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## Dump Trump

Worried Canadians continue to build public opinion against the right wing US Presidential candidate

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**Cover Picture** : Imtiaz Popat is a well known social justice activist and an independent broadcaster. He has organized two rallies outside Trump Tower in Vancouver to protest against the US presidential candidate's anti-immigrant rhetoric. This picture was taken during a June 2016 rally held outside Trump Tower.

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**RADICAL**  
DESI

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

## Why is Trump's defeat important?

**T**he US Presidential election scheduled for November 8 has created hype across the world. Not only minority groups in the US, but also in Canada and elsewhere are worried over the possibility of Donald Trump becoming the next President. This is mainly because of his anti-immigrant and racist views. The Republican candidate has been consistently attacking Muslims and Mexicans in his speeches. Despite the fact that US is led by a Black President, Trump was able to win the Republican nomination. This only shows that racism continues to exist in US and the country's politics is not immune to bigotry. Barack Obama's success story cannot hide this ugly reality. Trump is talking about banning Muslims from entering the US and raising a wall along the US-Mexican border to stop "illegal immigrants". These statements are also causing anxiety to many Republicans, including former Presidents, George W. Bush and his father. The former Secretary of State, Republican Collin Powell, has also expressed his reservations. With polls showing Trump trailing his Democratic rival Hillary Clinton by a narrow margin, the possibility of his becoming the president must be taken seriously. It is true that the Democrats have not done anything solid to eradicate structural racism in American society, and the two candidates are on the same page when it comes to defending US imperialist interests. But while Clinton is far from perfect, Trump is an outright racist who must be dumped in the election. His victory would symbolize the victory of

bigotry and send a wrong message all over the world. South Asians living in the US can make some difference by voting against him. They must not forget that their elders had to face blatant racism in the past. Under these circumstances, South Asian immigrants created the Ghadar Party a hundred years ago to fight against racism in North America and colonialism back home. The Ghadar Party had its headquarters in San Francisco. The party was formed to resist hate attacks from white racists who accused immigrants of stealing jobs. Men like Trump did exactly the same back then by whipping anti-migrant sentiments. That inglorious history is still relevant, as racism refuses to die. It continues to hurt everyone, including the indigenous peoples of America, the original habitants of the land stolen by the colonists. Systemic violence against Blacks still goes on. If people like Trump come to power, the situation will only worsen. His defeat is also important for South Asians because his rhetoric gives legitimacy to white supremacists who have been attacking Muslims and Sikhs. Such attacks have grown after 9/11. For them, all people of colour are alien and do not belong here. It's a shame that some ultra Hindu nationalists, who perhaps owe loyalty to a right wing government in India, have been praising Trump for his position against Islamic extremism. The current Hindu nationalist Bhartiya Janata Party government in India is led by Narendra Modi, who was Chief Minister of Gujarat in 2002 when an anti-Muslim pogrom started in that state. The violence followed the burning of a train carrying Hindu pilgrims. When the Modi government blamed Islamic extremists for the incident that left over 50 people dead, innocent Muslims were targeted across Gujarat. Human rights group continue to allege Modi's complicity in the massacre, though he was never charged or convicted. Under Modi's administration, emboldened Hindu extremists have intensified their attacks on minority communities in India. So much so, some fringe elements organized prayers for the victory of Trump in New Delhi. Hindu Sena, which organized the controversial event, described Trump as a "saviour of humanity from Islamic terrorism". Believe it or not, Trump and Modi share an extreme right-wing ideology that frequently creates fear of the "other" to polarise communities for political survival. Trump's defeat will also be a defeat of fanatical Hindus, who are doing a disservice to their own community by supporting him. Make no mistake, white supremacists have also targeted Hindu temples in the US. By supporting Trump, they are actually strengthening the hands of their own enemies. Some others naively think that Trump is only doing this to attract votes from the dominant group and might act responsibly after getting elected. They do not acknowledge that he has already done damage by creating divisions in American society. Keeping in view what the Ghadar Party taught the people of India and the US, South Asians must stand up against racism and religious discrimination. The Ghadar Party wanted to establish a secular and egalitarian society in post-British India, and denounced chauvinism of any shade. After all, South Asians both in America and Canada celebrate Ghadar history every year through massive community events. If they really care about what the Ghadar activists stood for they must defeat the designs of right-wing forces. Trump should be made to taste humiliating defeat so that all the bigots get a clear message: it is not right to divide people and create fear and hostility against any community. His defeat will be a defeat of racism and hate.

-Editors

## Dump Trump

Worried Canadians continue to build public opinion against the right wing US Presidential candidate

Even as British Columbia is heading for a provincial election in May next year, with Premier Christy Clark and the opposition leader John Horgan sharpening their knives against each other, the two rivals are in complete agreement when it comes to Donald Trump, the controversial US Presidential candidate.

