

# Conflict and Change in British Columbia Sikh Family Life

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## I. *Introduction*

When the Punjabi-speaking peoples came to live in British Columbia they brought with them ideas about religion and family that profoundly affected their settlement here. Most of the Punjabi settlers are adherents of Sikhism, a religious faith originating in India and distinguished for its emphasis on monistic doctrines, disciplined inner-worldliness, and strong communal politico-religious organizations. One of the guiding images for the Sikh, for instance, is the notion of warrior-and-saint. In dealing with those who might threaten the well-being of the Sikh community one should be as determined and fearless as a warrior. In personal affairs within the community, and in one's everyday actions, on the other hand, the Sikh is enjoined to be gentle, selfless, and scholarly, and to treat other members of the faith as brothers and sisters. On ceremonial occasions Sikh temples (*gurdwara*), especially in India, may be manned on the outside by warrior-like men "guarding" the temple; and on the inside, by saint-like men serving the devotees (Leaf, 1972: 157). Their emphasis on self-discipline, inner-worldly activism, and communal responsibility enabled the Punjabi Sikhs to make a successful adjustment to life in British Columbia despite various obstacles placed in their way by virtue of their oriental origins.

Sikhs' ideas of family life reflect the pressures and tensions involved in that adjustment, for though it may be said that the Sikhs settled well, it has not been without cost to them. They share with the other peoples of India the ideal of the large patriarchal family system as the foundation of their everyday life. They were able to import this institution into Canada only by subjecting it to extensive and sometimes painful modifications. The family changes that resulted from Sikh adjustment to settlement in British Columbia, and the stresses and conflicts that lay behind those changes, provide the subject matter of this paper. The place to begin with is how Sikhs themselves have conceptualized familial matters in

the context of their immigrant circumstances. The next task is then to relate their conceptualizations to the actual changes and adjustments that took place.<sup>1</sup>

Before discussing Sikh concepts and practices of family life, however, it will be useful to sketch in a few background details: the continuation of ties to the Punjab homeland, the nature and circumstances of Sikh immigration to Canada, and the settlement of Sikhs in British Columbia. These factors have a bearing on the ways in which B.C. Sikhs interpret their present situation.

## II. *Historical background and social setting*

The homeland of the Sikhs is the Punjab, "land of five rivers," in northern India. The overwhelming majority of B.C. Sikhs have come from several contiguous regions of the Punjab: most are from the districts of Jullunder and Hoshiarpur, and a few are from the districts of Ludhiana and Ferozepur. Some of the political factionalism, marriage regulations, and social distances among Sikhs in British Columbia today derive from the hierarchical arrangements that traditionally pertained between these districts. People from Jullunder and Hoshiarpur (an area referred to as the Doaba) consider themselves superior to people from Ludhiana, Ferozepur, and other districts south of the River Sutlej (an area referred to as Malwa). Although the distinction between the Doaba and the Malwa people has apparently decreased in importance in the Punjab, it continues to be somewhat of an issue in British Columbia. Only a few have immigrated to Canada from the areas north of the Doaba (mainly Amritsar District), called Majha. Majha Sikhs consider themselves superior to both Doaba and Malwa people. Some also immigrated from other parts of the Commonwealth and from the U.S.A., though they too frequently identify with the Punjab as their "homeland."

No accurate figures are available for the number of Punjab Sikhs presently residing in British Columbia. An estimate based on immigration

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that, strictly considered, all remarks about family life refer to a very particular sample of people interviewed about seven years ago (Inglis and Ames, 1967): 51 persons, of whom 40 were Sikhs (24 men and 16 women), living in the Greater Vancouver area. Most of the Sikh respondents belonged to the broad "middle" spectrum of age, occupation, and style of life. Despite the limited sample, the picture of family life given here is generally in accord with the findings of two independent surveys conducted by Mayer (1959) and Srivastava (1972).

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figures for people of "East Indian" ethnic origin place the numbers present in the province today at something in excess of 7,000, with at least half of these living in the lower mainland around Vancouver. As late as 1966 about 80 per cent of the East Indians in British Columbia were said to be Sikh. Non-Sikh East Indian immigrants have increased in proportion in recent years, however.

Most of the B.C. Sikhs (knowledgeable informants estimate 90 per cent) are *Jats*, traditionally a land-owning cultivator caste. There are an estimated 500 *Rajput* Sikhs, also a land-owning and cultivating caste, and a few members of various service castes including the "untouchable" Chamars. The *Jats* in British Columbia, like their fellow caste members in the Punjab, consider themselves to be the highest in the hierarchy of castes. Others, especially the *Rajputs*, do not readily accept their claim. (The Sikh religion ignores caste, but Punjabis have retained caste identities as part of their social life.)

For several reasons, including especially the vicissitudes of Canadian immigration policy, and the prejudicial attitudes of White Canadians, most Sikhs were prevented from establishing families in British Columbia until after World War Two (see Srivastava, 1972; MacInnes, 1927). Family migration has been the norm only for the past twenty or so years, consequently our generalizations regarding changing family ideals refer only to this more recent period.

Sikh immigration to Canada was first recorded in 1904, when a few Punjabis came to British Columbia seeking jobs and apparently intending to return to India once they had earned sufficient money (Mayer, 1959: 2). The number of immigrants increased steadily until 1908 (Table 1), and then dropped off when restrictive legislation was passed in India and Canada (Mayer, *Ibid.*). Only a few of the immigrants during this early period were women; in fact, Smith (1944: 363) estimates that only 400 Indian women migrated to Canada prior to World War Two, compared to more than 5,000 men. The large and sudden influx of dark-skinned, turbaned and bearded Sikh men during the first few years, coupled with a minor depression in 1908 (Lowe, 1952), apparently aroused the British Columbia citizenry and encouraged the government to restrict Indian immigration (Bose and Visva-Bharati, 1965: 232-3).

In 1908-09 the British government proposed the removal of East Indians to British Honduras, a move that was investigated and rejected by the leaders of the community through their representatives at the newly established Sikh Temple in Vancouver (Bose and Visva-Bharati, 1965: 234). By 1910, a policy had been formulated which provided that

persons could immigrate to Canada only if they secured continuous passage from their homelands, and were each provided with \$200 (Canadian Immigration Act, 1910). Since no ships made direct passage from Indian ports to Canada this was not legal exclusion but had the practical effect of excluding persons from India and those entering after this date did so by virtue of the fact that they were already outside of India, working in port cities where they could obtain direct passage. Although this policy effectively excluded immigrants from the Punjab, it did not exclude Chinese and Japanese who were not British subjects like the Indians and who were able to enter Canada by direct passage. This discriminatory practice did not escape the attention of the Sikhs.

B.C. Sikhs attempted to test the validity of the law in 1914 by providing funds to charter the ship *Komogata Maru* to bring 376 Indians from Calcutta. The circumstances surrounding the forcible turning back of this ship by gun-boat in the Vancouver harbour, and the violence and bloodshed it evoked in the community following the incident, have never been forgotten by B.C. Sikhs. The *Komogata Maru* "incident" (Angus, 1966: 331) has provided an ethos of discrimination and vigilance of civil and legal rights that continues to influence the leaders of B.C. Sikhs even today. Mewa Singh, the Sikh who assassinated the government's chief spokesman and investigator of the *Komogata Maru* affair, is still given a martyr's memorial every year at the Vancouver temple. According to our respondents, several Sikhs who provided information to the government at that time were dispatched in Vancouver or murdered later upon their return to India by the Babar Akalis, a Sikh vigilante group which took vengeance upon those who co-operated with the British.

A trickle of immigrants began again following the First World War, even though the "continuous passage" regulation was still in force. By the 1920's and 1930's a few wives were admitted on compassionate grounds. Provision was also made for the admission of children under eighteen years of age. Much false representation was made in this regard. Considerable illegal immigration also took place through United States.

It was only as an outcome of the Imperial Conference of 1917 that wives and minor children were permitted to join men already resident in Canada (Angus, 1966: 331).

