

# **Sant Teja Singh, M.A. LLB. A.M. (Harvard) & His Mission in the West.**

## **Dr. Amrik Singh**

The first president of Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society was a charismatic personality. His seven years sojourn in the West spanned from 1906-1913. 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 [...]



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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. Teja Singh gave a different message to the world, teaching 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.

Teja Singh must be among very few Sikhs who had got the opportunity to get western education. He 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 — he would serve the commoners for the rest of his life.

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."

He decided to quit the job since it was not his way to lord over poor and helpless people.

He took a one year leave from the Salt Department upon being offered a job as Vice Principal of Khalsa College, Amritsar. The question of bowing head before Guru Granth Sahib still bothered him, so he made some reluctant accommodations. He decided to go to Gurdwara when people were still asleep so that no one could see him. Then he reasoned that since he didn't accept the job for money, but entirely for Sewa, he wouldn't mind observing whatever was expected of him.

The first thing 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 invited needy students to his quarters to share meals with them. He instilled 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 with a thud. Subsequently, students would support him from suddenly falling before the Granth Sahib.

Teja Singh was a topper in whole of 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.

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. Learning Punjabi was projected as a step backward in academic life. "I would go sometimes in camps of Arya Samaj or Brahmo Samaj for spiritual guidance. I would consider it idol-worship to bow before Guru Granth Sahib."

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 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."

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 these restrictions. "God has gifted free salt to the poor. You are putting them in jail for the sake of your loyalty to the British."

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, paralyzing sensation and dropped like a log before Guru Granth Sahib. He would feel ecstatic and embrace whoever he saw first in the morning.

When he met with Sant Attar Singh, Teja Singh felt a strong bond with Santji, who urged him to forget his personal grievances and forgive those who he thought harmed him. 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 citizens 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 left for England on August 6, 1906 and arrived on August 24. 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.

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." 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."

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."

His self-conviction and communication skills were enormous. On learning that a cap is compulsory in Cambridge, he went to Downing College Cambridge and met Tutor Mr. Jackson. After he acquainted Jackson with the Sikh religion, he allowed Teja Singh to wear a turban. 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."

He took admission in science and studied zoology, chemistry and physics.

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. Guru Granth Sahib that he brought with him remained installed in London Dharmasala.

With assistance from a Maratha, D. G. Panse, Teja Singh helped others to settle in England. While he was there, M. K. Gandhi also visited London. Others who were in London and stayed at the same time 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 got a scholarship for \$150. While in Cambridge, he learned through news and letters that Sikhs in Canada faced many problems. He asked for permission from Sant Attar Singh and Sunder Singh Majithia to travel there to help them in their hour of need.

Before completing his degree at Cambridge, he moved to Columbia University New York on a summer scholarship. One of his teachers arranged public lectures for him on the spiritual traditions of India. The first topic was "Guru Nanak and the Sant Tradition," the second "On Indian Society." He was just in his twenties then. He was asked to give weekly lectures. The attendance increased and he explained that the path of ridhi sidhi was inappropriate for spiritual progress. His two lectures were covered by English newspapers in North America.

He traveled to Vancouver at the invitation of Sikhs and did some community work in British Columbia. When he returned to Columbia, Teja Singh found he had many Americans among his followers who were eagerly awaiting his return to New York. One, a Mr. T. C. Crawford, got interested in Gurbani. One day, he visited Teja Singh early in the morning, telling him:

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.

Leaving his studies aside, Teja Singh again started for Canada, where thousands of Sikhs needed him most. The Canadian government had planned to deport all Sikhs to Honduras in South America. Canadian Sikhs complained of a deep-rooted prejudice against them, stating with heavy hearts: “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 \$20,000 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.”

The 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 felt as if jealous people conspired to uproot their religious flag and own their property. Teja Singh stated, “I am sent here to help my brothers and sisters.”

Hearing the lamentations of Canadian Sikhs, he decided 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; Sikhs’ outward appearance was a threat to their culture. When the same people learned the beauty of Sikh principles of hard work, sharing, and brotherhood of mankind, he knew they would think differently.