Just ask Clark and Horgan, who have crossed swords many times, about their thoughts on Trump. They will

possibly come up with the same reply, that they are worried about the likelihood of Trump winning the election.

It might sound strange that Clark, who represents the BC Liberals, and Horgan, a New Democrat, could be on the same page when it comes to a presidential election across the border, but in all probability they do not want to see Trump win because of his anti-immigrant views. Though one might assume that this understanding could reflect the cultural diversity of this

province and the dependence of the two leaders on the minority vote-bank in swing ridings, it actually resonates with the sentiments of the majority of Canadians who are concerned over the possibility of Trump getting elected.

This anxiety is only likely to grow as the November 8 election date draws near. Due to the narrow lead maintained by Hillary Clinton over Trump in different polls, those who are apprehensive about his potential victory want everyone to take the threat

seriously.

### **Clinton vs. Trump**

This is the first time in US history that the two main candidates for presidency are seniors. Donald Trump is 70, and his rival Hillary Clinton is 68. Trump is a business tycoon, while Clinton has previously served as Secretary of State and happens to be the wife of former President Bill Clinton. She also ran unsuccessfully in 2008 for the Democratic nomination, against Barack Obama.

Unlike Trump, Clinton's status as a seasoned political figure has baggage. She has faced

controversies, including the one around the use of personal email account for official business in the past. The FBI did not charge her, but found that act was negligent. Her health has also become an issue after she recently stumbled at an event to commemorate the victims of the 9/11 terror attack. She was diagnosed with pneumonia, but her doctor has said that she is fit to be the president.

In spite of all this, Clinton still has a narrow lead over Trump in different polls. One of the latest surveys posted by *The*

*New York Times* puts her at popularity rate of 44 percent, with Trump behind only by a margin of two points at 42 percent. This poll followed the 9/11 commemoration event that raised speculations about Clinton's health.

Thanks to the negative stories about Clinton, Trump's popularity continues to climb, although he remains behind her.

Clinton supporters believe that she will make history by getting elected as the first woman US president, but there are numerous challenges before her. The foremost test

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comes from supporters of Bernie Sanders, her rival in the nomination race. Sanders is seen by many as left-wing politician with a vision to bring radical change in the American system, particularly for the working class. They feel cheated by the way the Democratic establishment favoured Clinton, and openly accused it of working against Sanders to ensure his ouster from the race. The bad blood might cause some damage to Clinton. Apart from that, her political baggage and health might impact public opinion.

The business magnate Trump, on the other hand, has a strange political background. In the past, he had supported Ronald Reagan, a Republican President. In 1999, he shifted his loyalty to the Reform Party, then was a Democrat from 2001 until 2008, when he endorsed Republican John McCain for President, and has been a Republican since.

Trump has been in the international news for talking tough against Islamic extremism. He called for a ban on the entry of Muslims in America, and has threatened to raise a wall along the US-Mexico border to stop "illegal immigrants". He also announced that if elected he would stop welfare being

given to "illegal immigrants" and speed up the process of deporting them. He even went to the extent of justifying racial profiling of Muslims and

torture of suspected terrorists. For doing so, he has made both enemies and friends.

Trump has obviously enraged Muslims and Mexicans in particular. And the reaction was not limited to the US. London's Muslim Mayor Sadiq Khan accused him of playing into the hands of the Islamic terrorists and trying to divide the western society and Muslims. But in India, the Hindu Sena, a fringe group of Hindu nationalists held prayers for the victory of Trump and described him as "saviour of

humanity from Islamic extremism".

Indeed, the polarisation within South Asian Diaspora in US is also visible. Early this year, a Sikh protester was removed from a Trump rally in Iowa. Arish Singh was one of two protesters who held up a banner that read "Stop Hate". He later tweeted; "I am not a Muslim. But you don't have to be a Muslim to stand up against anti-Muslim bigotry." It is pertinent to mention that like Muslims, turbaned Sikh men with facial hair have also been targets of hate crimes since the 9/11 terrorist incident. The attack on New York in 2001 was blamed on Islamic extremists who flew hijacked planes into the World Trade Centre, killing about 3,000 people. Turbaned Sikhs came under attack from white supremacists in the aftermath of the September 11 episode.

