NAME: Harminder Bindy Kaur Kang  

DEGREE: Master of Arts  

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SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:  

Chair: Dr. Marilyn Macdonald  
Assistant Professor Department of Women’s Studies  

Dr. Cindy Patton  
Senior Supervisor  
Professor Department of Women’s Studies  

Dr. Helen Leung  
Supervisor  
Assistant Professor Department of Women’s Studies  

Dr. Zoë Druick  
External Examiner  
Associate Professor School of Communications  

DATE DEFENDED/APPROVED: November 23, 2001
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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I explore the ways in which concerns over nation and race have shaped "Canadian identity". I read a range of texts of mainstream Canadian news representations of the Indo-Canadian Sikh community from the early 20th century to 2007. I focus specifically on the cultural celebration of Vaisakhi, a festival to commemorate the Northern Indian (Punjabi) New Year and harvest as well as to celebrate the formal anniversary of the Sikh faith. On the streets of Vancouver and Surrey, British Columbia, Canada, Vaisakhi is celebrated as a walk through designated areas where the Indo-Canadian Sikh community hosts the wider community with complementary food, beverages and entertainment. This paper draws on Canadian news narratives around the Indo-Canadian community and the very public celebration of Vaisakhi. Applying a post-colonial critique to the past and present mainstream Canadian news reveals the persistence of colonial ideology in contemporary Canadian culture.

Key words: Vaisakhi, post-colonial, Canada, media, nationalism, Sikh, Indo-Canadian, South Asian, Punjabi, cultural celebrations, hyphenated identities, colonial, multicultural
DEDICATION

Where one's life story begins is the origin of all dedications: thank you to my dearest grandparents: Ajit Singh, Bhagwan Kaur, Henry Smith, Sucha Singh and Naseeb Kaur.

In memory of the Sikh children, sisters, brothers, mothers, fathers, uncles, aunts, life partners, dear friends, orphans, grandmothers and grandfathers who were killed in the 1984 attacks on the Sikhs in India.
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PAURI¹ I: VAISAKHI THROUGH THE AGES

Solo at Vaisakhi

9 years old: walking with a group of Punjabi school peers at the Vaisakhi Nagar Kirtan. “The KKK are coming,” rushed through voices of young Punjabi Sikh children. Naively, I asked, “What is the KKK?”

“The Ku Klux Klan.”

Naively, I questioned the danger in this warning: “What do they want?”

“They want to kill us. They want us to go back to where we came from. They don’t want us here.”

Naively again, “But I was born here.”

“That doesn’t matter. They are coming to kill us. They hate anyone who isn’t white.”

Walking the Vaisakhi celebration with only other children meant that I had no sage grown-up voice by my side to reassure me this mysterious “Klan” was not going to “kill me.” As an adult, I now understand the complexity of racism in Canada but have not found any magical spells to dispel the fear of corporeal danger to the “other” children and adults. The dangers of not being white in a country that continues to perpetuate the colonial codes of othering while masquerading under a cloak of multicultural rhetoric are real; and as dangerous as the colonial code that openly tells you, “go back to where you came from, you f*%&ing Paki.” Having experienced both implicit and explicit forms of racism within my “home and native land,” I have

¹ When I was quite young, my mother encouraged me to bring home one question or phrase from our visits to the Gurudwara (Sikh place of worship). One day, I heard “Pauri” and was puzzled as to how the Punjabi word for “step” could be located in the sacred scriptures. As I grew older, I learned that the stanzas in the Sikh sacred scriptures were bound to form pauris (steps) that would take the Sikh (seeker) deeper into a meditative space. As rungs on a ladder serve to move you from one location into another, I use each Pauri in this paper to engage the reader to slip into a step-by-step unveiling of my ‘gaze’ from within my Indo-Canadian Sikh experience. Further, as I dwell in the hybrid post-colonial space of the hyphenated Canadian “other,” I use Pauri to challenge the hegemony of the English language, which constitutes only one of the communicative methods I have at my disposal.
found that neither form of racism is a danger-free zone, neither provides safe passage, and neither makes it easier to call Canada home; yet I do. Having no Mother India to return to limits my belonging anywhere else, but even my parents, who have a Mother India to go back to, have established Canada as home. Stories like “the KKK are coming to get you” have been frozen in silence – frozen into a shame of being different – of being the sort that these verbal attacks are made to. As I look back on my lived lessons situated in what Avtar Brah (2003) calls “self-reflexive autobiographical accounts”, I am reminded that these ‘iced-over memory narratives,’ the stories of being ‘racially wrong’ produce critical insights into the multiple positions of location and the politics embedded in those intersections. In hindsight, although the threat of the Klan was distant and probably factually incorrect, it does expose the tenuous nature of belonging. To a nine-year-old in a visually ‘brown’ identifiable body, the threat of racial violence is deeply rooted and becomes a part of the politically powerful and psychic forces that continue to define and sustain who belongs in Canada and who does not belong.

Canadian citizenship has been linked to race and skin colour from the very beginning. The first prime minister² categorized Canada as a “white man’s country.” The current use of hyphenated racial identifiers such as Indo-Canadian, African-Canadian, Asian-Canadian and Arab-Canadian clearly identify those who do not quite fit into this “white man’s country.” Even the First Nations peoples of Canada have been provided with a separate identity code to locate their non-white status. Only those who are

² Sir John A. Macdonald (held office: 1867-1873; 1878-1891)
identifiably ‘white’ need no hyphenations, carry no special identity codes: they are simply Canadian.

My own navigation of self-identification has been plagued with what Aihwa Ong recognizes as a host of “contradictions between cultural homeland and host country… and the politics of imposed identity and the politics of self-positioning” (1999, p. 23). If I locate myself in a hyphenated identity, I contribute to the racial identification situated in being Indo-Canadian. Also by incorporating only these ‘bicultural’ components of my identity, I have closed doors for multiple sites of hybridity in being Punjabi, Sikh, a woman of colour and a feminist. And part of the play on “multiple semiotic spaces” is that the political forces swirling around can push and pull at what emerges as self-subscribed identity (Brah, 2003, p. 631). For instance, if I declare my identity as Canadian, I am interrogated about my racial origins, my parents’ origins, my cultural otherness and the place of my ‘real’ home (but where are you really from?). If I declare holding Indo-Canadian identity, I am criticized for not assimilating into my birth country. The politics behind the societal installations and gaze of racial differentiation in the Canadian-scape continue to displace me and people like me despite Canada’s status as a “world leader in diversity issues and a model of social engineering and institutional arrangement” (Wood & Gilbert, 2005, p. 679). How Canada can stand at the pinnacle of racial harmony yet still harbour racism is one of the questions that have haunted me since

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3 The usage of ‘white’ to identify a group of diverse individuals is also problematic as individuals who appear to identify as ‘white’ are not a homogenous group. Class, socio-economic status, education, gender, sexual attraction, ability, religious affiliation, geographical residency etc diversify all groups of individuals. I wish to acknowledge these differences and highlight that ‘white’ identification is also heterogeneous. For the purposes of this paper, I will utilize ‘white’ to identify the ‘white Canada forever’ anthem space where ‘white’ is situated at the pinnacle of the racial hierarchy pyramid.
childhood. Before proceeding into the multiple river ways of the mapped identities of the Indo-Canadian Sikh community, I will present a brief discussion on identity politics.

**Identity Politics: To be or not to be...**

In the narrowing spaces of globalization, identities have taken on new hues – shape-shifting, metamorphosing, undoing and re-doing old ways of seeing, being and identifying. Identity prescriptions and subscriptions are also involved in intricate and complicated weavings and unweavings. But are the structures of national identities built in the imaginings of nation-states (Anderson, 1998) collapsing? Do we dare to think that the grand narrative of ‘difference’ has been abandoned? Hans J. Ladegaard’s (2007) study: *Global Culture – Myth or Reality? Perceptions of “National Cultures” in a Global Corporation* evaluates the perceptions of global employees. This notion of a dismantled, unified global identity does not seem to live in the everyday practices of the globally mobilized worker; rather, Ladegaard notes, “that (stereotypes of) nation-states are used as a frame of reference, whereas the notion of ‘global culture’... seems to be a hypothetical construction...” (2007, p. 156). Even these globetrotting contributors to multiple nation-states do not see the dismantling of the grand narrative of ‘difference.’ What I find even more intriguing is how the notion of “it’s a small world after all” has been erected into the global discourse. With interconnective tools like the internet, we have become a so-called global village. Considering what a village used to be before globalization, are we truly village dwellers that are proud sisters and brothers under the umbrella of a united Earth nation-state – ready to venture into Gene Roddenberry’s *Star Trek* culture (which incidentally uncovers difference on other planets)?
What hides under the village rhetoric is what Thierry Devos and Mahzarin R. Banaji's (2005) article *American=White* evaluates: based on six studies conducted to explore explicit and implicit beliefs about who represents a multiracial country like America, Devos and Banaji found that while explicit statements indicated egalitarian beliefs, the implicit beliefs identify that *American=White*. It is not just something we develop in our adult years but is embedded in our social development. In another article, Mahzarin R. Banaji and colleagues Yarrow Dunham and Andrew Scott Baron (2007) found that even in children, a sense of same group or more advantaged group identification overrides identification with lower privileged groups. In the Canadian-scape, this would also hold true as Canada substantiates itself on a “white Canada forever” anthem. Mahzarin Banaji’s extensive research into implicit beliefs demonstrates that stereotypes continue to maintain white at the top of the racial hierarchy even while academics and policy-makers parade the global citizen paradigm as our new enlightened rules of engagement. As the rules of engagement are so concretely embedded in difference, dismantling the master’s tools must begin with identifying and dissecting the well-constructed map of difference.

In *Identities, Democracy, Culture and Communication in South Africa* (1999), Stuart Hall speaks to the construction (and deconstruction) of difference, by first questioning how nation-states become constituted. Birthed from colonial occupation, Canada developed nation status with the rhetoric of a “white man’s country.” Then Hall asks us to assess how power becomes institutionalized and organically inscribed. In Canada (as in the United States), ‘white’ people became the institutionalized power brokers while First Nations people faced marginalization and eradication in their ‘home’
country. Removing children from their families and placing them in residential schools; condemning the use of First Nations languages, customs, traditions and philosophy; and imposing colonial ideals to civilize the ‘savages’ were tools to inscribe the ‘natural’ order. This sweeping hand of gentrification re-structured white as the norm and relegated colour as invisible. This gentrification project of racially coding Canada as ‘white’ also produced exclusionary legal and social practices to limit or prevent ‘non-whites’ from entering Canada as settlers in the late 1800s. The greatest perceived danger to the emerging white-Canadian nation-state was the Asian threat: the ‘yellow peril’ and the ‘Hindoo problem’. Although Canada’s federal government was reluctant to introduce policies that would completely ban Asian migration as labour shortages were prevalent, different strategies were developed to prevent or limit non-white migration. In 1887, the government introduced the Chinese head tax to restrict Chinese immigration (Dua, 2007). In 1908, Canada and Japan entered into an agreement to limit Japanese migration to Canada to no more than 400 migrants per year (Dua, 2007). Also in 1908, the ‘continuous journey regulation’ was implemented to prevent Indian migration to Canada (Dua, 2007). These restrictive legal and social practices operated to confirm the institutionalized ‘white’ race construct of Canadian identity. Even today, in 2007, the white race construct haunts my Canadian identity.

