

**Grade: 8**

**Course: Virṣā (ਵਿਰਸਾ)**

**Lesson Number: 24 - 26**

**Unit Name: Sikh (ਸਿੱਖ) Tensions in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

**Title: The Sikh Diaspora: Before 1947**

### **Standards**

#### **Standard 7: The Sikh Diaspora: before 1947**

- Students identify characteristics of the Sikh diaspora communities that ventured prior 1947
  - Students understand the characteristics and concerns of the Sikh communities that migrated before 1947, especially those communities in South East Asia and Africa.

### **Objectives**

1. Students will complete T charts by analyzing the information on South East Asia and Africa.

### **Prerequisites**

- Previous lesson on the partition of Pañjāb

### **Materials**

- Copy of readings and T charts (in Teacher Resources)
- Copy of map(s), or go to [www. nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com) to print some
- Pencils
- Chart paper or Board

### **Advanced Preparation**

- Teachers should look over the readings.
- Make copies of the graphic organizer(s) and readings.
- Draw the graphic organizer/ web on chart paper or on the board so you can have a larger web to complete with the students.

### **Engagement (15 to 20 minutes)**

- Ask students if they know where their parents are from and where they lived most of their lives. This discussion is a follow-up to discussion that began in Lesson 22. Students should have had the opportunity to ask their parents and grandparents questions about their migration patterns.
- See if any of your students have stories about where their parents, grandparents or great-grandparents were brought up. Try to look for stories about parents that were immigrants in another country.
- Ask students to share with their classmates what they know.
- Ask students to explain how being an immigrant has affected their or their families' lives.
- Ask students to address some of their concerns as Sikhs or what some of their families' concerns have been.
- Try to see if any of the students have stories from Africa or East Asia. For example, they may have family members or family friends who were brought up in Kenya and they might have shared some stories about their life there. (Note to teacher: If your students do not have any stories to share feel free to share your own stories or, if you are an immigrant from Africa or East Asia, please share with the students after you have given them the opportunity to share their stories.)

- Let students know that we will be analyzing the Sikh Diaspora before 1947 and will be looking at the characteristics and concerns of Sikh families that migrated to East Asia and Africa before 1946.
- For students to become familiar with the regions it is suggested that they make a map of the region or at least analyze a map of the region. (Teachers can go to [www.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com) and then go to Printable Wall Maps and select Asia and Africa for the students to assemble together.)
- Ask students to locate Kenya on the Africa map and South East Asia, especially Singapore on the Asia map.

### **Exploration (35 minutes)**

- Hand out the reading on the Sikh diaspora (in Teacher Resources). Ask students to read it silently to get a general idea about the events involved.
- Hand out the T-chart on South-East Asia (in Teacher Resources) and explain to students how to complete it. Ask students to write characteristics in the first column and concerns in the second column.
- Now hand out South-East Asia Reading (in Teacher Resources) and ask students to read silently to themselves.
- Now ask students to go back and complete the chart on what they just read.
- Discuss with students what they wrote for both sides of the chart (You might also want to write it up on the board for all students to see as they discuss it).
- Repeat with Africa reading (You might want to complete this on the second day).

### **Explanation/ Extension (5 to 10 minutes)**

- Provide each student a picture of a famous Sikh from the Sikh Diaspora (in Teacher Resources).
- If possible give the students an opportunity to research the person. Maybe computers and books could be made available or you may allow students to talk to other students to figure out who these persons are. You can also assign the research as a homework assignment so it can be discussed at the next class. Let them know that they are to present the importance of their person at the next class and should be prepared.
- Teachers should encourage student to explore [www.sikhpioneers.org](http://www.sikhpioneers.org) for further study of Sikhs in the United States.

### **Evaluation (On-Going)**

- Teachers should collect T charts and evaluate them for completion.

### Teacher Resources

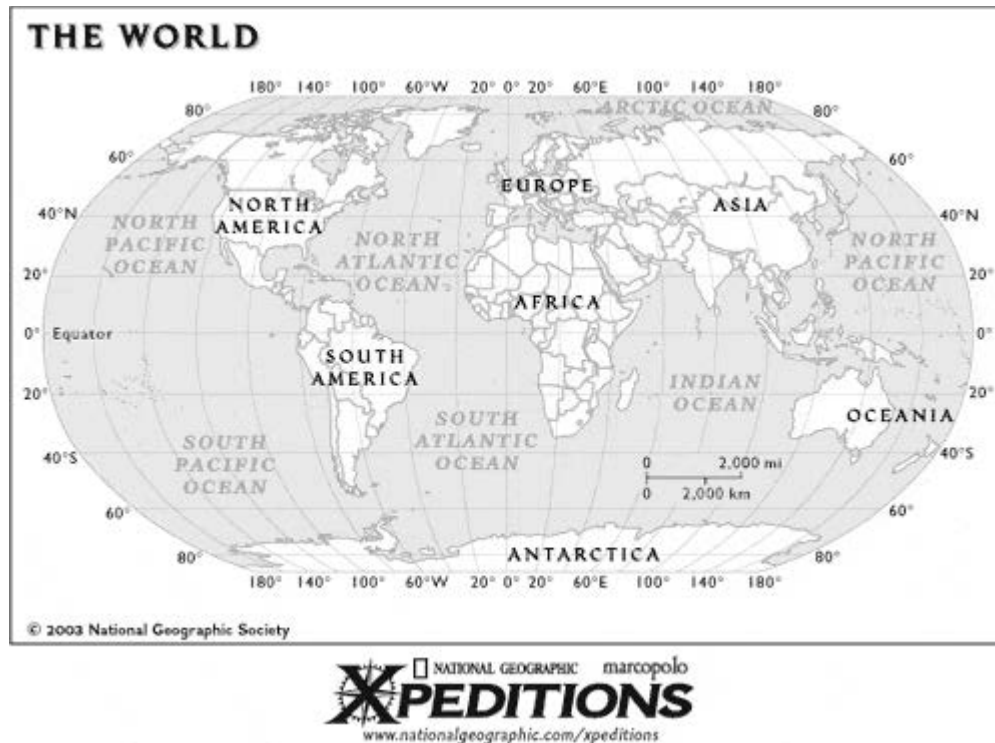
- Ballantyne, Tony. *Between Colonialism and Diaspora: Sikh cultural Formations in an Imperial World*. London: Duke University Press, 2006.
- Angelo, Michael. *The Sikh Diaspora: Tradition and Change in an Immigrant Community*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc, 1997.
- Hawley, John Stratton & Mann, Gurinder Singh. *Studying the Sikhs Issues for North America*. New York: State University, 1993.



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### Sikh (ਸਿੱਖ) Diaspora

You can easily say that a Sikh can be found anywhere in the world. There are an estimated 25 million Sikhs around the globe. The largest Diapora (outside of Indian-Panjab and beyond South Asia) is in three countries: Canada, the USA, and the UK. The UK has the largest Sikh presence in terms of population. While even today a majority of the Sikhs live in Pañjāb (ਪੰਜਾਬ) there has been an outward migration to most areas of the world over the past 200 years. By the end of the nineteenth century Sikhs started migrating in significant numbers to as far away places as Fiji, New Zealand, Australia, and to the South-east Asian countries of Singapore and Malaysia.

In the late 19 century, the posting of Sikh soldiers in the British army to stations in Malaysia and Hong Kong prompted Sikh emigration to those territories, which eventually became jumping-off points for further migration to Australia, New Zealand and Fiji, especially for those seeking temporary employment as unskilled laborers. Others Sikhs discovered opportunities along the West Coast of North America, the first emigrant evidently arriving in 1903.

Semi-skilled artisans were also transported from Pañjāb to British East Africa to help in the building of railways. After World War II and the partitioin of Pañjāb, Sikhs emigrated from both India and Pakistan, most going to the United Kingdom but many also headed for North America. Some of the Sikhs who had settled in Eastern Africa were expelled by Ugandan dictator Idi Amin in 1972; most of them moved to the United Kingdom, becoming twice migrants. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century the Sikh population in that country was more than 300,000, and there are communities of 180,000 to 200,000 members each in the United States and Canada.

### Sikhs in North America

Sikhs first arrived in the North America about 100 years ago and were also the first South Asians to migrate there. This migration was based on farming, industrial and educational skills but later it was focused mainly on the farming industry. Some Sikh engineers were brought to US by the government

for the construction of railroads, mainly in the North-west and Panama Canal, in late 1900's. The first Sikh population arrived to California in 1899. An article of San Francisco announced the arrival of the first 4 Sikhs in San Francisco on the front-page. Most of the Asians who came to United States in late 1900- 1980 were Sikhs from Pañjāb. ([www.sikhpride.com](http://www.sikhpride.com)).

