

4

Cover Story

Where two worlds meet

Efforts to connect South Asians and Indigenous communities continue to grow across Canada

Editorial

Standing up in solidarity with First Nations 2

Cover Story

Where two worlds meet 4

Lessons from Oka 11

Current Affairs

Can we achieve genuine reconciliation in Canada? 14

Respecting the ideology behind Komagata Maru struggle is more important than memorials and apologies 17

Charleston massacre was an act of homegrown terrorism 19

News 22

Radical Narrative

Guillotine 25

Radical history of the month

Remembering a dedicated Marxist who died with a wish to see the left united 26

Comment

Why is the mighty Indian state scared of old people? 28

Cover Picture: Supporters of the Heiltsuk Nation, whose members occupied the Fisheries Department office, rally in downtown Vancouver. Those seen in the picture are famous Indigenous activist Kanahus Manuel (left), independent Indo-Canadian political activist Parshottam Dosanjh (middle) and another Indigenous activist, Sacheen Seitcham (right).

Editorial Team : Kimball Cariou, Gobind Thukral , Harsha Walia, Gurpreet Singh

Director: Gurpreet Singh

Design & Layout: Rajpreet Singh

RADICAL
DESI

"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor."
~ Desmond Tutu

Standing up in solidarity with First Nations

This July marks 25 years of the Oka crisis that brought the First Nations and the dominant society of Canada into sharp conflict. The standoff began on July 11, 1990 after municipal authorities in Oka, Quebec, tried to expand a golf course and residential development into a sacred grove and burial ground of the Mohawk people, resulting in a blockade that culminated in the death of a police officer. The standoff left a permanent mark on the memory of many Canadians, particularly the Indigenous peoples. This was an ugly reminder of the fact that the First Nations in a country that claims to be a human rights leader in the world are being treated as second class citizens.

Twenty-five-years later, the racial arrogance stemming from the white supremacy that was the root cause of the episode continues to prevail at the level of policy makers. The attitude of imposing developments to benefit a handful rich and powerful over the traditional ways of the Indigenous communities, and to recklessly push energy pipelines through their territories, clearly reflects that institutional racism refuses to die in Canada. There is a strong need to stand in solidarity with First Nations who have a glorious history of resistance against colonialism and who continue to fight back. The South Asians especially, who share a history of colonialism and racism with the Indigenous communities, need to recognize that Canada sits on stolen land that belongs to its First Nations. The massive impoverishment in the indigenous communities and their over-representation in jails is an outcome of racist policies of the past.

The British and other imperial powers colonized Canada and created mythologies such as the Doctrine of Discovery, according to which the title to lands lay with the government whose subjects occupied a territory whose inhabitants were not subjects of a European Christian monarch. Both the Church and the State justified the occupation of these lands in the name of Christianity. They later opened residential schools where Indigenous children were forcibly sent to convert them into Christians, with the aim of "killing the Indian within the child". In these schools, children were forced to abandon their Indigenous languages and names. Physical and emotional abuse and malnourishment led to an estimated 6,000 deaths, and a long term devastating impact on the Indigenous communities in the form of domestic violence, substance abuse and suicides.

The South Asians, particularly Indians and Pakistanis, must remember that their homelands were once occupied by the British Empire. When their ancestors started coming to Canada for a better livelihood as British subjects, they were mistreated at every level. Racist immigration policies did not allow them to bring families, and they were disfranchised to discourage them from permanent settlement in Canada. The Komagata Maru ship carrying over 300 South Asian passengers was forced to return from Vancouver in 1914 under the discriminatory immigration laws. Much like Indigenous warriors, South Asian elders also fought back against racism and colonialism. Today, when the South Asian communities are celebrating that history of resistance, it becomes their responsibility to stand in solidarity with the Indigenous peoples in any event of racial violence or state repression. Any attempt to mimic the lies and myths about the Indigenous communities by the popular media or leaders of the dominant society must be challenged.

For instance, when Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan claimed last year that Muslim sailors had discovered the Americas more than 300 years before explorer Christopher Columbus, his statement should have

been strongly denounced by Muslims in Canada. It is believable that Muslims might have reached the Americas before Columbus, but to claim that it was a "discovery" is offensive. Neither Columbus nor Muslims explorers discovered the Americas, as the Indigenous peoples lived here since times immemorial.

This is not to suggest that no such myths prevail among other immigrant communities, such as Sikhs and Hindus. Often they are carried away by the racial stereotypes about First Nations promoted by the big media. Incidentally, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper made two apologies in 2008 - one to the Indigenous peoples for residential school abuses, and one to the South Asians for the Komagata Maru incident. But the Harper government remains adamant against a national enquiry into the missing and murdered aboriginal women, while at the same time bringing laws to tighten immigration and citizenship rules. The gatekeepers of the community need to ask themselves: what is the point in apologizing for something in the past while holding on to the same old discriminatory and Eurocentric mindset? Instead of accepting these tokenistic apologies, the two communities need to unite against the power to make it accountable. On the 25th anniversary of the Oka struggle, *Radical Desi* is pleased to run a cover story to highlight the connections which social justice activists of two communities have built over the years, and continue to make stronger in the face of ongoing racism. While it is encouraging to see many committed South Asian activists working in partnership with the First Nations, more needs to be done to ensure the end of racism and bigotry once and for all.

-Editors

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

___ \$40 for 1 year ___ \$ 80 for 2 years ___ \$ 120 for 3 years

Outside Canada: \$ 55 US or \$ 60 Cnd for 1 year

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Postal Code _____

Please make cheque payable to Radical Desi Publications Ltd.
7426, Barrymore Drive
Delta, BC, V4C 6X4, Canada

Where two worlds meet

Efforts to connect South Asians and Indigenous communities continue to grow across Canada

Harjap have done their part to educate South Asians about this plain but inconvenient truth. After all, the two communities share the history of colonialism, and this couple has kept the struggle against it alive. Long before Vancouver city council voted to acknowledge this reality, Harsha was consistently reminding the audience at rallies and demonstrations whose land they were on. This encouraged many within the South Asian community to make similar acknowledgements at public events.

Harsha, who migrated to Canada in the 1990s, is a prominent face of No One Is Illegal, a grassroots level movement for the rights of migrants and marginalised communities. She first moved to Montreal, which is close to Oka, scene of a standoff between the Mohawk people and the police and armed forces. The Oka Crisis, as it is largely known, started on July 11, 1990, sparked by the plan of the local government to expand its golf course on the traditional land of the Indigenous peoples. After the courts rejected their case, Mohawk protestors barricaded the area and to block access to their territory. This resulted into a conflict that continued until September 26 and left one police officer dead. The

When the City of Harjap Grewal, a dedicated couple Vancouver first of South Asian heritage, their acknowledged compatriots had known this fact for many years. Not only Vancouver, but the entire nation state of Canada, sits on the stolen land of the First Nations, a fact widely known at least among activist circles. Harsha and

crisis fuelled tensions between the First Nations and the dominant society. Harsha was influenced by Ellen Gabriel, a prominent Indigenous activist who was the spokesperson for the Mohawk people during the struggle. The incident had left a permanent mark on the mind of Harsha, who situates this episode in the broader context of the history of colonialism and racism in Canada that marginalized its first people. Since then she never looked back, and has always been in the forefront of campaigns in support of the First Nations who continue to struggle against systemic racism and occupation of their traditional lands.