A Gypsy Traveller, Exotic and Dangerous...

As a woman I have a country; as a woman I cannot divest myself of that country merely by condemning its government or by saying three times ‘As a woman my country is the whole world’. Tribal loyalties aside, and even if nation-states are now just pretexts used by multinational conglomerates to serve their interests, I need to understand how a place on the map is also a place in history which a woman, a Jew, a lesbian, a feminist I am created and trying to create. (Adrienne Rich, 2003, p. 30)
This paper is an exercise on mapping the identities ‘placed on’ (prescribed) and ‘performed by’ (subscribed) Indo-Canadian Sikhs in a place where they must sing “my home and native land” yet hyphenate that song of belonging with an encouraged multicultural ‘otherness.’ Born, raised and choosing to live in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada has provided me with endless privileges and safety from the atrocities that have occurred and continue to occur in Punjab, India. I am thankful for this privilege yet I wonder for how long will my birthright with Canada as my “home and native land” be challenged with “you don’t belong here”.

The wide-cast net of the Canadian media that polices the trespasses of the Indo-Canadian community has replanted the ongoing colonial project into a contemporary colonial surveillance and monitoring program. Those who came into Canada with ‘immigrant’ identities were quite familiar with the imperialist discourse as well as the colonial racist stereotypes used by the Canadian state and culture (Bannerji, 2000). Having been colonial subjects of British India for a period of 200 years, Indians were well aware of their place in a colonial empire. And the children of these ‘immigrants’ have been schooled in the ways of being different with ongoing Canadian comments or questions, such as:

“I can tell you were born here, but where are your parents from?”
“So, are you having an arranged marriage?”
“I really like that bang-raa thing that you guys do.”
“I have a friend from India.”
“Don’t you all know each other since you all go to the same church or something?”
“I think I was Indian in my last life because I love those saris you wear.”
“Can you teach me how to make butter chicken – my boyfriend loves it.”
“I’m dressing up like an Indian person for Halloween, could I borrow a sari or something?”

“Aren’t you afraid that if you marry an Indian man, he’ll kill you?”

Being constantly reminded of one’s ethnic identity traits reduces hyphenated ‘others’ of a multi-faceted identity to a single dimension. Operating outside of my Indian identity becomes increasingly challenging when the monitoring of brown bodies is hyper-vigilant in Canadian society. When questions of Indian cultural customs arise, I am relegated to the role of cultural expert. If news media coverage presents Indo-Canadian gangs or Indo-Canadian domestic violence, I am somehow guilty of being a supporter, perpetrator or victim of this violence and I must answer questions of ‘why’ this sociological phenomenon is occurring within ‘my’ people. Despite the hyper-surveillance, I enjoy the brown-ness of my skin, and feel honoured to carry “[the] burden of non-whiteness I carry not only beneath my skin but on my shoulders, on my back – the burden of having to represent so many” Sikh/Punjabi/Indo-Canadians/others (Banerjee, 2002, p. 121).

Dismantling the master’s tools (Lorde, 1979) requires evaluating the tools used to differentiate the master and the slaves situated by the Canadian state and ‘Canadians.’ One of the most widely used tools is media. Media has multiple functions from providing entertainment to unifying communities. Media also acts as a social agent to present the ‘truth,’ creating waves of cause and effect in social change and practices. From educating the public on identity-theft safety measures to portraying ideologically charged issues like the “war on Iraq,” the media plays an important role in our everyday practices, views and decisions. With countless images bombarding us through media advertisements, we are constantly subjected to media constructions and presentations. To evaluate the
presentation of the Indo-Canadian Sikh community in the Canadian media context, I will focus on the media coverage presented of the 2007 Vancouver and Surrey Vaisakhi celebrations, primarily through the CBC: The National’s *Canada’s Political Culture* and Channel M’s *Vaisakhi 2007* segment. As I occupy the contradictory space of what the Indo-Canadian Sikh community is like and what I read of my community in Canadian newspapers, I have pulled a string of newspaper headlines and quotes from the early 1900s to 2007 to illustrate that the CBC: The National piece is part of an ongoing colonial lineage that founded and perpetuates the “white Canada forever” anthem. To provide a glimpse into the complex world in which the Indo-Canadian Sikh community resides, a brief introduction to the stories that have positioned and repositioned Sikhs within the Indian and Canadian nation-states will follow. But first, I will present my recent encounter with Vaisakhi and the Canadian media.

**Sacred Spaces...**

With this complicated history of belonging to the Empire, not belonging to Canada, then belonging as Canadian labour and a “Hindoo Problem” which transformed into a hyphenated identity, the Indo-Canadian community has had to find spaces to support their cultural solidarity and location in the multicultural Canadian-scape. Cultural celebrations become important venues to instil pride in the easily identified and problematized corporeal and cultural ‘otherness.’ Vaisakhi is one such celebration that has been transplanted from the footpaths of Punjab to the streets of Vancouver and Surrey. By publicly celebrating important cultural events like Vaisakhi, the Indo-Canadian community brings a multicultural dimension from private, domestic spaces into a very public, shared, open Canadian space. Shakuntala Rao (2007) questions how the
circulation of such transnational images (found in Vaisakhi) reposition identities –
cloaking some with invisibility and silence while others maintain a stage for their voice
and power. The Lower Mainland's Vaisakhi celebrations unveil the Indo-Canadian
community as transnational figures on a Canadian stage. However, whether the choice of
voice and power belongs to the transnational identity holder or the nation-state is where
the concept of repositioning identity becomes tricky. Identity holders can have a certain
construct of their identity (acting as a subscribed identity); while the social, cultural and
political milieu in which individuals reside in may have a very different view of their
identity. How the media, as a co-conspirator (or tool) of the nation-state, reads the public
presentation of the cultural identity of the Indo-Canadian Sikh community is what I will
further explore in this paper. Because the build-a-nation project has a well-established
history of using media as a tool from print culture (Anderson, 1998) to popular cinema
(Chakravarty, 1993), examining how cultural celebrations such as Vaisakhi are taken up
by the Canadian media is an important practice in the dismantling of the status quo
currently in play. At Vaisakhi in April 2007, I stumbled upon a reading of Vaisakhi
through the lens of the Canadian media:

*Standing close to the main entrance of the Ross Street Gurdwara, my brother and
I watched as the Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji was escorted to the main float of the
Vaisakhi (also known as the Nagar Kirtan) celebration. As prayers were
underway, a middle-aged news reporter with a microphone and a middle-aged
camera person began shooting the scene behind them – of prayers, of sacred
scriptures being honoured and of a large group of Canadians celebrating a New
Year's/harvest festival and honouring a day that symbolically identifies Sikhi as a
dharmic path. “Sikh militants”... “Air India bombing”... “terrorism”...
“separatist movement”: these were the words being recorded. The juxtaposition
between the sacred spiritual activities in the background and the threatening and
dangerous spoken words caught my attention. Noticing my attentive ears, the
middle-aged journalist shut down the recording process and moved away from my
gaze. As I stood there, I began to examine my relationship with my Sikh identity
and its “terrorism,” “separatist movements,” “militancy,” “bombers” and*
“mass murderers” as represented by the Canadian media. Every step that I took that day was shadowed by these words that haunt my Indo-Canadian Sikh identity.

On June 28, 2007, a few months after my forgotten eavesdropping, I was channel surfing and found that same middle-aged journalist airing news of Sikh terrorism with the backdrop of the Vasaikhi celebration earlier that spring. The CBC: The National aired a piece titled *Canada’s Political Culture* with the following caption: “Politicians of all stripes are cozying up to extremist groups to earn the support and the votes of their supporters. Terry Milewski investigates.” Divided into two parts, the piece occupies 22 minutes and 30 seconds of CBC National airtime and solicited 416 public comments ranging from, “this is racist propaganda” to comments confirming the need to monitor, deport and restrict further migration of Sikhs. As a member of this community, my response to this visual and auditory Canadian media piece was exceptionally angry; I found it difficult to watch. Frequently, I had to walk away, vent my outrage at the essentializing and racist propaganda, but then return with my meditative lens (incidentally nurtured by my Sikh faith); it was a stomach-turning exercise in patience with the Canadian state and media. Every time I returned to the program, I entered the space of non-belonging. I heard the assaults of, “Paki, go back to where you came from” echoing from within this representation of my Indo-Canadian culture. This shaming of my identity by the all-mighty Canadian media’s ‘truth’ causes me to question if Canada can ever truly be home for anyone who does not fit the ‘white’ criteria.

Downloading this segment from the CBC’s website fuelled the fire further; Canada’s national journalism conglomerate chose to title this piece *Samosa*. Perhaps they

---

meant it to be funny or light-hearted; and I am too sensitive? I considered this, as I have considered that the “go back to where you came from” comments do not have racist intent (however, if you buy that, I could sell you rain in Vancouver). Reducing the struggle of Sikhs, who have been in negotiations for a separate homeland since the British annexed their kingdom (pre-India), to a savoury food item belittles the human atrocities that have been committed and continue to happen in Punjab. The metaphoric consumption of the other is well established in the Imperial dynamic. Uma Narayan utilizes food to understand the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized in *Eating cultures: Incorporation, identity and Indian food* (1995). The popular term “curry” to describe and identify most Indian food is actually a fabricated description by the British bearing very little resemblance to how food is identified or described in the South Asian context. For Imperial Britain, there were two Indias – one was consumable and the other was unsavoury until civilized through the process of colonization (Narayan, 1995). Eating curry was akin to eating India in all of its exotic splendour: from spices to silk shawls, from the Taj Mahal to turbaned Sikhs, from miniature paintings to the Vedas (Chaudhuri, 1992; Said, 1995; Narayan, 1995; Axel, 2001; Paranjpe, 1999). Narayan explains further about the two Indias,

But there was also another India in the imperial imagination, one less appetizing, but serving its own purpose in evoking the colonial enterprise – the India of ignorant natives, indolent and incompetent rulers, of vile practices and ungrateful mutinies, of snakes and scorpions, of the heat and the dust and the hard-to-convert heathens – an India that vividly signified the need for the civilizing mission of British rule. (1995, p. 67)

Here *Samosa* represents the ‘other’ India, the less appetizing one that is full of the “vile practices” of the terrorist: the violent and religious-fanatic Sikh. Once, long ago in
Imperial India, the Sikh was seen as an exotic other, more akin to the silks and saris, but is now reduced to the “Sikh=Danger” schema. Consuming the silks and saris of India fulfils the colonial fetish of viewing the Indian and his or her exotic nature during the Vaisakhi celebration. But when the Indian begins to transplant the human rights issues of fellow Sikhs (read as “ungrateful mutinies”), he or she is bringing the “snakes and scorpions” from the land of the “ignorant natives” and confirming once again, that “they” are “the hard to convert heathens”.