With the guidance of Teja Singh, Sikhs registered Mining and Trust Company and bought a quarter share in Mr. Crawford’s gold mine. They decided to preach the truth about Sikhs in Canada and bought 250 acres near Eagle Harbor. Many Canadians showed interest in teachings of Guru Nanak, and 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.”

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, reported as follows on Saturday, 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?*

[Prof. Teja Singh'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 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.

Two days later, on December 14, 1908, the British were alarmed to read a report by Colonel E. J. E. Swayne, Governor of Honduras, as published in the reputable Vancouver newspaper, *The World*. The report validated Teja Singh's observations, stating that although Sikhs were agitated, they never turned violent and were not willing to leave Canada. The newspaper carried Teja Singh's 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 unified all Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus from the Punjab, as well as Brahmans from the Northwest and from lower Bengal, on one platform in a way that could not have happened in India.

The newspapers clearly outlined how Indians of diverse backgrounds were united to defeat the Canadian government's design to illegally deport them 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 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.

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 everyone who stood for Brotherhood of Mankind and unleashed poison all around that ultimately infected all of Europe in World War I. The editorial of *The B.C. Saturday Sunset* of December 12, 1908 expressed its stunning revelation that the Canadian government must dare to confront the unity of Indo-Canadians:

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 matters 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.

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.

On visiting Victoria, in Canada, Teja Singh reformed Sikhs who had made drinking their favorite habit. He gave his sermon and prepared them to be true Sikhs. They got ready to build the Gurdwara and promised to contribute one month of pay right away.

Teja Singh met Rev. Jenkin Lloyd 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. Jones, Teja Singh was invited to attend the World Congress of Free Christianity and Religious Progress in Berlin.

Reports of Teja Singh's participation in Berlin Congress appeared in *The Christian Register* of October 6, October 13, and November 10, all in 1910. Rev. Charles W. Wendte wrote about 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.*

*In the October 13, 1910 issue of Christian Register, Rev. Wendte wrote:*

*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.*

*Sant Teja Singh faced hostility both from within and without. After the Honduras episode, the British attempted to morally discourage Teja Singh and his supporters from continuing to spread Gurus' mission in North America. British intelligence began tracing all activities of Teja Singh. A pious looking Gursikh, Khem Singh Bedi, pursued Teja Singh as an agent of the Indian intelligence and even tried to incite Teja Singh's wife against him.*

*Once, after Teja Singh returned from administering Amrit to about 100 Sikhs in Victoria, Seattle, Portland, and California, a thug hit Teja Singh and Balwant Singh about three or four times with a cane. Bhai Balwant Singh prepared to confront him, but Teja Singh forbade him to react and advised forgiveness, since the attacker 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.*

*Teja Singh's exceptional readiness to undertake appropriate course of actions to solve problems, his remarkable outreach in persuading Sikhs to be Amritdhari, and his clarity of thought on Gurbani created jealousy of those who subscribed to an Anglo-Vedic view of life. Yet Teja Singh remained calm and creative even during testing moments. 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 Queen Victoria's proclamation of 1858; if not, the British Empire could face the wrath of united India, the replica of which briefly had surfaced during the Honduras chapter.*

*Commenting on strong organization of Sikhs, 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 regretted that Sikh community, when cut off from true meanings of Gurbani, becomes very self-destructive.*

*The extent of the Canadian government's distress at Teja Singh's community work is evident from reports to Cambridge University in London and Columbia University in New York. Both at Cambridge and Columbia University, Teja Singh wasn't allowed to complete his education because of reports made by secret agents about his activities in Canada. Teja Singh was just one term away from completing his degree at Cambridge. He had successfully passed five terms from 1906-1908. Columbia University also prevented him from completing his coursework.*

*At Harvard University, fortunately, he got admission. In those times, Harvard subscribed to the most modern view of liberalism. It had a very enlightened view of history, literature, and world affairs. Teja Singh completed A.M. in English Literature under Professor Bliss Perry, Chair of English Literature from 1909-1930 and an established authority on 19th century literature. Prof. Perry earlier taught at Princeton University with Professor Woodrow Wilson, later to become the president of the United States of America.*