### **Sikhs in South-East Asia**

Malaysia and Sikhs: Malaysia was the first foreign country that the Sikhs from Pañjāb emigrated to. This was mainly because of the death of the legendary ruler Sardār Rañjīt Singh (ਸਰਦਾਰ ਰਣਜੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ) in 1839. Next Bhāi Mahārāj Singh (ਭਾਈ ਮਹਾਰਾਜ ਸਿੰਘ) and his follower Carkā Singh (ਚਰਕਾ ਸਿੰਘ) were exiled by the British to Singapore in 1850. He was kept in a windowless dungeon at Outram Road, where he died six years later. In 1915, as a result of the propaganda by the revolutionary Gadar (ਗਦਰ) party in California, the Indian troops stationed in Singapore rebelled against the British. Articles and poems on the revolution were widely circulated in secret. However, the British managed to suppress the mutiny, but there was mass abandonment from the regiments. Soldiers fled by crossing over to Johor, an island of Malaysia. They received a lot of help from the railway construction workers along the way, and others provided food, clothing and cash for them to return home. It is interesting to note that it was much easier for the Pañjābi Muslims to escape who blended in with the Malays than the Sikh troops who had to disguise themselves by cutting their long hair for fear of being captured. Most escaped to Siam.

When the Sikh population began to rise on the Peninsula, a unique service established itself in railway towns like Taiping, Kuala Kangsar and Tanjung Malim. It became a common sight to see Sikh men with milk churns standing on the railway platforms, giving away free heated fresh milk. As followers of Sikhī, these Sikh men voluntarily gave milk to any needy child or adult, whatever the race or religious affiliation. Wealthy Sikh cattle owners gladly donated their extra milk for this purpose. A few Sikh individuals even spent their time giving away cooked food to travelers.

Taiping was the headquarters of the Malay States Guides (MSG), a body of local Indian troops which was formed of Malaysia's own regiment. In 1873, the person in charge was worried about rivalry from another clan in the Tin mining region, so they decided to get men from Pañjāb to maintain law and order. He consulted Captain T. Speedy, who formed the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Perak Sikhs, which originally comprised 110 men of Sikh, Hindu, and Paṭhān (ਪਠਾਨ) origins. This battalion became MSG in 1896. During the First World War, the MSG regiment was mobilized to serve in Aden.

The early Sikh community in Malaya produced a string of creative writers. In one book *Maha Jang Europe* (ਮਹਾ ਜੰਗ ਯੋਰਪ) (Great European War) 1914-1918 AD, the writer Havalḍār (Sgt.) Nand Singh (ਹਵਲਦਾਰ ਨੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ) vividly described the daring exploits of the Malay States Guides in Aden when they fought the Turkish forces. Another writer, Gurbakhsh Singh Kesarī (ਗੁਰਬਖਸ਼ ਸਿੰਘ ਕੇਸਰੀ), the police Granthī (ਗ੍ਰੰਥੀ), published about 70 booklets. Gurbakhsh's *Panth Jāgvān* (ਪੰਥ ਜਾਗਵਨ) (Path of Awakening) had a profound influence in awakening the masses in Pañjāb.

The largest Sikh community in Malaysia during the time of the First World War was in the district of Larut and Matang in Perak. When the Malaya States Guides were disbanded, the Singh Sabhā (ਸਿੰਘ ਸਭਾ), a registered local Sikh society, convinced the British that the *Gurduārā* (ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ), within the Taiping army compound belonged to the Sikhs and not the military. They agreed and a new *Gurduārā* was built on the site and it is today called the Gurduārā Sahib Taiping.

Currently, the social situation in Malaysia has begun to deteriorate. There has been an erosion of Sikh values accompanied by the loss of the outward form of Sikhī among the educated class. Without any guidance from their parents and with no support from religious institutions, Sikh boys and girls have started to intermingle and intermarry with South Indians, Muslim Malays and Chinese. Dr. Manjīt Singh Sidhū (ਡਾ: ਮਨਜੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਿਧੂ) author of ‘Sikhs in Malaysia’ estimates that about 70% of Sikh children aged 10 and above cannot read and write Pañjābī. Many Sikh professionals in Malaysia consider it a sign of progress to mix with other nationalities and to copy their lifestyle, which includes drinking and smoking. However, some Sikhs in Malaysia are trying to put the young Sikh youth back in touch with Sikhī by holding holiday camps for the youth to foster Sikh values.

*Below is a typical story of an early migrant to Singapore.*

This is the story of Harī Singh (ਹਰੀ ਸਿੰਘ) from Gurdāspur (ਗੁਰਦਾਸਪੁਰ) district. Harī Singh came to Singapore in 1885. He traveled, like many others on deck, cooking his own meals. He landed in Singapore at Tanjong Pagar and was helped by some Sikh policemen on duty who gave him temporary accommodation. Sundar Singh (ਸੁੰਦਰ ਸਿੰਘ), a police constable, helped him find a job patrolling the grounds of the Botanical Gardens. Like many of the Sikhs in Singapore then, Harī Singh led a very frugal life, saving most of his money to send back home to help out his relatives. A couple of years after his arrival, Harī Singh brought out his younger brother Jaimal Singh (ਜੈਮਲ ਸਿੰਘ) and found him a job as an additional police constable. The job of these police constables in those days consisted of guarding the government run opium shops which were then legal in Singapore.

Many of these early Sikhs came as bachelors and then later returned to India with some money. When they did return they married and tried to bring their families with them. However, for Harī Singh things were a little different because his older brother died suddenly leaving a young son. Harī Singh adopted the son whose name is Ācar Singh (ਆਚਰ ਸਿੰਘ). When Harī Singh returned back to Singapore after being in India for some time he decided to buy some land to keep some dairy cows. He started with three cows and began what was eventually to become a full-time business. Soon after Harī Singh started his own family, and put a great emphasis on education.

Another Sikh, Sevā Singh Sidūke (ਸੇਵਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਿਧੂਕੇ) whose village is close to Harī Singh came to Singapore in the early 1900's and also began his own cattle business. Sevā Singh's eldest son, Divān Singh Randhāvā (ਦਿਵਾਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਰੰਧਾਵਾ) till the 1980's ran the only Pañjābī Weekly newspaper in Singapore. Harī Singh's descendants, now fourth generation Sikhs in Singapore, are comfortably settled middle class Singaporeans.

Today there are several *Gurduārās* in Singapore to accommodate the large Sikh population and their spiritual needs.

### **About Malaysia**

Abused Sikh workers left high and dry

Kuala Lumpur - Darshan Singh's (ਦਰਸ਼ਨ ਸਿੰਘ) story is all too familiar for many human rights activists. He was recruited from the Indian state of Pañjāb (ਪੰਜਾਬ) to work in a Malaysian company. Things soon turned nasty when the labor recruiter pocketed all his salary, housed him in a cramped place, fed him flour and lentils and went further to abuse and torture him.

The 29-year-old Darshan, a practicing Sikh, sold his motorcycle, all of his wife's few and precious jewels and borrowed 8,600 ringgit (2,261 U.S. dollars) from a loan shark to buy an air ticket to Malaysia. The air ticket price also included a 'visa and agents' fee'. All this was done on the promises of a soft-spoken Pañjābī-speaking woman who acted as the labor recruiter.

The labor recruiter had promised Darshan a “safe and secure” job laying electrical cables and a guaranteed 1,500 ringgit (395 U.S. dollars) a month, with food and lodging thrown in together with medical benefits. He hoped to work for three years and to return home with enough hard cash to pay off the loan, buy his wife new jewelry, get himself a new motorcycle and hopefully have enough left to start a small business in his village in Pañjāb. Like other migrant workers, Darshan’s dream was dashed the day he landed at the spanking new billion dollar Kuala Lumpur International Airport with 17 other workers that the agent had recruited from Pañjāb. Their passports and the remaining cash they had was taken away; the terms of their work contract were altered and they were ‘sold off’ to another employer.

Since arriving in Malaysia, Darshan and the others suffered nothing but misery. Today their home is a Sikh Gurduārā in the city that has been kind enough to give them temporary refuge. “We worked hard but were not paid the promised wages since the day we arrived...we were physically abused. Today we have nothing but the clothes we wear, no passports, no money, no jobs and no future,” Darshan told IPS. “All our dreams are shattered,” he said. “We have huge debts back home and can’t go back unless we get work here, save money and return home to pay up.” Under the circumstances such a possibility remains a distant dream.

Darshan is a Sikh and also feels humiliated that he was forced to discard his turban and cut his hair short on the grounds that he had to wear a safety helmet in his job. “I was deeply humiliated,” Darshan said. Two other Sikhs had their hair cut too. According to the workers they were warned that if they wore turbans again they would lose their job. On Wednesday, Darshan and the 17 workers related their plight to the National Human Rights Commission or SUHAKAM—a government funded human rights body with only an advisory role to the authorities. SUHAKAM commissioners Simon Sipaun and Jamaludin Othman, who heard their stories, were staggered by the inhumanity inflicted on these Sikh workers. “I cannot understand how one human being can treat another so cruelly and inhumanely...theirs is a sad story and I wonder how the employer would feel if the roles were reversed,” Sipaun told a press conference. “We will investigate the matter,” he said. The workers were taken to see SUHAKAM by Aegile Fernandez, program co-coordinator of TENAGANITA or Women’s Force—a leading human rights NGO that champions the rights of migrant workers and women in vulnerable situations.

