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A summary of the Hindu question and its



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# A Summary of the Hindu Question

And its Results in  
British Columbia

PRESENTED BY THE

Victoria Society of Friends  
of the Hindu

TO THE EMPIRE AS A WHOLE

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P.O. BOX 174, VICTORIA, B.C.

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DOES COLOR OR RACE DIFFERENTIATE A  
BRITISH SUBJECT'S PRIVILEGES  
WITHIN THE EMPIRE ?

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To the Canadian Imperialist and to all loyal subjects of His Majesty throughout the Empire, we ask such consideration for the facts set forth in this little brochure as will commend themselves to their sense of fair play, regardless of prejudice, whether economic or racial. To the Christian readers of every denomination, we ask you to raise the question involved into the atmosphere of the Cross, which spells the universal brotherhood of all races.

*"A British Subject"*—If one be in the heart of the Chinese Empire, in the jungles of Africa, walking the streets of Moscow, Paris, Berlin or Boston, in times of war or peace, what grave import and significance of security are locked up in that phrase, to the subject of the Empire, whether his skin be black or white. Is it true of a subject of our Empire that his liberty, life and person are inviolate wherever the sun rises outside the boundaries of the Empire? Yet within it the words *"British subject"* may have two meanings, and his liberty and person be in jeopardy; not by a foreign power, but that the Lion itself rends its whelps for no better reason than an economic or racial bias. Would either of the two last reasons be sufficient to stay the vindication of a British subject's rights in any foreign country when violated is another matter.

In the past—no, in the future—who will say, in the face of the treatment of the Hindus in our midst. A Hindu gentleman (Mr. Jinarajadasa), who is a graduate from Cambridge and a man who has spent much time and study in the capitals of Europe, with a sense of pride mostly on the Imperialistic side in which he had been saturated while in England, comes to our Dominion; free in every country under the sun, yet within his own Empire and with a great love and admiration for it, he finds his liberty in jeopardy,

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and his person and race discriminated against; his rights as a British subject unrecognized by the Government of Canada.

The next case that bears out the contention of this paper as to the British subject's being shorn of every semblance of Imperial citizenship, if he happens to be born in India rather than in Canada or in England, is that of Mr. Harnam Singh, who was deported from Vancouver last October. This man had served his country, and hence the Empire at large, as a trooper in the British Indian cavalry, side by side with England's bravest sons. He tried to open a night school, and a home for disabled Hindus in Vancouver, B. C. He was charged with conspiring against the British Government. Evidence that would not be sufficient to convict of petty larceny a common thief, was sufficient in his case to exile him in twenty-four hours.

The next case is that of Mr. Rahim, in June, 1910. Proceedings were taken to deport him because he had not come direct from India to Canada (for Mr. Rahim came from Honolulu), but Judge Murphy, seeing this man was a merchant and a British subject, took the *broad grounds* that a *British subject's rights transcend any Order-in-Council*. This decision has an Imperial ring which is a harbinger of the fair play that is sought by the writers.

The last case to hand, which is not yet completed, is that of Dr. Sunder Singh, an English university man, who, while passing through Canada, saw the many limitations of his countrymen, and the needs of their new conditions in this land. He determined to stay among them and endeavor to uplift and otherwise minister to their needs. He holds a medical licence from the General Medical Council of Great Britain; he has been here two years, a good citizen and generally respected, with a host of friends, medical and otherwise. Now the order is passed that he also must be deported. Offence the same as last case, did not come direct from India; hence unfit to reside in Canada, British Empire subject and professional gentleman to the contrary. We do not think comment is necessary in this case; its gross injustice and the absence of the same standard of British fair play is wholly wanting.

In October, 1908, a Mr. Harkin went to Vancouver on behalf of the Canadian Government and represented that British Honduras was a most desirable colony for the Hindus, both in climate and in economic conditions, two things which he knew nothing of at first hand. If they consented to go, the terms were to be indentured coolies, remuneration eight dollars per month. "Indentured coolies," freely translated, means semi-slavery. At last the Hindus decided to send two of their number to investigate conditions. They went to Belize in British Honduras. They found the conditions of some of their countrymen so horrible that they decided to return, and strongly advised their countrymen not to go there. Professor Teja Singh, M.A., L.L.B., by his tact and intelligent handling of the situation, closed this proposition of wholesale deportation forever. Having found that this scheme failed, the policy was changed to deportation of Hindus piecemeal and individually, of which a full account has been given in the above paragraphs.