*One day, Professor Perry visited Teja Singh's house to discover why he was not attending classes; he learned that Teja Singh had run out of money and couldn't pay his dues. Professor Perry gave him the necessary funds and urged him to complete his course. In this and other ways, Perry was no ordinary professor. Before coming to Harvard, he served as Editor of the prestigious literary journal, the Atlantic Monthly. There he promoted world-famous writers like Henry James, Booker T. Washington, Edith Wharton, and Jack London. Perry was also one of the closest friends of President Woodrow Wilson.*

*Professor Perry remained Woodrow Wilson's intellectual friend and confidante for over 25 years. Wilson's biographer, William Maynard, notes that Perry was concerned about his friend's health before he set out for the White House. Perry, now at Harvard, thought Wilson sometimes put too much faith in self-reliance and failed to seek consensus. "It is the ancient story of heroes," Perry mused, "and of martyrs."*

*Perry's views on race were much ahead of his times and greatly influenced the ideological leanings of President Wilson. When the question of race in America was as endemic as it was elsewhere in the world, Perry wrote:*

*"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." [Perry's mentions of Canadians and Californians is evidently a reference to Bellingham and Everet race riots.]*

*After World War I, Wilson's idea of self-determination caught the imagination of subjugated nations. 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 like India. The president boldly put forward his assertions, declaring: "Only America is using her great character and her great strength in the interest of peace and prosperity." Professor Perry's intellectual friendship with Woodrow Wilson clearly reflects in his proposals*

*to reorder international relations and establish the League of Nations. Wilson's biographer, Lloyd E. Ambrosius, rightly evaluates his vision of twentieth century world, stating*

*As he [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.*

*Inspired by the friendship and leadership of such luminaries, Professor Teja Singh, after his education in the west, founded the first Sikh Gurdwara in the United States of America in Stockton on May 27, 1912. As the first president of this Gurdwara, Sant Teja Singh established certain routines that were followed explicitly for more than half a century. Records of meetings in the Gurdwara, make a vital link to questions of race, equality, freedom, and fraternity.*

*After Teja Singh left Stockton, race diplomats circulated their ideas in Sikh religious places. Educated men of diverse backgrounds also began to establish a political party for an armed rebellion in India. They capitalized on cultural and religious archetypes of freedom that were inculcated in them by their Gurus. How the racial discourse snuck in amid battle cries of Indian nationalism is very significant to understand the history of Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society, Stockton.*

*We are among the first historians to fully evaluate Teja Singh's pioneer role as a community organizer, legal counselor, religious mentor, and above all a true harbinger of world peace. His vision for cooperative living through the pooling of resources by Canadian Sikhs so as to engage in business ventures was revolutionary. 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 audience, and his activism are all marks of a life lived in selfless service for others. In particular, Teja Singh's role as an institution builder hasn't been fully appreciated. His training of other committee members to maintain accounts, record minutes of meetings, make important decision in the Diwan Hall, and provide Langar to all with love and care were closely followed for more than 50 years.*

*After he left for India, Stockton Gurdwara became an active site for Gadhar activities. In the next four to five years, the situation developed in such a way that the American government might have shut down the Gurdwara, except for its transparency in collection of funds and the detailed records of all meetings held on the premises. The day that the USA entered World War I, American media turned against all East Asians. Stockton Gurdwara and the Gadhar Party tried to halt public opinion from turning against them.*

*Fortunately, Stockton Gurdwara was already observing all expectations of good citizens. They maintained records of inviting dignitaries on important occasions, telegrams and letters sent to the Stockton mayor, bank managers, the Governor of California, and the President of the USA. Again, Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan reversed the tide of public opinion by presenting sound*

*statistical records of paying taxes, donating to the charities, and contributing to the American economy. Thanks to these Sikh pioneers who received guidance, assistance, and encouragement from Sant Teja Singh, American Sikhs obtained a bias for wearing turbans, staying baptized, and overcoming all indignation and rejection until today, 100 years later, we are now an inseparable thread in the fabric of this great American nation and its character.*

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