The workers related how they were crowded into a room with only one fan and many slept on the floor. “We had rice and dāl (lentils) for food and were paid 130 ringgit (34 U.S. dollars) each for the three months of work we had done,” one of the workers said. “We were hungry most of the time,” said another worker. One day in mid July, Fernandez said, the 18 workers walked out of their jobs and made their way to the Indian High Commission seeking help. They were also referred to TENAGANITA. “The workers were abused, tortured, humiliated and exploited by the agents and contractors,” said Fernandez who urged firm police action against the perpetrators. Fernandez told IPS TENAGANITA would also lodge reports with the International Labor Organization and the United Nations Special Reporter on Rights of Migrant Workers to seek justice and publicize the plight of migrant workers in Malaysia.

“This is a classic case of abuse by employers who took the workers wages, housed them in a cramped place, gave them flour and dhal as food and abused and humiliated them,” Fernandez said.

“This is fraudulent recruitment made on false promises and tantamount to trafficking of people for labor,” she said. “It is in direct violation of the U.N. Optional Protocol against Trafficking and Smuggling of Persons.” “The government must take this abuse seriously and right the wrong,” she said, adding that forcing Sikhs to crop their hair is “deeply humiliating” and tantamount to torture.

She also said agents, contractors and employers have come to believe that they would not be punished for abusing and maltreating migrant workers. “Very few employers have ever been punished,” she said.

Human rights NGOs, having seen the same pattern of abuse of migrant workers over and over again have demanded a total revamp of the entire employment system but without much success. Fernandez said there are three factors why such migrant workers persist. One, corruption backed with a thriving number of recruiting agencies in the Asian region, makes it easy to bring people through illegal means. Second, many employers withhold the passports and other documents of their migrant employees. During raids when the migrant is forced to leave his work, the documents are left behind. Without proper papers, the migrant becomes undocumented. Third, many employers themselves “like to keep” undocumented workers because the former “don’t have to spend much money”.

Adapted from: Baradan Kuppusamy

### **Sikhs in East Africa**

Sikhs have been migrating to East Africa since 1890’s. They established themselves as a very hard working, honest, religious and skilled community. Their contribution to East Africa is phenomenal. The history of the Sikhs of East Africa begins with the Railway—though groups of Sikh Regiments had seen service in certain parts of East Africa in previous years. The Sikhs who were brought over from India to build the old Uganda Railways were skilled workmen—carpenters, blacksmiths and masons. They were quick to adapt themselves to the specialized requirements of the railways and many became fitters, turners and boiler-makers.

These early Sikhs were soon joined by their educated brothers. There was no department of the pioneering Railway without the Sikhs. A number of policemen, ranging from inspectors to constables, were also sent from India to become the vital instrument of maintaining law and order. They remained in the country for several years. Many, but not all, of the original Sikh arrivals returned to India to be replaced and augmented by others who came of their own desire. Their skills and industry were always in great demand. The Sikhs penetrated into every nook and corner of East Africa to erect buildings and to build the roads; to undertake general maintenance work on the farms; to serve in the offices and to assume charge of the hospitals.

The manner in which the Sikhs increased their usefulness to Kenya is a saga of resource and initiative and perseverance. They undertook with confidence any type of work, which required skill and industry. They became highly successful farmers. They responded magnificently to the growing needs of the country by improving and diversifying their capabilities. They became contractors and furniture makers. Sikhs also helped in the transporting problems of Kenya before the motoring era by helping to build and operate Indian style bullock carts. When the motorcar did arrive Sikhs converted themselves to mechanics and engineers. They began to own garages and engineering workshops.

With every succeeding year the Sikhs adopted a steadily rising standard of living; they gave the best possible education to their children, and they invested by far the greatest proportion of their earnings within the country. The Sikhs entered all the professions including the police, the civil service, educational and medical institutions and even factories.

There were, however, no acute extremes in the local Sikhs in wealth. Throughout East Africa, the Sikhs of substantial wealth were very few. It was mostly a community of middle-income because instances of extreme poverty were also scarce. During the initial 60 years or so of the last millennium, the Sikhs built nearly 40 *Gurduārās* (ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ) in various towns of East Africa. They also managed a dozen ‘aided’ schools of which one is in Nairobi and was among the largest in the whole country.



Sikh women's organizations were attached to every Sikh Gurduārā. There were several Sikh study circles, libraries, and young men's associations. A Sikh missionary society was set up to publish Sikh literature on many occasions.

The Sikhs had also served in the politics of Kenya. They had been members of the Legislative Council and of all the municipal councils. They had also taken part in numerous other bodies and commissions and committees. The Sikh Communities of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania were among the largest outside India.

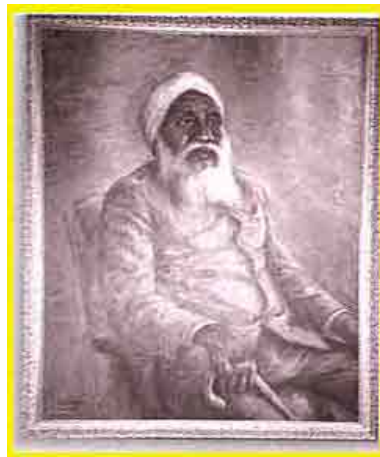
*Below are some actual interviews and stories from Sikhs in East Africa.*

### **The Portrait in My Office**

I'm 90 now and I can't remember everything, but I'll tell you what I can about my background in India and my first years in Africa. Our family had a farm in the village of Juṇḍālī (ਜੁੰਡਾਲੀ), in the Ludhiāṇā (ਲੁਧਿਆਣਾ) district of the Pañjāb (ਪੰਜਾਬ). We were farmers; Jats (ਜੱਟ)—all Gills were traditionally farmers; Gills are what you could call a clan of Jats. My mother died when I was just five hours old; I was brought up by her brother and his wife.

I was sent to the best school in the area, a school in Ludhiāṇā run by the Ārya Samāj (ਆਰਯ ਸਮਾਜ). No, it didn't matter that the Ārya Samājists are very staunch Hindus and we Jats are Sikhs; my father had good relations with the Ārya Samāj people. He did not care what religion anyone belonged to; he said that the only thing important in religion is to believe in God, to be honest and to be good to people.

I completed Standard 8 in that school and then I returned to my father who had remarried. My little half-brothers were going to a private school in our village. As I had finished my schooling I used to take them to school in the mornings and collect them in the afternoon. One day the headmaster, knowing that I had learned English, asked me what I was doing. I said, "Nothing." So he gave me a job teaching in his school, with a salary of 13 rupees a month. It was a small school, built of bricks with about 100 boys.



Now, at that time the British were encouraging people to come to British East Africa. Another of my uncles, my mother's brother Nāhar Singh Paṅglī (ਨਾਹਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਪੰਗਲੀ), took advantage of the opportunity and came here in about 1915 to work as an accountant with the Railway. My uncle knew I wanted to better myself too so he arranged a permit for me to come to Kenya but told me, 'Wait until I write to

you that there is an opportunity open and only then come.’ But I was eager and didn’t want to wait. I got to know a Hindu named Sanīwāl (ਸਨੀਵਾਲ), from a nearby village, who had come back on leave from Africa. I told him I wanted to go to join my uncle. It turned out that he was also working as an accountant for the railway and he knew my uncle. So he said he would take me with him when he returned to his job. Sanīwāl told me to meet him at the Railway station at Ludhiānā with my passport, my permit and 300 rupees (which my father loaned me). We traveled together by train to Bombay and then boarded a steamer. We traveled deck class—the fare was 65 rupees (my father gave me the money for that) which included our food. And so in 1922, when I was 20 years old, I came to Africa.

We landed at Mombasa and went up to Nairobi by train. My companion took me to my uncle who was very surprised to see me. But he welcomed me and got me into the Railway School as a trainee. I lived with him. As he was here with his wife and their children, three sons and a daughter, and was renting a house, there was room for me. After finishing my training I was taken on as a telegraphist at sh 20/- a month (US\$0.30). I was very happy that I had come, for that was much better than being a teacher earning 13 rupees. I worked for the Railway for over forty years, up until 1963. I was sent to different stations along the line in Kenya: Njoro, Molo, Muhoroni, Kibos, Kipikori, Kisumu. There were a lot of European settlers at Njoro and Mob. Lord Delamere was at Njoro. Yes, we knew each other. As I spoke English I got to know the Settlers. They’d come to me for booking wagons for transporting their produce out and bringing supplies in. We got along very well. That was a wonderful job, working with the Settlers. After four or five years I was promoted to Stationmaster grade at sh 250/- a month (\$3.80). My Pañjābī colleagues all called me Bāūjī (ਬਾਊ ਜੀ)—sort of a title of respect for government officials.