If Singh finds Trump's statements offensive, Shalabh Kumar, a Hindu businessman, has no problem with that. Associated with the Republican Hindu Coalition, he remains a staunch supporter of Trump and is impressed by his tough talk against Islamic terrorism. He is also impressed by Trump's assurance that he wants to strengthen relations with India, the country of



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Kumar's birth. Not only that, he claims that during a one-on-one meeting he had with Trump, the latter told him that Pakistan can never be trusted as a US ally. Pakistan is an Islamic republic and was carved out of India in 1947. Since then relations between the two countries have mostly remained hostile. The countries have gone to two major wars, and India continues to accuse Pakistan of sponsoring terrorism within its territories. Pakistan has always been considered a close US ally, but in a post 9/11 environment, India and the US are now getting closer. Nevertheless, it isn't just about minorities and immigrant communities. Trump is facing criticism from some prominent Republicans, including two former Presidents, George W. Bush and his father. Former Republican Secretary of State Collin Powell described Trump as a "national disgrace" in a leaked email. The current President, Barack Obama, has called Trump unfit to be the president of the US.

Waris Ahluwalia, a turbaned Sikh actor based in New York City who has been campaigning against racism ever since he started facing it because of his appearance, tries to put the entire issue in perspective. He believes that the emotion of fear has always been used by world political leaders to control people.

Without naming Trump, he told RDNB during a recent Vancouver visit, "We have in America a politician that is connecting with people with that emotion, connecting to the lowest emotion that people have, fear of the other, fear of neighbour, fear of what they are doing, fear of immigrants. We have someone tapping into the basest emotion, which is the easiest, cause its so easy

rather than tapping into the opportunity of something more beautiful as it takes more work".

### Concerned Canadians

In May this year, BC Premier Christy Clark reminded a crowd of South Asians in Ottawa that the battle against racism has not ended. The occasion was the official apology made by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for the Komagata Maru episode. In

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1914, the Japanese vessel carrying more than 300 South Asian passengers was forced to return under the discriminatory immigration law which was intended to keep Canada as a white man's land. Trudeau's apology in the House of Commons was an acknowledgment that this was a racist act by the Canadian government of the time. Clark, who went to Ottawa to attend the historic moment, used the occasion to caution people about developments in the US. "We have to be vigilant and we have to keep our hearts open. And that's the matter of very purposeful determination. We look south of the border and see what the American election is focussed on these days. We recognize how easy it is for people to answer the call of bigotry."

While Clark did not name anyone, opposition New Democratic Party leader John Horgan is more candid in his criticism of Trump. Talking to RDNB during a visit in Surrey, which has a sizable population of South Asian immigrants, Horgan said, "I am horrified by Donald Trump. He is a racist, he is misogynist, he doesn't like women, he doesn't like people of colour, he doesn't like anything but himself". He said that Canadians can only hope that he does not become the president. Horgan supported Bernie Sanders, but he is now advising people in

the US to support Hillary Clinton, who according to him has a record of serving the people as First Lady and Secretary of State. Indo-Canadian MLA from Surrey Newton, Harry Bains, agrees. "Donald Trump does not represent today's society. Humanity has gone through lot of pains in the past when you look at in thirties and forties, I don't think we need another leader, especially leader upon the most powerful state in the world."

Irene Lanzinger, President of the BC Federation of Labour, has also expressed her concerns. "I am very worried, because there is a narrative that is xenophobic, racist and exclusionary."

Daljit Thind, a prominent Punjabi developer who provided accommodation to Syrian refugees in Vancouver when some white supremacists and right-wing

politicians were objecting to the Canadian government opening doors for them, has been equally concerned. Nevertheless, he hopes that good sense prevails upon Trump if he is elected.

That leaders from opposite political groups and those representing the working class and business are speaking in one voice should not come as a surprise, considering the Insights West poll that suggests that almost four-in-five Canadians are concerned over Trump becoming the US President. Conducted in August, the poll says that 79 percent of Canadians are either "very" or "moderately" concerned.

Not to be left behind, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, during a Town Hall hosted by *Maclean's* last December, denounced Trump in response to a question asked by a voter through social media. Asked

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whether he would stand up to Trump and condemn his hateful rhetoric, Trudeau commented "If we allow politicians to succeed by scaring people, we don't actually end up any safer. Fear doesn't make us safer. It makes us weaker."

Trudeau's statement came not long after he defeated Conservative PM Stephen Harper in the October 2015 federal election. The Harper government had come under sharp criticism for using similar fear tactics against Islamic extremists and immigrants in the name of security. In the end, Trudeau came to power with an absolute majority, with the support of minorities and marginalized communities.

Those active on social media have also found ways to show resistance. Sunny Mangat, a Vancouver woman of Punjabi heritage, wrote an open letter to Trump criticising his ideas. Quoting William McAdoo, she stated, "I will not engage in explaining to you why your remarks and behavior are unacceptable because it is impossible to defeat an ignorant man by argument." She also called to boycott Trump Tower, located on West Georgia Street in Vancouver. Trump, who is a real estate tycoon, does not own the property, but the Holborn Group that is building the tower has branded it after his name.

After an online petition launched against the upcoming Trump Tower received more than 30,000 signatures, Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson unsuccessfully wrote a letter asking the Holborn Group to drop Trump's name. While Robertson and Mangat tried to fight it out through correspondence and conversation, others took to the street to show their outrage.

