming the whole western world at that time with claims to supernatural powers by psychical and magical means. They were urging westerners to get absolute lordship of world by acquisition of mystic power to subjugate others through ancient mantras. Sant Teja Singh gave a different message to the world that nothing was higher than the hard work, honest living and devotion to the creator. It is very important to know the multidimensional life of such a unique personality.

Known as Niranjan Singh Mehta before getting baptized in 1905, Sant Teja Singh was born in 1877 and belonged to village Balowali, district Gujranwala. He was son of a physician. After M.A. LLB in 1901, he started his law practice but could not work for more than 7 days. In the meanwhile, he got an offer of Headmastership of an Anglo Sanskrit School. He worked for one year in the school. Then he challenged the civil service exam in the Salt department. In 1902, he became the Assistant Superintendent at Sanbhar Lake.

His western education had turned his head. He would not care for any known practices such as giving respect to Guru Granth Sahib, preachers or saints. He wouldn't bow his head before Guru Granth Sahib, because he thought it was not less than idol worship. But he otherwise was very honest and sympathetic to the cause of needy people.

On his transfer to Rajanpur, his duties were those of a police officer. He was supposed to arrest poor people who would make salt on their own. He felt morally opposed to such actions. "That my natural aptitude was more towards imparting education and then it started weighing on my mind that the English are bringing intelligent Sikhs under their influence so that they could instill

slavery in them, therefore, I thought that I should mix with them and fill their minds instead with freedom.”ⁱ

Sant Teja Singh must be among very few Sikhs who had got the opportunity to get western education. British at the beginning of the 20th century opened all channels for educating a certain class of Hindu elites. Therefore, highly educated Hindus were filling up positions in the administration, education and social service departments. They were going all over the world to teach Gnosticism, clairvoyance, and mysticism. Sant Teja Singh experienced a great divide between what he learned in the college and what his grandparents and parents had taught him. He was clear only about one thing that he would serve the commoners for the rest of his life. As a Salt officer three thoughts bothered him too much: “that the salt which for miles has come out of the ground, only needy ones make it for their use. My duty was to catch them and imprison them. It came into my mind that the nature had given a free gift to the poor and being instrumental for their arrest just for earning wages became a repulsive idea.”ⁱⁱ

He decided to quit the job because it was not his way to lord over poor and helpless people. He wrote a letter to S. Sunder Singh Majithia if they needed M.A. LLB in their college. Majithia knew how capable Niranjana Singh Mehta (Teja Singh) was, therefore, he offered him the position of Vice Principal. Mehta instead of quitting the Salt Department got one year leave.

On becoming, the vice principal of Khalsa College, Amritsar, the question of bowing head before Guru Granth Sahib bothered him. He reluctantly made some accommodations. He decided to go to Gurdwara when people were still asleep so that no one could see him. Then he reasoned with himself that he didn't accept the job for money. It was entirely for Sewa therefore he wouldn't mind to observe whatever was expected of him.

The first thing Sant Teja Singh did in Khalsa College was to set up the Guru Nanak Club. The purpose was to help in education of those Sikhs who could not afford money. He would invite needy students to his quarters and would share meal with them. He would instill in them spirit of freedom. Some of these students later became well-known in public life. During his stint in Khalsa College Amritsar, Bhai Teja Singh felt transfigured, chastened and purified. He was drawn towards Guru Granth Sahib as if it was a magnet. “Thy name brings glory Nanak seeks good of all.” After prayer Teja Singh fell in front of Granth Sahib like a thud. Subsequently, students would support him from suddenly falling before the Granth Sahib.

Sant Teja Singh was a topper in Punjab in Physics and Chemistry. He didn't believe in any supernatural phenomena. He was very critical of ritualistic practices. In his own words, Teja Singh considered it not due to some hallucinations as others often interpreted, but it was the magnetic power of Gurbani that would draw him. He often expressed his doubts about Sikh saints, and declared he couldn't distinguish between a Saint or a non-saint. Professor Jodh Singh,

who later rose to the position of the college principal thought that only Sant Attar Singh could dispel his doubts. True indeed it was, the course of his life changed forever.

Grandfather Lala Nanak Chand was a Sahajdhari Sikh and his father Dr. Ralia Singh was a Keshadhari Sikh but was not baptized. Mother Sada Kaur/Ram Kaur was from the Bhaian family of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh's time. His maternal Grandfather Bhai Tara Singh was a writer of Guru Granth Sahib. Grandfather was 6 feet 2 inches, he would do Panj Granthi path early in the morning. He got his education from the village mosque through Mia Mohammad Din. After attending Municipal school Fazilika he studied in Arya School Lahor. He completed his matric in Mission High school Gujranwala and attended Lahor College.

After completing MA LLB in 1901, Bhai Teja Singh realized he had wasted his life getting worldly knowledge. In the whole career of 16 years education, nobody taught him a word of Gurmukhi nor did he feel inspired to learn it. "I would go sometimes in camps of Arya Samaj or Brahma Samaj for spiritual guidance. I would consider it idol-worship to bow before Guru Granth Sahib."ⁱⁱⁱ

The impact of education he got from educational institutions influenced his choices in life. The predominance of Anglo-Vedic education overshadowed all other concerns. Learning Punjabi was projected as a step backward in academic life. Teja Singh's brush with Anglo-Vedic education in the beginning of his career might have filled him with disrespect for Sikh scripture. For him to be a Headmaster of Anglo-Sanskrit School Bhera was, however, an attractive proposal. As a headmaster, Teja Singh recognized the importance of Punjabi, which he learned with his own efforts from Bal Updesh primer and started reading Guru Granth Sahib in short versions.

"But my heart was without reverence to the scriptures. I would put Guru Granth on the table and read it with shoes on. Guru is always forgiving and wondrous. Sometimes I would be struck with the Shabad. I was already devoted to serve the poor. One day I thought that it was better to educate the poor than to brag about my status as a Salt officer."^{iv}

He felt moved by the miserable condition of poor people. They had no education, no idea of dignity of life, no will to be free from shackles of poverty. Natural resources like salt were not available to them. Laws were passed to punish who violated the restrictions. "God has gifted free salt to the poor. You are putting them in jail for the sake of your loyalty to the British. It is better to do something else than to serve as a Salt Officer."