The CBC National’s Canada’s Political Culture ‘news’ program presenting what is occurring within Canada’s own borders by other Canadians solicits a response of required surveillance from the Canadian state, politicians, citizens and the Canadian media. By piecing together non-contextual fragments of various narratives into a holistic argument, the CBC: The National has devised a dissemination instrument that presents Sikhs as terrorists with no alternate Sikh identity and humanity. Furthermore, it identifies the allegiance held by Canadian politicians to these Sikh terrorists as one to gain votes and political prowess. Furthering this reading, Canada’s Political Culture is now being manipulated by these Sikh terrorists that hold power over Canada’s politicians, and are utilizing Canadian resources to further their violent cause to gain a separate homeland in India for their radical Sikh religion. Including the traumatic and painful images and words of ‘other’ Canadians, who lost loved ones in the Air India bombing, in the ‘news’ segment further demonstrates the one-dimensional dangerous focus of these Sikh terrorists who are willing to kill their ‘own’ and those who offend them: Canadians and non-Sikh Indians. Creating this type of fear around one group of individuals produces a state of panic that their vile practices are leaking into the model Canadian value system.
PAURI II: BUILDING BLOCKS

Dancing with Hybridity...

The postcolonial perspective resists the attempt at holistic forms of social explanation, it forces a recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist on the cusps of these often political spheres [between 3rd and 1st worlds] (bhabha, 1994, p. 173)

Questions of citizenship have become vexed as new social movements have produced heterogeneous changing, and overlapping subjects ... it is clear that nationalism itself has proved to be protean and mobile, providing identities and affiliations to mobile as well as settled subjects, and indeed to what have come to be called “global” and “cosmopolitan” subjectivities ... (Grewal, 2006, p. 35).

The language of critique is effective not because it keeps forever separate the terms of master and the slave ... but to the extent to which it overcomes the given grounds of opposition and opens up a space of translation: a place of hybridity, figuratively speaking, where the construction of a political object that is new, neither the one nor the other, properly alienates our political expectations, and changes, as it must, the very forms of our recognition of the movement of politics. (bhabha, 1994, p. 25)

Post-colonial theory was born out of the colonization process; whereby Western countries (i.e. England, Portugal, Spain, France, etc.) ‘took over’ the rule of another country – mainly those within the Eastern hemisphere. The most pertinent example for this paper is, of course, the British occupation of India, which situated Britain as the Western colonizer and India as the colonized Eastern subject. But the process of colonization did not solely occur across the East-West divide; it is also evident in the ‘take over’ and control of the First Nations peoples in North America (which is clearly situated in the Western hemisphere). The political, social and psychological dominance of the colonizers had been set in motion “by conquest and in blood” (Seth, Gandhi & Dutton, 1998, p. 7). Part of conquest was the continued rule of the colonized; in order to
maintain occupation for a sustained period (if not indefinitely), the colonizers studied the Orient: its mores, its laws, its culture and its people to develop cultural-specific rules of engagement. This discourse became institutionalized under the umbrella of Orientalism.

Many of these ‘take over’ missions were under the guise of a humanitarian obligation to civilize the uncivilized. Orientalism teased out the uncivilized customs and behaviours located in the East, which provided proof that the colonizer was indeed necessary to facilitate the evolutionary process – to help the backwards East catch up to the progressive, rational, modern and ethical West. Unearthing the rituals of sati, female genital mutilation and foot binding, the Orientalist scholars presented their concerns for the savage ways of the Orient as reason to validate their nation’s continued colonial rule.

Orientalism also extended the European scientific community’s racism project which marked ‘white’ races as superior on the evolutionary scale to the ‘darker’ races. Most of a colonizing country’s citizens did not have access to communications (i.e., anthropological, scientific and medical journals, travel writing, novels) that would present the ‘findings’ of this grand narrative of scientific racism; as such, advertising on commodity products became the preferred method for disseminating these messages. In *Imperial Leather*, Ann McClintock describes this process of advertising on bars of soap (or other domestic products) as a method of packaging, marketing and distributing evolutionary racism to “reinvent and maintain British national unity in the face of deepening imperial competition and colonial resistance” (McClintock, 1995, p. 209).

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5 Sati: In some communities in India, widowed women would be thrown upon their dead husband’s (or some would throw themselves) funeral pyre (widow burning). This practice is now banned but may still occur.
6 Female genital mutilation: In some communities in Africa and the Middle East, female genitalia are mutilated as a part of a mandatory womanhood ritual, often in unsanitary and painful circumstances.
7 Foot binding: In some communities in China, binding women’s feet (from the time they were babies) was practiced as a ritual (which limited women’s mobility and created obvious health issues).
Over the years, many different dissemination tools have been used to package, market and distribute colonial constructs of a superior ‘white’ race and inferior ‘other’ races – from soap packaging to print and photographic news media.

In revealing the ‘inherent’ social issues arising from the East, Orientalism firmly established an authorial footing and way of thinking about the world. However, some began to challenge the Orientalism ‘school of knowledge’ coinciding with the ‘postmodern’ challenges to the West’s status quo. Both post-colonial and postmodern discourses were involved in active engagement and critique; however, post-colonial theory was birthed out of the colonial sites of conquest, and as such interrogates how those colonial sites impact the post-colonial world. The editors of *Postcolonial Studies* (peer-reviewed journal), Sanjay Seth, Leela Gandhi and Michael Dutton, define post-colonialism as:

*[a] term, undeniably and necessary vague, a gesture rather than a demarcation, points not towards a new knowledge, but rather towards an examination and critique of knowledges…* (Seth, Gandhi & Dutton, 1998, p. 8).

Robert C. Young adds that “[post-colonialism] is about a changing world, a world that has been changed by struggle and which its practitioners intend to change further” (Young, 2003, p. 7). In our changing world, each colonial space is unique, and the forces of colonialism and post-independence are also unique on each individual life; but these forces can also create shared experiences embodying solidarity for the individuals exposed to these forces. McClintock cautions us against celebrating the ‘post’ position in post-colonialism as colonial issues are not that readily detached from our current-day reality. She is echoed by Gayatri Spivak who situates post-colonialism as a possible active agent in producing neo-colonial knowledge. Ella Shohat adds that there is an
ambivalence situated in post-colonialism, as the ‘post’ extracts the oppression and possibility of resistance embedded in colonialism (Shohat, 2006, p. 243). Further, Spivak cautions that although post-colonialism can become part and parcel of the colonial project, it cannot simply be positioned as “a continuous line from that past to our present” (Spivak, 1999, p. 1).

Is there a better term to discuss the issues of colonialism in a post-independence era? Neo-colonialism does continue to incriminate the colonial flavour that permeates the struggles located in the colonial projects, but limits the accountability of former colonized nation-states in their own political governing (often influenced by the vestiges of colonialism). Post-colonialism is not a neatly packaged entity, but nor is neo-colonialism or any of the other possible terms (i.e., colonial discourse studies or post-anti-colonial critique) that could be situated to represent the colonial issues that continue to influence the post-colonial context. Despite the above issues with post-colonial studies, this area of study does provide a platform to take up issues like the Vaisakhi celebration in the multicultural\textsuperscript{8} Canadian setting.

This reading of Vaisakhi fits well in the post-colonial critique to “to excavate the marginal, the magical, the erotic and the everyday” (Seth, Gandhi & Dutton, 1998, p. 10). Vaisakhi is a celebration that stages the ‘culture’, values and beliefs of the Northern Indian, Punjabi, Sikh Diaspora and Indo-Canadian communities – bringing the lived

\textsuperscript{8} The use of multiculturalism can be situated either as a space that encourages multiple cultures to live in collective harmony or as an instrument to maintain cultural differences. Himani Bannerji speaks to the divisive quality of Canadian multiculturalism: "Multiculturalism as an official practice and discourse has worked actively to create the notion and practices of insulated communities. Under its political guidance and funding a political-social space was organized" (Bannerji, 2000, p. 48). In the Canadian context, “[this] allows multiculturalism to serve as an ideology, both in the sense of a body of content, claiming that “we” or “they” are this or that kind of cultural identities, as well as an epistemological device for occluding the organization of the social” (Bannerji, 2000, p. 6).
everyday experiences from the shadows of the Canadian-scape to the front of the stage. This reading of Vaisakhi is very much in keeping with the politics of post-colonialism and feminism in that both of these positions share in the epistemological pursuit of revealing what has been omitted, challenging the status quo (in all of its masquerading forms from the media to national policies [i.e., multiculturalism]) and critiquing the continued influence of colonialism. Edward Said’s *Orientalism* unveils the colonial rhetoric not only in the spaces of institutionalized knowledge production but in “its application and existence in the general culture, in literature, ideology, and social as well as political attitudes” (Said, 1994, p. 340). As this reading of Vaisakhi involves the Canadian media, as both an institutional form of knowledge production and an applicable influence upon the political attitudes of Canadians, the post-colonial lens offers a comprehensive understanding of the involvement of the media in the continued but morphed spaces of present day colonial attitudes. Both homi bhabha and Edward Said find that the post-colonial perspective allows for the “heterogeneous, dynamic, and complex human reality” (Said, 1994, p. 333) to be presented and “forces a recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist” (bhabha, 1994, p. 173).