A Port Moody man, Diego Reyna, flew a Mexican flag from the top floor of the tower to express his outrage on behalf of Mexican workers.

Surrey resident Imtiaz Popat has been instrumental in organizing at least two demonstrations outside Trump Tower. A social justice activist and a broadcaster, Popat is worried that Trump's anti-Muslim and homophobic rhetoric can vitiate the social environment both in US and Canada and fuel racial tension. The rally that he organized in June was attended by members of diverse groups, including LGBT, Jews, Christians, Muslims and Sikhs, who joined hands to make a human chain outside the Tower to show their anger against Trump's controversial views.

### Curiosity remains

Shushma Datt is a renowned broadcaster who established Spice Radio in Burnaby, at 1200 on the AM dial. Every

morning, she hosts a program that includes a one-hour open line, free for all call in show. Being an experienced radio personality, she understands the pulse of her audience. Sensing the curiosity among South Asians over the US presidential election, she has started a special segment with Behjat Gilani from *Voice of America*. Every Thursday morning a little after 8 am, Gilani gives a live campaign update from the US. The segment will continue until election day. After Gilani's comprehensive update covers current developments related to the campaign, the lines are opened to take calls. The participants so far have expressed their reservations about Trump and his statements.

Datt feels that people in the South Asian community are as much interested in the US election as everyone else, because the US remains an important neighbour of Canada. The election results might reshape relations between the two countries, and that's why she decided to keep her listeners informed about developments across the border. Though she generally avoids giving her personal opinion on air to ensure fairness, she has shared her concerns over Trump becoming the President. Notably, Datt had

launched a campaign against racism through her radio station in 2015. # Hands Against Racism, as it is called, has received tremendous support both in the mainstream and from within the South Asian community. The widespread curiosity about the US election among the people of Canada, particularly those from South Asia, can be partly attributed to the fact that this country is headed by a progressive and liberal Prime Minister, who fought on the promise to make Canada more open and tolerant, as against the previous Conservative regime.

If Trump wins, the chemistry between him and Trudeau might not work, as the two leaders are poles apart in terms of political ideology. As things stand today, people largely remain uncertain about the outcome of the election. If the polls are any indication, it is really difficult to predict the result. Those who support Clinton vehemently argue that she is going to win, whatever the pollsters say. Their argument is that America has changed after accepting Obama as its first black president. Likewise, Trump lovers think that nothing can stop him from coming to

power as his popularity continues to grow because of Clinton's "tainted past". Then there are others who are either disinterested and remain skeptical. Away from this polarised debate of Clinton vs. Trump and Democrats vs. Republicans, anti-racism activists remain apprehensive. For them, whatever the results, the situation has already been made ugly, and a Trump victory would only teach the lesson that it is perfectly alright to target any group of people to win elections.

## What does the promise to consult really mean?

**A** vigorous debate is underway over what exactly the federal government means by its various statements and election promises regarding the processes for approval of natural resource projects - in particular whether indigenous peoples have the right to stop construction of pipelines and related infrastructure on their traditional territories. This debate shows that while progress has been made towards overcoming the legacy of colonial genocide in Canada, structural racism remains embedded in this

country's fabric.

Leading up to and during the 2015 federal election, Liberal leader Justin Trudeau struck a very different tone than the governing Conservatives. A Liberal government, he indicated, would develop a new nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous peoples, based on mutual respect, an end to violation of treaties, full recognition of the International Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (which the Conservatives had considered as only an "aspirational" document), and fulfillment of

the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 93 recommendations.

On the specific issue of energy projects such as pipelines, the Liberal platform referred to "community consent" being necessary for final approval. This concept was widely welcomed in areas such as the BC Lower Mainland, where a solid majority of the population opposes Kinder Morgan's application to expand its oil pipelines from Alberta to Burnaby.

These policy shifts helped the Liberals win a big majority in Parliament. Voter turnout was

way up on First Nations reserves and in urban areas like Metro Vancouver, where many people counted on a new political approach. Hopes were raised by the new federal government's initial steps, such as the announcement of a long-awaited inquiry into murdered and mission indigenous women and girls, and the appointment of First Nations activist Jody Wilson-Raybould to the position of federal Justice Minister.

But controversy is brewing over the Liberal government's stance on resource projects. Even as he pledges further consultation with aboriginal p e o p l e s and environmentalists, the PM also

says that "unanimous consent" is not needed for the government to approve pipeline projects, and that no community has a veto.

This would appear to contradict the 2014 Supreme Court decision in the *Tsilhqot'in v. BC* case, which had wide implications for the rights of indigenous peoples, particularly in British Columbia where many never signed treaties or surrendered their traditional territories. That ruling clearly found that in cases where aboriginal title is proven, consent is required before major projects can go ahead.