In the college Gurdwara when the prayer ended: "Oh Nanak may you attain glory with the Naam and may good come to all on earth." Teja Singh experienced a dizzying and paralyzing sensation and he dropped like a log before Guru Granth Sahib. He would feel ecstatic and embrace anyone who he saw first in the morning.

When a meeting with Sant Attar Singh took place, Niranjana S. Mehta felt a strong bond with Santji. Sant Attar Singh urged him to forget his personal grievances and forgive those who he

thought harmed him. On introspection, he found he was not well disposed towards his step-mother. Sant Attar Singh later gave him a mission for Sikhs in the West. He guided him to observe the following rules:

- 1 “Keep your Sikhi form intact; don’t argue with anyone. If anyone asks you say it with folded hands that we made nothing.
2. Where you go build Gurdwaras.
3. Convey my message to citizen of western countries that there is nothing in occult, spiritual poise is far greater and enduring than the position of worldly power.
4. If one wants to deliver a lecture, one shouldn’t, if there is a reluctance to do so, one must deliver the lecture.

He reached in England in on August 24, 1906. He had started on August 6 on this journey. Sant Teja Singh took *Messageries Maritimes Ville Liner* from Bombay. He was accompanied by his wife, two children, and four others: Bhai Bhagat Singh, Amar Singh of Guru Nanak Bhandar, Dharm Anant Singh, and Hari Singh Basra. They travelled via Aden, Marsailles, Paris. They reached Bolgne and then through British Channel to London.^v

In England he remembered Sant Attar Singh’s words. “A resolve was made that Sikhs who came to England cut their hair and give up their turban, the stamp of Guru’s Sikhs. I made up my mind to reduce such a trend.” Bhai Amar Singh went to Manchester for work in cloth mill. Hari Singh Basra got admission in Edinburg University for M.A. and Dharm Anant took admission in college for electric studies. They were instructed to keep their hair and turban intact.

Sant Teja Singh faced unwelcome looks from time to time. In one of the incidents, he says, “Once I walked with my wife and children through the High Gate Bazaar. Hundreds of curious people gathered and kept walking behind us. In the end, a gentle lady opened her door and showed us in. She scolded them and made them leave us alone.”^{vi} Sant Teja Singh considered such hostility as a natural curiosity. But he advised that Sikhs should be able to explain as to why they maintain their hair and turban. “First this problem comes to everybody. But when we lived in them for some time and tell them the whole thing about turban’s importance and then they respect you and even greet you with Sat Sri Akal.”

Sant Teja Singh’s self-conviction and communication skills were enormous. On learning that cap is compulsory in Cambridge, he went to Downing College Cambridge and met Tutor Mr. Jackson. He acquainted him with Sikh religion. He allowed him to wear turban but also a black gown as per the tradition of the university. He took admission in Science and studied zoology, chemistry and physics. He writes “ It was for the first time in the history of Cambridge University that a turbaned Sikh was allowed to take part in all aspects of the ancient and independent center of learning.”^{vii}

He rented an apartment and installed Guru Granth Sahib in one room. Many Sikhs started coming to him in Cambridge on the weekend services. Next Sunday he laid the foundation of Khalsa Jatha British Isles. He said he was very fond of writing essays and lectures. But he was restrained by Sant Attar Singh from doing so. The Guru Granth Sahib that S. Teja Singh brought with him remained installed in London Dharmsala.

Sant Teja Singh happened to meet a Marattha, D.G. Panse who helped in settlement of others in England. G Panse and M.K. Gandhi too were in London at that time. Gandhi was on a special mission to London. ^{viii} Others who were in London and stayed at India House were Madame Cama, Lala Har Dayal, Charlotte Despard, Madan Lal Dhingra, David Garnett, H. M. Hyndman, Dadabhai Naoroji.

In the summer, there was a program in Columbia University for teacher training. He sent his application and also got scholarship for \$150. While living in Cambridge he came to know through many news and letters that Sikhs in Canada are facing a lot of problems. He asked for permission from Sant Attar Singh and Sunder Singh Majithia to go there help them in their hour of need. Even Sant Attar Singh planned to come to Canada but was not allowed by Sangat. He obeyed orders of the Sangat.

Before completing his degree at Cambridge, he moved to Columbia University New York on a summer scholarship. He expressed an independent opinion about Rudyard Kipling's poetry, that attracted the attention of his teacher. The teacher arranged public lectures for him on the spiritual traditions of India. The first topic was "Guru Nanak and the Sant Tradition," and the second topic was "On Indian Society." He was just in his twenties then.

Dozens of European Americans met him. He was asked to give weekly lectures. The attendance increased and he explained that the path of ridhi sidhi was inappropriate for spiritual progress. They told Teja Singh that an Indian Swami had cheated them. His two lectures were covered by English newspapers in North America.

Sant Teja Singh in Eyes of the Canadians

On being invited by Sikhs, he went to Vancouver. He returned to Columbia after finishing his community work in British Columbia. By now Teja Singh had many Americans among his followers. They were eagerly waiting for him on his return to New York. One, Mr. T C Crawford got interested in Gurbani. One day he came early in the morning and narrated his problem. Crawford stated:

“Over a time, I built my right to be a shareholder of a gold mine in Jacksonville California. My friends who have turned unfaithful to me want to deprive me of that. I need \$ 50, 000 to retain my ownership of the mine. In exchange, I can transfer one-fourth share of the gold

mine to the Sikhs. I have been intuitively told during my meditation that only you can help me.”^{ix}

Leaving his studies aside, he started for Canada where thousands of Sikhs needed him most. Right at that time, Canadian government had planned to deport all Sikhs to Honduras in South America. Canadian Sikhs complained of a deep-rooted prejudice against them. They stated with heavy heart,

“Canadian people say that we have no jobs and no other sources to support us. Our living is not clean. Actually they are jealous of us. We have contributed about \$ 20000 to build our Gurdwara Sahib and have joint Langar to feed any needy person. All of us earn a good living. We live well and take our bath everyday while they don’t take shower for days together.”^x

Commissioner from Ottawa took Bhai Sat Nagar Singh and Bhai Sham Singh Dogra for their approval of the report on sending Sikhs to Honduras. Sikhs apprehended that the jealous people conspired to uproot their religious flag and own their property. Sant Teja Singh stated, “Maybe I am sent here to help my brothers and sisters.”