However, Mayer (1959: 2) points out that at that time, few of the immigrants had enough money to bring their dependents to the new country. Though students on temporary visas sometimes remained illegally in Canada and others were smuggled in from the U.S.A., and though a number of other immigrants were admitted by falsely repre-

TABLE 1  
IMMIGRATION OF EAST INDIANS<sup>a</sup> TO CANADA, 1900 TO 1965<sup>b</sup>

<i>Years</i>	<i>Totals</i>	<i>Years</i>	<i>Totals</i>	<i>Years</i>	<i>Totals</i>
1900-1901	0	1917-1918	0	1934-1935	33
1901-1902	0	1918-1919	0	1935-1936	21
1902-1903	0	1919-1920	0	1936-1937	13
1903-1904	0	1920-1921	10	1937-1938	14
1904-1905	45	1921-1922	13	1938-1939	14
1905-1906	387	1922-1923	21	1939-1940	11
1906-1907 <sup>c</sup>	2124	1923-1924	40	1940-1941	6
1907-1908	2623	1924-1925	46	1941-1942	3
1908-1909	6	1925-1926	63	1942-1943	0
1909-1910	10	1926-1927	62	1943-1944	0
1910-1911	5	1927-1928	56	1944-1945	0
1911-1912	3	1928-1929	53	1945-1946	1
1912-1913	5	1929-1930	58	1946-1947	8
1913-1914	88	1930-1931	80	1947-1948	167
1914-1915	0	1931-1932	47	1948-1949	64
1915-1916	1	1932-1933	63	1949-1950	54
1916-1917	0	1933-1934	33		

  

<i>Years</i>	<i>Totals</i>	<i>Years</i>	<i>Totals</i>	<i>Years</i>	<i>Totals</i>
1950	77	1956	332	1961	772
1951	99	1957	334	1962	830
1952	172	1958	459	1963	1,131
1953	140	1959	741	1964	2,077
1954	177	1960	691	1965	3,491
1955	249				

- a. The category "East Indian" presumably includes all people who claim that "ethnic," origin regardless of prior citizenship, and would therefore include all Sikhs plus others. Prior to 1962 the East Indian ethnic category included Ceylonese and Pakistanis. From 1962 onwards these latter two were listed as separate ethnic categories, while the East Indian one was apparently restricted to those claiming paternal origins in the Republic of India.
- b. The figures for all years include those entering Canada from the U.S.A. as well as from overseas. Sources: for 1900 through 1950 (Canada, 1951: 29-37); for 1950 through 1954 (Canada, 1955: 30-31); for 1955 through 1959 (Canada, 1960a: 30-31); and for 1960 through 1965, the annual "Immigration Statistics" reports issued by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration (Canada 1961: 16-17; 1962b: 16-17; 1963a: 16-17; 1964: 16-17; 1965: 16-17). The figures for 1900 through 1950 cover fiscal years ending March 31 of each year; the figures for 1950 through 1965 are for calendar years.
- c. 1906-07 covers only the nine months between June 30, 1906 and March 31, 1907.

senting themselves to be children of Canadian residents, the overall number of East Indians decreased, until there were only an estimated 1100 in British Columbia in 1939. This number was almost entirely composed of single males, living in logging camps or in shared apartments in Vancouver. A few wealthier men had brought families and had smuggled other relatives into the country, but East Indians estimated that not more than fifteen families were living in Vancouver at the outbreak of the Second World War.

Sikhs refer to these earlier times as the "bunkhouse life" period because of the difficulties of bringing in wives and children to establish families. It was not until India gained its independence in 1947, and immigration from India was regulated by an exchange of notes in 1951 (Angus, 1966: 331), that Indians were granted a quota permitting the entry of 150 persons a year plus close relatives such as parents, minor children, and fiance(e)s. The quota was further increased to 300 in 1957.<sup>2</sup> The immigration of Indians to Canada and the numbers entering British Columbia increased steadily after this (Tables 1 and 2). British Columbia remained the most popular destination for East Indian immigrants until 1963, when Ontario took the lead (Table 2). Presumably most East Indian immigrants were Sikhs during the earlier years, although this may not be the case today.

East Indians in British Columbia took the initiative in all their struggles for fair and equal treatment, including the franchise (granted in 1947), freedom to enter professions without restriction, freedom from fingerprinting upon the purchase of property, and equal right to purchase property on foreshore land. They acknowledge the support of the C.C.F. Party, but of few other Canadian organizations, during this period of struggle. Sikhs today say that the community as a whole favours the N.D.P. (formerly the C.C.F.) because of its earlier support and because it is the "working man's party." Most political discussion centres mainly on India's problems, however, especially those affecting the Sikhs in the Punjab.

B.C. Sikhs have organized their political struggles and social and religious life through their temples. The Khalsa Diwan Society in Vancouver manages about six temples: one each in Vancouver, New Westminster, Abbotsford, Mesachi Lake, Paldi, and Port Alberni. Three temples (Vancouver, Victoria, and Port Alberni) are managed by the

<sup>2</sup> See "A submission concerning immigration problems of the Canadian citizen of East Indian origin," submitted to the government by the East Indian Canadian Citizens' Welfare Association, Vancouver, B.C., July 3, 1963.

TABLE 2

DESTINATION OF EAST INDIAN IMMIGRANTS TO CANADA, 1954-1964<sup>a</sup>A. "East Indian" Immigrants<sup>b</sup>B. From Republic of India<sup>c</sup>

	1954		1955		1956		1957		1958		1959		1960		1961		1962		1963		1964	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Totals	175	100	245	100	330	100	324	100	451	100	716	100	673	100	744	100	529	100	737	100	1,154	100
N.F.	0		0		0		0		0		0		0		4	0.5	7	1.3	3	0.4	1	0.0
P.E.I.	0		0		0		0		0		0		0		4	0.5	0		2	0.2	0	
N.S.	0		0		1	0.3	1	0.3	5	1.1	4	0.6	10	1.5	15	2.0	17	3.2	34	4.6	55	4.8
N.B.	0		0		0		1	0.3	3	0.7	1	0.1	1	0.1	11	1.5	5	0.9	4	0.5	12	1.0
Que.	39	22.3	41	16.7	64	19.3	51	15.7	69	15.3	99	13.8	115	17.1	110	15.0	80	15.1	143	19.4	176	15.3
Ont.	50	28.6	49	20.0	79	24.0	105	32.4	85	19.0	157	21.9	151	22.4	181	24.3	154	29.1	257	35.0	456	39.5
Man.	2	1.0	3	1.2	1	0.3	7	2.2	11	2.4	17	2.4	26	3.9	21	2.8	10	1.9	13	1.7	34	3.0
Sask.	0		1	0.4	0		3	0.9	4	0.8	3	0.4	22	3.3	27	3.6	20	3.8	31	4.2	37	3.2
Alta.	5	3.0	9	3.7	2	0.6	4	1.2	2	0.4	19	2.7	42	6.2	47	6.3	30	5.7	37	5.0	48	4.2
B.C.	79	45.1	142	58.0	183	55.5	152	47.0	272	60.3	416	58.1	306	45.5	324	43.5	206	39.0	211	29.0	335	29.0

- a. These figures *exclude* East Indians who emigrated to Canada from the U.S.A. Sources: figures for 1954 through 1960 were abstracted from the annual reports of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration (Canada 1955: 29; 1956: 27; 1957a: 31; 1958a: 29; 1959a: 29; 1960a: 29; 1962a: 30); figures for 1961 through 1964 were abstracted from the annual "Immigration Statistics" reports (page 8 in each of Canada 1962b, 1963a, 1963b, and 1964).
- b. The category "East Indian" presumably includes all people who claim that "ethnic" origin regardless of prior citizenship or country of residence (exclusive of U.S.A.).
- c. From 1962 onwards immigrants were classified by country of last permanent residence (Republic of India in this table) rather than by ethnicity, hence the 1962-1964 period is not exactly comparable to the 1954-1961 period. During the first period (1954-1961) all Sikhs *and* all other East Indians who emigrated to Canada (excluding those who entered from the U.S.A.) were listed, whereas from 1962 onwards *only* those Sikhs and *any* others who came directly from the Republic of India were listed.