This court ruling is in accord with the content of the UN

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which everyone interested in these issues should read.

Article 32 of this historic declaration reads: "1) Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources. 2) States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in

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connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources. 3)

States shall provide effective mechanisms for just and fair redress for any such activities, and appropriate measures shall be taken to mitigate adverse environmental, economic, social, cultural or spiritual impact."

Not surprisingly, First Nations leaders and communities saw the Tsilhqot'in ruling (part of a longer-term trend for the courts to recognize indigenous rights) and the Liberal campaign promises as major victories. But their optimism is tinged with understanding that their struggles are far from over.

Within indigenous peoples and communities, there are a range of views over development issues. Cheam First Nation Chief Ernie Crey recently told a *Reuters* reporter that his community is not opposed to development, but they want their rights and needs to be treated with the same gravitas as those of other Canadians.

Similarly, the Tsilhqotin in central British Columbia have indicated that they would support mutually beneficial mining and resource projects in some parts of their traditional territories, but that areas of special historical and cultural importance are simply off-limits.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip of

the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs recently stated that PM Justin Trudeau should keep in mind that the economic considerations of the oil industry do not outweigh aboriginal rights.

"Nothing has changed on our side of the equation. The answer is still 'no,'" Grand Chief Phillip told *Reuters* when asked about Trudeau's latest comments at a news conference in Montreal.

The PM told the media that his job is to look out for Canada's best interests and not act as a "cheerleader" for pipeline projects as the previous Conservative government did. But he also indicated that his responsibility is to balance the economy and the environment. Trudeau said his government would announce a new review process for pipelines and other energy projects "shortly."

Some deadlines are imminent, such as the federal cabinet's final decision on Kinder Morgan by late this year. In the meantime, the old Harper-appointed National Energy Board (NEB) is still dealing with TransCanada's proposed Energy East pipeline, in the wake of revelations that TransCanada consultant Jean Chretien, the former Liberal PM, met secretly with NEB panel members to discuss the application.

Similarly, Trudeau's government has issued permits to the Site C mega-

dam in northern BC, even while First Nations challenge the project in court, and First Nations near Prince Rupert are preparing legal action and blockades of Lelu Island just as the Liberal government is preparing to approve or reject a Malaysian gas terminal.

All this is happening before the new government acts to carry out its promise of "a full review of regulatory law, policies, and operational practices" in full partnership and consultation with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.

Clearly, the Trudeau government faces big decisions: will it live up to its responsibility to carry out the letter and spirit of treaties, court rulings, the UNDRIP and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations? Or will it yield to the pressures of the big energy monopolies which remain determined to expand the extraction and export of unprocessed bitumen from the Alberta tar sands? The answer will go a long way towards determining whether Canada is truly entering a new era of reconciliation and justice for indigenous peoples, or whether the old colonial drive to maximize resource profits for corporate interests will triumph.

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## Hindu nationalists repeating residential school history

**E**ven as Canada continues to repent for cultural genocide against indigenous peoples through the controversial residential school system, Hindu nationalists are repeating colonial history in the world's so-called largest secular democracy.

Recent media reports from India suggest that groups affiliated with the ultra-Hindu nationalist organization Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) of which the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) is a part, are sending young girls from tribal communities to distantly located special schools for indoctrination into Hindu nationalist ideology.

RSS claims to be a cultural outfit that desires to transform India into a Hindu theocracy.

Taking a leaf from the dark history of Canada, where residential schools were opened to Christianize indigenous children in the name of nation building by the European settlers, schools run by the RSS affiliates in Gujarat and Punjab states of India have been bringing in young tribal girls from Assam to teach them the values of Hindu nationalism. The targeted tribes are Santhals

and Bodos, who have their own belief system that is different from Hinduism.

The story was unearthed by investigative reporters from at least two media outlets, *Outlook* magazine and *Cobrapost*, which specialize in sting operations. The investigations were done in the aftermath of an incident in which 31 tribal girls and their handlers were detained at Delhi railway station on suspicion of child trafficking. However, they had to be released following protests by Hindu fanatics. These girls were sent to schools in Gujarat and Punjab, and all concerns were brushed aside on the pretext of providing education to children from impoverished communities. This was despite the fact that the rules were flouted and no permission was ever sought from the authorities concerned. The handlers of these children had obtained signed affidavits from their gullible parents. Interestingly, these documents were drafted in English, a language that is alien to the tribals. Yet no action has been taken against the culprits.