Hearing the lamentations of Canadian Sikhs, he decided, in the meanwhile, to drop his studies at Columbia University. He applied his mind to revamp the image of Sikhs in Canada. He knew people react due to ignorance. For them Sikhs’ outward appearance was a threat to their culture. But when the same people would come to know about the beauty of Sikh principles of hard work, sharing and brotherhood of mankind, would think differently.

With the guidance of Sant Teja Singh, Sikhs registered Mining and Trust Company. They bought ¼ th share Mr. Crawford company, and decided to preach the truth about Sikhs in Canada. 250 acres was bought to near Eagle Harbor for the town. Many Canadians showed interest in teachings of Guru Nanak. Dr. Knapp and Mrs. Campbell Johnson became devotees of Guru Nanak.

Special ‘Awareness Lectures’ were arranged to counter the media propaganda against Sikhs. “Professor Teja Singh warned the opponents to think of the Sikh anger, for they belonged to a race of doughty warriors. It would be unfair and against natural justice to deport Sikhs to British Honduras by deception and fraud.”^{xi}

On December 12, 1908, details of Honduras episode appeared in the press. The excerpts are given below. The report identifies Sant Teja Singh metaphorically as a Buddhist. The Newspaper, The Vancouver Daily Province narrates the following report in its Saturday edition-December 12, 1908:

“Mystery and Power of Teja Singh—Remarkable Buddhist scholar who has come to Vancouver to lead his countrymen –Regarded by them as a Demi-God.”

“The East Indian problem in British Columbia has entered upon a new phase fraught with grave possibilities—how is the present situation to be explained?

....His (Prof. Teja Singh, M.A.’s) countrymen here almost worship him. He is regarded as a veritable demi-god.... There was no jingoism in his two hours address. He spoke calmly and dispassionately. The professor showed himself to be a man of profound erudition with a marvelous grasp of European civilization and intimate knowledge of the occult and oriental philosophy. He disclaimed against the rapacity of western nations and denounced the civilization that was based on material wealth... Prof. Teja Singh talks like a man who believes that he has a sacred mission to perform. At the lecture he proudly declared that his coming here was providential and that his steps have been directed by Guru Nanak, the mystical energy or spirit worshipped by the Sikhs. His influence during his stay here has even extended to white people.

Prof. Teja Singh is a Sikh. He led the opposition which was successful in preventing Mr. Harkin from reading the official report last Sunday.....he is a great leader, a man capable of meeting any emergency? ...Prof. Teja Singh is unalterably opposed to the removal of his people to British Honduras. He has the courage of his profession or convictions. The professor takes the view that the East Indians are satisfied with conditions in this province and that 70 percent of them are doing well. He estimates the balance, or 30 percent, are unemployed. He, however, maintains they are not a burden on the white population, as the Hindus and Sikhs practice the virtue of charity. He claims that a Sikh banking institution will probably advance money to a proposed land company which intends to buy up large tracts of land in British Columbia...

“If the Dominion Government gives my people a respite of three months the East India problem in British Columbia will be solved.” was his utterance a few days ago...The door of the basement of the Sikh temple already displays the titles of a mining and trust as well as a lumber company. Prof. Teja Singh, the idol of the Sikhs and Hindus, is a familiar figure on the streets...he looks like a man who is terribly in earnest. This impression is confirmed when he opens his lips. His conversation is pointed and dignified. He speaks faultless English, with a slight accent. His wide reading is illustrated when discussing any topic relating to India. He has a fund of information almost encyclopedic in character to drive home any argument he quotes historical authorities. The religious and philosophical system of every age and civilization, political science, political economy, Biblical criticism, modern social reforms, are equally at his fingertips...Teja Singh is never weary of laying down the principle that the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man will never be realized until mankind gets rid of its inherent selfishness. Of the ultimate triumph of the human race he entertains no doubt.

Whether the brotherhood will come tomorrow or a million years later hence, he asserts, all depends upon the abolition of selfishness, the subjugation of the ego, the annihilation of self by the spirit of a divine altruism.

He says, Money acquired at the cost of human suffering is regarded as a curse. It serves no good purpose and retards the goal to which the world is drifting.'

This is a man who in less than five weeks in Vancouver has animated Hindus and Sikhs with courage and confidence in themselves. There is something sublime about their devotion to him. Watch an East Indian meets him on the street. When, Teja Singh approaches, the other bows in abject humility, at the same time crossing his hands and uttering a salutation in an undertone. He is their guardian, philosopher and friend. Any argument that he was inspired by any other motive than pure unselfishness would be regarded as high treason. Teja Singh is the uncrowned king of the East Indians in British Columbia. But his influence reaches farther. He is regarded in India as one of the strongest champions of the so-called national movement now agitating millions of natives and which the British authorities regard as a purely seditious one. He is in constant touch with educated men of his own and other races in the Indian Empire....

Prof. Teja Singh will tell the enquirer that nothing has set up a more impassable barrier between the peoples of the east and west than the profound discrepancy between Christian profession and practice. The deceitful selfishness, the rapacity and bloodshed with which Christian nations have established their power in the Orient, the viciousness of the earlier adventurers, have thoroughly alienated sympathy and destroyed confidence....

Prof. Teja Singh will also tell the enquirer that recent scientific discoveries awaken a strange echo in the philosophy of the east in both Hindu and Buddhist lands...

The veil of Maya cast over mankind which produces the delusion of the ego of finite personality, and the Buddhist belief that the desire for individual existence is the root of the all suffering and that true happiness comes alone from the perception of the transitoriness of all things and from the gradual conquest of the error of self. Buddhism (meant Sikhism) according to Teja Singh finds its goal rather in the delight of a deep appreciation of the realities of existence in the exercise of the higher mental faculties, in a life transfused with everyday beauty, than in the possession of innumerable means of advancing wealth and commerce, of gratifying sense, of promoting mere bodily comfort.