Akali Singh Society, a group of dissenters who lost out in a power struggle to control the Khalsa Diwan Society in the 1950's. A tenth Sikh Temple, in Victoria, is autonomous, owning its own property and managing its own affairs. Few if any Sikhs have converted to Christianity, although some do not actively participate in the Sikh ceremonies at the temples. Respondents claim that their temples are becoming social centres with dwindling religious and political functions, a development they ascribe to the growing acceptance of Indians by Canadian society. (Few issues have arisen in recent times that require the temple committees to act for the protection of individual Sikhs and most of the committee members are now postwar immigrants, therefore the old ethos of a persecuted minority is gradually dying out.)

Several political functions of the temple have been allocated by the K.D.S. to the East Indian Canadian Citizens' Welfare Association, a separate organization created in the 1950's to represent all East Indians in British Columbia regardless of religious or temple affiliation. The E.I.C.C.W.A. has been especially active in negotiating with the government regarding immigration policy. Another organization, the East Indian Women's Association, occasionally put on dinners and fashion shows for the Canadian public.

With the exception of Paldi on Vancouver Island, Sikhs have not established enclaves in British Columbia. Residence patterns tend to follow the location and relocation of sawmills, although Sikhs are spread out in any district in which they are found. There is some preference for distance between families. Further, the buying of houses is considered a major form of investment, therefore the choice of location is influenced by commercial advantage as well as by social ties. The Sikh "community" of Vancouver lower mainland, where most B.C. Sikhs live, is not a residential entity; it operates more as a collection of reference groups of relatives, friends, and acquaintances who recognize a common ethnic membership, a proudly shared religion, mutual interests, and several temples.

Sikh men are frequently employed in sawmills and logging camps, occupations they have favoured since the beginning of their immigration. Few Sikh women work, and those that do tend to take office and clerical positions in government agencies to avoid the allegedly discriminatory hiring practices of private firms. According to the records of the K.D.S. temple in Vancouver, which list potential donors according to income categories, it would appear that approximately 80 per cent of the Sikhs in the Vancouver lower mainland recognized by K.D.S. hold unskilled and semi-skilled jobs, mostly in the lumber industry; 20 per cent are



foremen or managers; and small number are independent truckers, shop keepers, importers, salesmen, and accountants. A few are professionals, and one or two are sawmill owners, active or retired or otherwise in a position to contribute handsomely to the temple. This latter category includes several millionaires. A more specific idea of occupational distribution may be obtained from the records of marriages registered at the Vancouver K.D.S. temple between August 1951 and December 1966. (All Sikhs in good standing would be expected to marry in the temple.) Of those Sikh men who registered their marriages at the temple, 60 per cent were employed in the lumber industry (Table 3); 73 per cent of the Sikh women were not employed ("at home" in Table 4). This distribution may gradually change if the occupational qualifications of immigrants increase, and there is indirect evidence that they are increasing (Table 5).<sup>3</sup>

The occupational or "class" divisions within the Sikh community are to some extent also reflected in the structure of the Khalsa Diwan Society. The wealthier, professionally employed men are both the official and actual leaders of the community. Another way in which the Sikh community may be subdivided is in terms of the various phases of immigration (cf. Mayer, 1959: 3-4):

- (1) The early immigrants of the pre-World War One period, now few in number, who are still greatly respected for their long struggle for equal rights with other Canadians;
- (2) Those who entered in the 1920's and 1930's, some of whom now have children and grandchildren born in or at least educated in Canada;
- (3) Those who emigrated since World War Two, an active, large, and relatively prosperous group of men and women who today dominate the leadership of the community;
- (4) The Canada-born, still few in number, young in age, and relatively uninfluential in the community.

The steady influx of immigrants since the last war suggests that they, rather than the Canada-born Indians, will continue for some time to

<sup>3</sup> A sharp increase in the number of immigrants entering Canada from India has taken place since 1962 (Table 1), and this "reflects the impact of the regulations introduced in that year which provide for the admission of people from any country in the world who possess education, training and skills and other qualifications to enable them to become established in Canada." (Personal communication, J. B. Bissett, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, February 22, 1966).

dominate the community politically and culturally. Recent immigrants are on the average better educated and more highly skilled than their predecessors, and therefore better equipped to prosper in British Columbia; they are also more numerous than the Canada-born Sikhs; but they are not necessarily any less "Indian" in outlook than the others, and therefore perhaps no more likely to acculturate or assimilate to Canadian society. The flow of immigration, plus the frequent return visits to India by B.C. Sikhs, serve to reinforce the Indianness of the local population despite assimilation pressures. These connections with India also provide

TABLE 3  
OCCUPATIONS OF 132 SIKH MEN WHO REGISTERED THEIR  
MARRIAGES AT THE VANCOUVER TEMPLE BETWEEN AUGUST  
1951 AND DECEMBER 1966.<sup>a</sup>

	<i>Wood industry<sup>b</sup></i>	<i>Farming</i>	<i>Clerk and professional<sup>c</sup></i>	<i>Student</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Totals</i>
1951	6		1				7
1952	11	7		2			20
1953	2	1			1		4
1954	2						2
1955	2		1	2			5
1956	5			1			6
1957	4				1		5
1958	6		2	1	1		10
1959	3	1	2	1		1	8
1960	4		1	1			6
1961	5		3		1		9
1962	4		1	2			7
1963	5		2	1	1		9
1964	6		1	1			8
1965	8		3	2			13
1966	7		4	1	1		13
Sub-totals & percents of grand total	8 (60.6%)	9 (6.8%)	21 (15.9%)	15 (11.4%)	6 (4.5%)	1 (.8%)	132 (100%)

a. Data obtained from marriage records at Sikh Temple, 1866 West 2nd Avenue, Vancouver, B.C.

b. Includes sawmill, logging, trucking, fuel dealer.

c. Includes statistician, accountants, telegrapher, clerks, medical technologist, mechanics, engineers, teachers, physicians, town planner.

TABLE 4  
OCCUPATIONS OF 129 SIKH WOMEN WHO REGISTERED THEIR  
MARRIAGES AT THE VANCOUVER TEMPLE BETWEEN AUGUST  
1951 AND DECEMBER 1966.<sup>a</sup>

	<i>At home</i> <sup>b</sup>	<i>Office &amp; clerical</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Student</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>N/K</i>	<i>Total</i>
1951	6					1	7
1952	15	3			2		20
1953	3	1					4
1954	1	1					2
1955	3	2					5
1956	5					1	6
1957	5	1					6
1958	7	2		1			10
1959	5	2	1				8
1960	1	2	1	2			6
1961	7	2					9
1962	5						5
1963	6	1	1				8
1964	8						8
1965	8	3	1				12
1966	9	2		1	1		13

Sub-totals  
& percents of grand total  
 94 (72.9%)  
 22 (17.1%)  
 4 (3.1%)  
 4 (3.1%)  
 3 (2.3%)  
 2 (1.5%)  
 129 (100%)

a. Data obtained from marriage records at Sikh Temple, 1866 West 2nd Avenue, Vancouver, B.C.

b. Includes housewives and non-employed.

avenues for change, however. On the one hand, Canadian Sikhs visiting India are usually convinced that they have better opportunities in Canada. On the other hand, immigrants from "modern" India bring "modern" ideas with them, ideas that may be little different from Canadian ones though they appear more acceptable because of their source. Sikhs sharply distinguish between "modernization," which they value, and "Westernization," which they do not. They ideally desire for themselves a modernity devoid of the more "corrupting" influences of Western civilization. They wish to "adjust" but not "assimilate" to Canada. Commenting on an earlier period (date unspecified), Angus (1966: 331) noted that:

TABLE 5  
INTENDED OCCUPATIONS OF EAST INDIAN IMMIGRANTS TO CANADA, 1956-1964<sup>a</sup>

Occupations	A. Of "East Indian" Origin <sup>b</sup>								B. From Republic of India <sup>c</sup>									
	1956		1957		1958		1959		1960		1961		1962		1963		1964	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. Managerial, Administrative professional, & technical	61	32.1	57	35.4	69	30.3	137	30.2	188	45.1	219	55.0	174	68.0	196	67.4	317	59.8
2. Clerical	7	3.7	20	12.4	19	8.3	37	8.1	27	6.5	18	4.5	11	4.3	30	10.3	61	11.5
3. Transportation and communications	2	1.1	5	3.1	9	4.0	14	3.1	4	1.0	6	1.5	4	1.6	4	1.4	10	1.9
4. Commercial, service and recreation	8	4.2	16	10.0	18	7.9	25	5.5	16	3.8	18	4.5	8	3.1	8	2.7	24	4.5
5. Farming, farm labour, logging, fishing, & mining	8	4.2	7	4.3	11	4.8	84	18.5	24	5.8			6	2.3	9	3.1	6	1.1
6. Construction, manufacturing & mechanical	16	8.4	22	13.7	24	10.5	51	11.2	29	7.0	20	5.0	12	4.7	27	9.3	48	9.1
7. Labouring	88	46.3	34	21.1	77	33.8	104	23.0	128	30.6	116	29.2	40	15.6	16	5.5	63	11.9
8. Unknown					1	0.4	2	0.4	1	0.2	1	0.3	1	0.4	1	0.3	1	0.2
<b>TOTAL WORKERS</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>100</b>
9. Non-Workers																		
a) wives	57		58		75		88		89		132		102		160		239	
b) children	69		82		119		128		127		191		125		220		337	
c) other	14		23		29		46		40		21		46		66		48	
<b>TOTAL NON-WORKERS</b>	<b>140</b>		<b>163</b>		<b>223</b>		<b>262</b>		<b>256</b>		<b>344</b>		<b>273</b>		<b>446</b>		<b>624</b>	
<b>TOTAL ALL IMMIGRANTS</b>	<b>330</b>		<b>324</b>		<b>451</b>		<b>716</b>		<b>673</b>		<b>742</b>		<b>529</b>		<b>737</b>		<b>1,154</b>	

a. All figures *exclude* those East Indians who emigrated to Canada from the U.S.A. Sources: figures were abstracted from the annual "Immigration Statistics" issued by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration (Canada, 1957b: 12-13, and Table 4 in each of Canada 1958b, 1959b, 1960b, 1961, 1962b, 1963a, 1963b, and 1964).

b. The category "East Indian" presumably includes all people who claim that "ethnic" origin regardless of prior citizenship or country of residence (exclusive of U.S.A.).

c. From 1962 onwards immigrants were classified by country of last permanent residence (Republic of India in this table) rather than by ethnicity, hence the years 1962 to 1964, are not exactly comparable to the 1952-1961 period. The years 1952-1961 include *all* Sikhs and all other "East Indians" (except those residing in U.S.A.) who immigrated to Canada, whereas the years 1962-1964 include *only* those Sikhs and *any* others who immigrated to Canada from the Republic of India.

Ethnic consciousness did, however, retard cultural assimilation. Indeed the will to assimilate was not always clear; the early immigrants intended to return to India. Children were sometimes withdrawn from School early to avoid Westernization.

Two of the official purposes of the Khalsa Diwan Society, noted on the first page of the revised constitution (1967), are: (1) "To instruct [in special schools] children and youths of the Sikh community in the language of their ancestors and in history, philosophy, cultural heritage of Sikhs and India"; and (2) "To help newly arrived immigrants from India to adjust 'but not necessarily assimilate' to Canadian way of life."

In actual practice — and here lies the crucial problem — B.C. Sikhs are adjusting to a complex and unstable mixture of Canadian *and* Indian ideals that are both traditional *and* modern. The next section discusses and analyzes this problem in detail.

### III. *Contrasting Ideal Family Patterns*

The pressures of immigration and westernization are reflected in Sikh family organization, and it is through an analysis of the family that we may gain an understanding of how Sikhs responded to those pressures. The critical factor here is how the Sikhs themselves interpret their situation. Their conceptualization of family life is typically in terms of at least three broad dimensions: how family life was supposed to be organized in the Punjab, how they believe Whites live here in Canada, and how they think they themselves might best adjust to the Canadian setting, given their idealized positive Punjabi and negative Canadian models. The first two dimensions are thus best seen as limits, boundaries, or guidelines, and the third as adaptive strategies devised as compromises between the first two.

We will refer to these three dimensions, the traditional Punjabi contemporary Canadian, and immediate Punjabi, as "models" or "patterns" for the sake of convenience. These models are constructions or generalizations of statements made by various respondents and are, therefore, more complete and systematized than the views of any single respondent. They represent summaries or averages of numerous reports.<sup>4</sup>

The *traditional Punjabi pattern* is regarded by B.C. Sikhs as the one actually lived by them in their home villages in the Punjab. It is a patrilineal, patrilocal, "paternalistic-maternalistic," extended or joint family

<sup>4</sup> This descriptive method was suggested by Leach's (1954) analysis of conflict and change in Highland Burma, and Ward's (1965) discussion of the "conscious models" of the family of South China fishermen.

ideal. Research in the Punjab suggests that actual practice only approximately corresponds to this ideal. It is therefore preferable to treat this pattern as representing ideals and suppositions more than actual practices. The importance of this pattern for B.C. Sikhs lies in the fact that it is a "believed in," rather than "lived in," positive order that they use to guide and to evaluate their immediate beliefs and practices.

The *contemporary Canadian pattern* represent B.C. Sikhs' perceptions of Canadian (non-Indian) family life. The process of reconstructing a model from statements of informants leads to greater systematization than exists in fact. No Sikh gave a consistently negative view of Canadian family life in all categories, although most gratuitous statements did tend to be negative. Because few Sikhs maintain close relationships with non-Indians, they assess Canadian family life largely in terms of those features that are the special obsession of our own mass media: sexual exploitation, youthful rebellion against parental authority, the tragedy of old age, and the alleged instability of the conjugal relationship. Further, Sikhs judge Canadian patterns in terms of their own traditional ideals rather than in terms of Canadian values. It is therefore not surprising that their perceptions are at least negatively tinged. Where family life among East Indians in B.C. has been disrupted, even by stresses inherent in the traditional family structure, this disruption is typically explained by reference to "rebellious" members who have been "corrupted" by Canadian patterns.

The *immediate Punjabi pattern* represents the compromises B.C. Sikhs believe their present situation demands. The traditional and Canadian patterns are treated like fixed reference points or boundaries; the immediate pattern is more like a set of working models created by individual Sikhs who view their situation with considerable ambivalence. Immediate or actual ideals of family life are therefore less stable, less uniform, more open to argument, to choice, and to modification than the traditional or Canadian (non-Indian) ideal patterns. There tends to be widespread consensus about the components of the traditional and Canadian models, but there are almost as many immediate patterns as there are people; and each individual may modify his immediate ideal model at different times and in different situations. Immediate ideals are viewed by Sikhs as changing patterns of expediency, as compromises between the traditional notions of family life they bring with them from India and the requirements of adjustment demanded here.<sup>5</sup> Because the

<sup>5</sup> These immediate patterns are not unlike comparable ones found in Indian urban areas, for comparable reasons. See Owens, 1971: Ames, 1973.

immediate pattern represents a dynamic and dialectic process rather than a static and formal image, it is extremely hazardous to attempt to summarize in terms of one over-all general pattern. Uniformity is more the artifact of the observers than of the actors. This stricture must be kept in mind when examining the following tabular summaries.

Table 6 presents a summary description of the three ideal patterns. A vertical reading of each column (I, II, III) gives the expressed ideals of family life for each of the three patterns. A horizontal reading of each row (A, B, etc.) expresses the differences, as Sikhs see them, between the traditional family relationships, those that prevail among Canadian (non-Indian) families, and those that are ideal in the immediate situation for Indian families living in British Columbia. The rows suggest a linear movement of option to the individual whereas in fact it should more properly be visualized as a circular, open, and dynamic arrangement. The structural categories and the general outline of Table 6 were adapted from a scheme developed by Levy (1952, 1963).