Notably, the BJP is in power in all three states - Assam, Gujarat and Punjab. Indian

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, an RSS man from Gujarat, was the Chief Minister of the state when anti-Muslim pogroms broke out in that region in 2002. Human rights activists continue to allege his complicity in the massacre. It is pertinent to mention that tribals were used by the supporters of BJP as foot soldiers during the violence against Muslims. It clearly indicates that the RSS and the BJP have been able to make inroads into the tribal communities, and if the indoctrination of the tribal girls in their schools is any indication, their ambition to bring the indigenous population into the Hindu fold is a well thought out strategy. Like in the case of residential schools distantly located from the homes of the indigenous children, the schools run by RSS affiliates are on the west side of India, far from the north-eastern state of Assam. According to the United Nations, forcibly transferring the children of one group to another group amounts to genocide. Going by this simple yardstick, RSS affiliates are indulging in genocide much as the colonists did in the past in Canada, which officially apologized for the residential



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school system in 2008.

As in the case of residential schools, where indigenous children were forced to give up their spiritual beliefs and discouraged from speaking their own languages, in the schools run by RSS affiliates, the tribal girls are forced to adopt Hindu rituals and speak Hindi. So much so, the tribal girls who eat crabs are forced to become vegetarian according to Hindu traditions. Not surprisingly, the churches that ran residential schools in Canada enjoyed the backing of the state. Similarly, the schools run by the RSS, where students perform religious rituals, also enjoy state patronage under Modi's regime. Christian churches in Canada found the idea of matriarchy among the indigenous communities to be alien and against the European value system. Through the residential schools, they tried to introduce patriarchy in the native culture, and to some extent succeeded in doing so. In the case of tribal girls from Assam, matriarchy is being replaced by encouraging them to adopt orthodox Hindu customs that bring women under the subjugation of men. The very idea of picking tribal girls aged between 8 to 14 for indoctrination indicates how Hindu nationalists see them as future mothers who can influence society through values acquired at their schools. When the residential schools were opened,

indigenous parents were assured of a bright future for their children, because of which many agreed to send them far away from their homes. Others were forced to give away their children, since refusal amounted to a crime. However, many of these children were mistreated, beaten and sexually assaulted. Many died in after running away from schools to escape abuse. On top of that, they were not allowed to come home during the school term, or to write letters to their parents. The *Outlook* story by Neha Dixit suggests how parents of tribal girls are anxious about them and haven't heard back from them for very long times.

The idea in both cases is to ensure that the cultural memory of children is erased at a very young age by isolating them from their families and communities.

All these parallels show how dominant societies try to assimilate marginalized communities to construct an artificial society. In the case of tribal girls in India, the Hindu nationalists are also trying to take advantage of local level fights between the tribals and the Muslims and Christians in Assam, which often take on a communal colour because of the sustained penetration of Hindu fundamentalists in these communities. Undoubtedly, Assam is exposed to migration from Bangladeshi Muslims and the

activities of Christian missionaries. But the BJP has its own agenda of creating divisions among these communities, to establish a Hindu state by engineering violence and bloodshed against religious minorities and appropriating tribal groups. That reality must be recognized worldwide.

In the case of India, the situation is far more dangerous. Tribal girls are vulnerable to abuse and being forced to give up their cultural identity, but are also being trained to hate Muslims and Christians through the controversial curriculum of schools run by RSS affiliates, where they are taught the virtues of an exclusionist Hindu state. It's a shame that the residential school system which has been denounced by modern day Canada is being adopted by supporters of the BJP. This party governs a country whose constitution guarantees religious freedom and secularism, but is bent upon pushing India back to the stone age, while a section of foreign investors are enamoured by the economic growth of the country under the leadership of a man who does not even see a difference between mythology and science.

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## Punjabi author who wrote a fictional story on Indian Residential School system to be honoured in Vancouver

**T**oronto-based Punjabi author Jarnail Singh, who wrote a short fiction story on the Indian Residential School system and its impact on indigenous communities, will be honoured in Vancouver on October 29.

*Kaale Varke* (Dark Pages) is based on a dialogue between an Indo-Canadian counsellor and an indigenous man who is a residential school survivor.

First published in 2015 by *Sirjana*, a Punjabi literary magazine, the story was widely read and appreciated in the Punjabi community. Jarnail Singh later published the collection of his short stories under the same title.

Thousands of indigenous children were forcibly sent to residential schools by the colonists to indoctrinate them into Christianity. Once at these schools, they were forced to give up their own language, indigenous names and customs. Defiance would often invite punishments. Then there were children who also suffered sexual abuse. The Canadian government and the churches involved have apologized for this cultural genocide, and survivors (except for those who attended similar "day schools" while still living at home) have received financial payments.

*Kaale Varke* gives reader an idea how the residential school system had left a deep impact on the indigenous communities that continue to suffer substance abuse and violence.

Jarnail Singh, who comes from a Punjabi background, feels that since the South Asians and Indigenous peoples share a history of racism and colonialism, the story has appealed many in his community. Like Canada, India too was colonized. His story takes a look at this linkage.