Teja Singh is a Buddhist. To his people he is more. He is their leader and lawgiver, a veritable Guru Nanak, the sage who reformed their religion centuries

ago. He decided for them whether they should go to British Honduras or remain in British Columbia and take chances in a hide and seek game with the deportation officers during the winter months. But Prof. Teja Singh has no fears for the future; he feels able to look after the welfare of his confiding fellow countrymen..”^{xii}

British were alarmed to read Colonel EJE Swayne, the Governor of Honduras’s report that was published in reputed newspaper *The World*, Vancouver, B.C. December 14, 1908. The report pointing out to Prof. Teja Singh’s observations as valid stated that though the Sikhs were agitated, they never turned violent and were not willing to leave Canada. The newspaper carried Teja Singh comments: “Any forced eviction of the Indians might incite 50,000 Sikhs in the Imperial Army to rebel, and to quell this rebellion they would have to send at least two lakhs soldiers.” He further wrote in his report that Professor Teja Singh had brought all the Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus from the Punjab and Brahmans from the North West and from lower Bengal on one platform in a way that could not have happened in India.”^{xiii}

Newspaper clearly outlined how Indians of diverse backgrounds were united to defeat Canadian government’s design to deport them illegally to unfriendly regions of the British Empire. The anxiety that such a unity of people could throw the British out of India opened eyes of the custodians of the British Empire. They rather preferred to close their eyes to the embarrassment caused by this incident and drew curtain on the Honduras chapter permanently. This created a sense of self-respect and dignity in all Indians.

Writing about G.D. Kumar’s activities, Andre Parnaby & Gregory S. Kealey write, “ At that time, he was living in Victoria and running a grocery store that was set up with the assistance of his friend, Taraknath Das. The link between the two men, which was common knowledge within the South Asian community, prompted Hopkinson to pay a visit to Kumar’s modest operation in the provincial capital in August 1909. Disguised as a lumberman, looking for laborers, Hopkinson observed that Kumar not only sold *Free Hindusthan* and the radical, London-based *Indian Sociologist*, but that he was in constant contact with the ubiquitous Teja Singh and Taraknath Das, who was then living in Washington State. The following November, Kumar surfaced in Vancouver, opened the “Swadesh Sewak Home,” and started publishing a newspaper by the same name early in 1910. Hopkinson kept tabs on him at all time. “The tone of this paper gradually became more and more objectionable,” one government official’s report concluded, based in part on his assessments. “[I]t was addressed principally to the Sikhs in the Indian Army in their own language, and was being sent out to India in considerable numbers.”^{xiv}

The British and Canadians contrived to poison mutual relations of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs in Canada, because their unity was detrimental to saving India for the British Crown. Global efforts started to contaminate the very source of this cosmic energy. There was no dearth of manpower, resources and wealth. Afraid to lose the ill-gotten wealth of India, the British Empire targeted all those who stood for Brotherhood of Mankind and unleashed poison all around that ultimately

infected whole Europe in World War I. The editorial of *the B.C. Saturday Sunset* of December 12, 1908 expresses its stunning revelation of unity of Indians as something which Canadian government should dare to confront.

Hitherto the Hindus and Sikhs have been regarded in this province as misguided and possibly deluded victims who had been induced to locate in a land which was quite unsuited to them in many respects. We had somehow learned to think of them as poor simple creatures who knew no better than to come to this country, where nature had stacked the cards against them and who were up against a combination of circumstances over which neither they nor us had control.

The net result is that we are getting our eyes opened to the real character of the Hindus and Sikhs. We are learning that the rank and file of them are being led by clever educated men for purposes not yet clear. Whatever these purposes may be, apparently they have little to do with the real interests of the Hindus or Sikhs, otherwise, why should they have manipulated matter to prevent them from hearing the report of the government officials upon the prospects of Honduras....It would seem that the Government will now be quite justified in deporting all Hindus and Sikhs who are not self-supporting and to rigorously enforce vigorous measures to prevent any more from coming to this country. --- BRUCE. ^{xv}

Khalsa Diwan Vancouver became a registered company. The media for the first time stressed Sikhs were working very hard to support Canada's economy. The systematic campaign to stereotype Sikhs was fully exposed. Sikhs passed a resolution to completely reject any proposal related with Honduras and determined to assert their right to live in Canada. Since the resolution was passed in the Diwan Hall, the commissioner insisted not to remove shoes for announcing the report in the main hall. On hearing shouts of "Bole so Nihal," he left the premises in utter desperation.

The British intelligence was tracing all activities of Sant Teja Singh. A pious looking Gursikh, Khem Singh Bedi was pursuing Teja Singh as an agent of the Indian intelligence. He tried to incite Teja Singh's wife against him.

On visiting Victoria, in Canada, Sant Teja Singh reformed Sikhs who had made drinking their favorite habit. He gave his sermon and prepared them to be true Sikh. They got ready to build the Gurdwara and promised to contribute one month pay right away. Mr. Robert W. Clark real agent helped in buying the land. Mrs. Clark got two pamphlets written by Professor Teja Singh of which 10,000 copies were reprinted.

Rev. Jenken Lloyed Jones's Invitation to Prof. Teja Singh

On his way, Sant Teja Singh met Rev. Jenken Lloyed Jones, Lord Bishop of the largest Unitarian Church of Chicago. They exchanged their views on world peace and the role of religions in it.

After listening to Teja Singh's discourse on spirituality, Rev. Jones stated, "Brother Teja Singh, Light shall come again from the East. We in the West are quite unfit for it."