The CBC: The National segment: *Samosa* showcases Vaisakhi as the outward, deceptive front of a violent Sikh separatist movement that is weaving itself not only into the social fabric of Canada but is also pulling the strings of Canada’s political leaders. The complexity of Vaisakhi, the Sikh community and this separatist movement is entirely omitted from this segment; instead, a one-dimensional presentation is aired on Canada’s national news program, homogenizing Sikhs into a holistically dangerous category.
To locate myself in my body means more than understanding what it has meant to me to have a vulva and clitoris and uterus and breasts. It means recognizing this white skin, the places it has taken me, the places it has not let me go (Rich, 2003, p. 32).

Adrienne Rich locates her body as a physical vessel with arteries and cells and also as a cultural, political, social and economical form that will cause doors to open or close. Meyda Yeğenoğlu in Colonial Fantasies (1998) echoes this sentiment as she acknowledges that the “body is the medium through which power operates”. For me, my embodiment as a visibly brown-skinned-other woman in a white-Canada has informed me of this unique intersection I reside in: where colonialism continues to haunt my post-colonial, post-independence lived reality. Even though I was born in Canada to parents who were (and continue to be) Canadian citizens, I live in that in-between space of mobile and settled; I am informed of my non-settled citizenship every time I am questioned about my ‘true’ home. homi bhabha situates this space as hybridity where identity is never fixed but moves with the political and social milieu and is informed not just by race or skin colour but multiple factors of gender, class, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, ability, and so on into every facet of our lives.

In the pages of the Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader (2003); Colonial Fantasies (1998); Colonize This! Young women of color on today’s feminism (2002); The Empire Writes Back (2002); Orientalism (1978); Dislocating Cultures (1997); Of Silk Saris and Mini-Skirts: South Asian Girls Walk the Tightrope Culture (2003); Postcolonial Studies and Beyond (2005); Desis in the house: Indian American Youth Culture in New York City (2002); This bridge we call home: radical visions for transformation (2002); The Dark Side of the Nation (2000); A Critique of Postcolonial
"Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present (1999); Imperial Leather (1995); Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race, and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms (2001); Black Skin White Mask: The Experiences of a Black Man in a White World (1967); Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices (2006); Outlaw Cultures: Resisting Representations (1994), I found a sense of home. These pages echoed how the hierarchy of skin colour has coded and continues to code who belongs and who does not. This deeply entrenched colonial rhetoric continues to harvest new versions of the colonial project in the post-colonial era. My intention in this Vaisakhi reading is to draw upon post-colonial critique to better inform and describe the interaction between Vaisakhi and the Canadian media and perhaps contribute to the larger project which Frantz Fanon refers to as the decolonisation process, whereby actors and spectators of the colonial project call into question the colonial situation.

Decolonisation never takes place un-noticed, for it influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally. It transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history’s floodlights upon them. ... In decolonisation, there is therefore the need of a complete calling in question of the colonial situation. If we wish to describe it precisely, we might find it in the well-known words: «The last shall be first and the first last». Decolonisation is the putting into practice of this sentence. That is why, if we try to describe it, all decolonisation is successful. (Fanon, 1963, p. 30)

Media: Still Plugged in to the Colonial Rhetoric...

Even if one were to live like a hermit, ignoring the disrupting influence of media would be challenging; from monolithic billboards to tiny designer emblems, we are drowning in an ever-increasing media deluge. Even a visit to the bathroom at your local restaurant leaves you staring into a media message: no place is sacred. Even families who do not consume Kellogg’s breakfast cereals can usually identify Snap-Crackle-Pop lyrics.
The Nike swoosh symbol can stand alone to identify the world of Nike. The effects of visual ‘branding’ are pervasive, seeping into our consciousness: our identities, mores, values, ethics, and thoughts are, often without realizing it, enmeshed in the pattern the media offers us. As people can be ‘branded’ by the clothes they choose to wear, so can they be ‘branded’ by the colour of their skin or the trappings of their culture. Each of us does have free will to make our own decisions about the meanings we ascribe to the symbols that surround us, but certain buzz words or buzz images have come to define not just products but also types of people.

To be so omnipresent, media has had to adopt different forms. Morphing from simple typeset print forms to newer innovations like *YouTube* where powerful images of the Myanmar Buddhist nuns and monks facing the armed military can be viewed along side the horrific images of the 1984 attacks on Sikhs by the Indian government. Even though the old version of *YouTube* is situated in television and is less interactive, TV has become a major social institution and serves as a “powerful form of social integration and control” (Williams, 2002, p. 35). Because news media outlets commonly incorporate images, whether moving or still, as a type of proof to establish an evidence-based truth that text-based print culture cannot easily reproduce, I would like to quickly review the ‘truth’ construction involved in the photograph.

“[When] something is visible, it is a fact, and … facts contain the only truth … Photographs … tell the truth… [With] “no theoretical distinction [being] made between the photograph as scientific evidence and the photograph as a means of communication” (Berger, 2002, p. 55), the photograph acts as the undeniable truth. Although photography involves framing to display the ‘truth,’ questions of how this truth is manufactured, and
what is left out of photo (or video) continues to dismantle the scopic truth of the frozen film moment (Faris, 2002). “Photography made gazing upon events (thereby making them ‘spectacles’) safe for voyeurs” (Faris, 2002, p. 79). During colonial occupation, voyeurism into the veiled Orient was far more commonplace with compilations like An Indian Encounter: Portraits for Queen Victoria (Mathur, 2003), which exhibits Austrian artist Rudolf Swoboda’s portraits commissioned by Queen Victoria to capture the diverse range of British Indian subjects. That colonial project of marking the ‘other’ for voyeuristic fetish consumption continues. Catherine A. Lutz and Jane L. Collins, in their article The Color of Sex: Postwar Photographic Histories of Race and Gender (2002), analysed National Geographic images for racial hierarchical coding. Lutz & Collins found that National Geographic images position “people of color” as “poor, dirty, technologically backward, and superstitious” (Lutz & Collins, 2002, p. 99). Further, the images emphasized that “[with] guidance and support from the West [people of color] can in fact overcome these problems, acquire the characteristics of civilized peoples” (Lutz & Collins, 2002, p. 99). This brings us back to the supposed need for a colonial saviour in the problematic East.

The most powerful use of media can be found in the discourse of propaganda. Although it can be suggested that any advertising campaign is propaganda, I would argue that some forms of propaganda are far more dangerous than selling a particular type of yogurt. When Adolf Hitler took power of the German government in 1933, he used propaganda to further the Nazi Germany movement. The extermination of the Jewish people from not only Germany but also Poland, (the then) Soviet Union and Europe was part of the Nazi Germany agenda. Mass use of the radio was instigated during Nazi
Germany: organized and compulsory listening groups were established to serve as a propaganda tool (Williams, 2002). Public meetings, word-of-mouth, weekly posters, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, films and even children’s books were used as anti-Semitic propaganda tools (Bytwerk, 2005).

Creating an environment of fear fuelled anti-Semitic propaganda and created the myth of the “Jewish threat”: that the Jewish people were planning to exterminate the German people (Bytwerk, 2005). Saving the Aryan race from ‘others’ was the premise behind the Holocaust. Randall L. Bytwerk notes that the Nazi movement had no need to convince Germans to adopt a fanatical anti-Semitic approach; “it was enough if most were indifferent to the fate of the Jews” (Bytwerk, 2005, p. 20), and indifference had already been cultivated through the mass propaganda campaigns. This self-defence rhetoric (we must save ourselves from the dangerous others) was not only established in the grotesque nature of the Holocaust but also in the creation of dangerous ‘others’ in today’s war on terrorism.

**Power Play...**

...power is mobilized; it makes itself everywhere present and visible; it invents new mechanisms; it separates, it immobilizes, it partitions; it constructs for a time what is both a counter-city and the perfect society; it imposes an ideal functioning, but one that is reduced, in the final analysis, like the evil that it combats, to a simple dualism of life and death ... (Foucault, 1995: 205).

Once racial boundaries of difference are erected, social groups find biological, psychological and cultural reasons to maintain those boundaries. At this point, “racist theory produces full-blown descriptions of culture and personality that juxtapose powerful ego and degraded/dangerous alter” (Lutz & Collins, 2002, p. 92). Racial coding
manifests through everything from physical endurance to intelligence, from ‘savages’ to ‘civil citizen’, and from fanaticism to common sense. As “dangerous as they are, race theories have infiltrated the commonsense thinking of most people in the United States” and Canada, “profoundly influencing the ways they perceive and account for cultural difference” (Lutz & Collins, 2002, p. 93). Media can act as an impetus to our racial coding; in a series of newscasts, the media may nudge us towards an interpretation of difference and provide validation for our engrained suspicions of the ‘other’.

For when mass media such as television are treated as part of a whole range of cultural products, as texts to be “read” according to the interpretive strategies, we see that literary conventions and forms have greater sociocultural significance than we might first suspect: analyses of mass media thus enable us to see how we are fashioned by our interactions with what we read, watch, and listen to. (Manekar, 2002, p. 299)

Evaluating media products through the post-colonial critique serves to help us understand how the narratives of colonialism are woven into national programming in the post-colonial era.
PAURI III: THE SIKH STORY

The Vaisakhi and Khalistan Connection...

April 13th, 2007 marked the well-celebrated Punjabi and Sikh festival of Vaisakhi in British Columbia. For those who originated from the Northern Indian region of Punjab, Vaisakhi commemorates the New Year as well as the harvest season (highly significant to those who trace their roots to agriculturally-oriented Punjab). Finally and most importantly for Sikhs, Vaisakhi marks the birth of the Sikh religion. Punjabi Sikhs, the predominant South Asian population in British Columbia, have moved this internally significant diasporic event from the private domain of the Punjabi Sikh community to a very public Canadian multicultural sphere. As a celebratory space, Vaisakhi focuses members of the South Asian community around food and entertainment. As many Vaisakhi participants have ties to Sikhi, Sikhs have an opportunity to honour their religion’s tenets of seva and provision of langar by preparing and serving food and generally helping to make the community’s celebration a success. These tenets of community involvement can be traced throughout the multiple spaces of Sikhi.