Harsha's understanding of the

Indigenous struggles for self determination and their right to use land base in traditional ways came quickly because of her own Indian heritage. The country of her parents' origin had been a colony of Britain, which plundered its wealth, and which also impoverished the First Nations in Canada. Much like Indian political activists resisted British occupation and succeeded in liberating their country, Indigenous warriors also fought against colonialism in this part of the world. From her perspective, the two communities share the history of racism and colonialism.

When Harsha was blessed by a baby girl last year, she and Harjap decided to name her Avnika Kartara.

The name of the child is self-explanatory; Avnika means Earth, and Kartara is the feminine version of Kartar, the name of a prominent Indian revolutionary who was hanged by the British government. Kartar Singh Sarabha was one of the founders of the Ghadar Party established by South Asian radicals in North America in 1913. Sarabha was among those who had migrated from India to the US for higher studies. The Indian immigrants back then came to this part of the world as British subjects, and were made to believe in the fairness of the British Empire toward its peoples. But that was not the case with Indians moving to the US and Canada. In an event of racial

violence, British officials never came to their rescue. In Canada, they were disfranchised in 1907 and weren't allowed to bring their families. The idea was "keep Canada white" by discouraging Indian (and Chinese) migrants from permanent settlement. Many Indian immigrants soon realized that the root cause of their sufferings abroad was foreign occupation of their homeland, and they turned into political activists. These circumstances gave birth to the Ghadar Party, which fought against racism in North America and resolved to launch an armed rebellion against the British government back home. The group had a big following in Vancouver,

where in 1909, many former Sikh soldiers, who had served in the British armies, burned their discharge certificates and uniforms in protest against injustices to sever their ties with the Empire. A similar action was repeated by former Indigenous soldiers who had served the Canadian army during two world wars. Upon realizing that they were not been given equal rights in spite of fighting for others' freedom, many turned into political activists.

Men like Sarabha returned to India in 1914 with the intent to start an armed revolt with the help of Indian soldiers working for the British Empire. He was arrested and

hanged on November 16, 1915. Harsha and Harjap see a connection between the Indigenous struggles for the land base, and the Ghadar movement. For them, the two words Earth and Kartara resonate with each other and symbolize the connection between the struggles of the two communities.

Incidentally, Sarabha and Louis Riel share the date of their executions. Louis Riel, the hero of the Métis rebellion in western Canada, was hanged on November 16, 1885. Riel had resisted the surveys of traditional land and the expansion of the crown into Indigenous territories. Although the two individuals were executed at

COVER STORY

different times and in different parts of the world, they had one thing in common: both died fighting against colonialism and plunder by the imperialist powers. Harjap also recognizes these connections and is opposed to energy extraction and the laying of oil and gas pipelines through Indigenous communities. He hails from the region of Punjab, where Sarabha was born, and is aware of the radical history of South Asia.

Others in the South Asian community also maintain kinship with the First Nations. The solidarity between the two communities goes back to the 1970s, according to Harsha, who points out that this was the time that brought the Fourth World of the Indigenous communities and the Third World immigrants together against imperialism and racism. Together these racialized communities fought back against white supremacy. Perhaps the ties are much older, and can be traced back to the period when the Ghadar Party was formed. One piece of evidence is the diary of Jawala Singh, among the founders of the Ghadar Party. He was instrumental behind scholarships to Indian students who could be brought to the US for studies and encouraged to fight against British occupation. He was also instrumental in establishing a farm in California which helped Ghadar Party activists to get free food. During a visit to Vancouver in 1913, he also toured Victoria, and wrote about his visit to a memorial at a site that was

once a fort of a powerful Indigenous warrior who was captured by the British soldiers. Jawala Singh was told by a companion that this warrior gave a tough fight to the British troops during the 1860s. This was the period when the British faced a first uprising in India in 1857, that was given the name of Ghadar, an Urdu word for mutiny. The Ghadar activists deliberately appropriated this term for their

movement. Obviously, the resistance of the First Nations had entered the consciousness of the Ghadar activists. Notably, they had a clear mandate to support all international struggles for self-determination and liberation, apart from their own revolutionary agenda. Among their allies were Irish and Russian revolutionaries too.

Sadhu Binning, a progressive Punjabi writer based in Vancouver, recalls that relations between the two communities have always remained very cordial. Years ago, when the Indian males were not allowed to bring their families and racism against them was very blatant, some developed relationships with Indigenous women and in many cases married them. Binning has written a short story on this sensitive issue. He has also consistently participated in initiatives in support of the Indigenous peoples, and was one of a few South Asian activists who joined the "Tar Sands Healing Walk" led by Indigenous activists in Alberta in 2013. Renowned author Naomi Klein also participated in the walk, which opposed destruction of environment by the tar sands industry.

Jarnail Singh, a Toronto-based Punjabi story writer, has also published fiction focussing on the abuse of Indigenous children in the Indian Residential schools. The story is focused on a dialogue between a victim of the residential school system and a Punjabi counsellor. Among other things, the two

characters discuss how their communities share the history of systemic racism at the hands of the British Empire. He believes that the South Asians in Canada must work in partnership with the Indigenous communities to build a just society.

Anushka Nagi, another South Asian activist, joined the protests against the Mount Polley disaster in August 2014. A dam failure at the Imperial Metals mine had caused spillage of polluted water with effluents in the lakes and rivers, affecting the environment of the local Indigenous community. She addressed a press conference alongside Kanahus Manuel, a dedicated Indigenous activist from Secwepemc nation, to reveal the independent findings behind the disaster. Kanahus is the daughter of Arthur Manuel, who recently published his book *Unsettling Canada*. Arthur is a tireless

Indigenous activist himself who has raised his daughters to stand up for the rights of their people. He has travelled to different parts of the world to highlight the issues of his community at international platforms. Harsha mediated at his book launch at the Vancouver Public Library.

Parshotam Dosanjh is another activist of Indian origin who misses no opportunity to show his support to the Indigenous community. He was present at this year's annual community march for missing and murdered aboriginal women and also attended a rally in Vancouver in support of the Heiltsuk nation, whose members occupied a fisheries department office to protest against the opening of the herring fishery to commercial fishing. He talks passionately about the continued marginalization of First Nations in Canada. Ironically,

he hails from village Dosanjh in Punjab, the native village of former BC Premier Ujjal Dosanjh, who had sent the RCMP to Gustafsen Lake in August 1995 following tension between Indigenous peoples and white ranchers. The standoff began when Indigenous peoples were prevented from performing the Sun Dance sacred ritual. Ujjal Dosanjh was B.C. Attorney General at that time. The police operation involved 400 officers and the support of the army.

Seema Ahluwalia, a lecturer at Kwantlen Polytechnic University College, is of Punjabi heritage and married to a Lakota man. An authority on Indigenous cultures, she has been organizing teach-ins to educate people about Idle No More, a grassroots level Indigenous movement.

Not only these individuals, but several South Asian groups have

COVER STORY

also shown support to the Indigenous communities from time to time. The South Asian Network for Secularism and Democracy has been more consistent in providing space for cross cultural ties between the two communities. Likewise, Progressive Intercultural Community Services and the World Sikh Organization have opposed any form of racism against the Indigenous peoples. These groups have been very vocal against mistreatment of Indigenous children in residential schools. In 2002, when the BC Liberal government held a referendum on aboriginal treaties, it was vehemently opposed by many prominent South Asian activists who saw it as an assault on indigenous rights. Cutting across ideological lines, both moderate and fundamentalist Sikh groups urged the Sikh voters to defeat the referendum, which was not in the interest of the First Nations who form only four percent of the Canadian population. Sikhism encourages its followers to share a value which is strongly cherished in the Indigenous communities. Of course there are other similarities, such as treating the land with respect and maintaining family relations, ideas perceived to be primitive in traditional Eurocentric societies that encourage individualism.