Now, to come back to the British Lion, of whose heart pulse the Canadian and the Hindu are a part. Canada is so near the heart she never sees the claws nor the teeth. She sees the mind and the mother heart throbbing in love always, if not always in sympathy, so the Canadian man, boy and woman know the Lion and there are no fear areas between them. Has not the time come now, that this attitude should be true for India? The great heart of the Empire runs along lines of love for its own; now there can be no love where there is misunderstanding. The claws and teeth of the Lion are much in evidence in India of the past and the present. The Hindu has hardly ever got an insight into the great heart. He is constantly coming in touch with its intelligence and its exterior, so he but half understands, and the outcome is mostly fear and respect; there is little or no love in the large sense. Though many a Hindoo has paid the homage of his blood to hold the Empire, of which he is the principal part.

The appeal we make to all Christians is that as British subjects, and as Christians, we have a paramount duty to perform towards the Hindu in our midst, which is first to understand him and make ourselves understood by him. There is no law of the understanding,

but that of Christ, which is love. Intelligent interest in their affairs, ministering to their needs, shielding them from the oppressor when occasion arises, recognizing their rights without exaggeration, surely sharing our brotherhood in Christ with them.

This last thought in relation to the Hindu. He has made good in spite of climate and adverse conditions, and seemingly almost hopeless struggle, of two or more years ago, and is now a winner on the material side. It is for us to see what we are able to give him in the future on the ethical and religious sides of his nature. If the reader of this paper has been at all interested, may it not be hoped that he will try to understand that there can be no love worth the name without sympathetic effort and understanding. The writers think the time has come for an organization to be formed, whose object will be, both in Canada and in England, to promote a better mutual understanding between the Hindu and all other parts of the Empire, on the basis of the red line of brotherhood, the source of all mutual knowledge, to be direct and not through channels of officialdom.

We are glad to learn that a society, called the Friends of the Hindus, has been formed in Victoria, B.C., to protect the Hindus' rights as British subjects.

The following is a copy of a petition very respectfully addressed at mass meetings of the Hindus in Victoria, Vancouver, New Westminster and Port Moody, B.C., to the Imperial Conference, to be held in London, England, in May, 1911:

"1. THAT WHEREAS it is computed by authentic records that there are at present some six thousand Hindus resident in Canada, mostly in the Province of British Columbia, and all of whom are working steadily at different trades, etc.

2. That they are, as a class, sober, industrious, reliable, law-abiding people, living continually in accordance with the rules of decency and order (so far as the position forced upon them by persecution and prejudice) which prejudice is now happily passing away.

3. That many of the Hindus settled here have fought loyally for the upholding of the Empire in different parts of the world.

4. That since coming to this country the Hindu has prospered in spite of climate, adverse conditions, and seemingly almost hopeless struggle of two or more years ago.

5. The present Dominion Immigration Laws are humiliating to the people of India, when the aliens such as the Japanese and Chinese by their treaty rights can come to Canada, whereas our fellow British subjects are not allowed to enjoy the birth-right of travelling from one part of the British Empire to another.

6. The present Dominion Immigration Laws insist upon the Hindu people to buy tickets direct from India because the law reads: "The immigrants must come direct from the land of his birth or citizenship." As long as they are British Subjects any British territory is the land of their citizenship from the interpretation given by the Imperial and parental Government. It is needless to point out that the narrow interpretations of the Dominion Government about the land of citizenship do not allow them to enter Canada from Great Britain, Hong Kong, Fiji, Trinidad, Australia, and other parts of the British Empire, although these men can travel unhampered in China, Germany or the Sahara.

7. The present Dominion Immigration Laws are quite inconsistent with the Imperial policy because they discriminate against the people of India who are British Subjects, as compared with other British Subjects resident in other parts of the Empire.

8. That the Hindus hold considerable landed property in Canada and have passed the pioneering stage and they mean to settle down in the fair Dominion.