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9 The date for Vaisakhi alters slightly year to year however, the celebration usually occurs in the month of April.
10 Sikhi: I made a conscious decision to choose the term Sikhi over Sikhism, as in the Punjabi language, Sikhi is used to identify the Sikh religion (similar to adding ‘isms’ in the English language like the term Sikhism). However, as Sikhi challenged the status quo (caste, class and gender) and dogmatic religious rituals (as Sikhi emerged following the devotional, mystic tradition of bhakti), placing Sikhi as a traditional religion (using an ‘ism’ to denote its standing i.e., Sikhism) would limit the value of its mystical, spiritual space. Using the term Sikhi instead of Sikhism honours the Punjabi language which has afforded me greater understanding of spirituality.
11 Seva can be loosely translated as community service or volunteer work while langar involves the provision of food for the community.
The founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak Dev Ji was born into a period of major
economic, political, and social instability in fifteenth century India (Basran & Bolaria,
2003). At the time of his birth, the predominant Hindu religion was steeped in centuries-
old traditions such as having the Brahmin caste act as the political/social and
religious/moral authority over all other castes. By the 16th century, Muslim Moghul rulers
had invaded India and established an empire that oppressed the Hindu population (i.e.,
mandatory conversion to Islam, rape, murder). Traveling widely, Guru Nanak Dev Ji
challenged ritualism, superstition, the caste system, religious intolerance and religious
oppression (Basran & Bolarai, 2003). After the death of the first Guru, nine male Gurus
succeeded Guru Nanak Dev Ji to hold Guruship. Once the final Guru passed away,
Guruship became invested in the sacred Sikh scriptures: the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

Over the period from the 15th to 18th centuries, the Sikh Gurus were not the only
ones breaking from the ritualistic, dogmatic practices of traditional Hinduism and Islam.
Traditionally, members of the Brahmin caste were seen as more divine than those who
were born into the lower caste structures. Brahmins held honoured positions as mediators
between divinity and human beings. The bhakti traditions challenged this notion with
lower caste individuals such as Ravi Dass (a cobbler) and Kabir (a weaver) rising to serve

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12 Guru: Otherwise known as a teacher. 'Gu' refers to darkness and 'Ru' refers to light. Guru is moving
from darkness to light. Within the Sikh faith, there are ten physical male Gurus (teachers) and one sacred
scripture: the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (including the poetry and hymns of Sikhs, Hindu and Muslim
mystics).

13 Guruship: In the Sikh faith, Guru Nanak Dev Ji held the spiritual throne to guide Sikhs much like Islam's
Mohammed and Buddhism's Mahatma Bhood. In the Sikh tradition, nine physical male forms successively
were appointed Guruship after Guru Nanak Dev Ji's passing. Here is their order: Guru Nanak Dev Ji (1469-
1539); Guru Angad Dev Ji (1504-1552); Guru Amar Das Ji (1479-1574); Guru Ram Das Ji (1534-1581);
Guru Arjan Dev Ji (1563-1606); Guru Har Gobind Ji (1595-1644); Guru Har Rai Ji (1630-1661); Guru Har
Krishan Ji (1656-1664); Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji (1621-1675); Guru Gobind Singh Ji (1666-1708); Guru
Granth Sahib Ji (1581-present).

14 Bhakti tradition: Path of love and devotion (Kaur-Singh, 1993). Bhakti forms of devotion can range from
singing poems to painting spiritual images. This tradition has origins in the lay practices of worship
(accessible to the common person) and involves an emotional and passionate union with the Divine.
as enlightened spiritual leaders. Bhakti movements led to a Sant\textsuperscript{15} tradition whereby anyone could openly explore and discuss devotion to and love for Divinity. In the Punjab region, Guru Nanak Dev Ji arose from this Sant tradition, as did his successors, to collectively propel the following of Sikhs (seekers/students) to form a separate dharmic (way of life) faith. Challenging historically prevalent power structures such as class, caste and gender, the Sikh Gurus (teachers) were disrupting the long-standing ruling arrangement in the Northern Indian region; as such, the Sikh Gurus and their followers became targets for persecution.

The fifth Guru, Guru Arjan Dev Ji, was tortured to death because he had blessed a rebel of the Moghul court (Singh, 2007) and refused to convert to Islam (Basran & Bolaria, 2003). Guru Hargobind Ji, as Guru Arjan Dev Ji’s successor and son, moved from the earlier pacifist tradition and took up arms to fight against the rising religious persecution (Singh, 2007; Basran & Bolaria, 2003). Guru Hargobind Ji also institutionalized the union between the concepts miri and piri. Miri represented temporal power (secular authority) while piri signified spiritual authority. As Harimandir Sahib (the Golden Temple) in Amritsar held the spiritual authority (piri) for the Sikh faith, Guru Hargobind Ji built the Akal Takht directly across from the Golden Temple to symbolize the presence of a temporal authority (miri). Although Sikh originated in challenging societal issues, institutionalizing these aspects of miri and piri solidified the relationship of the Sikh faith to its political activism. These principles were given new fuel when Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji (ninth Guru) was tortured to death for defending the right of the

\textsuperscript{15} Sant tradition: Sant is analogous to the term ‘saint.’ As a religious tradition, the Sant tradition is led by Gurus or spiritual leaders. The Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji serves as an important source of the Sant tradition in North India (Gaeffke, 1985) as the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji includes 700 poems of non-Sikh sants as well as Sikh sants.
Brahmin Hindu community to practice their faith. His successor and son, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, initiated the role of the Sikh as a ‘saint-soldier,’ “transforming the Sikh community into a community… of people who were inspired by a moral-religious vision of righteousness to take up arms against oppressive rulers” (Singh, 2007, p. 557). At Vaisakhi in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh Ji also reconfigured the Sikh identity through the creation of Khalsa\textsuperscript{16} – the community of the pure (Singh, 2007) – transforming the individual Sikh into a collective identity with a collective purpose (Axel, 2001).

Since Guru Amar Das Ji’s Guruship (late 1400s to early 1500s), Sikhs had gathered during the Vaisakhi celebration to hear the reigning Sikh Guru’s words. On April 13, 1699, thousands of Sikhs had gathered to hear Guru Gobind Singh Ji (the tenth Guru) speak. After a large congregation had formed, Guru Gobind Singh Ji drew his sword and asked (unexpectedly) who would be willing to sacrifice his life as proof of faith. Daya Singh rose from the congregation and followed the Guru behind a curtain; the Guru returned with a bloodied sword and a request for four more sacrifices. After four more faithful pledged their lives to the Guru and disappeared behind the curtain, Guru Gobind Singh Ji presented all five men to the congregation and addressed them as the Panj Pyaray (Five Beloved). “My brethren, you are in my form and I am in yours … In my time there are found five Sikhs totally devoted to the Guru. These shall lay anew the foundation of [Sikh]” (Macauliffe, 1909, p. 93). Calling on members of the congregation to sacrifice their lives, Guru Gobind Singh Ji reconfigured Sikhi from a Guru-led spiritual path to one that required the individual Sikh to navigate her or his own spirituality. This

\textsuperscript{16} Khalsa: This term refers to the community or collective identity of Sikhs after Guru Gobind Singh Ji’s 1699 Vaisakhi ceremony. Khalsa translates as community of the ‘pure’. Pure is used here to refer to one who is ‘free of malice, vengeance, greed, anger and hostility’ and whose actions (including the spoken word) must come from this space of a pure heart.
ceremony removed the physical guidance of a human Guru and placed the sacred scriptures, the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, as the eternal guide for the Sikh faith and created the Sikh initiation ceremony: Amrit. In practical terms, a Sikh was (and continues to be) initiated through drinking Amrit and thus committed to upholding the visible identity of an Amritdhari body, following the Sikh code of conduct and meditating using various prayers/mantras. Guru Gobind Singh Ji’s Amrit ceremony served two unique purposes: 1) to abolish all prior identity markers (mainly caste identification) and 2) to place importance on the visible Sikh identity (Axel, 2001). For Sikhs, the April 13, 1699 Vaisakhi ceremony marks the creation of Sikhi as a formal faith system and as a collective community, Khalsa. Having a unique, visible identity and a set of tenets to live by is akin to gaining citizenship within a new nation fully equipped with a charter of rights and responsibilities.

This new nation-state built on Sikh tenets did come into being. After the death of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, India faced a period of turmoil and uncertainty as Islamic rule began to weaken and Sikhs began establishing small independent principalities or misls. Each misl was lead by a sardar (leader) who exercised sovereign reign over his mini-kingdom. The head of one such misl, Ranjit Singh, at the age of 19 was proclaimed Maharaja of Punjab (the land of the 5 rivers) – bringing all of the misls together under

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17 Amrit: translated as nectar but in the Sikh initiation ceremony of Amrit, this ‘nectar’ is made using a small sword (kirpan) to mix water and sugar into Amrit.
18 Amritdhari: A person who has been initiated by this Sikh ceremony of Amrit (not all Sikhs have taken Amrit). The life of an Amritdhari Sikh involves rising early in the morning to conduct prayers, following the Sikh codes of conduct and maintaining the outward markers of an Amritdhari Sikh, including the five Ks: Kes (unshorn hair under a required a turban), Kangha (comb), Kara (steel bracelet), Kirpan (a sword) and Kachha (shorts). Each of the five Ks has a symbolic meaning: e.g., Kara “[refers] to ethics, a symbol of responsibility” to “remind Sikhs not to misuse their hands” (Basran & Bolaria, 2003: 20); prudently, the Kara protected Sikhs’ wrists in battles involving sword fighting – primarily with the oppressive Moghul rulers. There are Sikhs who are not Amritdhari Sikhs (such as myself), who may or may not practice some or all of the tenets required by an Amritdhari Sikh.
one sovereign rule (Basran & Bolaria, 2003). During the 1700s, Sikhs were the majority in Punjab (Axel, 2001) and from 1799 to 1849, Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his descendants ruled Punjab. It is said the Maharaja maintained a humble presence; he rejected traditional symbols of superior status and would sit cross-legged on the floor when meeting guests (rather than sitting on a throne). He did not wear an emblem on his turban and neither the emblem nor the coins of his government bore any reference to him (Basran & Bolaria, 2003). His agenda was to form a state where Sikh philosophy would guide the nation’s policies. He recruited capable and competent individuals for government positions irrespective of their religion, ethnicity and nationality (Basran & Bolaria, 2003). During Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s secure reign, the Sikh Dharma and community flourished. Many Gurdwaras were built while others were renovated and restored under his patronage. A primary reason for Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s success lay in his ability to consolidate his kingdom into a single working unit. He utilized military tactics to secure this area, as the region was the primary point of entry for land-based invasions into India. Punjabi inhabitants faced many possible assaults and were active in militaristic actions. Maharaja Ranjit Singh created a significant army to defend Punjab’s outer borders; they fought off Afghans on one side and signed a friendship treaty with the British on the other side to maintain the Sikh homeland. This goodwill treaty required that Maharaja Ranjit Singh keep other possible invaders out of the East India Company’s empire, that is, what is currently known as India. However, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Lion of Punjab, died in 1839 leaving the Sikh homeland vulnerable to British invasion. In 1843, Duleep Singh ascended the throne to unify the Sikhs and carry on his father’s

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19 Guru Nanak introduced the idea that at the core of our being, we are one (Ek Onkar) regardless of our practices and identities.
legendary authority. However, Ranjit Singh's youngest son was merely five years old, and his rule was short lived.