On the request of Rev. Jenkin Llyod Jones, Sant Teja Singh was invited to attend Congress of free Christianity and religious progress in Berlin. Delegates gathered at Cologne and dinner was given in Bonn University Hall.^{xvi}

Reports of Teja Singh's participation in Berlin Congress appeared in *The Christian Register* of October 6, 1910, October 13, 1910, and November 10, 1910: Rev. Charles W. Wendte writes about Professor Teja Singh's discourse in the following terms:

"Professor Teja Singh of Lahore (Punjab) University, the Sikh scholar who addressed the Berlin Congress on the religion of his people—a theistic form of faith is now pursuing a six months course of study on philosophical and other topics at Harvard University. He may be secured for occasional Sunday evening addresses.

We learn from *Christian Life* that a religious society for the promotion of universal religion on the lines of Brahma Samaj of India, but to the use of Mohammedan, and Christian, as well as Hindu Scriptures, in its worship is in process of formation among Indian residents in London"^{xvii}

In issue of October 13, 1910, Charles Wendte writes in his report:

"In robes of flowing yellow silk with lofty turban, Professor Teja Singh gave an account of the religion of his people, the Sikhs of India, planted by Guru Nanak and others in jungles of Asiatic philosophy and worship centuries ago."^{xviii}

The Target of the British Empire

Sant Teja Singh had to face hostility both from within and without. His exceptional readiness to undertake appropriate course of actions to solve problems, his remarkable outreach in persuading Sikhs to be Amritdahari, and his clarity of thought on Gurbani created jealousy of those who subscribed to Anglo-Vedic view of life. But Teja Singh remained calm and creative even during testing moments. The British agents multiplied their efforts to break any unity among Indian subjects. Their harmony could have impelled the Canadian Government to grant citizenship rights according to the Queen proclamation of 1858; if not the British Empire could face the wrath of united India, the replica of which briefly had surfaced during Honduras chapter.

Hopkinson became agitated after Honduras episode to morally discourage Professor Teja Singh and his supporters to carry on spreading Gurus' mission in North America. Once when Prof. Teja Singh returned after administering Amrit to about 100 Sikhs in Victoria, Seattle, Portland, and California, a henchman, probably of Hopkinson, hit Teja Singh and Balwant Singh three four times with a cane. Bhai Balwant Singh got ready to confront him boldly, but Professor Teja Singh forbade him to react and advised to forgive him as he was a fellow Sikh. Bhai Balwant

Singh calmed down and laughingly said it was not his fault, he was specifically sent to do what he did.

Commenting on strong organization of Sikhs, Sant Teja Singh writes that there was no chance of any outside interference. “But due to lack of ‘Nitnem’ practice, they became ego-centric. Mutual bickering started increasing among them. Remember the time, in difficulty, they all were ready to bet their life, but now in times of prosperity, they became rancorous and jealous of one another. “Teja Singh regrets that Sikh community, when cut off from true meanings of Gurbani, becomes very self-destructive.”^{xix}

The infiltration in Sikhs was taking place very fast. Its agenda was to divide Sikh leadership and identify all those who could be pain in the neck for the British. Their purpose was to malign the character of Sant Teja Singh. He was charged with misappropriation of funds, and blamed for misleading them to buy useless stretch of land. Since he was very selfless and only devoted to preach Sikhism as per the directions of Sant Attar Singh, he left for Britain because still a proposal to build a Gurdwara there was pending.

On reaching Vancouver, Teja Singh found that Secretary Raja Singh had joined hands with European Auditor to malign him. Teja Singh immediately demanded public audit of all the accounts. Raja Singh was proved false in his allegation. Mr. Crawford returned \$ 19000/ 250 acres land was sold by the new committee which was held for extending Guru Nanak mission.

How much the Canadian Government through its undercover agents was upset about Teja Singh’s community work, it is evident from reports to Cambridge University in London, and Columbia University in New York. Teja Singh was just one term away from completing his degree at Cambridge. He had successfully passed five terms from 1906-1908. Correspondingly, Columbia University too expressed its inability to allow him complete his coursework.

Harvard University: Limits of the British Influence

But Harvard University was a different school in those times. It subscribed to the most modern view of liberalism. It had very enlightened view of history, literature and world affairs. If some attempts were made to block Teja Singh from attending the University, it might have failed as there was no place for Aryan humanism, the rationale of which “was quite simple: certain ethnic groups were ‘subhuman’ and were therefore subject to the will of the ‘humans’ (Aryans).”^{xx} It is interesting to note that Professor Bliss Perry, Chair of Department of English at Harvard University, was one of very few literary luminaries of the United States of America.

Both at Cambridge and Columbia University, Teja Singh wasn’t allowed to complete his education because of reports of his activities in Canada. But at Harvard University, fortunately, he got admission. Teja Singh completed A.M. in English Literature under Professor Bliss Perry, who earlier taught at Princeton University with Professor Woodrow Wilson, later to become the

president of the United States of America. Professor Bliss Perry, Chair of English Literature from 1909-1930, and was an established authority on 19th century literature.

One day Professor Perry visited Prof. Teja Singh's house to know why he was not attending classes. Teja Singh ran out of money and couldn't pay his dues. Professor Perry gave him needed money, and urged him to complete his course. Professor Perry was not an ordinary professor. Before coming to Harvard, he had served as Editor of the Atlantic Monthly, a prestigious literary publication. In Atlantic, even writers of repute sometimes would get rejection slip. He promoted writers like Henry James, Booker T. Washington, Charles Eliot Norton, Edith Wharton, Sarah Jewett, William James, Woodrow Wilson, and Jack London.

Jack London found a place in Atlantic Monthly, after many rejection slips from the editor. In one of his communications, Jack London acknowledges receiving rejection slip from Professor Perry.

"London answered Perry's letter, making it clear that he saw the rejection as essentially class-based. However, he made a point of thanking Perry for his respectful note: "Now this is not sarcastic at all," wrote London, "and I am thanking you for the best and most genuine rejection I ever received in all my life."^{xxi}

Another dimension of Professor Bliss Perry was that he was one of the most favorite friends of President Woodrow Wilson. Perry shared his unique literary vision with him quite often. Wilson worked in Princeton University as a professor and was very popular. Sant Teja Singh mentioned Professor Bliss Perry's name in his writing how he came to his rescue when he ran out money to pay for his dues.