Again it must be strongly emphasized that these patterns refer to ideals, suppositions, expectations and not to actual practices. The extent to which actual structures correspond to the ideal structures (and the correspondence could never be perfect) is a problem for further research. It appears, for example, that in matters of residence the actual patterns only approximately correspond to immediate ideals. Although we know of only one patrilocal joint family, which is the ideal, there are a number of stem families (parents with one married child).

Several implications may be drawn from the relations between these three ideal patterns. (1) Perhaps the most general statement is that the immediate pattern is oriented more towards the traditional rather than towards the Canadian pattern. This illustrates the earlier suggestion that the traditional and Canadian patterns represent positive and negative reference points for the immediate situation.

(2) Based on explicit statements by informants (mainly India-born) and Mayer's suggestion (1959: 3), we expected to find a considerable difference between the ideals of Canadian-born and India-born Sikhs. We found only limited evidence to support this hypothesis, however. Except for categories C.3 and D, the immediate pattern represents fairly adequately the views of both types of informants, although the sample was not large enough to make conclusive statements. The situation may well change as the number of Canada-born increase in numbers and mature in age. Sikhs frequently argue that young people today, especially the Canada-born, are rebellious. Youth themselves indicate that they find

TABLE 6

COMPARISONS AND CONTRASTS OF THREE "IDEAL" PATTERNS OF FAMILY LIFE AS  
SEEN BY SIKHS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

I Punjabi IDEAL TRADITIONAL/PATTERN (How it was supposed to be in India)	II Punjabi IDEAL IMMEDIATE/PATTERN (How it should be here)	III "IDEAL" CANADIAN (WHITE) PATTERN (How Canadians appear to be)
A. EXTENDED FAMILY AND NUCLEAR FAMILY		
1. <i>Patrilocal extended family</i> (all living generations, residing in close proximity or under one roof, i.e., "joint family" or <i>parivar</i> ).	<i>Nuclear</i> (but some aspects of the operation of joint family organization persists, such as solidarity of members' obligation and privilege to wide ranging kin in Canada and India).	<i>Nuclear</i> . Obligations to non-nuclear family kinsmen are neglected.
2. Interaction with affinally related families important for social and political support. The larger kin group containing families as sub-units called <i>ristadari</i> .	Interaction with affinally connected families more important in Canada, in cases where few agnates are present. Reliance on affines for financial and social support.	Interaction with affines optional.
3. <i>Hypergamous</i> relations between families linked in marriage.	Hypergamy ideally rejected, but some aspects linger in customs related to marriage arrangement and reluctance of parents to spend declining years in the home of married daughters.	Families related by marriage are ideally equal.
B. RULES OF MEMBERSHIP		
1. <i>Patrilocal residence</i> . Brides brought in from areas outside village or town of the patrilineage. Relations between patrilineage and affines is hypergamous.	Residence <i>temporarily patrilocal or matrilocal</i> as circumstances dictate, but only until virilocal residence can be established. Preference for bring-spouses from outside Canada (usually India).	<i>Neolocal</i> .



I Punjabi  
IDEAL TRADITIONAL/PATTERN  
(How it was supposed to be in India)

2. *Patrilineal descent.*
3. *Patrilineal inheritance*, shared equally by sons who are regarded at birth as co-owners or coparceners of family property. Daughters may be given share of patrimony upon marriage (dowry).
4. *Regulation of sex:*
  - (a) Premarital and extramarital sexual relations prohibited.
  - (b) Marriage prohibited to any member of the named patrilineages (*got*) of the four grandparents, even if the actual relations between the parties cannot be traced. (Thus cousin marriage of any degree prohibited.)
  - (c) *Caste endogamy.*
  - (d) *Village exogamy.*

II Punjabi  
IDEAL IMMEDIATE/PATTERN  
(How it should be here)

*Patrilineal descent*, but stress is placed on father's and mother's lines equally in describing family relationships in B.C. (bilateral filiation).

*Testamentary inheritance* (through most actually do not make wills). Patrimony shared between wives, sons, and daughters. Threat of disinheritance may be used to enforce political power of father over rebellious sons.

Premarital and extramarital sexual relations prohibited.

Marriage prohibited to any member of own patrilineage. Marriage to persons of FaMo's, Mo's, or MoMo's *gots* not ideal, but degree of actual biological distance determines the degree of deviation from prohibition that may be overlooked. "Third cousin" marriage permitted. Rule is vague, "fuzzy," hence open to interpretation.

*Caste endogamy.* (Some indication that this ideal decreasing in importance among Canada-born Sikhs.)

*Village exogamy.* (village of origin in India taken as reference point, not Canadian residence).

III  
"IDEAL" CANADIAN (WHITE) PATTERN  
(How Canadians appear to be)

*Bilateral Descent.* Lineal lines not strongly emphasized.

*Testamentary inheritance.* Wives and children inherit.

Premarital and extramarital sexual relations prohibited.

Cousin marriage permitted.

No counterpart in Canadian life.

No counterpart.

I Punjabi  
IDEAL TRADITIONAL/PATTERN  
(How it was supposed to be in India)

(d) Prohibition of marriage to fictive kin.

C. AGE

1. *Absolute age*: stages of life cycle defined in terms of birth, marriage and death.
2. *Relative age* affects status, power, and responsibility within the family. Older persons responsible for and have power over younger persons.
3. *Generational precedence* recognized as organizing principle of family life. Expressed in terms of respect.

D. SEX

Precedence of males over females.

II Punjabi  
IDEAL IMMEDIATE/PATTERN  
(How it should be here)

Some acceptance of marriage to fictive kin.

Stages in life of the individual centre around childhood, maturity (marked by marriage), and death. Marriage especially important transition. Stages marked by modified traditional rites.

Relative age gives higher status, power, and responsibility within the family. (Achieved status becoming more important, actually, but not ideally, with the possession and manipulation of money by some members of the family, not necessarily senior in age to ego.)

*Generational Precedence* recognized. Ritual respect demanded whether or not the actual family organization rests upon actual acceptance of and guidance by older generation. Younger persons, particularly Canada-born, share this ideal of the India-born majority and suffer various disabilities on this account.

Precedence of males over females, with modification of traditional respect behaviour associated with this

III  
"IDEAL" CANADIAN (WHITE) PATTERN  
(How Canadians appear to be)

No counterpart.

*Generational precedence* not recognized. No respect shown by younger generation for older generations. Young people are "rebellious."

Men cannot control women and this results in divorce and separation.

I Punjabi  
 IDEAL TRADITIONAL/PATTERN  
 (How it was supposed to be in India)

- E. SOLIDARITY: rests upon landholding.
1. Strength (relative precedence of relationships) :
    - a. Fa-So most important
    - b. Mo-So important
    - c. Fa-Da same as a.
    - d. Mo-Da important
    - e. Si-Br important
    - f. SiSo-MoBr very important especially at marriage.
    - g. grand-parents-grand-children important

II Punjabi  
 IDEAL IMMEDIATE/PATTERN  
 (How it should be here)

ideal. Continuance of ideal reliance on male in the direction of family affairs, as family representative in community affairs, and as representative to non-Indian community. Younger persons, especially Canada-born, often hold ambivalent ideas of male-female relationships. Canada-born females may not accept traditional female role ideally required by India-born males.

- Rests upon ideals of intimacy, responsibility, and respect.
- a. Fa-So most important
  - b. Mo-So important
  - c. Fa-Da as a.
  - d. Mo-Da important.
  - e. Si-Br important
  - f. SiSo-MoBr important especially at marriage.
  - g. grand-parents-grand-children important. The grandparent-grand-child relation is ideally maintained even where a break with so or da has occurred.