On March 24, 1849, the East India Company finally conquered Punjab, the last territory to be stifled by colonial rule. As "Sikh men had come to be known as extremely courageous soldiers and the strongest challenge to the British" (Axel, 2001, p. 40), the British utilized the surrender as a "celebration of colonial discipline" (Axel, 2001, p. 41). To further display their colonial might, Duleep Singh was required to sign away all rights to the Sikh kingdom and made to convert to Christianity prior to leaving Indian soil for Britain, where he would serve as a colonial souvenir for Queen Victoria. Given that "Sikh men" were seen as the "strongest challenge to the British", they were employed within the British army and served not only as trophy representations of colonized peoples (with their long hair hidden under metres of fabric) but also as a reminder of how "so powerful of an army" (Axel, 2001, p. 80) fell to British rule. With the Sikh flag lowered in Lahore (now located in Pakistan) and replaced with the Union Jack (Basran & Bolaria, 2003), Sikh faced its greatest challenge since before Guru Gobind Singh Ji’s construction of the Khalsa: a shattered and declining Sikh identity and affiliation. Sikhs were abandoning Sikh philosophy and Sikh identity (no longer displaying the physical outward markers) and were adopting Hindu practices (Basran & Bolaria, 2003).

The Singh Sabha Movement in 1873 formed in response to this decline, with the mission to revitalize Sikhi principles, practices and ideals (Basran & Bolaria, 2003). Khalsa Diwan Society was formed in 1883 to promote Sikh studies and Sikh dharma (Basran & Bolaria, 2003). The Khalsa College in Amritsar, established in 1892, served as an important symbol in Sikh identity (Basran & Bolaria, 2003). Bhai Vir Singh utilized
literary forms to re-introduce the messages of the Sikh Gurus. The novel *Sunderi* (1898) boasts a central female character who serves as a model Sikh. Depicted as a spiritual warrior, Sunderi performs the teachings of the Gurus. For instance, returning from battle with a group of Sikh warriors, she hears a man calling out for water in a Persian dialect and dismounts to serve him water and tend his wounds. Although he was a member of the opposing Moghul army, Sunderi is able to uphold the Sikh tenets of seva (service) in the spirit of Guru Nanak Dev Ji’s words that there is no Muslim, there is no Hindu, we are all the same (Kaur-Singh, 1993).

As a minority group within the borders of India, Sikhs have been disproportionately targeted even prior to Indian independence in 1947. Under British colonial rule, 93 of the 121 Indians hanged were Sikhs. Similarly, of the 2,646 Indians who were imprisoned for life, 2,147 were Sikhs, and of the 1,300 Indians who were killed at the infamous Jallianwala Bhag incident, 799 were Sikhs (Basran & Bolaria, 2003). From the moment when Punjab was seized by the East India Company, the relationship between Sikhs and the British was precarious. Sikhs were involved in multiple sites of negotiation with their colonial ruler. From vengeance to demoralization, Sikhs negotiated their new position in British India (Singh, 2007). After thwarting violent and non-violent acts of defiance by ex-soldiers of Ranjit Singh’s army, the British did provide opportunities to participate in the new India, such as being recruited to the British army (Singh, 2007). Although Sikhs continued to serve as soldiers for the British during

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20 Jallianwala Bhag incident: As a child and an adult, I have visited this site multiple times to see the bullet holes still embedded in the brick walls. During British rule, Indian Independence movements arose and on April 13, 1919 (incidentally on Vaisakhi day), the British army moved in on a peaceful demonstration by a large crowd of men, women and children. The only entrance to this area was blocked by the British army; many demonstrators tried to scale the walls while others jumped in the well. Meanwhile, the British army began shooting into the massive crowd.
both world wars, Sikhs were also fighting for a separate Sikh homeland within British India (Axel, 2001). Despite active negotiations with the British, the 1940 Lahore Resolution carved Pakistan out of the former Sikh kingdom of Punjab. The Akali Party\textsuperscript{21} deemed this a betrayal: Sikhs had served Britain and yet the land that was acknowledged as Sikh territory by the British was being handed over to form a Muslim state: Pakistan (despite Muslims composing only 20\% of the population in this area). Sikhs were considered a “nuisance well worth placating” yet “a relatively small nuisance” (Axel, 2001, p. 86) by the British. The British continued to tease the three main Akali leaders by assessing borders for a possible Sikh state until 1946. In June 1947, another Sikh surrender took place as India was formally divided into two countries: India and Pakistan. The division of Pakistan from India involved mass riots, mass violence, mass displacement and sheer inhumane chaos in the Sikh dominated area of Punjab. Many of those who lost their land, homes, places of worship and loved ones were Sikh, but ‘New India’ promised that, “Sikh friends have no reason to fear that we [the Congress Party] will betray them. For, the moment it does so, the Congress would not only thereby seal its own doom but that of the country” (Basran & Bolaria, 2003, p. 37). Despite this promise, Punjab was the only state not afforded the right to emphasize its mother tongue, Sikhs were lumped into a Hindu identification and the capital city of Chandigarh (promised to Punjab) remains both the capital city of Punjab (with a Punjabi language and Sikh religion focus) and Haryana (with a Hindi language and Hindu religion focus).

\textsuperscript{21} Akali Dal Party: Also known as the Shiromani Akali Dal, it serves as a political party composed of Punjabi Sikhs. In 1920, Akali Dal emerged in Punjab to facilitate the Gurdwara Reform movement (whereby Sikhs had to fight to expel British supported individuals who had taken over the Gurdwaras [Sikh places of worship]) and this party has continued to support Sikh political struggles and voice Sikh issues.
**Border Issues...**

Although Sikhs are a minority group within India, they hold majority status in the state of Punjab. Briefly, I will highlight some of the conditions in the Punjab region for the Sikhs. For an overview of the political and social climate of the Punjab region, Joyce J. M. Pettigrew’s *Sikhs of the Punjab: Unheard Voices of the State and Guerrilla Violence* (1995) offers a comprehensive account. Pettigrew presents four major issues that cultivated a volatile climate for Sikhs in Punjab. Firstly, Sikhs had documented and presented their economic grievances through a non-violent campaign that included the Anandpur Sahib Resolution (1973) to the state concerning the state policies in the agricultural sector. Post-independence, Punjab became not only self-sufficient in wheat production but produced a wheat surplus and served as the major producer of rice, cotton and sugar cane. Punjab was supplying 73% of the nation’s wheat and had been (and continues to be) dubbed as India’s breadbasket; rather than supporting economic success for Punjabis, the State instead began imposing extreme regulations on Punjabi agricultural practices. For instance, “[the] central government regulated the amount of water Punjab could take from its own rivers, and it was calculated that 75% of available waters of riparian Punjab were allotted to non-riparian states” (Pettigrew, 1995, p. 5). This left Punjabi farmers to source irrigation for their crops through more costly methods. Due to state regulations, the cost of wheat cultivation increased by 84% between 1970 and 1978 (Pettigrew, 1995).

Secondly, underemployment for Punjabi youth is an issue. Denying employment opportunities to Punjabis outside of Punjab and resisting the establishment of any   

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13 The Indian states of Maharashtra and West Bengal will not allow out-of-state Indians to work within their states (Pettigrew, 1995).
industries in Punjab, the Indian government has confined Punjabis to Punjab – reliant upon the limited, family-based agricultural sector (Pettigrew, 1995). Further, acquiring bank loans for investments in Punjab is difficult as 70% of Punjab’s bank deposits are invested outside the state of Punjab (Basran & Bolaria, 2003). Thirdly, three successive events in Punjab (in 1984) have been identified by Pettigrew as an attack specifically on the Sikh population in this region: “The fact that they were Sikh removed their status and their rights from them” (Pettigrew, 1995, p. 8). The Indian government’s attack on the Golden Temple complex – identified as “Operation Bluestar” – was an attack on “the spiritual and political centre of the Sikh way of life and the Sikhs as a people” (Pettigrew, 1995, p. 8). “The army went into the Darbar Sahib [Golden Temple Complex] not to eliminate a political figure or a political movement” as stated by the Indian government, “but to suppress the culture of a people, to attack their heart, to strike a blow at their spirit and self-confidence” (Pettigrew, 1995, p. 8). Following this attack, the Indian army proceeded with Operation Woodrose: entering the homes of Punjabi villagers to remove young Sikh males aged 15-25 from their homes (Pettigrew, 1995). The third major attack on the Sikhs in 1984 was a “systematic and planned attack on Sikh settlements in the trans-Jumna area of Delhi in which neighborhoods were surrounded and their Sikh inhabitants set alight and burnt alive” (Pettigrew, 1995, p. 9), resulting in the reported death of more than 4,000 Sikhs. An inquiry into this massacre was brushed off and the guilty remain unpunished, despite the perpetrators being well known to authorities.

The Indian police continue to repeatedly attack Sikhs – not only inflicting terror on the psyche of Sikhs but also preventing them from gathering to discuss the human

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14 Because Punjab borders the neighboring country of Pakistan, India is hesitant to set up heavy industries in Punjab as relations between India and Pakistan remain tense and Pakistan may attack these industrial areas (Basran & Bolaria, 2003).
rights violations they face. The Indian state’s surveillance and policing of the Sikh population includes the following activities: to abduct; to not produce citizens before magistrates; to maintain no record of arrests, detentions and interrogations; to torture, rape and murder (Pettigrew, 1995). The slightest or even only perceived transgression (perhaps being related to someone suspected of having separatist loyalties) is cause to inflict any or all of the above atrocities upon the “transgressing” Sikh. Life in a danger zone is hard to imagine; but as I read through the narratives of Sikhs who live daily under state-imposed terror for being a minority citizen, I begin to gain some scope of the injustices they face daily. To honour the voices of Punjabi Sikhs requires more space than I have here, but I have selected one story to illustrate the random terror Sikhs experience in their homeland.