The BC Liberals under Premier Christy Clark were given another jolt by South Asian and Indigenous

activists, for ignoring the National Aboriginal Day events marked for June 21, 2015, instead announcing the closure of Burrard Bridge to celebrate International Yoga Day. Taraksheel Sabha, an Indian rationalist society which is part of the local Ghadar Centenary Committee (an umbrella front of progressive groups that came together to commemorate 100 years of the Ghadar Party), decided to oppose the Yoga Day events to

show their support to the First Nations. Following a backlash, the BC government was forced to abandon its plan.

In an era of reconciliations, the two communities have found their own ways of commemorating shared history and standing up for each other in the face of racism in the contemporary world. In 2014, the Musqueam Indian Band organized an event to

commemorate the centenary of the Komagata Maru episode. The Japanese vessel carrying over 300 South Asian passengers was forced to return under the discriminatory immigration law of 1914. The Musqueam Indian Band held celebrations where Indo-Canadians were invited for a feast, and a postal stamp dedicated to the Komagata Maru was unveiled. The portrait of Bhaag Singh, the Vancouver-based leader of the Ghadar Party who was assassinated by a British spy inside the Vancouver Sikh temple in September 1914, now greets visitors at the Band office. Bhaag Singh was murdered shortly after the Komagata Maru was forced to leave, sparking a bloody conflict between the activists and toadies within the South Asian community. Bhaag Singh was instrumental behind encouraging former Sikh soldiers to burn their discharge certificates and uniforms to cut ties with the British rulers. Musqueam

nation activist Cecilia Point also showed up at a rally against Bill C-24 that threatens to strip citizenship and openly challenged the Canadian government, saying that this was her nation and the ruling Conservatives have no right to take away citizenship from those who are born outside Canada. She insists that if the First Nations were in power when the Komagata Maru ship arrived, they would have welcomed its passengers with open arms much as they welcomed Europeans.

It is pertinent to mention that in 2012 the Musqueam band had to launch a fight against the government, when its traditional cesh'am pre-contact village and burial ground was in the process of being acquired for the construction of apartments. However, an Oka-like situation was prevented after the territory was purchased in 2013 by the Musqueam from the private

developers. One of the guests who showed up during the gathering of Musqueam band members was Jagmohan Singh, a visiting social justice activist from India. Singh is the nephew of Bhagat Singh, a towering Indian revolutionary who was hanged in 1931 for killing a British police officer. Bhagat Singh was greatly inspired by Sarabha and the Ghadar movement. Jagmohan Singh's visit to show support marked an important chapter in the history of relationship between the First Nations and South Asian immigrants, whose elders still remember how they used to address the indigenous peoples as *Taaye ke* (those from elder uncle's family), out of affection in an alien land where aboriginals were seen as real allies for maintaining common values of sharing and respect for land.

-RDNB

Opinion

Lessons from Oka

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Oka crisis, an important standoff in the ongoing context of colonialism that is seared in the minds of entire generations of Indigenous peoples and Canadians.

Background to the Oka Crisis

The Oka standoff took place over seventy-seven days in the Mohawk communities of Kanehsatake & Kahnawake near Montreal in 1990. The town of Oka was developing plans to expand a private, members-only golf course and a residential development of sixty luxury condos onto lands that were traditionally Mohawk lands. The golf course was to be built atop a sacred grove of pinetrees and a burial ground where Mohawk ancestors were buried.

This is land that since 1717, when the French Crown first stole the land and gave it to the Sulpician Missionary Society, the Mohawks have been fighting to get back. They had written letters to the European Crowns, protested illegal transfers of sales, gone to court, and filed official land claims. So in 1990, when the Mayor did not consult the Mohawk communities and fed up with over 270 years of colonial disrespect and theft, a blockade

went up with about thirty members of the Mohawk nation.

At first, even Quebec's Minister of Native Affairs John Ciaccia, supported the blockade. He wrote a letter stating "these people have seen their lands disappear without having been consulted or compensated, and that, in my opinion, is unfair and unjust, especially over a golf course."

On July 11, police raided the blockade at Kanehsatake by deploying tear gas canisters and flash bang grenades, and there were shots fired on both sides of the blockade. One police officer Marcel Lemay was shot dead, which resulted in over 2,000 police and then 4,500 Canadian army soldiers being sent to intimidate and repress people defending the blockades.

With the government escalation and stories of Oka on the nightly news, over 600 Indigenous people from across Canada and the U.S. traveled to support the blockade. Mohawks from Kahnawake, in solidarity with Kanehsatake, blockaded the Mercier Bridge at the point where it passed through their territory, thereby sealing off a major access point between the Island of Montreal and Montreal's heavily populated South

Shore suburbs.

The police also created their own barricade, denying entry to supporters and journalists. Even though food and emergency supplies were being raised across the country, food convoys including by Red Cross could not get in and there was a chronic food shortage. Free access to food (as well as unhindered access to clan mothers and spiritual advisors, and the posting of international human rights observers) became preconditions for any negotiations with provincial and federal governments, but the federal & provincial governments rejected these demands.

Racial tensions in Montreal and Châteauguay also erupted, with residents of Châteauguay burning effigies of Mohawk warriors while chanting "sauvages" (savages). At times, these drunk mobs would swell to over 5,000 people often throwing rocks and sticks across the barricades towards the Mohawk people. During one of these incidents of racial hatred, a Mohawk elder Joe Armstrong who was 71 years old had a large boulder tossed at his chest. This happened in plain view of dozens of police officers who did not make any arrests. Armstrong died of a heart attack

following his injury.

The mayor of Oka eventually canceled the golf course expansion that had originally triggered the crisis. Across the country, solidarity protests and occupations brought thousands of people onto the streets in support of the Indigenous people at Kanehsatake & Kahnawake. Oka inspired the birth of the Native Youth Movement, a young radical movement of Indigenous warriors who are still active across North America to defend their lands.

The Oka crisis was a defining moment for Indigenous people and Canadians alike. As Warrior Publications describes, "My memories of that summer at Kanehsatake are so different from the stories told by the media. Their attention was focused on the barricades. To most of them, this was just a cop story; the police & soldiers were there to "restore law & order," to put things back the way they were. But most of the people behind the barricades were my family, friends, & relatives. And they didn't want things to go back to the way they were. They knew that would mean a certain steady ride down a one-way street to an oblivion called assimilation."

Current relevance with Indigenous land rights

Since the inception of Canada, settler-colonialism has sought to forcibly displace Indigenous peoples from their territories, destroy self-

determination within Indigenous governance, and assimilate other Indigenous cultures and traditions. Most recently, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has painstakingly recounted how Canada clearly participated in "cultural genocide" and how this is ongoing in the present-day.

One of the areas the Truth and Reconciliation Commission highlights in the issue of land rights, stating that Canada needs to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and that all levels of government and industry need to "commit to meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects."