Prof. Teja Singh's Bonding with Professor Bliss Perry

Before going to Harvard, Teja Singh lectured to a huge audience in Columbia and it is said his lectures were covered by newspaper of the time. Later, such lectures were delivered in Vancouver, Canada also. Professor Teja Singh had immobilized all efforts of Canadian government's plan to forcibly deport all Sikhs and Hindus in Honduras. He must have shared all this with Professor Perry, and his reasons of discontinuing education at Cambridge University, London, and Columbia University, New York. Professor Perry must have developed fondness for Prof. Teja Singh, when he further informed him of attending Peace Conference in Berlin in 1910. Rev Jenkin Lloyd Jones, Lord Bishop of the Largest Unitarian Church of Chicago who organized the Parliament of world religions had personally invited Prof. Teja Singh to Berlin. Professor Perry's sympathy must have been also for Teja Singh's special efforts to make clear the distinction between *ridhis- sidhis* (occult knowledge), and the connection of spiritual life to the good of all. Thus, Prof. Teja Singh as the first ambassador of Sikhism to the western world connected missing links of the duality of the Anglo-Vedic vision that was promoted in the academia at a big scale.

Professor Perry's writings reflect universal vision for mankind across the globe. Therefore, he was unimpressed by attempts to define race in political terms. In his book, *The American Mind*, Professor Perry clearly outlines the incapacity of arts and literature to delineate racial or nationalistic characteristics. He states: "Wholly aside from such spiritual insulation of the single writer, there is the

obvious fact that none of the arts, not even literature and not all of them together can furnish a wholly adequate representation of racial or nationalistic characteristics.”^{xxii}

Racial Origins irrelevant in Social Sciences

The scientific studies on identifying racial origins have no significance, according to Perry, in social sciences. He quotes one of the professors to denounce race discussion on scientific lines. “The late Professor Josiah admitted “I am baffled to discover just what the results of science are regarding the true psychological and moral meanings of race differences.---All men in pre-historic times are surprisingly alike in their minds, their morals, and their arts- we don’t scientifically know what the true racial varieties of mental type really are.”^{xxiii}

Professor Perry is very forthright in giving definition of American mind. In one of the articles, published in New York Times, on December 15, 1918, Brander Matthews states, “What we mean by Americanism? We all feel there is such a thing and it is very precious to us: but what is it really? For these questions there are many answers, and no two of them agree. Perhaps the definition of an essential national spirit of fundamental racial quality is too difficult to be achieved by the keenest eyed among us or even by our united efforts. The answer that professor Perry propounds hits as near to the center of the target as any of his predecessors have come. It is to the effect that we are descended from pioneers and that we have retained the swift Elizabethan sense of the transitoriness of human institutions. “Men are tent dwellers. Today they settle here and tomorrow they have struck camp and are gone. We are strangers and Sojourners, as all our fathers were.”^{xxiv}

Race Diplomats and the Founder of the First Sikh Gurdwara

Professor Teja Singh, after his education in the west, becomes the founder of the First Sikh Gurdwara of United States of America in Stockton on May 27, 1912. On this day, Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society was incorporated that later buys the land and constructs the Sikh temple. As the first president of this Gurdwara, Prof. Teja Singh establishes certain routines that were followed literally for more than half a century. Records of meeting in Gurdwara, make a vital link to questions of race, equality, freedom, and fraternity. It is interesting to see how, after Teja Singh left Stockton, race diplomats circulated their ideas in Sikh religious places. After Teja Singh leaves, educated men of diverse backgrounds enter in the Sikh sphere to establish a political party for an armed rebellion in India. They capitalize on cultural and religious archetypes of freedom that were inculcated in them by their Gurus. But how the racial discourse sneaks in amid battle cries of Indian nationalism is very significant to understand the history of Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society, Stockton.

British experience in ruling India by manipulating racial factors is well known. But how racial rhetoric builds tension for the whole world has never been fully explained. German society was more liberal and progressive before the dawn of the twentieth century. But after Russia and France projected the possibility of an alliance, Britain devised what is called “Great Game.” The great game was centered more around creating racial theories that were propagated as the final truth of the century. In the long run, the plan was to subjugate all religions to the ancient wisdom of the Aryan. Societies formed for the spread of these ideas, became active all over the world. As part of the strategy, first, all energy was

spent to create the bugbear of racial superiority. Then a coalition was cobbled together to smash it. The Britain couldn't stretch any further, therefore, had to bite the dust after two great wars.

Andrew D. Evans in his book, *Anthropology At War*, underlines a drastic change in ideology of the German people. It argues that World War I had a major role in transforming German thought 'from the decidedly liberal discipline of the late nineteenth century into the racist and nationalistic race science of the 1920.' "This study locates crucial elements of the change in the war years and their aftermath. From 1914-1918 anthropologists worked in a series of new contexts-- ideological, political, and practical -- in which the definitions and percepts of the liberal traditions quickly became unfashionable."^{xxv}

Professor Perry and Woodrow Wilson: A Unique Friendship

Woodrow Wilson 25 years at Princeton as undergraduate, professor, and then President of Princeton University had a very rewarding scholarly career. Wilson's friendship with select people had great significance for their ideological status. Bliss Perry remained his favorite friend for twenty five years. Biographer of Woodrow Wilson, William Maynard notes that Perry was concerned about his friend's health before he set out for the White House. Perry knew how failing to reach accord with others, Wilson had a tendency to overburden himself with his unbearable workload. "This retreat into isolation worried his old faculty friend Bliss Perry, now at Harvard, who thought Wilson was putting too much faith in self-reliance and failed to seek consensus. "It is the ancient story of heroes," Perry mused, "and of martyrs." But Wilson was following a habit that dated back to childhood. "I live my real life inside myself." he once said of his spells of deep withdrawal, "as if others were not here. I hope and believe that they do not know it- but I could not stand it if I really lived with them. The world I live in (I have peopled my own world ever since I was a boy) is full of the most delightful persons in the world. None is admitted whom I don't love."^{xxvi}

