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## THE TRUTH ABOUT THE HINDU

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*Editor Victoria Times*

*MUCH is being said and done on behalf of the Sikhs who now reside in Canada. Much is being said and done against them. The country is in a foment over the question. The honest, fair-minded citizen does not know what to say or think. He believes in keeping Canada a white man's country, but he desires to be consistent. He hesitates to debar British subjects from India merely because of their colour, while colour is no bar to the Chinese and Japanese.*

*The Sikhs already here want one privilege, and it seems reasonable. They desire to bring in their wives and families. This they are debarred from doing by the immigration regulations. Whether or not further Hindu immigration shall be allowed, this is a matter for immediate consideration and decision.*

*Mr. Baer has written the following article at our request. He is in a position to know the facts. He has studied the problem at first hand ever since it became a problem. His analysis of the situation is fair and candid, and should be convincing. We are pleased to be able to give our readers such a plain and informing statement of the case.—EDITOR.*

THE problem of Hindu immigration—or more properly speaking, Sikh immigration—in British Columbia is a problem more grave than the broader question of Oriental immigration. It is necessary in considering the question to direct attention to the fact that there is a difference between Hindus and Sikhs. While all Sikhs are Hindus, not all Hindus are Sikhs. The relation between the two classifications ends almost entirely when we speak of their racial entity. In ethics, religion, morals, aspirations and in their history since they became all but a distinct people, the Sikhs are greatly superior to the broader classification of His Majesty's Indian subjects known as Hindus. They stand in their relation religiously to the devotees of Hindu faith just where the Friends or Quakers stand among the religious organizations of the so-called more civilized peoples. I use this comparison simply because it most nearly expresses what it is impossible adequately to describe. I shall not magnify the inseparable relation of this fact with the question of the advisability, or otherwise, of admitting them into the province of British Columbia or into Canada, but must point it out as having a definite bearing on the case which will appear as I proceed.

The question of Oriental or Asiatic immigration has been a burning question in this province for a decade. It grows more heated and consuming with every passing year. It has been brought to a white heat by the demand—literally, the demand—of the Sikhs for what they conceive to be British fair play. The objection to Oriental labour was taken in the first instance because it was "cheap" labour. That is still the only sincere objection against it. Whether it is a good one and valid in the face of other economic considerations I am not intending to argue here. Political economists must settle that.

STATE interference by regulation of Oriental immigration began with the imposition of a head tax of \$50 on every Chinese entering the country. That was long ago and before we had any suggestion of trouble with Japanese immigration. The modest tax did not decrease the immigration; it only raised the wages charged by Chinese bosses for Chinese servants and labourers. As a concession to White labour it was raised to \$100 and again to \$500 much to the discomfiture and dissatisfaction of the corporations and contractors employing "cheap" labour. No head tax can ever keep out the Chinese. They will spread the investment of that tax over as many years as they live and will even pass it on as a

legacy to their children, but it will be paid, in the end, by the employers. I interject this remark only because I know the mind of the Chinese "Bosses" on the question and state the fact so that those who are determined to exclude the Chinese element in settling our immigration problems may know the truth. They will have to find some method other than a head tax.

It was at the time of, or shortly after, the imposition of the \$500 tax on Chinese that some brilliant minded White man made the discovery that, because of Treaty relations between Great Britain and Japan, no head tax had been imposed on Japanese. These must be classified and admitted on the same terms as required by the general Immigration laws of Canada. In the middle of the first decade



A HINDU FAMILY

These are types of the women and children whom the married Sikhs now resident in Canada desire to bring from India. There are about 4,000 Hindus here, but only two Hindu women.

of the twentieth century an influx of Japanese began. They came in hordes and there was consternation in the ranks of organized labour. The excitement was indescribable and finally culminated in the Oriental riots in Vancouver in the winter of 1907. The news of these was unconsciously exaggerated in the Eastern press for, though I slept in the heart of Vancouver the night the riots occurred I knew nothing of them until I reported for duty at my desk the next day. But there is no denying that the demonstration against the Orientals was exciting and the feeling ran higher than it had done before.

It was in the midst of these scenes that the first Hindus came to British Columbia. The reader can understand that this was fuel to the already lambent flames of lawlessness and riot. The first Hindus were undoubtedly the victims of unscrupulous agents who had bundled together all who could be got ready for transportation and without regard to their physical or moral fitness for transplantation to a new land. They were mostly from the class which

would be selected by a recruiting agent who had a tale of passengers to "shanghai" into the hold of a steamship for dumping on a foreign shore. It is no reflection upon the Hindus in British Columbia today that the first were of this class. Many of the men who came from India were physically unfitted to survive in our climate, mild and equable as it is. Some were diseased. None understood our language nor had any suspicion of what they would find to do nor how to do it if they did find it. They had been loaned money to meet the requirements of the Immigration laws and this was taken away as soon as they were put ashore. Their circumstances were pitiable in the extreme. The people responsible were nothing more than ghouls willing to batten on human blood. They did it too. The Hindus, left to shift for themselves, huddled together into out-houses, sheds and miserable places of crouching abode but only because they had no other where to lay their heads. Their experiences were heart-breaking but the universal prejudice against Asiatic or "cheap" labour focussed upon them and they had to accept the heavy impact of the fierce blows. Chinese had been coming in legally for a quarter of a century, and Japanese for a decade, but these were a new excitant. Some of them starved and others hired themselves out for a pittance so that only they might keep body and soul together but in that very act aggravating the public indignation against them.

It is well that it was so, for that class of Hindu is not wanted. Singularly the Hindus were themselves the first to learn the moral of the situation. Many went back to India, but they carried the tale of the land of opportunity and fired the imaginations of a better class of His Majesty's subjects. These organized for legitimate and prospectively successful emigration to Canada and, since that time, there can be little objection to the class of men who have come to us "From India's Coral Strand." I say "little objection" using the term in comparison with the Oriental immigrants who are regularly permitted to come to this province and whose admittance into the country is accepted as a matter of course. I challenge contradiction of the statement that the Sikhs who are taking the places of Japanese and Chinese as well as Montenegrin labourers in British Columbia are superior, physically, mentally, morally, socially and every other way to the races I have enumerated.

Those who have come since their advisers in India have been here, inspected the conditions and are directing their emigration are, in my opinion, more desirable than any class of Orientals or Asiatics of which we have had experience. When I say this I make no pronouncement at all upon the broad question of a "White Man's" country.

The Sikhs who are here have done well. They are orderly, sober, thrifty, honest, reliable when applied to do a task. They are patient under their own disabilities and limitations, but they learn as rapidly as any other people coming to us under similar conditions. I admit that there are exceptions to this rule among them, but the exceptions are in a lesser percentage than among other immigrants of the same "undesirable" class.

YOU will ask me, then, what is the meaning of all this hubbub and objection to their demands. I will tell you. The Hindu is a British subject and, should he emigrate to this country he comes to stay. He comes to live here, to flourish here, to die and be buried here. In other words he looks forward to becoming a permanent factor in the evolution of labour problems in this country. The Chinaman comes to make a fortune and go back to China. He will keep on doing so, I think. The Japanese have agreed that only a limited number shall come to us each year. They are keeping that agreement. The Hindu thinks he has as good a moral right to come into this country to improve his fortunes as any race with the additional claim upon us that he has