As Crystal Lameman, communications manager for the Beaver Lake Cree Nation in Alberta who are fighting tar sands development on their lands, says "There can be no true reconciliation until the fight for land and resources is resolved. Until then, we will never have true reconciliation or a relationship with Canada based on peace, friendship and sharing as outlined in the treaties." The Beaver Lake Cree nation is taking the government to court for no less than 17,000 treaty violations. They are arguing that tar sands projects are violating their inherent and constitutionally protected treaty rights to hunt, fish and trap.

Like Crystal's community, other Indigenous communities living around the tar sands in Alberta are also facing slow industrial genocide through soaring cancer rates and poisoned food systems. In the case of the Lubicon Cree, over 1,400 square kilometres of leases have been granted for tar sands development on Lubicon lands and almost 70 per cent of Lubicon territory has been leased for future development.

The Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN) is also right in the heart of this mega industrial project. The ACFN recently announced that they plan to oppose all future tar sands projects proposed within their traditional homelands and have launched a legal challenge against notorious oil giant Shell.

Here in B.C., the most well-known tar sands pipeline is the \$5.5-billion Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline. This pipeline would cross 1,000 rivers and streams through the territories of 65 First Nations from Alberta to Kitamat, B.C., enabling a 30 per cent increase in tar sands production. Emboldened by the Supreme Court of Canada's Tsilhqot'in decision, the Haisla Nation, Gitxaala Nation, Council of the Haida Nation, Gitga'at Nation, Heiltsuk Tribal Council, Kitasoo/Xaixais Nation, Nadleh Whut'en First Nation and Nak'azdli First Nation have all announced constitutional legal challenges to Harper's recent approval of the

pipeline. Twenty municipal governments and the Union of BC Municipalities also oppose the project.

And closer to home, Kinder Morgan's \$5.4-billion Trans Mountain proposal consists of a pipeline carrying over a million barrels of tar sands crude every day from Alberta to Vancouver, B.C. and a tanker proposal that brings more supertankers into the Burrard Inlet. Over 70 per cent of Burnaby residents are opposed to Kinder Morgan's expansion, and the Tsleil-Waututh Nation as well as the City of Burnaby are challenging the National Energy Board's decision to allow Kinder Morgan to operate in Burnaby Mountain.

Though lesser known, the \$12-billion Energy East pipeline is the largest oil pipeline project in North America. Energy East is a 4,500-km pipeline proposal by TransCanada to transport 1.1 million barrels of tar sands crude daily across 960 waterways from southern Alberta to New Brunswick. Geared for export, two oil export terminals off the St. Lawrence River and Atlantic Ocean are also being proposed as part of the project. According to a Pembina Institute report, the amount of greenhouse gas emissions that would be generated is equivalent to 7 million cars.

Says Ellen Gabriel of Kanehsatàke, who was the spokesperson of the Mohawk community during the Oka crisis

and now a vocal opponent of the Energy East pipeline, "In the absence of our free prior and informed consent, it would be illegal for the National Energy Board to grant TransCanada an application for Energy East."

In addition to pipelines, mining companies are destroying Indigenous lands and ways of life. Premier Christy Clark has announced the plan to build 17 new and expanded mines by 2015, all on unceded Indigenous lands. In 2010, the International Human Rights Clinic at Harvard Law School found that in B.C., "First Nations bear an unfair burden at every point in the mining process," including the burden of a lack of consultation and detrimental environmental, health and spiritual consequences. Since the B.C. Liberals took office in 2001, mine inspections have reduced by nearly half while environmental orders have decreased by over 90 per cent. Furthermore, there is no requirement in B.C. that mining companies have emergency response plans including insurance for such spills.

Conclusion

Colonialism is not a thing of the past. According to Mi'kmaq lawyer and scholar Pamela Palmater, "The failure of Canada to share the lands and resources as promised in the treaties has placed First Nations at the bottom of all socio-economic indicators -- health, lifespan, education levels and employment

opportunities. While Indigenous lands and resources are used to subsidize the wealth and prosperity of Canada as a state and the high-quality programs and services enjoyed by Canadians, First Nations have been subjected to purposeful, chronic underfunding of all their basic human services like water, sanitation, housing, and education."

Decolonization of settler-colonialism on these lands requires a commitment to fighting colonization, and a resurgence and recentering of Indigenous worldviews of another way of living and protecting the land. The obligation for decolonization rests on all of us. Indigenous Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson urges non-Natives to seriously take on the struggle against colonialism. "We don't have to uphold this system any longer. We can collectively make different choices," she writes.

On this 25-year anniversary of the Oka standoff, let us make a different choice and stand alongside Indigenous communities.

Harsha Walia is a social justice activist who is associated with No One is Illegal. She has also authored a famous book, "Undoing Border Imperialism" and is very articulate on issues like racism and colonialism. She is part of the editorial team of Radical Desi.

Can we achieve genuine reconciliation in Canada?

On June 3, the long awaited report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission into the Indian Residential School system, chaired by Justice Murray Sinclair, was delivered in Ottawa. This powerful document - and the extensive process taken to reach its conclusions - has sparked a wide-ranging debate over the impact of the colonization which was imposed on the Indigenous peoples, and about how to achieve meaningful reconciliation.

These discussions must begin by listening to the voices of Indigenous peoples. Many of their deeply moving stories are included in the TRC Summary, which should be widely read. Here is one such voice, that of Assembly of First Nations Grand Chief Perry Bellegarde:

"Reconciliation means so many things as we move through the aftermath of the Indian Residential School system, one that we know was designed to rid Canada of 'Indians'. In its aftermath, we are left with the gap - a persistent, wide and unacceptable gap in the quality of life between First Nations and other Canadians. We commit to doing the necessary work to close the gap. The

calls to action describe and remind us of the work that lies before us - our children must grow up safe and comfortable in their own homes and home communities, so addressing the over representation of First Nations children in the child welfare system is essential. We know that if we do not act, we will lose our Indigenous languages, the jewels of this land. Only three Indigenous languages are predicted to survive,

the two First Nations ones being Cree and Ojibwe, so revitalizing and preserving our 58 remaining languages is an imperative as they are the heart of who we are. Committing to implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation is an essential first step to guide reconciliation in all areas of our lives affected by colonization and the attempt at cultural genocide launched by the Indian Residential School System."

But for many Canadians - apparently including Prime Minister Harper and his cabinet members - the initial response has been to downplay the historic significance of the TRC report, dismissing its recommendations as a "shopping list". Some have arrogantly denied that the term genocide correctly describes the policies imposed by the colonizing imperialist powers and later by the Canadian state.

The summary report of the TRC deals directly with these arguments, stating:

For over a century, the central goals of Canada's Aboriginal policy were to eliminate Aboriginal

governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a process of assimilation, cause Aboriginal peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada. The establishment and operation of residential schools were a central element of this policy, which can best be described as a cultural genocide.

This conclusion is firmly based on the facts and on international law, which recognizes several categories of genocide, including the mass killing of members of a targeted group (physical genocide); and destruction of structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group (cultural genocide).

During the TRC's six years of consultations and research, thousands of witnesses came forward, including many residential school survivors, whose legal and political struggles had forced the federal government to establish the Commission. Their testimonies proved that the residential school system, operated by the churches and funded by the government, was a major element of the colonialist strategy to create a white man's country by eliminating and/or forcibly assimilating indigenous peoples. 150,000 students were forced into these schools, and about 6,000 (likely more) died from disease, malnutrition, appalling housing conditions and violence. Students were prevented from speaking indigenous languages or practising their cultural and spiritual traditions, and thousands were physically, emotionally and sexually abused. Chillingly, many were even denied a name, simply called by their student number instead.