III  
 "IDEAL" CANADIAN (WHITE) PATTERN  
 (How Canadians appear to be)

Nuclear family is selfish, takes no responsibility for kinsmen outside nuclear unit. Less solidarity than Indian family, according to India-born. More solidarity in Canadian than in Indian families, according to some Canada-born who complain that their activities outside the home are frequently suspected by parents.

## I Punjabi

IDEAL TRADITIONAL/PATTERN  
(How it was supposed to be in India)

2. Intensity (state of affect involved in the relationship):

*Intimate Avoidant*  
Mo-So, Da Wi-Hu  
Mo-HuYoBr Wi-HuMo  
Mo-Br Wi-Hu's male relatives  
Fa-So, Da senior to Hu in age  
Br-Si

F. ECONOMIC: INCOME AND  
ALLOCATION

1. Income from produce of land and rents, under authority of family head.
2. Income equally shared by all within the joint family. Elderly men may consume less when their contributions of labour lessen.

G. POLITICAL: LOCUS OF POWER

*Patripotestal*, with eldest living, capable male heading the family and holding final authority. At his death, authority passes to his younger brother or eldest son.

## II Punjabi

IDEAL IMMEDIATE/PATTERN  
(How it should be here)

Avoidant relations somewhat modified, but some reticence shown.

*Intimate Avoidant*  
Mo-So, Da Wi-Hu  
Fa-So, Da Wi-HuMo  
Br-Si Wi-Hu's male relatives  
senior to Hu in age.  
Ego-Strangers.

Income primarily from rents, wages, business profits, professional occupations. Father ideally controls income of nuclear family.

Income shared by members of nuclear family, and with other kinsmen here and in India according to need and to traditional responsibilities.

Authority of senior capable male still recognized, in terms of respect, direction of family affairs, and ritual expression. Family head may reside in India or Canada. If ideal family head remains in India, actual head may be senior male of Canadian group, acting as representative of ideal head. Some preference for selecting most economically successful

## III

"IDEAL" CANADIAN (WHITE) PATTERN  
(How Canadians appear to be)

Avoidant relations not expressed in terms of respect.

Income from many sources.

Income kept within the nuclear family.

Elder males are disregarded and younger people take their own way in all matters.

I Punjabi  
IDEAL TRADITIONAL/PATTERN  
(How it was supposed to be in India)

H. EDUCATION AND EXPRESSION

1. Socialization of children in the home oriented to familial values, especially regarding responsibility and respect relations.
2. Expression: Punjabi food, dress, language.
3. Religion: temple is centre of religious expression.

II Punjabi  
IDEAL IMMEDIATE/PATTERN  
(How it should be here)

member to be family head, thus shifting locus of power from eldest capable male to successful male regardless of generation or age. Full and independent political authority of man at time of marriage ("viripotestal-ity") considered ideal by Canada-born males.

Family socialization oriented to familial values, especially obligation, obedience, and respect. Stress on formal education for males so they may compete with other Punjabis in B.C. for status and wealth. Less stress upon formal education beyond high school for females, since marriage is ideally the most important vocation.

Punjabi food, dress (for women only), and language in the home. Canada-born wear Western dress except on festive occasions. Canada-born children sometimes prefer Western food, dress and language. Beard and turban not considered necessary insignia.

Religion less important now. Temple serves primarily as social and political centre.

III  
"IDEAL" CANADIAN (WHITE) PATTERN  
(How Canadians appear to be)

Children are not taught respect, obedience, or obligation to family members.

Claims of Christianity rejected.

it increasingly difficult to live up to the traditional family ideals. As it will be pointed out below (Table 9), age-based and sex-based roles (categories C and D in Table 6) appear especially vulnerable to conflicting interpretations.

(3) On the basis of initial contacts with Sikh women we expected to discover a considerable difference of opinion between men and women. Again, we found only limited evidence to support this hypothesis. We found sufficient consensus between men and women regarding the ideals of male-female behaviour to justify including both within the one ideal immediate pattern. This is not to deny that some women express acute distress and unhappiness with their present circumstances, and that not all women actually uphold on all occasions the intentions they ideally express, as in the matters of divorce and separation. Indian women, especially those born in Canada, are finding it increasingly difficult to accept their circumstances, and we would expect that eventually the ideals regarding respect for and responsibility to husbands and fathers will be a major focus for change in the immediate model (Table 9). At present, however, although women may be disgruntled they have yet to formulate or accept ideals of male-female relationships significantly different from the men's ideals.

(4) A comparison of the three ideal patterns in Table 6 by rows suggests that in some instances the relations are consonant between at least two patterns, and in other instances they are dissonant. An inspection of the dissonant cases suggests a second division between those that are foci of conflict and those that are not. We will examine each of these relationships in turn.

Some immediate ideals are similar if not identical with corresponding traditional ideals, which suggests the persistence of those traditional notions in the immediate setting (Table 7). Most of the persisting ideals have no counterpart in Canadian life, and are perhaps therefore not opened to scrutiny and opposition; they become a private concern unknown to non-Indian Canadians. Caste endogamy is a partial exception here; Sikhs recognize that Canadians consider caste to be "wrong," and therefore avoid discussing it. Knowledge of caste association may be denied and the ideological castelessness of Sikhism is projected into initial conversations. Although driven underground, caste nevertheless continues to operate at least as a regulator of marriage.

Some immediate ideals differ from corresponding traditional ones, although informants express little concern or dismay over these differences. These instances suggest areas where change has taken place without ap-

TABLE 7

## AREAS OF PERSISTENCE: TRADITIONAL TO IMMEDIATE

*B4. Regulation of sex*

- (a) Pre- and extra-marital prohibitions
- (b) Got exogamy
- (c) Caste endogamy
- (d) Village of origin (in India) exogamy

*C. Age differentiation*

- 1. Definition of stages of life
- 2. Precedence by relative age within the family

*E. Solidarity*

- 1. Strength of familial relationships
- 2. Intensity of familial relationships

*H. Education and expression*

- 3. Religion

parent stress or conflict (Table 8). A few examples may be cited by way of illustration.

*Family type, A.1.* Respondents frequently argue that the joint family is no longer necessary in British Columbia since individually earned wages, and not family land, is now the basis of income. The joint family "extended protection to millions through the ages,"<sup>6</sup> but . . .

The ideals of the joint family were formulated out of necessity for survival, and now it is no longer necessary to live together, though considerable co-operation exists between people linked through kinship. They help each other in seeking jobs, finding accommodation, overcoming financial difficulties, and so on.

Sikhs respondents use the English word "family" in several ways. It is used in the sense of the Punjabi *ristadari*, all those related to ego bilaterally and living in one's own and surrounding villages. It is also used to translate the word *parivar*, which refers to agnates and their wives forming a household group (the "joint family"). A third usage of the word "family" is to refer to the household group in British Columbia, typically

<sup>6</sup> The respondents' statements enclosed in quotations marks and contained in indented paragraphs are paraphrases based on notes taken during interviews. Where necessary the respondent has been disguised to ensure anonymity.

TABLE 8

AREAS OF CHANGE WITHOUT APPARENT STRESS:  
TRADITIONAL TO IMMEDIATE

- A. *Family type*
1. Extended to nuclear family
  3. Hypergamous to equalitarian relations between affines
- B. *Rules of membership*
1. Patrilocal to virilocal residence
  2. Bilateral modification of patrilineal descent
  3. Patrilineal to testamentary inheritance
  4. Marriage to fictive kin accepted by some.
- E. *Economic allocation*
1. Shared income in cash and kind to individual wages, etc.
- G. *Political allocation*
- Patripotestal to viripotestal.
- H. *Education and expression*
1. Increase in formal education, especially for boys.
  2. Western food, dress, and language especially for males and for young people. The discarding of beard and turban by some.

the nuclear family with the possible addition of several other kinsmen. All others outside the household with whom one can trace a relationship may be referred to by the English term "relative." Cousins, who are classificatory brothers in Punjabi, are called "cousin-brothers" in English.