The Vancouver-based Dhahan Prize Foundation will honour him at the University of British Columbia with \$25,000. The foundation was established by Barj Dhahan, a prominent

businessman with an objective to promote Punjabi language and literature. This will be the third annual award since 2014.

The first award ceremony at the UBC Anthropology Museum was opened with a traditional song by Cecilia Point from the Musqueam Band.

Barj Dhahan feels that such narrative will go long way in educating Punjabi audiences and help in breaking the stereotypes that also prevail within the South Asian communities against indigenous peoples. "It is important to recognize that we are sitting on unceded lands belonging to the First Nations."

Dhahan also announced that they are looking into the possibility of getting such stories and work done by other award recipients translated into English, so that the mainstream audience can also access the work done by these writers.

Jarnail Singh was born and raised in Punjab. He immigrated to Canada in 1988. In all, he has published six collections of short stories. Out of them three were written in Canada.

## NEWS

### Patel admits he was also denied visa by the Indian government

**R**enowned author and social justice activist Raj Patel has admitted that he was denied visa by the world's so called largest democracy for writing critically about the agrarian crisis in that country. Raj Patel is a British-born academic and journalist and is a vocal critic of the World Bank, WTO and the UN. He has written extensively about the farmers' suicides in India, whose economy is mainly based on agriculture. He believes that wrong agrarian policies and continued economic liberalisation have led to this crisis. During a visit to Vancouver where he was invited to speak at the annual Hari Sharma Memorial Lecture on September 16, he disclosed that India had denied him visa for some years because of his critical approach. "I was told I was doing anti-India things. I was specifically talking about farmer's suicides. I was embarrassing India in terms of its data around food insecurity." Patel could not go to

India for some years under the previous Congress government under Manmohan Singh, who had started the process of liberalisation. However, he succeeded in getting a tourist visa after tweeting to the current Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Patel is not the first foreign activist to be denied entry to India. In fact, the Hari Sharma Foundation had invited two more activists and authors in the past who have the same story. David Barsamian, a US based broadcaster, continues to be denied visa for writing against atrocities in Kashmir and central India by the Indian armed forces. The Swedish author Jan Myrdal was also refused visa for writing about the Maoist insurgency in India. Notably, the late Hari Sharma, who was himself a social justice activist, was denied an India visa a number of times for criticising the Indian establishment on issues including the repression of religious minorities and press censorship.

-RDNB

### Punjabi journalist allege suspension under political pressure

**S**hiv Inder Singh, a Punjabi based independent journalist, has alleged that he has been suspended by Radio Red FM under political pressure.

Singh used to give Surrey-based Radio Red FM a daily update on current affairs in India.

In a letter to the CRTC, the regulatory body for radio and TV stations in Canada, Singh claims that he was suspended for three months for criticising the current right wing government in India and its policies. But Red FM CEO Kulwinder Sanghera denies this. If Sanghera is to

be believed, Singh has been asked to temporarily stop giving his services as they want to change their format. He claims that they are not under any political pressure, and Singh was never suspended.

Nevertheless, he admits having received some complaints from listeners about Singh's critical commentary, which some found to be offensive.

Singh maintains that he was asked to wait for three months after he had a heated argument with an on-air host over strong disagreements about the policies of the current Indian government. Later, two of his friends who live in Surrey visited Sanghera to enquire about his

status. According to Singh, they were told that this action was taken because of complaints from several listeners, but the station would bring him back on air after some time.

Singh believes that this action was taken under pressure from the pro-India lobby and Indian officials in Vancouver. In the meantime, the South Asian Network for Secularism and Democracy (SANSAD) has condemned the development. In a statement issued by the group, SANSAD sees a pattern behind continued attempts to muzzle the voice of journalists under the present government in India.

-RDNB

## Remembering Tundilaat

**T**his month marks the 132<sup>nd</sup> birth anniversary of Harnam Singh Tundilaat, a dedicated radical political activist who fought for social justice and the liberation of India from British occupation.

Born on October 26, 1884, Tundilaat's father was a marginal Sikh farmer in Punjab. The family lived in penury because of the unfavourable agrarian policies of the British government. As a result of this, many young men were forced to either join the British army or migrate abroad for better livelihoods.

Tundilaat's family was influenced by the Singh Sabha movement, a reformist and progressive social campaign of its time, which encouraged the Sikhs to stay away from superstition and blind faith. This had an impact on Tundilaat. While he was still a child, he started questioning the untouchability within Indian society that remains divided in four caste groups. The so-called low caste people are often discriminated against and treated as "untouchables" by those on the top of this ladder in orthodox Hindu society. Tundilaat often resisted peer pressure to practise this brutal system at school. He even refused to follow the orders of a teacher who wanted him to respect the conservative caste

code. Thanks to the Singh Sabha movement, the early teaching he received at home might have shaped his forward thinking ideas in the years to come.