These facts are undeniable,

and they cry out for a much more profound response than the court-ordered apology delivered in 2008 by PM Harper. A respectful and proper response must include acceptance of the core findings of the TRC, and commitment to implement its recommendations, not ducking and weaving. Instead, the Harper Conservatives have downplayed the TRC's conclusions regarding cultural genocide. They still refuse to adopt without caveats the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or to call a national inquiry into the 1200-plus murdered and missing Aboriginal women and girls. At the same time, the Conservatives make it clear that indigenous land defenders and opponents of corporate energy and resource extraction projects will be treated as potential terrorist threats to Canada's economic security, under the terms of their Bill C-51 anti-terrorist legislation.

This report is not the first expression of the need for fundamental change to overcome the racist legacy of colonialism within Canada. In the wake of the "Oka crisis" of 1990, the federal

government of Brian Mulroney established a Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. The RCAP's 1996 report made many significant recommendations, only to be ignored by governments over the past two decades.

Will this be the fate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission? Ultimately, that depends on whether the people of Canada will allow political leaders to avoid their moral and political responsibility to commit to genuine reconciliation. Already, expressions of support for the TRC report and recommendations have been issued by dozens of people's movements, and it appears that this will be a major issue in the October 2015 federal election.

In the end, however, the only people who can judge the success of the reconciliation process are the survivors of the residential school system, and the Indigenous peoples who remain the victims of the racist and colonial policies which established those dreaded institutions.

Kimball Cariou is the Editor of People's Voice, a social justice activist, and a member of the Radical Desi Editorial Team.

Respecting the ideology behind Komagata Maru struggle is more important than memorials and apologies

The recent public statement by a visiting Indian official calling for better maintenance of the Komagata Maru memorial in Vancouver reflects that hypocritical authorities are more worried about symbolic upkeep of our heritage than about keeping alive the spirit behind the historical struggles.

The Komagata Maru, a Japanese vessel with over 300 South Asian passengers aboard, was forced to return from Vancouver harbour in July 1914 under the discriminatory immigration law that aimed at discouraging settlement of Indian migrants to "keep Canada white". India and Canada were British colonies back then, and the passengers had travelled all the way to Canada as British subjects in hopes of settling down for a better livelihood. The vessel remained stranded in the sea for weeks after arriving on May 23, 1914. Chartered by Gurdit Singh, who wanted to challenge the racist immigration laws by using peaceful means, it was forced to return under the shadow of guns following a two month standoff between the local South Asian activists and the government.

Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized for the episode in 2008. As part of the reconciliation process, the Komagata Maru memorial bearing the names of all the passengers was built in Vancouver's Harbour Green Park, where a public event was held close to the anniversary of the arrival

of the ship. Pramod Jain, a Joint Secretary in India's Ministry of Culture, was here to attend the events partly sponsored by the Indian Consulate. Addressing the gathering, he remarked that the maintenance of the memorial requires a fresh look. Undoubtedly, the steel plates of the memorial were covered by bird crap. But how is this a big deal? Bird droppings can be seen at any number of historical and religious places in Jain's own country. Even the statues of national figures across India are often covered by bird crap. The big deal is that the Hindu nationalist Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) government in India should focus on fixing its ideology rather than worrying about bird poop.

Bringing the Komagata Maru to Vancouver was an act of resistance against racism. Among the passengers were people belonging to different faith groups, including Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims. Gurdit Singh provided spiritual space to each religious group aboard the vessel. The local South Asian activists also supported the passengers' cause by rising above religious divisions. Among them were members of the Ghadar Party, a group of South Asian radicals that fought against racism in North America and colonialism back home. The party believed in an armed rebellion against the British Empire and wanted to establish a secular and egalitarian society in post-British India. In a nutshell, the

Komagata Maru struggle symbolized the fight for a just and secular society. The BJP government in India and its officials need to ask themselves, do they have anything common with people like Gurdit Singh or the Ghadar leaders? Rather than showing off superficial emotions over the poor maintenance of the Komagata Maru memorial, the BJP government and its fanatical supporters should change their ways.

In June, a central minister in the Indian government, Manohar Parrikar, publicly mocked Chinese people. He said that these days the idols of Hindu gods being made in China have narrow eyes. This was clearly a derogatory reference to the facial features of oriental people. He wanted to make a point in support of encouraging local manufacturing, which is fine, but why make a racist statement?

In 2013, Dayanad Mandrekar, a BJP MLA from Goa, where Parrikar used to be the Chief Minister, had described Nigerian people as a "cancer," following some criminal activities involving people of Nigerian origin. How can one make a sweeping statement that paints an entire community with one brush?

The Ghadar activists actually fought back against such racial slurs. So Jain and others who are part of the BJP administration need to do some introspection rather than being worried about the piousness of memorials.

However, it is hard to expect

the BJP to overcome its racist mindset. The party that came to power with a brute majority last year is a political wing of the Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh (RSS) – an orthodox Hindu nationalist organization that dreams of transforming pluralist and secular India into a Hindu theocracy. This has obviously raised the expectations of the RSS. Already the state has started pampering its leader, giving him heavy security cover and space on the public broadcasting system. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is an RSS man. The RSS has a track record of terrorising religious minorities. Modi is accused of encouraging the 2002 anti-Muslim pogrom in Gujarat, where he was the Chief Minister at the time. He was not convicted for those crimes, but human rights groups maintain that he was complicit in the mass murders of Muslims following the burning of a train carrying Hindu pilgrims. Over 50 people died, and the Gujarat government blamed Muslim extremists for torching the train.

The BJP supporters have also been intimidating Christian missionaries, accusing them of mass conversions. They staged their own form of religious conversions in the name of bringing back Christians into the Hindu fold.

Ever since the UN declared June 21 as International Yoga Day at Modi's request, the Hindu fanatics are trying to impose it on Muslims. Although yoga is a mental and physical exercise practiced by ascetics for centuries, the BJP supporters are trying to appropriate it in the name of Hindu nationalism. By clearly posing a risk to the Indian people's unity and diversity, these tendencies are something Ghadar activists never

wanted or believed in.

To be fair, even the Conservative government in Canada, which has apologized for the past mistakes and acknowledges the historical wrongs, also continues to encourage racism. In March, Tory MP Larry Miller had suggested to veil-wearing Muslim women to "stay the hell where you came from" if they do not want to remove their face coverings at citizenship ceremonies. Earlier, Conservative MP John Williamson asked what is the point of bringing in "brown people" under the temporary foreign workers' program while

"whities" sit at home. If this is not enough, the Conservatives have tightened immigration and citizenship laws, in spite of tall claims of correcting the past mistakes.

Either the right-wing governments of these two democracies should shed their hypocrisy of being secular and inclusive, or bring a fundamental change in their thinking, instead of worrying too much about photo ops for the sake of fake apologies or bird droppings.

Gurpreet Singh is a founder of Radical Desi.

Charleston massacre was an act of homegrown terrorism

With heavy hearts, we send our love, thoughts, and compassion to the friends and loved ones of those who were lost, and to the Charleston community itself. We know the road to healing will be a long one for you. Our broken hearts, prayers, and sympathy for the family members of those who were lost are well-intentioned, but they're not enough.

It is imperative to have a solemn, national dialogue about how we view these events, how we prevent them, and the role that every individual in our society has to play in eliminating intolerance.