WHAT THEY CLAIM is surely within the bounds of reason and moderation, and it is this:—

1. The families of those men who have settled in Canada ought to be allowed to enter this country on the same terms as the non-British Japanese, Chinese or even negroes. At present an

order-in-council requires a Hindu to come direct and by a continuous passage from the land of his birth, and as there is no direct steamship communication between India and Canada, this law is a legal absurdity for people cannot perform what is on the face of it impossible. Your petitioners note that this very order-in-council No. 920 has been suspended just at present in the case of aliens and we respectfully submit *that it may be rescinded for these our fellow subjects?*

2. A Japanese entering Canada has to show only \$50.00 in his possession, while in the case of a Hindu, who is a British Subject, it is \$200.00.

3. That a restrictive number of Hindus, say about 300 per year, be allowed to enter Canada. This provision would enable the Hindu settlers here to have their relatives join them by slow degrees, the extent to which the facility was availed of being regulated by the demand which automatically adjusts the distribution of labor.

4. That as in the case of other Orientals, merchants, professional men, and students of the Hindu race may be given free access to this country, so that they may travel unmolested as is not the case at present.

5. That the Hindu settlers in the United States ought to be allowed to enter Canada to see their friends here, without complying with the legal fallacy of not coming direct from India, and the Hindus who have settled in Canada ought to be able to enter the United States and see their relatives.

6. That the Hindus *cannot purchase* steamship tickets from India for any point in Canada as the steamship companies will not take the risk to carry them back if refused admission to this country, *hence not a single Hindu, whether merchant, student or tourist, coming to Canada during the last two years has been allowed to remain in this country.*

Your petitioners beg to submit the following cases as proof of the hardships which the present Immigration Laws entail upon our Hindu fellow subjects:—



1. A Hindu gentleman (Mr. Jinarajadasa), who is a graduate from Cambridge, and a man who has spent much time and study in the capitals of Europe, with a sense of pride on the Imperialistic side with which he had been saturated while in England, comes to our Dominion; free in every country under the sun, yet within his own Empire and with a great love and admiration for it, finds his liberty in jeopardy and his person and race discriminated against; his rights as a British subject unrecognized by the Government of Canada. This gentleman was given a specified time during which, to put it mildly, he was told to leave Canada.

2. The next case that bears out the contention of this paper as to the British Subject's being shorn of every semblance of Imperial citizenship, if he happens to be born in India rather than in Canada or in England, is that of Mr. Harnam Singh, who was deported from Vancouver in October last. He had served his country, and hence the Empire at large, as a trooper in the British Indian cavalry, side by side with England's bravest sons. He tried to open a night school and home for disabled Hindus in Vancouver, B.C. Evidence that would not be sufficient to convict of petty larceny a common thief, was sufficient in his case to exile him from this country in 24 hours.

3. The next case is that of Mr. Rahim, in June, 1910. Proceedings were taken to deport him because he had not come direct from India to Canada (for Mr. Rahim came from Honolulu), but *Judge Murphy*, seeing this man was a merchant and a British Subject, took the broad grounds that *a British Subject's rights transcend any order-in-council*. This decision has an Imperial ring which is a harbinger of the fair play that is sought by your humble petitioners.

4. One Bhai Hari Singh, formerly resident of Golden, B. C., went to London, England, as a Sikh missionary with Prof. Teja Singh, M.A., L.L.B., but when he wanted to return to Canada, was refused admission into this country.

5. One Mr. Nathu Ram, a student from India, was not allowed to land at Vancouver, last year, where his friends and

relatives were residing, only because he had to tranship from Hong Kong for Vancouver.

6. On a recent occasion we had, here in Victoria, a pitiable spectacle of the impotence of law and justice when opposed by prejudice and persecution. It was the case of a number of Hindus destined to Seattle, State of Washington, from Calcutta via Hong Kong (that being the only available steamer route). They were refused admission into the United States, ostensibly on account of their creed, which, as was contended "sanctioned polygamy." On this pretext they were ordered to be deported. They were brought to Victoria, where, as British subjects in a British port, they desired to have their case tested and investigated by the Courts. They were refused permission to communicate with the shore nor were their Hindu advisers and friends in this city allowed access to them on board. When they attempted to assert their rights, as British Subjects, they were promptly placed in confinement by the Japanese officials of the vessel, "Awa Maru." When finally the Courts were moved on their behalf, not only was access to the men refused to one of Victoria's leading lawyers and K. C.'s and who was treated with disrespect, *but further, the writ of Habeas Corpus, issued under the signature of one of His Majesty's Judges, was set at defiance, and the men were carried off under conditions of "technical slavery" and without a hearing. It was stated as an excuse that they were still under the United States' control, but as everybody knows, there is a limit to even American and Japanese jurisdiction, and it certainly has no status in a British port.*"