I saw that things were good, so when I went home on leave in 1925 I brought my wife Bacan Kaur (ਬਚਨ ਕੌਰ) back with me (we’d been married when we were 12, but had not been allowed to see each other again until we were 19, just before I left home). Then in 1926 I was transferred to Uganda. I began doing other business on the side; I went into saw-milling and had cotton ginneries. I settled in Jinja and built a fine house, which I called Lakeview. The rest is well known: I became one of the three multi-millionaires of Jinja, along with Mahtā (ਮਹਤਾ) and Madhvānī (ਮਧਵਾਨੀ) (both of whom made their money in sugar)... and then I was one of the thousands of Asians thrown out by Idi Amin in 1972.

Fortunately I had kept ties in Kenya. I’d laid the foundations stones of both the old and the new Singh Sabhā (ਸਿੰਘ ਸਭਾ) temples in Nairobi, and in 1948-50 I had built Gill House, the first 5-storey building in town—a skyscraper in those days, which I rented to the colonial government for offices. So in 1972 I came back to Kenya, where I had started my career as ‘Bauji’. It was all because of my Uncle Nāhar Singh that I am what I am today. I still keep his portrait in my office. Yes, though I am 90 years old I still go to the office every day.

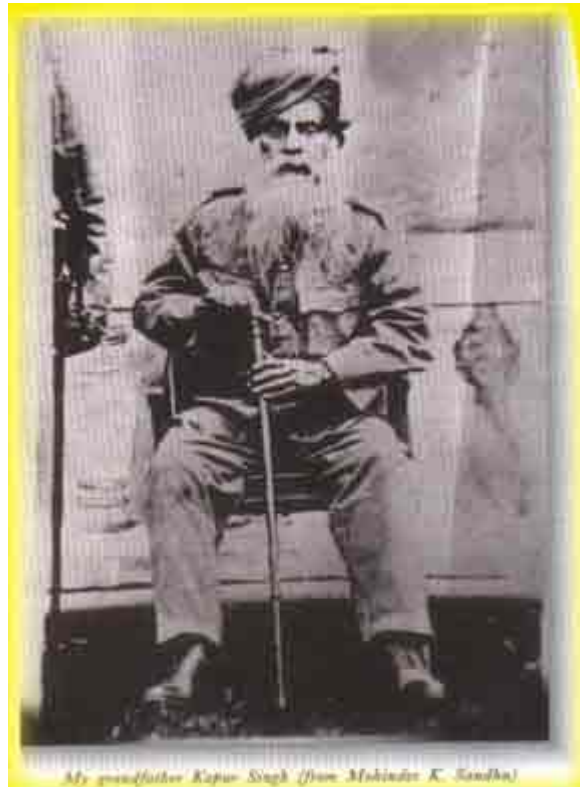
### **The First Indian (Sikh) Police Inspector**

Mohindar Kaur Sandhū (ਮੋਹਿੰਦਰ ਕੌਰ ਸੰਧੂ), Nairobi

My grandfather Kapūr Singh (ਕਪੂਰ ਸਿੰਘ) was the first Indian Inspector of Police here. He was originally from the village of Gaggobūhā (ਗੱਗੋਬੁਹਾ), near Amritsar in India, and he joined the police force there. First he was posted to Baluchistan, and then in 1895 he was seconded from India to work with the Kenya Police.

Kapūr Singh became greatly respected, not only because of his high rank in the police force but also in his community. He had the honor of laying the foundation stone of the first Sikh temple in Nairobi. Although the building, the Singh Sabhā Gurduārā (ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ), has been greatly altered, the original

plaque with his name is still there. He also laid the foundation stones of mosques in Nakuru, Kisumu and Mombasa. That shows not only how respected he was but also how good inter-communal relationships were in those days.



*My grandfather Kapūr Singh (from Mohinder K. Sandhu)*

When my grandfather retired he returned to India, and eventually died there. I was born and raised here in Kenya and so I never knew him, so I can't tell you anything more about him. But my husband and I can tell you about his son Satbachan Singh (ਸਤਬਚਨ ਸਿੰਘ) who was my father.

From an interview with late Indar Singh Gill (ਇੰਦਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਗਿੱਲ), Nairobi

### **The Oldest Police Officer**

My grandfather Kapūr Singh (ਕਪੂਰ ਸਿੰਘ) was already married when he came to Kenya. His wife stayed in Gaggobūhā (ਗੱਗਬੁਹਾ), except for one brief visit here. They had three sons and a daughter. The daughter died, one son stayed in India, but two sons followed their father to Kenya and also joined the police. One was Lakashaman Singh (ਲਕਸ਼ਮਨ ਸਿੰਘ) and the other was my father Satbachan Singh (ਸਤਬਚਨ ਸਿੰਘ), who was born in 1900. In his career as a police officer my father Satbachan Singh moved around a lot as he was transferred from place to place, but most of the time he was in Nairobi. In the early days Nairobi was very wild, covered with bush. When he went on his rounds he would come back covered with ticks. Sometimes he encountered lions. He was posted up to Cherangani, and out at Tigoni too, in Settler days.

“Satbachan Singh was not at all what one thinks of as a typical policeman. He was a very gentle man. He never raised his voice, never got angry.”

Around 1915 or 1916 he got married in India to my mother Hukam Kaur (ਹੁਕਮ ਕੌਰ) and brought her out here, and she moved around with him. They had two sons and then me, their only daughter. I was born in Kisumu, where my father happened to be posted then. When I was three years old he was transferred to Lamu. He was sent there especially to keep an eye out for possible infiltration of enemy agents—Germans and Italians.



Previously, sometime in the late 1920s I think, he had been posted to Voi to halt the slaughter of elephants for their ivory. My father was very fond of Nature (he later became a founder of the Wildlife Society) and was angry about all the poaching. He walked miles and miles in the forests around Voi until he finally got to the source of the poaching and captured the man responsible for the entire killing and smuggling. My father tied the man to a tree and threatened to burn him unless he told where the ivory was hidden. The poacher of course told, and all the ivory was recovered. My father's boss was so pleased that he told my father, 'Pick out the best tusk as your reward for controlling the poaching'.

Perhaps the reason my father was so fond of Nature and the outdoors was that his family was in farming in India. He bought a farm here, 400 acres of land at the foothills of the Nandi Hills near Miwani. My uncle Lakshaman Singh (ਲਕਸ਼ਮਣ ਸਿੰਘ) retired from the Police to run the farm and my father spent as much time as he could there. I stayed there when I was a little girl, four and five years old, before I had to go to school—the Indian Primary School in Nairobi.

Because I was the youngest I was my father's pet and I remember him taking my mother and me for walks around the farm. Most of the farm was planted with sugarcane but he also had pedigree cows of which he was very proud, and pigs. He was the first Indian to whom the Colonial Government gave a license to keep and breed pigs. He also had a fine orchard with a lot of fruit trees he imported from South Africa, including seedless oranges. He kept horses there, for he loved riding and was a very good horseman (but he never taught me to ride). He had a couple of horses on the farm, brown ones, and he kept one for his own use in Nairobi too. He was also good at shooting. Even when we were living in town, my father liked to be outdoors. He was very fond of picnics and every Sunday he'd take us all on an outing somewhere. He was a strict parent (it was our mother who was the soft one) and a very serious person (he always dressed very well, in jacket and trousers when not in uniform). But he also had a good sense of humor and liked to relax with his friends. He had close friends in all

the communities, Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, and Europeans too (he was a good friend of Dr. Leakey, the old Leakey who was a naturalist). He was usually very busy with his CID work all day, but in the evenings his friends would come around and visit him. Often he'd have visitors from India, especially people wanting his help in getting settled here.

Once, my father resigned from the police force for a day. There had been theft of money at the Norfolk hotel. Fingerprints were taken and suspicion pointed to a European woman. When my father was driving her to the police station she became terribly upset. He assured her she would not go to jail. But when she was searched, the money was found in her panties. My father let her go anyway; as he said, he'd promised her she would not go to jail, and he could not go back on his word. When the Commissioner found out he was furious. My father, knowing that according to regulations he should have charged her, submitted his resignation. The next day the Commissioner came to him and said, 'Forget your resignation. You're on duty.'

My father retired in 1945/ 46 but then was recalled because of the Emergency. He left the management of the farm in the hands of a nephew; a son of his brother Lakashaman Singh. (Both his own sons were otherwise occupied: the elder, who worked in the post office, was also a police reservist, and the younger was in a special branch of the police.) Things did not go well and in 1968 he sold out and returned to Gaggobūhā. (My mother had passed away in 1948.) He came back for a visit in 1976. While he was here he attended the cremation of a very close friend Mistrī Mangal Singh (ਮਿਸਤਰੀ ਮੰਗਲ ਸਿੰਘ) and there encountered Mitchell, the Assistant Commissioner of Police. My father asked, 'Do you remember me?' and Mitchell said, 'Of course. You're the oldest police officer in Kenya.'



Sikh Gurduāra Makindu, on the main road from Nairobi to Mombasa



Mahārājā (ਮਹਾਰਾਜਾ) of Paṭiālā (ਪਟਿਆਲਾ) Yādvindar Singh (ਯਾਦਵਿੰਦਰ ਸਿੰਘ) being flanked by S. Lābh Singh (ਲਾਭ ਸਿੰਘ) and S. Kirpāl Singh Sāgū (ਕਿਰਪਾਲ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਾਗੂ), who was the first Sikh to receive the OBE in Colonial Kenya.