*Affinal Relations, A.2.* With regard to hypergamous relations between families linked in marriage, even knowledge of such traditional relationships may be denied verbally though recognized in the breach. For example, an India-born father who arranged the marriage of his Canada-born daughter denied that hypergamous relations ever existed either in India or Canada:

It is just that when you give a daughter into a man's house, you never take anything in return. You do not barter your daughter. You would not expect to go there to live with her in your old age, nor take a daughter from that family for your son.

This man made an effort to demonstrate his egalitarian attitude at his daughter's wedding. When the groom's father began the traditional per-



ration with "You have given me your most precious possession . . ." (which implies the giving of tribute), the girl's father immediately interjected that,

My daughter will respect your son if he respects her. I will go right on disagreeing with you on public issues, since it is these young people who are the ones who have entered into this arrangement.

Another India-born father with long residence in Canada, when arranging the marriage of his India-born daughter, claimed that he broke in upon the groom's father's ritual thanks with the abrupt observation that "You have given me your most precious possession too, so let us get on with the matter!" Both of these cases suggest that while hypergamous unions may be universally denied there are still occasions where it is felt necessary to reassert the ideal of equalitarian relations between affines.

*Rules of residence, B.1.* Virilocal residence is preferred by young married couples, though it is not always possible or convenient immediately after marriage. The situation of one India-born wife who has lived in Canada for ten years is an example:

When we [she and her husband] came to Canada we moved in with my mother and father. My husband's people were in India. Men who move in with the wife's family are teased about it, but it is considered reasonable where the husband has no family to take them in. We stayed for two years. My family wanted to help us. They could not help financially, but they could give us a home. This was a good thing to help us get started. After two years we found a place of our own. My husband is working, so it was possible. When a young man brings a fiancée out from India, then after marriage, he usually takes her to his father's house. Some don't. But usually the father and mother will try to keep them, at least for a little while, say one month, two months, three months. It would be the parents desire to keep them, but the young people would be wanting to establish their own home. The parents might want this too, but they would say, 'Oh, don't go, you are welcome here'.

Younger respondents consider it old fashioned and repressive to attempt to prevent a young couple from establishing their own independent household here in Canada. Parents, on the other hand, may recognize the rights of the young couple to move while resisting the actual move itself. As one Canada-born wife put it:

We had a terrible time moving out of my husband's home after we had bought our house. Even my husband's brothers and sisters had been told not to assist us to move by touching so much as a stick of our furniture.

This respondent considered the behaviour of her in-laws to be somewhat aberrant.

It appears to be a well-defined immediate pattern that young people should at least eventually move out and establish their own separate households. This ideal is congruent with the practice of investing in real estate that has characterized the Punjabi community almost from its inception in British Columbia. The large majority of B.C. Sikhs are of the land owning agricultural Jat and Rajput castes, and they have sought to maintain in Canada their ideal of independent land ownership. "Land is our blood." Frequently a father will loan one of the houses he owns to his son rent-free as a wedding gift, or even present the house as an outright gift. A young man is expected to demonstrate his seriousness and reliability as a potential family provider by saving money and possibly investing it in property so as to provide a separate residence for his future family.

*Descent, B.2.* Descent is normally described in terms of the biological relatedness to both father's and mother's kin, with special emphasis on social and economic relations with agnates. For a Canada-born person, however, the mother's side may be equally important since it is possible that few of his agnates have come to Canada. A person is known by the *got* (patrilineage) name of his father, although he must take into consideration the *got* of his mother as well when calculating the exogamic requirements of marriage.

*Inheritance B.3* Inheritance is ideally testamentary, although most of the B.C. Sikhs probably do not actually make wills. There is no effort except among a few traditionalists to confine inheritance to sons:

My father was afraid that his sons would fight over the division of his property and that was one reason why he sold it. He made a will leaving everything to mother and the boys, I [female Canada-born speaking] made him make the will out jointly to mother and all of us children.

According to an educated Canada-born young man:

Most men here don't want to make wills because they don't like to think about their own deaths, I guess. But I think it is important to provide for everybody who has been good to you, and to whom you owe some token of respect. It is absolutely necessary to have a will.

*Political allocation, G.* A married son will still express at least ritual deference to his father and uncles and will continue to consult with his elders before making major decisions. A husband nevertheless tends to exercise authority over his own wife and children, and he will claim as

much independence from his elders as he can get. Where other relatives are in the home, either on a transient or permanent basis, the home owner and provider is usually the father of the family who has invited them into the home, and he is usually the chief authority. A man is ideally expected to exercise authority over any nieces and nephews residing in his home. Where brothers and their families live together, the authority may be shared with the elder brother assuming priority. Among the India-born, where a father or perhaps a grandfather is living in, he may claim authority even though the son is the provider. But ideally a husband-father should eventually establish his own separate household, and be his own authority within it.

Other categories in Table 8 do not require special explanation. No particular stress appears to be associated with the ideals regarding the importance of education or with the changes in food and dress. Some of the elders express disappointment that younger people have no opportunity to learn Punjabi. Language classes were for awhile conducted at the Vancouver temple, but were disbanded because of lack of interest and the inconvenience of bringing children in on a regular basis.

Several immediate ideals differ from the traditional Punjabi pattern and are a source of stress and conflict, sometimes serious to the point of family disintegration. Table 9 summarizes the main areas of stressful difference: age and sex.

Regarding generational precedence (*C.3*), several India-born respondents claim that the trouble arises from the attitude of the Canada-born, who hold Indian traditions in "utter contempt." Youthful disrespect and disobedience is deplored, and "the Western system is cursed for that." The ideal of showing obedience and respect to elders is still maintained by both the Canada-born and the India-born youth, although the former are finding it increasingly difficult to actually conform to the dictates of parents who they regard as "backward" or "repressive." On the one hand, the Canada-born believe they should govern their own lives, and on the other hand, they regret the loss of parental favour that this independent "rebelliousness" frequently entails. In several cases where young people were cut off by their parents for choosing unacceptable spouses, the Canada-born expressed deep regret and actively sought readmittance to parental favour.

One respondent, when asked by an Indian family residing in England about the opportunities in Canada, reports that he wrote back to warn them of the serious choice they would have to make:

TABLE 9

## AREAS OF CHANGE REFLECTING STRESS: TRADITIONAL TO IMMEDIATE

C. *Age differentiation*

3. Generational precedence questioned

D. *Sex differentiation*

Precedence of males over females questioned

Here in Canada parents cannot maintain authority over their own children. The family will break up. Children will take their own way. Indian ideals and ways of family life will be lost in one more generation. Then inter-marriage will come, and even by colour the children will be indistinguishable. This is the choice you make when you come to Canada. Is money and comfort more important than this? If you go to East Africa or somewhere else you and your family may be able to live an Indian life if you want to.

An educated Canada-born man said that until his maturity he did not understand and respect his father. He regarded him as completely unable to judge the issues in Canadian life. He was especially struck by a visit to the Punjab when a youth:

It was like the Arabian Nights! Fantastic! They were still plowing with bullocks. Then I realized how the two outlooks of my father and mine were not slightly apart but centuries apart; between the fourth and the twentieth century! My parents in coming to Canada had made a trip between the centuries, and by *air!*

This respondent reports that he has since regained respect for his father's opinions. He understands how his father's values were appropriate for him in his situation, and he hopes that in managing his own life here in Canada he will not disrupt the relations between himself and his family, particularly his father. He is nevertheless conscious that disruption is an ever present possibility.

A Canada-born young woman, now married by arrangement of her parents, claimed that she was raised to put herself so completely in the hands of her parents that it never even occurred to her to question the goodness or rightness of their authority. Now that she is married she is lonely (her husband works out of town), and she realizes that she probably missed "a lot of fun" as a girl by not being permitted to go any place without her parents or sister. She would like her own children to go out a little more than she did and have fun with young people their own age; but she still wants their marriages to be arranged by the elders.

Her old mother, who is now living with her, would be hurt if the children were allowed to go out because "she is deeply devoted to them." The young mother will therefore continue to defer to the traditional standard, even though she does not prefer it.