Does Imperialism mean Canada for the Empire, Australia for the Empire, India for the Empire, or can there be two definitions for subjects of one and the same Empire? If there is but one recognized definition under the flag over which the sun is supposed never to set, then it is for us to see that *no injustice shall minimize the rights or privileges of that citizenship, whether the holder is black or white.*

The question therefore, which suggests itself, is this, viz.: Is it just, is it right, is it creditable, nay, is it even politic, that we, as subjects of one and the same realm, should condemn any of our

fellow subjects, to unfair conditions such as your petitioners humbly submit, and which the Canadian Hindus have patiently endured for the past six or seven years, and which from present appearances will, unless relieved against, still continue?

Your petitioners submit that, with due respect to the Dominion Government at Ottawa, that the disgraceful conditions of these our fellow citizens may be brought up before the Imperial Conference and the whole question of Hindu Immigration may be put on a proper basis with the help and co-operation of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and His Majesty's Government."

The report of Mr. W. L. Mackenzie King, C.M.G., on his mission to England in May, 1908, to consult the British authorities in relation to immigration from India is the basis of the orders-in-council which have resulted in so much injustice and discrimination against the Hindus. Whatever we read in this pamphlet that spells persecution is due to the false premise on which Mr. King's report is based. He claims that humane reasons alone impell him to take the viewpoint which we read in his report. In the face of three years' experience to the contrary, he says that the Hindu is wholly unfit to grapple with the conditions in Canada, whether they be economic or climatic. *And it is only for the best interest of the Hindu himself that he be restricted, and he with the British authorities both of England and India see eye to eye on this subject.* We quote in full his own words on which the structure of his report is laid. And we beg to say that it is unfair and not true to experience or facts as they exist in British Columbia today. The whole report does Mr. King no honor; it is the work of an amateur in politics, and abounds in subterfuge with a bias against the Hindu, and a cry for the favor of the white workman at the expense of justice to the British subject, because of his color. Mr. Mackenzie King says in his report:—

"It was clearly recognized in regard to emigration from India to Canada that the native of India is not a person suited to this country, that, accustomed as many of them are to the conditions of a tropical climate, and possessing manners and customs so unlike those

of our own people, their inability to readily adapt themselves to surroundings entirely different could not do other than entail an amount of privation and suffering which render a discontinuance of such immigration most desirable *in the interest of the Indians themselves*. It was recognized, too, that the competition of this class of labor, though not likely to prove effective, if left to itself, might none the less, were the numbers to become considerable (as conceivably could happen were self-interest on the part of individuals to be allowed to over-ride considerations of humanity and national well-being and the importation of this class of labor . . . . permitted) occasion considerable unrest among workingmen, whose standard of comfort is of a higher order, and who, as citizens with family and civic obligations, have expenditures to meet and a status to maintain which the coolie immigrant is in a position wholly to ignore."

' Whilst effective as a means of restricting a class of immigration unsuited to Canada, it will be apparent that the arrangement as herein set forth is one which finds its *justification on grounds of humanity* as strong as are the economic reasons by which it is also supported. *The liberty of British subjects in India is safeguarded rather than curtailed, the traditional policy of Britain in respect to the native races of India has been kept in mind, and the necessity of enacting legislation either in India or in Canada which might appear to reflect on fellow British subjects in another part of the Empire has been wholly avoided. Nothing could be more unfortunate or misleading than that the impression should go forth that Canada, in seeking to regulate a matter of domestic concern, is not deeply sensible of the obligations which citizenship within the Empire entails. It is a recognition of this obligation which has caused her to adopt a course which by removing the possibilities of injustice and friction, is best calculated to strengthen the bonds of association with the several parts, and to promote the greater harmony of the whole. In this as was to be expected, Canada has had not only the sympathy and understanding but the hearty co-operation of the authorities in Great Britain and India as well.*'

Victoria, B.C., May, 1911.

S. S. AND L. W. H.