From interviews with Mohinder K Sandhū (ਮੋਹਿੰਦਰ ਕੌਰ ਸੰਧੂ) and Bhupinder S. Sandhu (ਭੁਪਿੰਦਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਸੰਧੂ), Nairobi

### South East Asia


**East Africa**


**Examples of Possible Answers for T charts:****South East Asia**

- Characteristics
  - The first foreign country Sikhs from Pañjāb emigrated to
- Concerns
  - Some Sikhs had to cut their hair for fear being captured in the early 1900s
  - Were not given appropriate work and wages were low

**East Africa**

- Characteristics
  - Were considered hard-working, honest, religious, and skilled.
  - Were brought over to help with the old Uganda Railways.
- Concerns
  - The work was difficult and dangerous.
  - Many of them left their families back home and brought them back later.

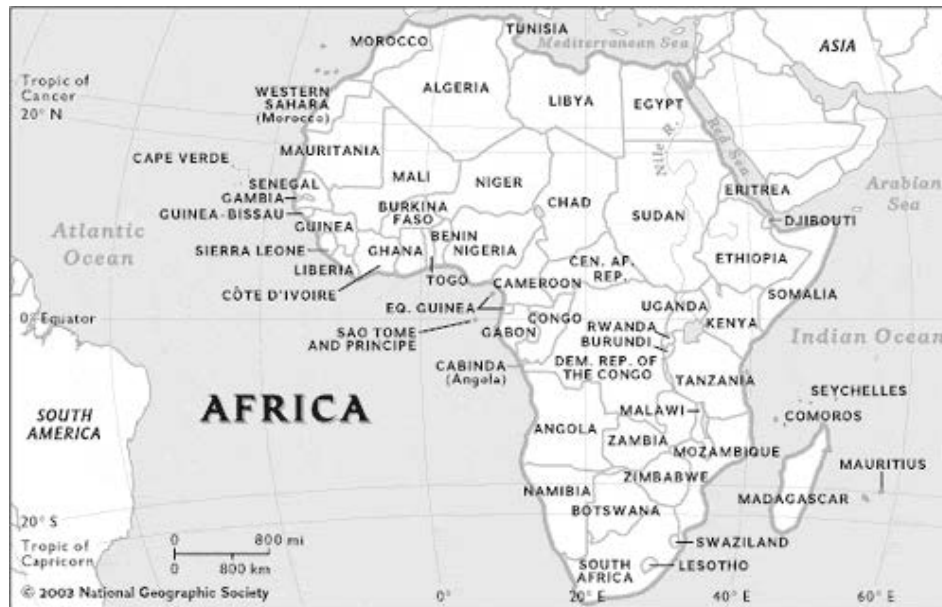


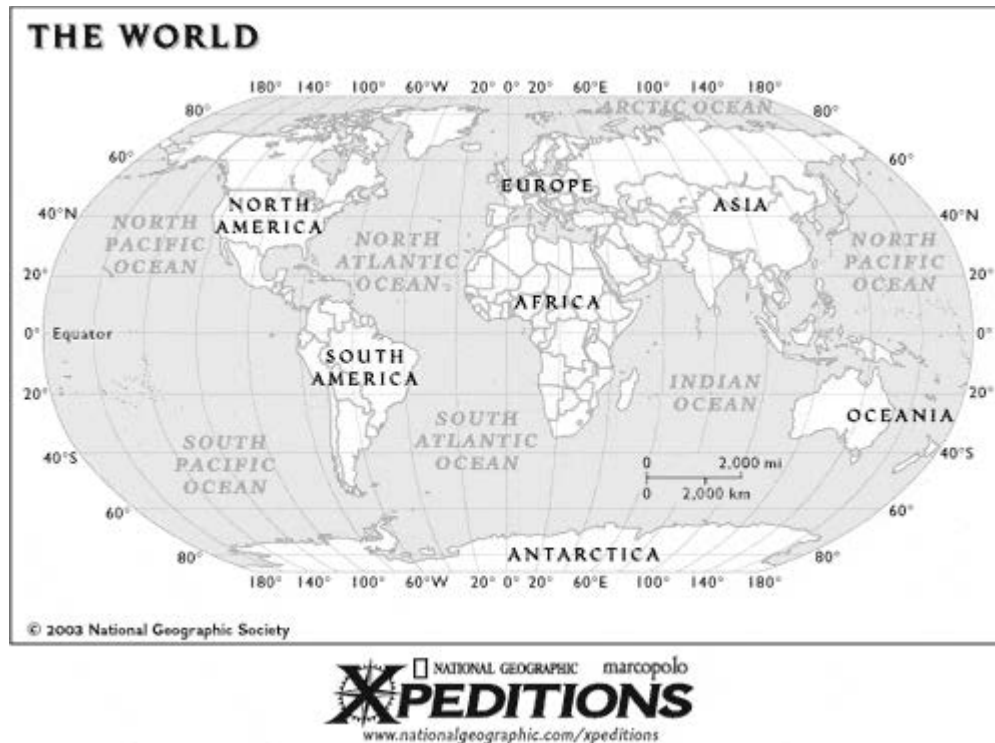


With the tragic legacy of an uncertain future, a young refugee sits on the walls of Purānā Kilā (ਪੁਰਾਨਾ ਕਿਲਾ), transformed into a vast refugee camp in Delhi.

*Pictures courtesy of: [http://www.martinfrost.ws/htmlfiles/aug2007/partition\\_india.html](http://www.martinfrost.ws/htmlfiles/aug2007/partition_india.html)*







### Sikh (ਸਿੱਖ) Diaspora

You can easily say that a Sikh can be found anywhere in the world. There are an estimated 25 million Sikhs around the globe. The largest Diapora (outside of Indian-Panjab and beyond South Asia) is in three countries: Canada, the USA, and the UK. The UK has the largest Sikh presence in terms of population. While even today a majority of the Sikhs live in Pañjāb (ਪੰਜਾਬ) there has been an outward migration to most areas of the world over the past 200 years. By the end of the nineteenth century Sikhs started migrating in significant numbers to as far away places as Fiji, New Zealand, Australia, and to the South-east Asian countries of Singapore and Malaysia.

In the late 19 century, the posting of Sikh soldiers in the British army to stations in Malaysia and Hong Kong prompted Sikh emigration to those territories, which eventually became jumping-off points for further migration to Australia, New Zealand and Fiji, especially for those seeking temporary employment as unskilled laborers. Others Sikhs discovered opportunities along the West Coast of North America, the first emigrant evidently arriving in 1903.

Semi-skilled artisans were also transported from Pañjāb to British East Africa to help in the building of railways. After World War II and the partitioin of Pañjāb, Sikhs emigrated from both India and Pakistan, most going to the United Kingdom but many also headed for North America. Some of the Sikhs who had settled in Eastern Africa were expelled by Ugandan dictator Idi Amin in 1972; most of them moved to the United Kingdom, becoming twice migrants. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century the Sikh population in that country was more than 300,000, and there are communities of 180,000 to 200,000 members each in the United States and Canada.

### Sikhs in North America

Sikhs first arrived in the North America about 100 years ago and were also the first South Asians to migrate there. This migration was based on farming, industrial and educational skills but later it was focused mainly on the farming industry. Some Sikh engineers were brought to US by the government

for the construction of railroads, mainly in the North-west and Panama Canal, in late 1900's. The first Sikh population arrived to California in 1899. An article of San Francisco announced the arrival of the first 4 Sikhs in San Francisco on the front-page. Most of the Asians who came to United States in late 1900- 1980 were Sikhs from Pañjāb. ([www.sikhpride.com](http://www.sikhpride.com)).

### **Sikhs in South-East Asia**

Malaysia and Sikhs: Malaysia was the first foreign country that the Sikhs from Pañjāb emigrated to. This was mainly because of the death of the legendary ruler Sardār Ranjīt Singh (ਸਰਦਾਰ ਰਣਜੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ) in 1839. Next Bhāi Mahārāj Singh (ਭਾਈ ਮਹਾਰਾਜ ਸਿੰਘ) and his follower Carkā Singh (ਚਰਕਾ ਸਿੰਘ) were exiled by the British to Singapore in 1850. He was kept in a windowless dungeon at Outram Road, where he died six years later. In 1915, as a result of the propaganda by the revolutionary Gadar (ਗਦਰ) party in California, the Indian troops stationed in Singapore rebelled against the British. Articles and poems on the revolution were widely circulated in secret. However, the British managed to suppress the mutiny, but there was mass abandonment from the regiments. Soldiers fled by crossing over to Johor, an island of Malaysia. They received a lot of help from the railway construction workers along the way, and others provided food, clothing and cash for them to return home. It is interesting to note that it was much easier for the Pañjābi Muslims to escape who blended in with the Malays than the Sikh troops who had to disguise themselves by cutting their long hair for fear of being captured. Most escaped to Siam.