John Milton Cooper, Jr., another biographer of Woodrow Wilson indicates that 'with Bliss Perry, Wilson enjoyed both a personal and literary friendship until Perry left Princeton in 1899 to become editor of "The Atlantic Monthly."^{xxvii} Wilson's idea of self-determination caught up the imagination of subjugated nations so much that a new phase began in their political life. Being a firm believer in triumph of good, Wilson confronted European leaders all by himself. He boldly put forward his proposals which made them to review their relationship with colonies. According to J.W. Schulte Nordholt, "Wilson was a warm person, as clearly showed in the numerous close friendships he made at Princeton. He had cordial relations with colleagues such as George McLean Harper, Bliss Perry, John Grier Hibben and many others. There was much mutual visiting among these friends; they helped each other when in difficulty and admired each other sincerely."^{xxviii}

Wilson's idealism sometimes would upset members of congress. But the president boldly put forward his assertions sometimes even attacking them 'who dared to resist the will of the nation and did not understand what a magnificent taste American now had. "Only America is using her great character and her great strength in the interest of peace and prosperity." And, once more, he was certain that time would prove that he was right; Eventually the whole world would turn to America and admit , "You were right and we were wrong. You kept your head when we lost ours."^{xxix}

Professor Perry and Woodrow Wilson were reared in different value systems that informed their scholarly and political careers. At Williams, Professor Perry knew, "All paths that led to trust in God and strengthening of the essential of the character were allowable in the brotherhood of the service of humanity."^{xxx} Professor Teja Singh's message of Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of mankind must have been the common ground to strike Professor Perry's special favor to him.

Bliss Perry was born in 1860. In 1881 he was teaching English literature. In 1886 he rose to be professor and in 1893 he was Chair of the English Department at Princeton. Six years later, he accepted the offer to be editor of *Atlantic Monthly*, where he worked for 10 years. In 1909, he accepted the offer from Harvard University to head the department of English. The same year went abroad on scholarship "Hyde Lecturer" at Sorbonne. Professor Perry was an authority on Walt Whitman who, according to Professor Perry, was an amateur poet. A student writes about Professor Perry, "Scholarly in his tastes, clear in his thinking, simple and direct in expression of his thought, and always human in his personality, he taught us to think, he helped us to feel, and he thrilled us with a new horizons." To us he seemed the ideal teacher, and he has won the loyalty of Harvard, Princeton, and Williams's men alike."^{xxxi}

Professor Perry's views about Canada also seemed to be very independent and authentic. According to him Canadian literature could not disengage from colonial influences altogether. "Yet Canadian Literature, one may venture to affirm, has remained to this hour a 'colonial' literature, or, if one prefers the phrase, a literature of 'Great Britain.'"^{xxxii}

Perry's views on race were also much ahead of his times. How close he was to the affairs of the day, is quite evident from the following quote. The question of race in America was as endemic as it was elsewhere in the world.

"It affects the North as well as the South, it touches the daily life of all of our citizens, individually, politically, humanly. It moulds the child's conception of democracy. It tests the faith of the adult. It is by no means an American problem only. The relation of the white with the yellow and black races is an urgent question all around the globe. The present unrest in India, the wars in Africa, the struggles between Japan and Russia, the national reconstruction of China, the sensitiveness of both Canadians and Californians to oriental immigration, are impressive signs that adjustment of race differences is the greatest humanitarian task now confronting the world. What is going on in our States, North and South, is only phase of a world problem."^{xxxiii} Perry's mentions of Canadians and Californians regarding oriental immigration, is evidently a reference to Bellingham and Evret race riots and role of the American exclusionists in the background of the incidents.

Professor Teja Singh's Message and Whittier's Philosophy

Teja Singh's message about brotherhood of mankind is quite evident in Whittier's philosophy. Professor Perry owed much of his liberalism to Whittier, and the same influenced his friend Woodrow Wilson.

"Now Whittier's opinion upon the world are unmistakable. He believed, quite literally, that all men are brothers, that oppression of one man or one race degrades the whole human family and that there should be the fullest equality of opportunity."^{xxxiv}

Professor Perry's intellectual friendship with Woodrow Wilson clearly reflects in his proposals to reorder the international relations and establish the League of Nations to appropriate his liberal philosophy. Wilson's biographer Lloyd E. Ambrosius rightly evaluates his vision of twentieth century world. He states:

“As he (Woodrow Wilson) developed this conception of American nationalism, Wilson emphasized both its positive and negative aspects. The new League, he claimed, would embody the integral relationship of liberty, order and progress that had long characterized the United States. “Liberty,” he proclaimed in St. Paul, Minnesota, “is a thing which is rooted and grounded in character, and the reason I am so certain that the leadership of the world, in respect of order and progress belongs to America is that I know that these principles are rooted and grounded in the American character.”^{xxxv}

Sant Teja Singh as a Harbinger of World Peace

Very few historians evaluate Teja Singh's pioneer role as a community organizer, legal counselor, religious mentor, and above all a true harbinger of world peace. Kernel S. Chang in his recent book, *The Making of the U.S.- Canadian Borderlands*, tries to recognize Teja Singh's vision of 'cooperative living' as an alternative to Canadian government's campaign to denounce Indians mostly Sikhs as burden on taxpayers. He collected evidence, data, and interviews of European business owners under whom Indians worked to expose a false media campaign against them. According to Chang, “In place of the emigration plan, Teja Singh offered a vision of cooperative living where Canadian Sikhs would pool their resources to engage in business ventures that could support independent agricultural communities. To this end, Teja Singh formed the Guru Nanak Mining and Trust Company in Vancouver, which Dominion authority alleged was nothing more than a cover for his revolutionary conspiracy. In 1908, US Immigration Inspector P.L. Prentis reported to his superiors in Washington, DC that “this Mining and Trust Company has been organized and is being used for the sole purpose for furthering the seditious plans of East Indians and that members of this company are being sent to the United States and elsewhere for the ostensible purpose of promoting the interests of the company, but in reality for the purpose of collecting funds to be used in the manufacture of bombs and other explosives.”^{xxxvi}