Here is Surinder Singh’s story: As an ex-soldier of the Indian army – not involved in any separatist movement activities or other illegal activities – Surinder Singh would not seem a likely target of police detention and arrest. However, after Indira Gandhi was killed by her two Sikh bodyguards (whom she maintained even after the monumental attacks on the Sikhs in 1984), attacks upon the Sikhs grew. On the evening of May 27, 1986, Surinder Singh admitted his ill father to the hospital and by mid-morning the next day, police had surrounded his house and arrested him. They tortured and interrogated him. He was subsequently charged and jailed. Two years later, he won his case and was released from prison. In 1989, he was re-arrested, tortured and then released on bail. In 1991, a relative was imprisoned and Surinder Singh went to inquire as to his whereabouts. He was arrested again, beaten, transferred to another jail, tortured, transferred to a camp near the Pakistan border, tortured (i.e., electric shock to his genitals,
his eyesight and hearing irreversibly damaged), transferred again and ‘shown’ to have possession of hand grenades. Due to ill health, he was released to the hospital and later released on bail. Police came back to his house and beat him. He was re-arrested and the police threatened to charge him with possession of an AK47 (which he had never owned nor had in his possession). His wife sent telegrams to the chief justice in Punjab and the Haryana High court which started the re-shuffling process. He was again tortured (legs torn apart) and transferred. Then the police inspector asked for money for his release. His family raised the money and he returned home. Ten days later, the raids on his home began. He went to the army to seek assistance and was assured he would be safe. Police now returned to make false accusations against his wife. He fled to Amritsar. Police invaded his home, abused his wife and children and threatened to kill Surinder Singh when they found him. His wife was arrested and their personal belongings were taken from their home. Once they had located him, the police took Surinder Singh into custody and again tortured him. He was then taken with six other men to the bank of a river where they were all beaten before the police began to shoot and kill them. Surinder Singh escaped, but his wife remains in jail, his possessions are still with the police, his home is still locked up by the police and his children are living with their grandparents. Here is Surinder Singh’s voice:

I appeal to the democratic peace loving countries of the world to stop giving economic aid to India, for this money is being spent on killing and on the oppression of minorities. I would appeal to the UNO to send their investigative team to the Punjab to listen freely to the people without government interference, so that the truth may prevail... (Pettigrew, 1995, p. 18).

The Sikh resistance movement was born from this political and social milieu. Violence within the Sikh community had always been well documented by the Indian
government, as Sikhs were a viable threat to the nation-state of India. Groups such as the Khalistan Commando Force emerged with well-armed members willing to fight for freedom. Many Sikhs either joined or sympathized with those involved in resistance movements in India and in their diasporic communities. After Operation Bluestar, Sikhs felt alienated from India and their fellow citizens (Singh, 2007).

There are many who believe the Sikh resistance movement has not stayed within Indian borders, but has moved with Sikhs to wherever they have found refuge. In Canada, the Air India bombing case has been clearly identified as a Sikh terrorist attack, despite only one of the people charged and convicted of this act being a Sikh. To share a very different perspective Zuhair Kashmeri and Brian McAndrew contributed *Soft Target: How the Indian Intelligence Service Penetrated Canada* (1998) to the Indo-Canadian discourse. The stated purpose of this book is to create awareness of the persecution of Sikhs residing in Canada at the hands of the Indian government. The book illustrates Canada’s infiltration by the Indian government and its intelligence forces – impacting the lives of Canadians and manipulating the intelligence collection and policing efforts of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Kashmeri and McAndrew’s investigation narrates a string of events that expose the “Sikh terrorist” paradigm. From revealing an “Indian government plant” who was interviewed by a BBC reporter, to revealing ticket cancellations on the targeted Air India flights by Indian officials and their families just before the flights, Kashmeri and McAndrews provide a solid argument for the involvement of the Indian government in not only the bombing of Air India Flight 182 but also in the denigration of the Sikh community in India and beyond.
The 1984 attack, Operation Bluestar, on Punjabi Sikhs had galvanized Sikhs internationally into a unified community and questions were now being raised in both American and Canadian governing bodies about the harsh treatment of Sikhs in India. CSIS developed a serious interest in the Sikh community’s activities in 1984. They increased their surveillance of Canada’s Sikhs, giving the reasons of firstly, the persecution of Sikhs in their ‘home’ state, which increased the potential for violence among all Sikhs, and secondly, “the possibility that India would purposely provoke the Sikhs into committing acts of violence” (Kashmeri & McAndrew, 1989, p. 50). However, this official interest did not last long. The Indian government began to apply political pressure for Canada’s support of “Sikh terrorism,” especially after the Air India bombing. In 1987, Joe Clark, External Affairs Minister for Canada, began to express his concern with government officials attending events organized by the Canadian Sikh community. He explained that “Sikh organizations” were a “significant irritant in our [Canadian] relations with India” (Kashmeri & McAndrew, 1989, p. 138). After many falsely reported or exaggerated claims by the Indian government, CSIS began to question the position of the Indian government officials. “CSIS had enough circumstantial material to reach the conclusion that agents of the government of India were linked to the Air India and Narita bombings (Kashmeri & McAndrew, 1989, p. 93). Subsequently, CSIS put an abrupt end to sharing reports with the Indian government and its affiliates. Despite this, Sikh men were the ones charged with the Air India bombings.

Sikhs are now seen as troublemakers, terrorists and fanatics in the Canadian public domain and this violent terrorist construction continues to be perpetuated in the media discourse around the Air India bombing trials, Indo-Canadian gang violence and
Indo-Canadian domestic violence stories. Even in the academic realm, terrorist researchers have identified Sikhs as a population to examine for their “terrorist” tendencies. Cynthia Keppley Mahmood negotiates her “commitment to peacebuilding” on the shoulders of her anthropological studies around violence, war and terror whereby she locates herself as “[working] directly with Sikh militants of six different guerilla organizations and with Islamic militants of three” organizations (Mahmood, 2002, p. 2).

Further, Mahmood’s *Fighting for Faith and Nation: Dialogues with Sikh Militants* (1996) continues to position Sikhs as militants. Are these Sikhs actually militants? Or are they freedom fighters? What makes their organizations “guerilla”? Was Martin Luther King, Jr. a freedom fighter or a “terrorist”, “militant” and “guerilla”? If the Sikhs that Mahmood has worked with are truly militants, would she do the following: “I interviewed dozens of militants at length, stayed in the homes of militant families” (Mahmood, 1996, p. 5)? Although she claims that “this book is about Khalistani militants” and “to generalize to all Sikhs would be misguided,” the use of “Sikh militants” and “Fighting for Faith and Nation” doesn’t unravel the “Sikh terrorist” paradigm but rather it perpetuates it by continuously linking “Sikh” with “militant” and “fighting” reinforcing the idea that Sikh=Danger. Her ethical consideration around use of labels is questionable. She identifies even an elderly man – who was tortured and abused at the hands of the Indian government for being a Sikh in Punjab, whose wife was raped and was still detained at the time Mahmood was conducting her interviews – as a militant.

The anthropological agenda of unveiling the mystic Orient, knowing the ‘other’, is still at large with comments like:
We don’t know enough about how the [militant Islamist] think to effectively talk with them. We can’t easily imagine what the world looks like from extraordinary viewpoints. And ethnographies of village life in Egypt, however important in themselves, don’t enlighten us much about the World Trade Center bombers.” (Mahmood, 1996, p. 3)

Unveiling the dark side of the Orient by knowing them is wrapped up in the notion of Michel Foucault’s policing and surveillance of dangerous populations through knowledge accruement (Foucault, 1990) (Foucault, 1990) (Foucault, 1995). Mahmood is not the only one to continue the use of problematic identifiers for the Sikh community in Western academic discourse. Pettigrew’s book, Sikhs in the Punjab: Unheard Voices of State and Guerrilla Violence, also connects Sikhs with guerilla violence to again establish the Sikhs=Danger paradigm. As I noted earlier, despite delivering a sympathetic telling of the atrocities faced by Sikhs in Punjab, Pettigrew does not disentangle violence and danger from the Sikh identity; instead, she entrenches it further.

The question of why ‘guerilla terrorists’ is the chosen identifier for Sikhs instead of ‘revolutionary freedom fighters’ has to be addressed, especially when discussing a population that has experienced far more violence than it has perpetrated. Marayam Razavy’s article, Sikh Militant Movements in Canada (2006), presents not only another link between violence and the Sikh faith but also the elevated cost of having Sikh militants as a burden on the Canadian systems of surveillance and policing (thereby ‘costing’ the Canadian public). Utilizing comments made by one “member of the Sikh community in Canada”, Razavy illustrates “Sikh infighting” (2006). This is akin to interviewing a ‘white’ Canadian whose comment about “getting rid of the immigrants” is taken as illustrating the position of all ‘white’ Canadians. Razavy’s article builds on the Sikh=Danger narrative even more than Mahmood and Pettigrew; the former two at least
provide a glimpse into the human rights violations and the underlying political, social, economic and cultural context of Punjab. Razavy merely presents a skewed and limited perspective of Sikh history and of the individuals who identify as following the Sikh faith.

I do not condone violence and I am not condoning it here. It is important to the discourse to air the issues in Punjab and the involvement of Sikhs in movements that use ‘guerilla,’ ‘militant,’ ‘terrorist’ and ‘violent’ tactics. But when only a minority of Sikhs are involved in such movements, the continuous coupling of these words of violence and terror and Sikh are building ‘fast tracked’ psychological schemas that support implicit and explicit racism towards a group of individuals connected by a faith system.
PAURI IV: VIOLENT REPRESENTATIONS OF THE DANGEROUS “KIND”

The Geographic photographer has always been and predominantly remains, both literally and symbolically, a white man. And not just any white man, but the whitest and most masculine version possible: the great hunter/adventurer (Bright 1990, p. 137-138), free to roam the globe in search of visual treasure, flamboyantly virile in his freedom from observation and evaluation, and his bravery in entering the dangerous realms at the ends of the earth, in continents still dark for most of his audience. (Lutz & Collins, 2002, p. 112).

The CBC: The National Samosa piece positions itself very much like the geographic photographer, entering the dangerous realm of the dark Orient. The great hunter collects flamboyantly virile observational treasures and doles out glimpses of those who reside in the marginalized hyphenated identities. Unveiling the mysteries of the private, domestic space of the Indo-Canadian Oriental, CBC’s Terry Milewski demonstrates that even after a century of Occidental residency, the Oriental is so resistant to assimilation that he continues to fight for a far-away homeland.

The power of the camera was well utilized during the Empire’s colonial invasions and continues to document colonial discourse long after the Empire has fallen. “Each imperial filmmaking country had its own imperialist genres set in “darkest Africa”, the “mysterious East”, and the “stormy Caribbean” (Shohat & Stam, 2002, p. 125). As present day globalized colonial citizens, the “dark Africans”, the “mysterious Easterners” and the “stormy Caribbeans” live within the boundaries of former Imperialism. Canadian news media has adopted the role of narrating the tales of current colonial issues just as colonial “cinema combined the narrative and spectacle to tell the story of colonialism.
from the colonizer’s perspective” (Shohat & Stam, 2002, p. 125). With the CBC: The National Samosa piece, television was the medium used to place this colonial perspective describing the ‘terrorist other’ into the social discourse of Canada.