When the Sikh population began to rise on the Peninsula, a unique service established itself in railway towns like Taiping, Kuala Kangsar and Tanjung Malim. It became a common sight to see Sikh men with milk churns standing on the railway platforms, giving away free heated fresh milk. As followers of Sikhī, these Sikh men voluntarily gave milk to any needy child or adult, whatever the race or religious affiliation. Wealthy Sikh cattle owners gladly donated their extra milk for this purpose. A few Sikh individuals even spent their time giving away cooked food to travelers.

Taiping was the headquarters of the Malay States Guides (MSG), a body of local Indian troops which was formed of Malaysia's own regiment. In 1873, the person in charge was worried about rivalry from another clan in the Tin mining region, so they decided to get men from Pañjāb to maintain law and order. He consulted Captain T. Speedy, who formed the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Perak Sikhs, which originally comprised 110 men of Sikh, Hindu, and Paṭhān (ਪਠਾਨ) origins. This battalion became MSG in 1896. During the First World War, the MSG regiment was mobilized to serve in Aden.

The early Sikh community in Malaya produced a string of creative writers. In one book *Maha Jang Europe* (ਮਹਾ ਜੰਗ ਯੋਰਪ) (Great European War) 1914-1918 AD, the writer Havalḍār (Sgt.) Nand Singh (ਹਵਲਦਾਰ ਨੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ) vividly described the daring exploits of the Malay States Guides in Aden when they fought the Turkish forces. Another writer, Gurbakhsh Singh Kesarī (ਗੁਰਬਖਸ਼ ਸਿੰਘ ਕੇਸਰੀ), the police Granthī (ਗ੍ਰੰਥੀ), published about 70 booklets. Gurbakhsh's *Panth Jāgvan* (ਪੰਥ ਜਾਗਵਨ) (Path of Awakening) had a profound influence in awakening the masses in Pañjāb.

The largest Sikh community in Malaysia during the time of the First World War was in the district of Larut and Matang in Perak. When the Malaya States Guides were disbanded, the Singh Sabhā (ਸਿੰਘ ਸਭਾ), a registered local Sikh society, convinced the British that the *Gurduārā* (ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ), within the Taiping army compound belonged to the Sikhs and not the military. They agreed and a new *Gurduārā* was built on the site and it is today called the Gurduārā Sahib Taiping.

Currently, the social situation in Malaysia has begun to deteriorate. There has been an erosion of Sikh values accompanied by the loss of the outward form of Sikhī among the educated class. Without any guidance from their parents and with no support from religious institutions, Sikh boys and girls have started to intermingle and intermarry with South Indians, Muslim Malays and Chinese. Dr. Manjīt Singh Sidhū (ਡਾ: ਮਨਜੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਿਧੂ) author of ‘Sikhs in Malaysia’ estimates that about 70% of Sikh children aged 10 and above cannot read and write Pañjābī. Many Sikh professionals in Malaysia consider it a sign of progress to mix with other nationalities and to copy their lifestyle, which includes drinking and smoking. However, some Sikhs in Malaysia are trying to put the young Sikh youth back in touch with Sikhī by holding holiday camps for the youth to foster Sikh values.

*Below is a typical story of an early migrant to Singapore.*

This is the story of Harī Singh (ਹਰੀ ਸਿੰਘ) from Gurdāspur (ਗੁਰਦਾਸਪੁਰ) district. Harī Singh came to Singapore in 1885. He traveled, like many others on deck, cooking his own meals. He landed in Singapore at Tanjong Pagar and was helped by some Sikh policemen on duty who gave him temporary accommodation. Sundar Singh (ਸੁੰਦਰ ਸਿੰਘ), a police constable, helped him find a job patrolling the grounds of the Botanical Gardens. Like many of the Sikhs in Singapore then, Harī Singh led a very frugal life, saving most of his money to send back home to help out his relatives. A couple of years after his arrival, Harī Singh brought out his younger brother Jaimal Singh (ਜੈਮਲ ਸਿੰਘ) and found him a job as an additional police constable. The job of these police constables in those days consisted of guarding the government run opium shops which were then legal in Singapore.

Many of these early Sikhs came as bachelors and then later returned to India with some money. When they did return they married and tried to bring their families with them. However, for Harī Singh things were a little different because his older brother died suddenly leaving a young son. Harī Singh adopted the son whose name is Ācar Singh (ਆਚਰ ਸਿੰਘ). When Harī Singh returned back to Singapore after being in India for some time he decided to buy some land to keep some dairy cows. He started with three cows and began what was eventually to become a full-time business. Soon after Harī Singh started his own family, and put a great emphasis on education.

Another Sikh, Sevā Singh Sidūke (ਸੇਵਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਿਧੂਕੇ) whose village is close to Harī Singh came to Singapore in the early 1900's and also began his own cattle business. Sevā Singh's eldest son, Divān Singh Randhāvā (ਦਿਵਾਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਰੰਧਾਵਾ) till the 1980's ran the only Pañjābī Weekly newspaper in Singapore. Harī Singh's descendants, now fourth generation Sikhs in Singapore, are comfortably settled middle class Singaporeans.

Today there are several *Gurduārās* in Singapore to accommodate the large Sikh population and their spiritual needs.

### **About Malaysia**

Abused Sikh workers left high and dry

Kuala Lumpur - Darshan Singh's (ਦਰਸ਼ਨ ਸਿੰਘ) story is all too familiar for many human rights activists. He was recruited from the Indian state of Pañjāb (ਪੰਜਾਬ) to work in a Malaysian company. Things soon turned nasty when the labor recruiter pocketed all his salary, housed him in a cramped place, fed him flour and lentils and went further to abuse and torture him.

The 29-year-old Darshan, a practicing Sikh, sold his motorcycle, all of his wife's few and precious jewels and borrowed 8,600 ringgit (2,261 U.S. dollars) from a loan shark to buy an air ticket to Malaysia. The air ticket price also included a 'visa and agents' fee'. All this was done on the promises of a soft-spoken Pañjābī-speaking woman who acted as the labor recruiter.

The labor recruiter had promised Darshan a “safe and secure” job laying electrical cables and a guaranteed 1,500 ringgit (395 U.S. dollars) a month, with food and lodging thrown in together with medical benefits. He hoped to work for three years and to return home with enough hard cash to pay off the loan, buy his wife new jewelry, get himself a new motorcycle and hopefully have enough left to start a small business in his village in Pañjāb. Like other migrant workers, Darshan’s dream was dashed the day he landed at the spanking new billion dollar Kuala Lumpur International Airport with 17 other workers that the agent had recruited from Pañjāb. Their passports and the remaining cash they had was taken away; the terms of their work contract were altered and they were ‘sold off’ to another employer.

Since arriving in Malaysia, Darshan and the others suffered nothing but misery. Today their home is a Sikh Gurdwārā in the city that has been kind enough to give them temporary refuge. “We worked hard but were not paid the promised wages since the day we arrived...we were physically abused. Today we have nothing but the clothes we wear, no passports, no money, no jobs and no future,” Darshan told IPS. “All our dreams are shattered,” he said. “We have huge debts back home and can’t go back unless we get work here, save money and return home to pay up.” Under the circumstances such a possibility remains a distant dream.

Darshan is a Sikh and also feels humiliated that he was forced to discard his turban and cut his hair short on the grounds that he had to wear a safety helmet in his job. “I was deeply humiliated,” Darshan said. Two other Sikhs had their hair cut too. According to the workers they were warned that if they wore turbans again they would lose their job. On Wednesday, Darshan and the 17 workers related their plight to the National Human Rights Commission or SUHAKAM—a government funded human rights body with only an advisory role to the authorities. SUHAKAM commissioners Simon Sipaun and Jamaludin Othman, who heard their stories, were staggered by the inhumanity inflicted on these Sikh workers. “I cannot understand how one human being can treat another so cruelly and inhumanely...theirs is a sad story and I wonder how the employer would feel if the roles were reversed,” Sipaun told a press conference. “We will investigate the matter,” he said. The workers were taken to see SUHAKAM by Aegile Fernandez, program co-coordinator of TENAGANITA or Women’s Force—a leading human rights NGO that champions the rights of migrant workers and women in vulnerable situations.

The workers related how they were crowded into a room with only one fan and many slept on the floor. “We had rice and dāl (lentils) for food and were paid 130 ringgit (34 U.S. dollars) each for the three months of work we had done,” one of the workers said. “We were hungry most of the time,” said another worker. One day in mid July, Fernandez said, the 18 workers walked out of their jobs and made their way to the Indian High Commission seeking help. They were also referred to TENAGANITA. “The workers were abused, tortured, humiliated and exploited by the agents and contractors,” said Fernandez who urged firm police action against the perpetrators. Fernandez told IPS TENAGANITA would also lodge reports with the International Labor Organization and the United Nations Special Reporter on Rights of Migrant Workers to seek justice and publicize the plight of migrant workers in Malaysia.

“This is a classic case of abuse by employers who took the workers wages, housed them in a cramped place, gave them flour and dhal as food and abused and humiliated them,” Fernandez said.