We should all be very clear about what happened in Charleston: nine lives were stolen by the hands of a terrorist – a homegrown, racist terrorist. Not just a shooter or a person guilty of a hate crime, but a terrorist who premeditated the mass murder of nine human beings. This attack was ideologically driven and the targets were chosen because of the color of their skin. It was an act of domestic terrorism.

When people are killed in their places of worship, the attack stabs at the very heart and soul of our communities. I know the Indo-Canadian community is all too

familiar with these effects from the communities to descend into a world of violence and retaliation. The murder of Nirmal Singh Gill. When the perpetrator succeeds in violent attacks and actions are doing this, he's won, because it is designed to create permanent extraordinarily difficult to break the division so that no dialogue or reconciliation is possible.

Their purpose is to incite and inflame communities to abandon exactly what they are—domestic terrorism. The perpetrators are members of the affected referred to as "shooters" and the

actions "hate crimes", terms that minimize the gravity of this type of tragedy. If a Muslim walked in to a place of worship and killed several people, they would instantly be branded a terrorist.

As a society, we like to think that terrorism is something that is brought here from overseas, a foreign thing brought by the "other", a way to attack us, one that couldn't possibly develop from within our own communities, or be committed by our own neighbors. We are reluctant to look ourselves in the mirror, to acknowledge that we too are capable of brutality. All human beings are capable of barbarism, as all human beings are also capable of compassion.

The danger with not being honest with ourselves about domestic terrorism is that it limits the seriousness of our response to tragedies like what happened in Charleston. The threat of domestic terrorism is a serious one and, in fact, the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) views it as the most serious threat to the United States. The DHS recently published a list of the 20 top domestic terror threats and 5 of the top 8 are violent white extremist groups. Jihadi extremists are number 2 on the list, while Sovereign Citizens (akin to the killer of the Edmonton police officer) are number 1.

The reality is that since 9/11, more people have been killed by white supremacists than have been killed by Jihadi/Islamic extremists (43 vs. 21 is the estimate).

Another danger within the national dialogue surrounding this tragedy and that is distracting from

the real issue(s), is talk of gun control. The mass shooting in Norway by Anders Breivik who, on July 22, 2011, murdered 77 people, taught us that even in a place with strict gun-control laws, the availability of guns, while a factor, is not the root cause of these events. Allowing the dialogue to be hijacked by advocates and opponents of gun-control alike, ensures that the root causes remain unexamined.

Racial division in the United States still exists more than a century after the Civil War, and let us not forget that Canada has its own history of racism that remains alive and well today in many forms. This is not the first time this particular church has been attacked and its members murdered because of the color of their skin. In some communities, there is a climate of acceptable racism that quietly (and sometimes not so quietly) maintains racial inequality.

All lives matter.

We need to examine the culture of violence that exists in our society, a culture that makes it easier for these events to occur. While the culture of violence seems to be stronger in the United States, Canada is far from immune. The news and messaging from what seems like 25 years of perpetual war has led to a desensitization to, and an acceptance of, violence as a means to political end (whether through foreign policy or civil war). We must not forget that massacres like this have happened in Canada as well; let's not forget the murder of 14 women by Marc Lepine, or the murder of Constable Daniel Woodall

by a "sovereign citizen".

Preventing these events is a difficult challenge. The philosophy of the perpetrators is usually one of the Lone Wolf, which encourages attackers to remain anonymous and to not join groups where they can be identified by informants and surveillance. In such a solitary space the indoctrination is self-induced through the Internet and individuals are encouraged to strike from the shadows in an effort to instill fear and division in the communities they attack.

The goal is to instigate their targets to violence themselves and inflame a civil war along racial lines. The terrorist in Charleston openly stated that this was his goal. In fact, he openly discussed his plans for months before the event; not one person took him seriously. Friends, family, relatives, and neighbors all heard his racist rhetoric as well as his plans for a "massacre", yet remained silent. How is this possible? I believe it is because we don't take the issue seriously enough and we haven't educated ourselves on how to recognize the signs of an authentic threat.

Whether it be gangs, jihad, or white power, we need to learn to recognize when young people become a threat to themselves and others. There are no laws that can be passed to prevent events like this from happening, but communities can be empowered with the knowledge to recognize and take appropriate steps to prevent tragedy.

What can we as individuals do in the face of such horror? We can never forget that the goal of these

attacks is to lure us in to abandoning our humanity and to lead us into the world of violence to meet the so-called enemy head-on. This is the goal of these acts of terror, and if we retaliate similarly, we abandon our humanity and they achieve their goal.

The fact is that at Roof's arraignment hearing, several of the victim's families and the survivors of the attack forgave him. Think about that for a minute. Could you do that? They in no way condoned his actions, or even understood them, but they did forgive him. In the act of forgiveness, those human beings declared a resounding message; he has no control over them. That is the power of forgiveness. It releases you from the control of the person you are forgiving. They can no longer hijack your emotional state. Their acts of forgiveness inspired me to search my own soul, to find any anger I still harbor, any anger that has an iota of control over me, anything that I have not yet forgiven. I challenge you to do the same. Profound. Powerful. Inspiring.

The forgiveness granted by the relatives and survivors speaks volumes to the power of their community leaders, a power to hold on to their humanity in the face of such vicious aggression. I think they recognize that people, Dylann Roof included, do not enter this world with such anger and hatred, but for various reasons, end up there. How do I know?

I used to be a white supremacist organizer and an advocate of violence. As a person who has lived in a world of violence, I understand well who I had

to become to actually commit acts of violence. And I don't wish that upon anyone. I was asked once, "Tony, how did you lose your humanity?" My response was, "I didn't lose it, I traded it for approval and acceptance". In that place, my sense of connection was lost. I'd lost connection with myself, my family, my friends, and with society in general. I became incapable of having healthy relationships with others.

Without healthy relationships with others, society breaks down, and that is the price we pay when we give up our humanity. That is when we enter the arena of violence. Once there, the return is extremely difficult but not impossible. We must fight to maintain our humanity and, likewise, our compassion.

In my study and research into violent extremism—how people enter and exit such groups—one of the common themes I've heard from people who have transformed their lives was the impact of receiving compassion, especially from a person who they didn't feel they deserved it from. I can't help but think about how Dylann Roof sat in the prayer meeting for an hour before he opened fire, and in his confession, he stated that he almost changed his mind because the people were so nice to him.

The power of compassion and forgiveness cannot be underestimated, and if we want to get real about how we as a society can prevent these events in the future, we cannot leave the responsibility to lawmakers, but rather, we must accept the role that each one of us has as individuals. We

must be mindful of how we interact with others in our daily lives. We must search for the intolerance and judgments that we harbor towards ourselves and others, that we commit in our own lives. We must embrace the opportunity to share our compassion and forgiveness with others, as well as ourselves. We cannot remain silent when bearing witness to the injustice faced by others, because in doing so, we give our passive consent.

All lives matter.

A former organizer for the White Aryan Resistance (WAR), Tony McAleer served as a skinhead recruiter, proprietor of Canadian Liberty Net (a computer operated voice messaging center), and manager of the racist rock band, Odin's Law. Tony was eventually found to have contravened Section 13 of the Canadian Human Rights Act that prohibits the dissemination of messages likely to expose groups to hatred by telephone.