The young Canada-born quoted above aptly described the generational conflicts people are facing:

The complication arises when the second generation Canadians awaken to the sad fact that they are living in a mixed culture. The immigrant parents refuse to adapt to Western patterns. Marriage practices offer the most obvious differences. In Canada the second generation Canadians often attempt to find their own partners in life but after they have found this partner they must then seek the good wishes of their parents. It is not an uncommon incident for the parents of either the bride or groom to reject the possibility of marriage. And a marriage without family backing can indeed be an empty one. This is quite often the alternative that the two young people face. Because of the customs being forced upon these young people they may be cajoled into making an unhappy marriage for the sake of their parents.

One India-born, middle-aged man, who had received his education at a university here and serves on the highest levels in the committees of the Khalsa Diwan Society, expresses both the traditional ideals and the tensions involved in trying to maintain them:

We are certainly going to see that these young people marry spouses from India, so that we the parental generation can continue to be regarded as respected elders in the home. Yes, the young people are prepared to marry those coming out from India because they understand the necessity for it. No small community can survive without outside immigration to get boys for our girls and girls for our boys.

Generally this traditional ideal has been modified to conform to a "new idea:" a child should choose his partner, subject to the approval of the elders; or conversely, he has the right to reject a specific proposal made by his parents. This new ideal is said to have been "forced upon the parents" as the marriages they contracted dissolved around them. As a young India-born university-trained girl remarked:

I do not want to have an arranged marriage. An East Indian girl friend told me not to talk about marriage now, but to wait till I am older and can make my own decision.

<sup>7</sup> It is quite possible that what B.C. Sikhs represent as a "new" idea of voluntary mate selection is not in fact new. It may long have been the actual pattern in India, and is now becoming ideally respectable as well. Voluntary selection subject to parental approval is certainly widespread in India today, both as ideal and as practice.

And according to an educated Canada-born boy,

The young Indians of Canada, unlike their parents, do not believe that 'love will come' after the arranged marriage. They attempt to find it before the wedding and this again leads to family conflict.

Another "rebellious" young Canada-born girl, who married a non-Indian despite her parents objections, remarked that:

by the time my sister and I were ready to go out we would never have permitted our parents to arrange a marriage. My brother let himself be bribed into an arranged marriage. He is dumb enough for that.

The problems that are shaking the foundations of respect upon which generational precedence is based centre largely upon how young boys and girls should be brought together. One elderly leader who has been in Canada for fifty-five years recognized that the traditional Indian methods appeared abnormal in the Canadian setting: "changes must come, but at present nobody knows what the solution is." In the meantime, a number of the younger people feel that the conflict between the generations, especially regarding "dating," has created an intolerable "atmosphere of suspicion" in the home.

The relations between the sexes (D of Table 9) is an area of particular concern for B.C. Sikhs. They recognize that these relations are changing, and perhaps necessarily, but they are frequently disturbed by the directions of these changes. The movement towards voluntary mate selection, discussed above, is a cause for dispute between the generations. However, the greatest unsolved problem according to most respondent centres around marital disharmony and dissolution. Sikhs believe that the dissolution of Sikh marriages in British Columbia is both frequent and highly undesirable. The "blame" for this is usually laid to the "fact" that women no longer accept unquestionably the traditional female role of adjunct to the husband, and therefore refuse to adapt to their husbands as traditionally and ideally they should.

One married man with long experience in Canada blamed it on the Sikh woman's "new independence," especially her ability to obtain work:

If she can pack groceries in a paper bag, she can leave her husband. These women are made independent of their husbands. It takes no brains to pack a paper sack, or to make out a simple bill, you don't even need much English. But now they don't have to put up with anything. A woman no longer accepts the fact that any rotten deal is just the fate that has befallen her. They do not submit to this.

It is not entirely the woman's fault, for the men also have "degenerated" in the Canadian setting. "Westernization has got through to the men," complained one India-born man, "and they are rotten to the core." Ideally, of course, a good wife would adjust to her husband however bad he may be; both men and women agree that ideally the husband should be the authority and decision-maker in the home. However, women are now less inclined to accept a bad bargain. Respondents believe that the problem is especially acute when one of the marriage partners, particularly the wife, is a Canada-born.<sup>8</sup> A Canada-born girl may not accept the expectations of her India-born spouse that he should be regarded as "husband-lord," as his traditional role is ideally described. One father remarked that his Canada-born daughter and her friends would be inclined to regard a groom brought out from the Punjab as more a "lout" than a "lord." Indeed, new arrivals from India are facetiously and covertly referred to as "D.P.'s" by Sikhs either born in Canada or long resident here.

Highly educated girls are also considered marital risks; they have been known to walk out of arranged marriages almost before they are consummated. An India-born, Canadian-educated man explained that once he had been engaged to a Canada-born girl but broke off the engagement when it became obvious that she was trying to plan what the two of them would be doing with their time. He had no intention of including her in any plans for his time.

Sikh women complain about the difficulties they have with their teen-aged children, their residential isolation from other women of similar ages and interests, and their general exclusion from the social life of their husbands. In a word, they feel desperately lonely. They do not openly challenge the ideal of male authority; but they do seek increased attention and responsibility for themselves. They seek outlets for sociability with other women and they try to become involved with their husbands in evening social activities. They meet with only limited success, judging by the remarks of one Canada-born wife:

Women will have to find some common past-time such as social dancing in order to enjoy the company of our husbands. When we do get together in couples, the men tend to drink, and talk politics in the living room while the

<sup>8</sup> Of the 136 marriages registered at the Vancouver Sikh Temple between 1951 and 1966 we know of 12 that ended in divorce or separation. In five of these 12 cases both partners were born in North America; in another four cases the wives only were Canada-born; and in one case the husband only was Canada-born. Therefore at least one Canada-born partner was involved in each of ten of the 12 cases of divorce or separation.

women get together in the kitchen and cook and gossip. We asked our husbands to get together with us, just brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, for dancing; but it just fell through. I guess they don't want to.

Women feel ambivalent and frustrated by their role, and they are likely to continue searching for some resolution. As one young wife put it, "women are held down." Men are also beginning to recognize the winds of change. "I think that a man should be head of the family and make the decisions," a young Canada-born man observed, and then added remorsefully, "with my girl-friend that is what we fight the most about."

#### IV. *Conclusion*

Tables 8 and 9 illustrate that some changes may be perceived as stressful, and others not. For convenience, these may be labelled as *disputed* (believed to be unnecessary and/or unfortunate) and *accepted* (believed to be necessary and or desirable) changes respectively. The disputed changes may be to a large extent the unrecognized unintended and unwanted consequences of accepted changes. Changes in occupational, residential, and educational patterns (both ideal and actual) appear to have been the crucial determinants. This tentative conclusion is consonant with what has been found in other studies of change resulting from contact with industrial-urbanism. In the traditional pattern, generational precedence receives ideological and actual support through the multiplicity of persons in or near the household in any one generation. Similarly, female roles in an extended household group partilocally organized are also reinforced by a variety of institutional mechanisms. With residential, occupational, and educational changes, the traditional reinforcement and satisfactions are restricted if not destroyed. The women's role, for example, may provide less satisfaction in the small family situation in British Columbia. Men may continue traditional patterns of male association outside the family by virtue of their occupational roles, but opportunities for women to form female associations outside the family are severely limited relative to the traditional rural setting from which they come and to which they look as a source of ideals. The alleged instability of their conjugal unions and the "rebelliousness" of their youth, which Sikhs cite as the main social problems resulting from their move to British Columbia — problems they confess an inability to solve — forshadow the directions of change.

Changes in role differentiation by age and sex, although perhaps the



result of other changes, are themselves the foundations for new, emerging structures. Changes are not in a linear direction, however. Alterations in certain ideals and practices interact with and react upon others to produce new structures. The immediate pattern of the B.C. Sikhs represents a continuing process of creative adjustment to ever changing circumstances. The directions of change are partly towards the Canadian pattern, partly in opposition to it, and partly in compliance with traditional sentiments. Linear models of change would crudely over-simplify these dynamics.

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