As he grew, he even started questioning rituals in the Sikh religion.

In 1902, because of financial hardships, he joined the British army, but was soon disillusioned by the attitude of

white officers toward Indian soldiers. Back in his mind, he worried about the possibility of oppressing his compatriots at the behest of the British government. He quit the army in 1906 and decided to go to America to earn his living.

He first arrived at Vancouver and worked at a sawmill in Port Moody.

In Canada, Tundilaat and others like him had to endure

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racism. Under the pressure of white supremacy, the Canadian authorities conspired to relocate Indian immigrants to Honduras to keep Canada a "white man's country". A struggle against this conspiracy was launched and Tundilaat participated in it. The Indian immigrants won that battle, as the plan to relocate them did not materialize.

In 1909 or 1910 he moved to Oregon, where the Indian immigrants decided to get organized and fight back, both against racism and colonialism back home. They had realized that until India was liberated from foreign rule, they would not get equal rights or respect anywhere in the world. This awakening gave birth to the Ghadar Party that believed in an armed struggle. Launched in 1913 in Astoria, an Oregon city with a large immigrant population, the party wanted to establish an egalitarian and secular society in post-British India. Tundilaat became an active member.

Tundilaat was sent to San Francisco, where the Ghadar Party had established its headquarters. Being physically strong, he was assigned the responsibility of a bodyguard for the party leader Lala Hardayal. He also used to write revolutionary poems that were frequently printed in a newsletter published by the Ghadar Party. One of his poems emphasized people's

unity, and called upon the community to give up unnecessary customs and religious practices to unitedly fight against aggressors. This had enraged some Sikh

fanatics.

Tundilaat was later included in the editorial board of *Ghadar* newspaper.

He also learnt making bombs. During one of the bomb-

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making experiments, he lost his right limb. This incident gave him the last name of Tundilaat, in reference to his lost arm. Nevertheless, he got an artificial limb.

In 1914, when Britain became locked in a war with Germany, the Ghadar activists decided to return and launch an armed revolt with the help of Indian soldiers in the British army. They thought it was a right time to strike as their enemy was preoccupied. Upon return, many Ghadar activists were arrested, while others worked underground. They could not succeed in starting a rebellion partly due to lack of public support and partly because their plan was leaked.

Tundilaat was arrested in February 1915. Initially given a death sentence, his punishment was commuted to life imprisonment following appeals by sympathetic Indians. He was among 17 people whose death sentence was revoked. Notably, Tundilaat never made an appeal himself and was willing to face death with courage.

He and others were sent to a far away prison on the Andaman Islands, where they had to go through many hardships. Tundilaat and other political prisoners had to resort to hunger strikes against mistreatment.

After almost sixteen years he was freed from incarceration. Yet he never rested in peace,

and continued his struggle against foreign rule. The efforts of Tundilaat and his comrades bore fruits when British left India in 1947.

By this time, Tundilaat had joined the Communist Party.

True to his commitment for a secular society, he saved the lives of Muslims from Hindu and Sikh fundamentalists during the religious strife after Muslim Pakistan was separated from India. The partition of the two countries on religious lines was the legacy of British rule. This division led to large scale violence on both sides of the border. Hindus and Sikhs became targets of Muslim fundamentalists on the Pakistani side, and Muslims became the victims of Hindu and Sikh fanatics on the other side. In post-British India too, Tundilaat had to go to jail for participating in people's struggles.

He was hit by cancer and died on November 18, 1962.

While Tundilaat is no more, his legacy is still relevant not only in India, but also in Canada and the US. As long as racism continues to exist in North America and affect the lives of the indigenous peoples and other minority groups, he will remain relevant. In India, where religious bigotry has grown under the current right-wing Hindu nationalist government and caste-based

discrimination refuses to die, Tundilaat's legacy has become even more relevant. Rather than paying symbolic tributes to Tundilaat, all the so-called flag bearers of Ghadar ideology must resolve to keep his struggle for secularism and social equality alive. Any attempt to appropriate Ghadar history must be challenged. It's a shame that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is being invited to the Ghadar memorial in San Francisco to launch a project for remodelling the building to its original form. The artificial limb of Tundilaat is on display inside the building. Modi represents a far-right Hindu nationalist ideology. He was the Chief Minister of Gujarat, scene of an anti-Muslim massacre in 2002. Survivors of the violence continue to allege Modi's complicity in the bloodbath, though he was never charged or convicted. Under his government, attacks on religious minorities have grown across India. Likewise, the Sikh separatists have also been trying to distort the Ghadar history by projecting it as a Sikh movement. Even though a majority of those who became members of the Ghadar Party were Sikhs, the party remained secular in character and denounced chauvinism of every shade.

-RDNB