Tony's love for his children led him on a spiritual journey of personal transformation. Financial hardship and the harsh realities of single parenthood brought him to a place of compassion and forgiveness for himself and for others. Tony has spent the past six years as principal of McAleer & Associates Wealth Management and traveling as a motivational speaker. Today he is Executive Chairman of Life After Hate and shares his practice of compassion as a presenter of Kindness Not Weakness curriculum.

Edmonton police officer with hate crimes unit shot dead

Edmonton Police Constable Daniel Woodall was shot to death on June 8 as he went to a house to serve an arrest warrant. He was hit several times and died at the scene, while a second officer was injured in the incident. Edmonton-based Punjabi broadcaster Kulmit Singh Sangha told RDNB that Woodall was given an opportunity to serve in the hate crimes unit because of his belief in diversity, and his death is a big shock for the minority communities. He pointed out that white supremacy continues to pose challenge in Alberta, where number of incidents of vandalizing mosques and a Sikh temple have occurred during the recent past. 35-year-old Woodall was a husband and a father of two. He had previously served as a police officer in Manchester, England. He was given a tearful adieu by police officers from across Canada on June 17 for dying in the line of duty.

Air India Flight 182 Meditations CD launched

A CD dedicated to the victims of the Air India bombing was launched at Shiloh-Sixth Avenue United Church in New Westminster on June 3.

All 329 people aboard Air India Flight 182 died in a mid air bombing above the Irish Sea on June 23, 1985. The crime was blamed on Sikh separatists seeking revenge for the ugly political events of 1984, including the army attack on the Golden Temple Complex, the holiest shrine of the Sikhs in India, and the anti-Sikh pogrom following the murder of the Indian Prime Minister by her Sikh bodyguards.

Jointly produced by Renee Sarojini Saklikar and John Oliver, *Flight 182 Meditations* is based on poems dedicated to the Air India bombing victims. Saklikar, who lost her aunt and uncle in the tragedy, is a famous poet and the author of *Children of Air India*, a poetry book. The CD is composed by Oliver.

The event was held at the church where

Saklikar's father became the first Minister of the Indian heritage.

-RDNB

Demonstration held in commemoration of 1984 incidents

More than 700 people showed up at the demonstration in Vancouver that year. The Sikh activists have continued to hold commemorative events since then in downtown Vancouver.

Vancouver Art Gallery on June 7 to commemorate the ugly incidents of 1984. Nearly all major Sikh organizations came together to remember those who died during the infamous Operation Bluestar, which left many people dead and buildings destroyed inside the Golden Temple complex, the holiest Sikh shrine in Amritsar, India.

The army operation was launched in the first week of June 1984, to flush out militants who had fortified the place of worship. The military attack had left the building of the Akal Takht – the highest temporal seat of the Sikh faith - completely damaged. This enraged

In the aftermath of this operation, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards on October 31, following which anti-Sikh pogrom broke out across India. Sikhs were systematically murdered by the goons hired by the leaders of Indira Gandhi's Congress Party. Because of these incidents, the Sikh activists remember the year of 1984 as a period of Sikh genocide.

This year's event was attended by a well known human

rights lawyer from India, Navkiran Singh. The organizers not only paid tributes to the unknown number of civilians who died in cross-firing during the operation, but also to the militants who died fighting against the Indian army.

An unwanted controversy arose during this year's commemoration when the Vancouver International Bhangra Celebration announced a decision to hold a dancing and singing event close to the anniversary of Operation Bluestar, at the same venue. However, the matter was later resolved as VIBC not only apologized but also assured to be thoughtful about the sensitivity of commemorative events next year.

-RDNB

Gas station attendant loses life for trying to stop the driver of a stolen truck

Another gas station attendant has died trying to stop gas-and-dash on the night of June 7. Maryam Rashidi (35) was run over by a stolen truck in Calgary as she tried to chase it after it filled up with \$113 of gas and drove away without paying. She later died in hospital, leaving behind her husband and a six-year-old son. The couple had migrated from Iran to work in the oil and gas industry. They were laid off from their engineering jobs.

The horrific incident revived

ugly memories of the death of Grant De Patie, another gas station attendant who was dragged to death under similar circumstances in 2005. De Patie served as a gas station attendant in Maple Ridge, BC, where he lost his life for trying to stop a driver from stealing \$12.30 of fuel. De Patie's death prompted calls for tougher laws to protect late night workers, as a result of which the BC government brought in legislation named after De Patie, making it mandatory to pay before the pump.

The latest incident has once again provoked labour unions to renew demands for workers' safety. Describing Rashidi's death as "avoidable", the BC Federation of Labour (BCFED) has sought protection of late night gas station workers across Canada.

"Pay-before-you-pump laws are vital and need to be in place in every province. It is a basic law, and it saves lives," said Aaron Ekman, Secretary-Treasurer for the BCFED.

-RDNB

Dialogue on 40 years of Emergency held

Radical Desi organized a dialogue on the 40 years of Emergency and Censorship clamped on India in 1975 by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

The emergency imposed on the world's largest democracy in June 1975 curtailed freedom of the press and also affected civil liberties. It was later withdrawn after the collective struggle of the opposition and people.

The dialogue was organized to draw a connection between the continued attacks on free expression in India and the events of 1975. The speakers were unanimous in their observation that an undeclared emergency still continues in India under the right-wing Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) government, and the voice of dissent continues to be muzzled in a number of ways. Ironically, the BJP at that time had vehemently

opposed the emergency.

Among the speakers was a visiting human rights lawyer from India, Navkiran Singh, who noted that all political parties, including the left, have suppressed the voice of dissent whenever there is a resistance of people against repression. Others who spoke on the occasion were Chinmoy Banerjee of South Asian Network for Secularism and Democracy and Shailendra Chauhan, the Editor of *Dharti*, a Hindi magazine that covers alternative politics. Banerjee recalled how he and others associated with Indian People's Association in North America (IPANA) had opposed the emergency. IPANA was formed on June 25, 1975 – the day the state of emergency was declared. He said that religious fascism has grown under India's current Hindu nationalist government, which poses a greater danger to freedom

and civil liberties. Chauhan said that Indira Gandhi had declared the state of emergency due to her own insecurities from within her party ranks and the opposition. He warned that the character of the mainstream media has never since changed in India, largely remaining under the thumb of the government.

Those present on the occasion included the founder of Sikh Nation, Barjinder Singh; Chetna Association leader Jai Birdi; Fraser Valley Peace Council leader Minakshi Sidhu; Taraksheel Sabha President Avtar Gill; Saif Khalid from the Committee of Progressive Pakistani Canadians; and Parminder Swaich from East Indian Defence Committee. Earlier a song by Sant Ram Udasi, a revolutionary Punjabi poet who had opposed the emergency, was played.

-RDNB

Guillotine

they say

a tree in my village has been imprisoned.
there were many allegations against him:
it bore red leaves instead of greens,
and fluttered even without a wind.

it was not situated outside the village
it grew in the village well, instead.
and bestowed shadows whenever it rocked
and instilled fear in the sun.
and offered travellers its cool,
protecting them from sweltering heat
and all the girls who came to take water from the
well
were daughters to him.

the story goes
that he had many feet.
and he walked in the night
and returned only
after meeting all the trees of the village every day.
and lamented every time
when winds were not favourable.
but it is strange my friends
friends, I have seen branches of the trees
did they ever have feet too?

and today I have read in the newspaper
that he was an armed tree.
he had millions of bombs, guns and bayonets.
i had always heard only about the cool shadows of
trees

but the story of bombs is
quite an enigma.

this is phony news.
i can't believe it
he has killed another tree of the village, the tree
that had grown
in the courtyard of the wealthy,
and that nestled the crows
which spied on the village daily.

and today a friend from my village has come
bringing the news that,
that tree of my village will be guillotined
his father who is like acacia, and
his mother who is like jujube, are in grief.