“This is fraudulent recruitment made on false promises and tantamount to trafficking of people for labor,” she said. “It is in direct violation of the U.N. Optional Protocol against Trafficking and Smuggling of Persons.” “The government must take this abuse seriously and right the wrong,” she said, adding that forcing Sikhs to crop their hair is “deeply humiliating” and tantamount to torture.

She also said agents, contractors and employers have come to believe that they would not be punished for abusing and maltreating migrant workers. “Very few employers have ever been punished,” she said.

Human rights NGOs, having seen the same pattern of abuse of migrant workers over and over again have demanded a total revamp of the entire employment system but without much success. Fernandez said there are three factors why such migrant workers persist. One, corruption backed with a thriving number of recruiting agencies in the Asian region, makes it easy to bring people through illegal means. Second, many employers withhold the passports and other documents of their migrant employees. During raids when the migrant is forced to leave his work, the documents are left behind. Without proper papers, the migrant becomes undocumented. Third, many employers themselves “like to keep” undocumented workers because the former “don’t have to spend much money”.

Adapted from: Baradan Kuppusamy

### **Sikhs in East Africa**

Sikhs have been migrating to East Africa since 1890’s. They established themselves as a very hard working, honest, religious and skilled community. Their contribution to East Africa is phenomenal. The history of the Sikhs of East Africa begins with the Railway—though groups of Sikh Regiments had seen service in certain parts of East Africa in previous years. The Sikhs who were brought over from India to build the old Uganda Railways were skilled workmen—carpenters, blacksmiths and masons. They were quick to adapt themselves to the specialized requirements of the railways and many became fitters, turners and boiler-makers.

These early Sikhs were soon joined by their educated brothers. There was no department of the pioneering Railway without the Sikhs. A number of policemen, ranging from inspectors to constables, were also sent from India to become the vital instrument of maintaining law and order. They remained in the country for several years. Many, but not all, of the original Sikh arrivals returned to India to be replaced and augmented by others who came of their own desire. Their skills and industry were always in great demand. The Sikhs penetrated into every nook and corner of East Africa to erect buildings and to build the roads; to undertake general maintenance work on the farms; to serve in the offices and to assume charge of the hospitals.

The manner in which the Sikhs increased their usefulness to Kenya is a saga of resource and initiative and perseverance. They undertook with confidence any type of work, which required skill and industry. They became highly successful farmers. They responded magnificently to the growing needs of the country by improving and diversifying their capabilities. They became contractors and furniture makers. Sikhs also helped in the transporting problems of Kenya before the motoring era by helping to build and operate Indian style bullock carts. When the motorcar did arrive Sikhs converted themselves to mechanics and engineers. They began to own garages and engineering workshops.

With every succeeding year the Sikhs adopted a steadily rising standard of living; they gave the best possible education to their children, and they invested by far the greatest proportion of their earnings within the country. The Sikhs entered all the professions including the police, the civil service, educational and medical institutions and even factories.

There were, however, no acute extremes in the local Sikhs in wealth. Throughout East Africa, the Sikhs of substantial wealth were very few. It was mostly a community of middle-income because instances of extreme poverty were also scarce. During the initial 60 years or so of the last millennium, the Sikhs built nearly 40 *Gurduārās* (ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ) in various towns of East Africa. They also managed a dozen ‘aided’ schools of which one is in Nairobi and was among the largest in the whole country.

Sikh women's organizations were attached to every Sikh Gurduārā. There were several Sikh study circles, libraries, and young men's associations. A Sikh missionary society was set up to publish Sikh literature on many occasions.

The Sikhs had also served in the politics of Kenya. They had been members of the Legislative Council and of all the municipal councils. They had also taken part in numerous other bodies and commissions and committees. The Sikh Communities of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania were among the largest outside India.

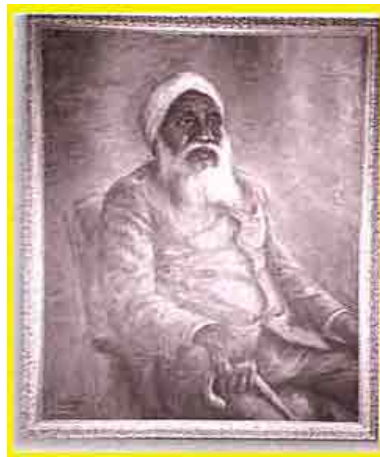
*Below are some actual interviews and stories from Sikhs in East Africa.*

### **The Portrait in My Office**

I'm 90 now and I can't remember everything, but I'll tell you what I can about my background in India and my first years in Africa. Our family had a farm in the village of Juṇḍālī (ਜੁੰਡਾਲੀ), in the Ludhiāṇā (ਲੁਧਿਆਣਾ) district of the Pañjāb (ਪੰਜਾਬ). We were farmers; Jats (ਜੱਟ)—all Gills were traditionally farmers; Gills are what you could call a clan of Jats. My mother died when I was just five hours old; I was brought up by her brother and his wife.

I was sent to the best school in the area, a school in Ludhiāṇā run by the Ārya Samāj (ਆਰਯ ਸਮਾਜ). No, it didn't matter that the Ārya Samājists are very staunch Hindus and we Jats are Sikhs; my father had good relations with the Ārya Samāj people. He did not care what religion anyone belonged to; he said that the only thing important in religion is to believe in God, to be honest and to be good to people.

I completed Standard 8 in that school and then I returned to my father who had remarried. My little half-brothers were going to a private school in our village. As I had finished my schooling I used to take them to school in the mornings and collect them in the afternoon. One day the headmaster, knowing that I had learned English, asked me what I was doing. I said, "Nothing." So he gave me a job teaching in his school, with a salary of 13 rupees a month. It was a small school, built of bricks with about 100 boys.



Now, at that time the British were encouraging people to come to British East Africa. Another of my uncles, my mother's brother Nāhar Singh Paṅglī (ਨਾਹਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਪੰਗਲੀ), took advantage of the opportunity and came here in about 1915 to work as an accountant with the Railway. My uncle knew I wanted to better myself too so he arranged a permit for me to come to Kenya but told me, 'Wait until I write to

you that there is an opportunity open and only then come.’ But I was eager and didn’t want to wait. I got to know a Hindu named Sanīwāl (ਸਨੀਵਾਲ), from a nearby village, who had come back on leave from Africa. I told him I wanted to go to join my uncle. It turned out that he was also working as an accountant for the railway and he knew my uncle. So he said he would take me with him when he returned to his job. Sanīwāl told me to meet him at the Railway station at Ludhiānā with my passport, my permit and 300 rupees (which my father loaned me). We traveled together by train to Bombay and then boarded a steamer. We traveled deck class—the fare was 65 rupees (my father gave me the money for that) which included our food. And so in 1922, when I was 20 years old, I came to Africa.

We landed at Mombasa and went up to Nairobi by train. My companion took me to my uncle who was very surprised to see me. But he welcomed me and got me into the Railway School as a trainee. I lived with him. As he was here with his wife and their children, three sons and a daughter, and was renting a house, there was room for me. After finishing my training I was taken on as a telegraphist at sh 20/- a month (US\$0.30). I was very happy that I had come, for that was much better than being a teacher earning 13 rupees. I worked for the Railway for over forty years, up until 1963. I was sent to different stations along the line in Kenya: Njoro, Molo, Muhoroni, Kibos, Kipikori, Kisumu. There were a lot of European settlers at Njoro and Mob. Lord Delamere was at Njoro. Yes, we knew each other. As I spoke English I got to know the Settlers. They’d come to me for booking wagons for transporting their produce out and bringing supplies in. We got along very well. That was a wonderful job, working with the Settlers. After four or five years I was promoted to Stationmaster grade at sh 250/- a month (\$3.80). My Pañjābī colleagues all called me Bāūjī (ਬਾਊ ਜੀ)—sort of a title of respect for government officials.

I saw that things were good, so when I went home on leave in 1925 I brought my wife Bacan Kaur (ਬਚਨ ਕੌਰ) back with me (we’d been married when we were 12, but had not been allowed to see each other again until we were 19, just before I left home). Then in 1926 I was transferred to Uganda. I began doing other business on the side; I went into saw-milling and had cotton ginneries. I settled in Jinja and built a fine house, which I called Lakeview. The rest is well known: I became one of the three multi-millionaires of Jinja, along with Mahtā (ਮਹਤਾ) and Madhvānī (ਮਧਵਾਨੀ) (both of whom made their money in sugar)... and then I was one of the thousands of Asians thrown out by Idi Amin in 1972.

Fortunately I had kept ties in Kenya. I’d laid the foundations stones of both the old and the new Singh Sabhā (ਸਿੰਘ ਸਭਾ) temples in Nairobi, and in 1948-50 I had built Gill House, the first 5-storey building in town—a skyscraper in those days, which I rented to the colonial government for offices. So in 1972 I came back to Kenya, where I had started my career as ‘Bauji’. It was all because of my Uncle Nāhar Singh that I am what I am today. I still keep his portrait in my office. Yes, though I am 90 years old I still go to the office every day.