In the above chapter, we have tried to situate role of Professor Teja Singh in England, Canada and the US. His experiences as a student in western universities, his efforts to convey Guru's message to his western contacts, and his activism to fight for Indians' rights in western countries are some aspects we discussed so far. Professor Teja Singh's attendance at World Peace Conference and later completion of his masters at Harvard University are two significant events which have not been fully studied earlier. After his AM at Harvard, Professor Teja Singh becomes the founding president of the Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society incorporated on May 27, 1912, and establishes the First Sikh Gurdwara in the US. Teja Singh's role as an institution builder hasn't been fully appreciated. His training to other committee members to maintain accounts, write minutes of meetings, take important decision in the Diwan Hall, and provide Langar to all with love and care went along more than a half century. After he left for India,

the Stockton Gurdwara becomes an active site for Gadhar activities. In the next four to five years, the situation developed in such a way that the American government could have shut down the Gurdwara, had there been no transparency in collection of funds, and proceedings of meeting held on the premises. The day United States of America entered World War I, American media turned against all East Asians. Stockton Gurdwara and Gadhar party tried to halt public opinion against them.

But fortunately, Stockton Gurdwara members had a lot that could make Americans proud of them. They maintained records of inviting dignitaries on important occasions; telegrams and letters of support to the City Mayor, Bank Managers, Governor of California and the President of United States of America to their efforts in World War I. Again, Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan like as a mother organization reversed the tide against Indians by presenting sound statistical records of paying taxes, donating to the charities, and contributing to the American economy. German-Hindu conspiracy compelled the American administration to pull details of their financial records and compare those with others who merely depended on donations and illicit money from Germany. Sikh pioneers who faced indignation, rejection and maligning not only from some racists, but also from their own countrymen who considered themselves Aryan or of superior caste. Amritdhari Sikhs became eyesores in eyes of a majority of Indians. It was during this time that patriotic Sikhs started drifting towards leftist ideology, though initially Sikh ideals remained their primary source inspiration.

Reference Notes

ⁱ Teja Singh, *Jeevan Katha Gurmukh Piare Sant Attar Singh Ji Maharaj* (Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag Punjab) 23

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, 23

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, 250-251.

^{iv} *Ibid.*, 250

^v *Ibid.*, 280.

^{vi} *Ibid.*, 282.

^{vii} *Ibid.*, 283.

^{viii} G. PANSE [HOTEL CECIL, LONDON,]

November 29, 1906

DEAR SIR,

Some time during the month, on my return to the Hotel, I found a card left by you. I kept it in the hope of being able to call on you during my stay here. I however find that it is not possible for me to do so. I therefore now write to apologize.

I am, Yours truly,

D. G. PANSE, ESQ. INNS OF

COURT HOTEL HIGH

HOLBORN

From the typewritten office copy: S.N. 4660

^{ix} Teja Singh, *Jeevan Katha Gurmukh Piare Sant Attar Singh Ji Maharaj* (Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag Punjab) 294.

^x *Ibid.*, 298-299.

^{xi} "Sant Teja Singh and His Global Contribution II" *The Akal Academy* 18:1-2 January–July, 2011:4.

^{xii} Quoted in "Sant Teja Singh and His Global Contribution II" *The Akal Academy* 18:1-2 January–July, 2011:6-7.

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- ^{xiii} “Sant Teja Singh and His Global Contribution II” The Akal Academy 18:1-2 January–July, 2011:8.
- ^{xiv} Andrew Parnaby & Gregory S. Kealey, “The Origins of Political Policing in Canada: Class, Law, And The Burden of Empire,” Osgoode Hall Law Journal 41 (2003): 231.
- ^{xv} Editorial, The B.C. Saturday Sunset 12 December 1908: 2
- ^{xvi} Teja Singh, *Jeevan Katha Gurmukh Piare Sant Attar Singh Ji Maharaj* (Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag Punjab) 358
- ^{xvii} Wendte, Charles W. “The Late World Congress of Free Christians and Other Religious Liberals at Berlin, Germany” American Unitarian Association. *The Unitarian Register, Vol 89 (ebook), 1910 p.1204*
- ^{xviii} *ibid.*, 1087.
- ^{xix} Teja Singh, *Jeevan Katha Gurmukh Piare Sant Attar Singh Ji Maharaj* (Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag Punjab) 360
- ^{xx} Bequette, John P. *Christian Humanism: Creation, Redemption, and Reintegration*. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, Inc., 2007).
- ^{xxi} The Atlantic: Ideas Tour Online <http://www.theatlantic.com/ideastour/contributors/london.html>
- ^{xxii} Bliss Perry. The American Mind (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1912) 10-11
- ^{xxiii} - A Study of Poetry (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1920) 321
- ^{xxiv} Brander Matthews, “American Life in American Literature: Professor Bliss Perry’s Felicitous Interpretation of the National Spirit as It is Revealed in the work of our Great Writers.” The New York Times 15 December, 1918.
- ^{xxv} Andrew D. Evans, Anthropology at War: World War 1 and the Science of Race in Germany (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010) 3.
- ^{xxvi} William Barksdale Maynard, *Woodrow Wilson; Princeton to the Presidency* (Yale University Press, 2008) p. 75.
- ^{xxvii} John Milton Cooper, Jr., *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography* (Random House Digital Inc., 2011) p.70.
- ^{xxviii} J.W. Schulte Nordholt, *Woodrow Wilson* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991)p.28.
- ^{xxix} *Ibid.*, 146.
- ^{xxx} A Williams Anthology: a collection of the verse and prose of Williams College 1798-1910. Priv. Print 1910 221. p. 209
- ^{xxxi} *ibid*, 212
- ^{xxxii} Bliss, Perry *The American Mind*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1912. p.25
- ^{xxxiii} Bliss, Perry *Park-Street Papers* New York and Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1908 p. 195
- ^{xxxiv} *ibid*, 196
- ^{xxxv} Lloyd E. Ambrosius, Woodrow Wilson and the American Diplomatic Tradition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 178.
- ^{xxxvi} Chang, Kernel S. *The Making of the U.S.- Canadian Borderlands* Berkeley: University of California, 2012. p.126