Shiv Kumar Batalvi was a famous Punjabi poet. Translated by Satnam, Guillotine was written as a tribute to 82-year-old Bujha Singh, a leftist political activist who was killed by the Indian police in a staged shootout on July 28, 1970. This poem has been reproduced here in commemoration of his death anniversary.

Remembering a dedicated Marxist who died with a wish to see the left united

This month marks 44th death anniversary of Niranjan Singh Pandori, a radical political activist who not only fought against colonialism and racism, but remained a diehard Marxist till the time of his death.

Born in British-occupied India in 1882, Pandori had seen the hardships of village life since his early childhood. He lost his father at the age of nine and his mother had to raise him single handedly with great difficulties. His father served for the British army and had died in a cantonment. In the absence of a breadwinner for the family, Pandori started working in the fields at the age of 13. Since farming was not a dependable profession to earn a better livelihood, Pandori joined the army when he turned eighteen. However, he quit the job in 1905 due to ill treatment by white officers. Now he was left with only one option to better his economic situation: migration abroad. He had to support his wife whom he married at a tender age, in accordance with the conservative traditions of that time, and a son.

Australian government passed a colour bar in 1901, making it impossible for Indians to migrate to that country. Under these circumstances, Many of his compatriots had discriminated against the entry of people of colour to Australia. But the Australian government discouraged the entry of people of colour to that country. Under these circumstances,

RADICAL HISTORY OF THE MONTH

Pandori came to Canada in 1906. Here, he worked at a railway construction site on Vancouver Island.

The blatant racism and discriminatory policies of the Canadian government to discourage permanent settlement of Indian immigrants had transformed many into political activists. The Indians were disfranchised in 1907, and were not allowed to bring their families. They soon realized that the root cause of their problems was foreign occupation of their home country. They started getting organized to fight back against colonialism in India and racism abroad. Pandori also started getting involved in activism and the struggle for equal rights. His experiences with white officers in the army and his inability to go to Australia must have impacted his consciousness.

In 1907, his wife died of chickenpox, as a result of which his mother had to look after his son. Pandori returned to India in 1913, the same year that South Asian activists in North America formed the Ghadar Party, a radical movement that believed in an armed rebellion to liberate India.

After returning to India, he was forced to remarry by his mother. While Pandori was occupied with family responsibilities, the Ghadar Party members resolved to return to India and launch an armed struggle against the British Empire. The plan to start an armed uprising could not materialize for many reasons, but

the Ghadar Party members continued their underground activities. Pandori was contacted by them and asked to participate in an attack on the state armoury.

In 1915, Pandori escaped from a police dragnet and reached New York, from where he went to California, the nerve centre of the Ghadar movement. He was eventually given the responsibility of the secret cell of the Ghadar Party.

Sometime after the Bolshevik revolution, a section of the Ghadar Party leadership decided to send members to Russia to get a grasp of communism. By 1925, Pandori had adopted Marxism under the influence of these leaders.

Pandori was also involved in the killings of toadies who were spying on the activities of Ghadar Party members. He was totally opposed to the non-violent means of the pacifist camp of the freedom movement.

He was ahead of his times in many ways. When he learnt about the pathetic situation of his wife in India, he sent her a letter asking her to find another partner, as he did not want her to live a lonely life. He could not bring her to North America because of the tough immigration laws, nor did he want to return to India and commit himself to a life of domesticity because of his dedication towards the movement.

In 1934, he went to Moscow, where he studied Marxism and learnt guerrilla warfare. He returned to India in 1942, but was arrested. After

being released, he stayed in India until 1964. He remained involved in the communist movement even after India gained official independence in 1947. He went underground when the Communist Party of India was declared illegal in 1948 and many communists were thrown into jails. In later years, when the Communist Party of India was split and Communist Party of India (Marxist) came into being, Pandori was very sad and he continued to ask the two parties to reunite.

He also had an opportunity to serve his village as its headman and opposed caste-based discrimination during his tenure. He was a poet too, and contributed to the Ghadar narrative that still remains popular among social justice activists.

By this time his son had moved to Canada, and due to his old age, Pandori was brought back to Vancouver. Before he passed away on July 21, 1971 he wrote a letter to the Communist Party of India in which he had expressed his desire to see the left united and continue the struggle for a just society. He was given a tearful adieu and his body was wrapped in a red flag according to his last wish.

With the left remaining divided, and social equality still a distant dream, the legacy of Pandori is still relevant. Those who claim to be the flag bearers of his ideology need to think about his unfulfilled dreams and keep his struggle alive.

-RDNB

Why is the mighty Indian state scared of old people?

For 70-year-old journalist David Barsamian, India remains out of bounds. The US-based independent journalist, who has co-authored books with internationally acclaimed writers, like Arundhati Roy and Noam Chomsky, was deported from India in 2011 and is not getting a visa to visit the world's so-called largest democracy. Addressing a gathering at Simon Fraser University Harbour Centre in Vancouver on May 14, Barsamian remarked sarcastically; "You can see how frightening I am."

Barsamian has been writing against state repression in the disputed territory of Kashmir in India. He has also been critical of state violence against Indigenous communities and oppressed groups in other parts of India. But Barsamian is not an exception. The Indian government had also denied a visa to Jan Myrdal, an 88-year-old Swedish author, for similar reasons: he has authored a book on the Maoist insurgency in India.

These two cases have become well-known due to the popularity of the two individuals. Just google these men and you can easily find what happened to them. However, there are many unknown cases of harassment of old people by officials of a country which is armed with nuclear power and has a

huge army. In Vancouver, some aging Sikh political activists have been denied visas a number of times for their separatist views. What harm can these men really do if allowed to visit India?

Although it sounds very amusing that the mighty Indian state can be frightened of old people, the reality is much more scary and brutal. A disabled social justice activist, G.N. Saibaba, has been in jail in India for the past year. He was accused of supporting Maoist insurgents and thrown into jail despite his poor health and disability. In 1970, 82-year-old political activist Bujha Singh was killed in a staged shootout by the Indian police, despite the fact that he had participated in the Indian liberation movement against British occupation. Unsatisfied with the

official freedom and the social inequality in post-British India, he had joined the ultra-leftist movement. Instead of listening to him, the Indian state murdered him for his political views.

All these instances reflect that the Indian state is not only scared of elderly critics, but can go to the extent of torturing and killing them, in spite of Indian society's cultural practice of touching the feet of wise old people.

If the democratic Indian government is really worried about internal security, it should sit down

with wise people, like Saibaba, Barsamian or Myrdal, and find ways of ending the crisis which has contributed to social insecurity. Let them come up with solutions, instead of muzzling their voices.

The real security threat to the mighty Indian state is not from old and wise people, it is from reactionary forces, such as Hindu nationalists who move around freely in India, spewing venom against religious minorities, and bent upon turning a pluralist Indian society into a Hindu theocracy. Such blatant systemic violence by extremists belonging to the dominant society at the behest of the Indian government poses the real threat to the so-called unity and integrity of the country.

-RDNB