### **The First Indian (Sikh) Police Inspector**

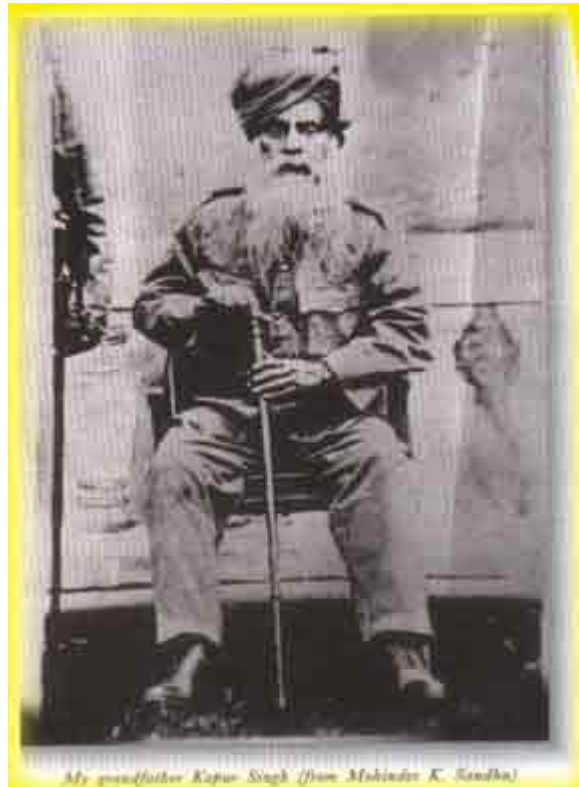
Mohindar Kaur Sandhū (ਮੋਹਿੰਦਰ ਕੌਰ ਸੰਧੂ), Nairobi

My grandfather Kapūr Singh (ਕਪੂਰ ਸਿੰਘ) was the first Indian Inspector of Police here. He was originally from the village of Gaggobūhā (ਗੱਗੋਬੁਹਾ), near Amritsar in India, and he joined the police force there. First he was posted to Baluchistan, and then in 1895 he was seconded from India to work with the Kenya Police.

Kapūr Singh became greatly respected, not only because of his high rank in the police force but also in his community. He had the honor of laying the foundation stone of the first Sikh temple in Nairobi. Although the building, the Singh Sabhā Gurduārā (ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ), has been greatly altered, the original



plaque with his name is still there. He also laid the foundation stones of mosques in Nakuru, Kisumu and Mombasa. That shows not only how respected he was but also how good inter-communal relationships were in those days.



*My grandfather Kapūr Singh (from Mohinder K. Sandhu)*

When my grandfather retired he returned to India, and eventually died there. I was born and raised here in Kenya and so I never knew him, so I can't tell you anything more about him. But my husband and I can tell you about his son Satbachan Singh (ਸਤਬਚਨ ਸਿੰਘ) who was my father.

From an interview with late Indar Singh Gill (ਇੰਦਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਗਿੱਲ), Nairobi

### **The Oldest Police Officer**

My grandfather Kapūr Singh (ਕਪੂਰ ਸਿੰਘ) was already married when he came to Kenya. His wife stayed in Gaggobūhā (ਗੱਗਬੁਹਾ), except for one brief visit here. They had three sons and a daughter. The daughter died, one son stayed in India, but two sons followed their father to Kenya and also joined the police. One was Lakashaman Singh (ਲਕਸ਼ਮਨ ਸਿੰਘ) and the other was my father Satbachan Singh (ਸਤਬਚਨ ਸਿੰਘ), who was born in 1900. In his career as a police officer my father Satbachan Singh moved around a lot as he was transferred from place to place, but most of the time he was in Nairobi. In the early days Nairobi was very wild, covered with bush. When he went on his rounds he would come back covered with ticks. Sometimes he encountered lions. He was posted up to Cherangani, and out at Tigoni too, in Settler days.

“Satbachan Singh was not at all what one thinks of as a typical policeman. He was a very gentle man. He never raised his voice, never got angry.”

Around 1915 or 1916 he got married in India to my mother Hukam Kaur (ਹੁਕਮ ਕੌਰ) and brought her out here, and she moved around with him. They had two sons and then me, their only daughter. I was born in Kisumu, where my father happened to be posted then. When I was three years old he was transferred to Lamu. He was sent there especially to keep an eye out for possible infiltration of enemy agents—Germans and Italians.



Previously, sometime in the late 1920s I think, he had been posted to Voi to halt the slaughter of elephants for their ivory. My father was very fond of Nature (he later became a founder of the Wildlife Society) and was angry about all the poaching. He walked miles and miles in the forests around Voi until he finally got to the source of the poaching and captured the man responsible for the entire killing and smuggling. My father tied the man to a tree and threatened to burn him unless he told where the ivory was hidden. The poacher of course told, and all the ivory was recovered. My father's boss was so pleased that he told my father, 'Pick out the best tusk as your reward for controlling the poaching'.

Perhaps the reason my father was so fond of Nature and the outdoors was that his family was in farming in India. He bought a farm here, 400 acres of land at the foothills of the Nandi Hills near Miwani. My uncle Lakshaman Singh (ਲਕਸ਼ਮਣ ਸਿੰਘ) retired from the Police to run the farm and my father spent as much time as he could there. I stayed there when I was a little girl, four and five years old, before I had to go to school—the Indian Primary School in Nairobi.

Because I was the youngest I was my father's pet and I remember him taking my mother and me for walks around the farm. Most of the farm was planted with sugarcane but he also had pedigree cows of which he was very proud, and pigs. He was the first Indian to whom the Colonial Government gave a license to keep and breed pigs. He also had a fine orchard with a lot of fruit trees he imported from South Africa, including seedless oranges. He kept horses there, for he loved riding and was a very good horseman (but he never taught me to ride). He had a couple of horses on the farm, brown ones, and he kept one for his own use in Nairobi too. He was also good at shooting. Even when we were living in town, my father liked to be outdoors. He was very fond of picnics and every Sunday he'd take us all on an outing somewhere. He was a strict parent (it was our mother who was the soft one) and a very serious person (he always dressed very well, in jacket and trousers when not in uniform). But he also had a good sense of humor and liked to relax with his friends. He had close friends in all

the communities, Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, and Europeans too (he was a good friend of Dr. Leakey, the old Leakey who was a naturalist). He was usually very busy with his CID work all day, but in the evenings his friends would come around and visit him. Often he'd have visitors from India, especially people wanting his help in getting settled here.

Once, my father resigned from the police force for a day. There had been theft of money at the Norfolk hotel. Fingerprints were taken and suspicion pointed to a European woman. When my father was driving her to the police station she became terribly upset. He assured her she would not go to jail. But when she was searched, the money was found in her panties. My father let her go anyway; as he said, he'd promised her she would not go to jail, and he could not go back on his word. When the Commissioner found out he was furious. My father, knowing that according to regulations he should have charged her, submitted his resignation. The next day the Commissioner came to him and said, 'Forget your resignation. You're on duty.'

My father retired in 1945/ 46 but then was recalled because of the Emergency. He left the management of the farm in the hands of a nephew; a son of his brother Lakashaman Singh. (Both his own sons were otherwise occupied: the elder, who worked in the post office, was also a police reservist, and the younger was in a special branch of the police.) Things did not go well and in 1968 he sold out and returned to Gaggobūhā. (My mother had passed away in 1948.) He came back for a visit in 1976. While he was here he attended the cremation of a very close friend Mistrī Mangal Singh (ਮਿਸਤਰੀ ਮੰਗਲ ਸਿੰਘ) and there encountered Mitchell, the Assistant Commissioner of Police. My father asked, 'Do you remember me?' and Mitchell said, 'Of course. You're the oldest police officer in Kenya.'



Sikh Gurduāra Makindu, on the main road from Nairobi to Mombasa



Mahārājā (ਮਹਾਰਾਜਾ) of Paṭiālā (ਪਟਿਆਲਾ) Yādvindar Singh (ਯਾਦਵਿੰਦਰ ਸਿੰਘ) being flanked by S. Lābh Singh (ਲਾਭ ਸਿੰਘ) and S. Kirpāl Singh Sāgū (ਕਿਰਪਾਲ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਾਗੂ), who was the first Sikh to receive the OBE in Colonial Kenya.

From interviews with Mohinder K Sandhū (ਮੋਹਿੰਦਰ ਕੌਰ ਸੰਧੂ) and Bhupinder S. Sandhu (ਭੁਪਿੰਦਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਸੰਧੂ), Nairobi

### South East Asia


**East Africa**


**Examples of Possible Answers for T charts:****South East Asia**

- Characteristics
  - The first foreign country Sikhs from Pañjāb emigrated to
- Concerns
  - Some Sikhs had to cut their hair for fear being captured in the early 1900s
  - Were not given appropriate work and wages were low

**East Africa**

- Characteristics
  - Were considered hard-working, honest, religious, and skilled.
  - Were brought over to help with the old Uganda Railways.
- Concerns
  - The work was difficult and dangerous.
  - Many of them left their families back home and brought them back later.