Since the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, ‘terrorism’ has become part of the Westerner’s daily news diet. Terror jargon not only carries the psychological, physical and social weight of fear; it also reminds us of the fearful randomness that is our legacy of terror: from the 1985 Air India Flight 182 to the 2007 Glasgow Airport attack. Since the 9/11 attacks, the Middle East exists as “a ready source of dark fears and threats” (Boggs & Pollard, 2006, p. 335). And terrorism serves up “a vital source of narratives, fantasies and myths that contribute so much to highly entertaining cinema, with its international intrigue, exotic settings, graphic violence, and the putative conflict between good and evil” (Boggs & Pollard, 2006, p. 335). The ‘irredeemably evil’, ‘crazed’, ‘violent’, ‘threatening’ and ‘irrational’ are found in the illegal alien, immigrant other and hyphenated identities. In the immediate racist backlash post-9/11, the turban became targeted as a threat to national security, as all those who wore turbans were seen as followers of Osama Bin Laden. The fatal shooting of Balbir Singh Sodhi (a Sikh man) in Mesa, Arizona and reports of turban grabbing led some to abandon their turbans (Puar & Rai, 2002). Being seen as a threat to national security also places the ‘other’ in a precarious position; they are in danger of a racist terrorism that is rarely articulated but quite evident: the death of Balbir Singh Sodhi is only one example. The terror inherent in belonging to a group of hyphenated others is what Jasbir K. Puar and Amit S. Rai articulate:
To the average uninterested American eye, however, a turban is just a turban. And it symbolizes the revived, erect, and violent patriarchy of the East, of Islam, and of the Taliban; the oppression of Afghan women; the castration and the penetration of the white Western phallic power by bad brown dick and its turban. (Puar & Rai, 2002, p. 137)

Although Puar and Rai speak in context of the American Sikh, the Canadian gaze also symbolizes the Sikh turban as representing a violent, backward Eastern, Oriental, Hindoo and Asiatic patriarchy. The turban has become a symbol for the Air India bombing, of the separatist movement for Khalistan and of an irrational, savage violence seen against the backdrop of Indo-Canadian gangs and South Asian domestic violence.

**Visual Representations and Samosa Politics…**

Such images are indeed able to usurp reality because first of all a photograph is not only an image (as painting is an image), an interpretation of the real; it is also a trace, something directly stencilled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask. (Sontag, 1999, p. 80)

To delve further into the *Samosa* piece, I found a separate reading of the visual representations (void of sound bytes) produced a visual montage of signs used to construct the prescribed identity and culture of Sikhs in the Canadian context. Photographic images act as ‘proof’ (Tagg, 1999) yet they are also symbolic signs that “belong to a history … a signification already built” (Barthes, 1999, p. 55). “Lights, camera, action” involves the manipulation of the visual form to reproduce symbols for mass societal consumption. As ‘social animals’, human beings cannot be apolitical, nor can photographic products be void of the ‘social baggage’ that we carry around with us; yet we maintain an unquestioned faith that the news preserves a space of ‘neutrality’, of ‘truth’ and of ‘apolitics’ (Burgin, 1999). Under the guise of this ‘truthful’ familiar space, ‘news’ media passes unnoticed as a political device (Burgin, 1999) for not only
surveillance and policing (Tagg, 1999) but also to communicate ‘myths’ about our lived ‘reality’ (Barthes, 1999). Here are three running images from the Samosa piece:

Young Sikh man wearing a blue turban, white hoodie and white shorts practicing Gatka (Northern Indian martial arts form) at the Vasakhi celebration

Two Sikh men with orange turbans beside a float with “Khalistan” written on it at the Vasakhi celebration

Close-up on a float banner reading: “Khalistan Jindabad” in Punjabi with “Sikh Homeland Khalistan” in English with Indo-Canadians grouped around the float at the Vasakhi celebration.

Panning out of the banner captures a flashing police car driving by

Panning onto pictures of Sikh men lining the side of a float at the Vasakhi celebration with Sikh boys wearing turbans on the float

As is evident in the visual introduction in this Samosa segment, the turbaned Sikh man is the active agent in the separatist movement being fomented on Canadian soil. Even the children represented here are male children. Women are almost invisible in this segment though large numbers were in attendance at the Vaisakhi celebration. By erasing the presence of Sikh, Punjabi and Indo-Canadian women from the celebration and by extension the public sphere, the CBC: The National image montage positions women as voiceless: weaving the passive, oppressed narrative around the Oriental veiled woman. As these visual quotes are located in the Vaisakhi celebration, it appears that this harvest festival, New Year’s celebration and birth of the Sikh faith acts as a deceptive ‘front’ to the inner workings of the ‘other’. The terror stage is set, when the first visual image places a turbaned Sikh man demonstrating his command of weapons use. The mysterious inner curtain is ripped aside and rather than seeing a young man practicing Gatka (Northern Indian martial art form), you see a violent presentation of a turbaned, bearded Sikh man proudly demonstrating his violent prowess on the streets of Canada. What is
even more interesting is that the CBC: The National image montage caught a flashing police car driving in the forefront with the Vaisakhi celebration happening in the background. By linking these two images together, it reinforces the notion of required surveillance and policing of this non-assimilating other.

The backs of two young men wearing t-shirts with “Our aim Khalistan” and the International Sikh Youth Federation symbol.

Three young boys wearing hoodies with an emblem with two guns crossing over one another, the Sikh Khanda (or Adi Shakti) symbol and a lion with Punjabi writing.

Wearing the attire of the International Sikh Youth Federation confirms that there is a collective, organized group involved in this movement. It is not just a group of guys hanging out and talking about some haphazard idea but rather, it is a federation internationally established by Sikhs (again, the Sikh=Danger construction). Reading through these images you can imagine *National Enquirer*-like headlines: ‘Worldwide, they have terrorist cells cultivating the next terrorist attacks – bombing planes with Canadian citizens on them to achieve their aim: Khalistan’. As the fight for a separate homeland (Khalistan) has been laden with a great degree of violence and ‘terrorist’ labelling, Khalistan carries loaded imagery of bombings, death and terrorist violence. Another headline imagined through these images: ‘Even their young boys are wearing violent emblems. The crossed guns image clearly shows that they begin their terrorist training early’. Yet the recent skull fascination in our fashion industry is just a fashion statement. The video games that many Canadian children (white children included) play that gun down cops and other random strangers – that is simply kids playing a game. Terry Milewski does ask why these children are wearing a weaponry image. When the salt-and-pepper bearded and turbaned Sikh man says, “It is just pictures,” the camera
pulls away. There is no comment from Terry Milewski; dismissing the “it is just pictures” statement. The viewer is left to either accept it as a fashion statement or as something more sinister, but in the deeply entrenched violent narrative, it is clearly hard for the viewer to dismiss it as such. Watching this segment, even having lived in a peaceful Sikh identity, having attended the warm-fuzzy Vaisakhi celebration, I questioned, “was I being duped?” After the momentary lapse of second-guessing myself, I replay my lived experiences and realize that my lens has not been corrupted; rather it encompasses a holistic picture of what is happening.

A 1984 rally of Sikhs supporting the Khalistan movement after the attack on the Sikhs’ holiest city (the Indian government’s Operation Blue Star) showing hundreds of Sikh men wearing turbans with full beards speaking in Punjabi. Signs speak for the crowd (the CBC added translations): “Hindu Dogs”; “Death to them”; “Exalted shall be the one who shouts”; “God is the truth”; “They say Hindus are our brothers … until we kill 50,000 Hindus, we will not rest”; “Indira bitch”; “Death to her” ✎

An old black and white clip of Indira Gandhi, former Prime Minister of India, greeting various men (among them a bearded man wearing a turban) with her hands joined (prayer-like pose) and receiving flower garlands from the men as she bows to greet them in her white sari. ✎

Another old clip of Indira Gandhi speaking ✎ The camera focuses on Indira Gandhi’s Sikh bodyguard with a full beard and wearing a turban ✎

An illustration of a cover of magazine depicting two men wearing turbans and military uniforms shooting Indira Gandhi, dressed in a white sari ✎

With emotions running at an all-time high, Sikhs gathered in response to the bloodshed of the attack on the Golden Temple (1984 Operation Bluestar) in a state of mixed anger, frustration and sorrow. With enforced curfews, all rail, bus and air services stopped, phone lines cut, journalists forced to leave (Axel, 2001), the Indian

24 Forcefully imposed curfews requiring individuals to be confined to their homes for various periods such as dawn-til-dusk or 24 hours per day, limits their ability to access essential supplies and to connect with each other. Military- and/or government-imposed curfews are a part of a collective imprisonment for citizens that is meant to limit protests and collective activism.
government unleashed a brand of terror that was not conceivable to most Sikhs in Amritsar, Punjab, India. I remember the reports; I was too young to fully absorb the magnitude of the attack but old enough to feel a deep sorrow. While I do not agree that violence requires more violence, I do understand that this clip comes out of a painful, angry moment. Returning to the above image montage: the fiery, violently positioned gathering of Sikhs with their murderous slogans does read: DANGER. From this violent demonstration, we move into a black and white clip evoking a state of nostalgia – of a peaceful time gone by. Indira Gandhi, who shares the last name of the most beloved peace activist in India, is humbly accepting garlands of flowers in a white sari (which evokes constructions of humility, simplicity and purity), her hands together in the Indian greeting placement while slightly bowing her head. Selecting this imagery out of many possible clips of Indira Gandhi positions the former Prime Minister as a gentle, non-threatening, well-loved and respected woman who had been democratically elected to lead a seemingly patriarchal nation (when most ‘civilized first world’ countries have not had a female leader).

Depicting Indira Ghandi’s assassination by two Sikh men in military uniforms illustrates that these two men, trained in violent acts, gunned down a defenceless woman wearing a white sari in cold blood. We moved from a dangerous gathering to the killing of well-loved female leader sharing the Gandhi name and symbolism. What does not make sense is why Indira Gandhi maintained her Sikh bodyguards after Operation Bluestar. Having Sikhs, who occupied all ranks in the Indian army, walk away from their life-long commitment to the army in response to this attack against Sikhs, should have been like every alarm imaginable going off all at once. Although Sikhs were not the only
ones who had issues with Indira Gandhi’s government, leadership and policies, it is surprising that she did not reconsider having Sikh bodyguards immediately after Operation Bluestar.

But do the sound bytes accompanying these three clips support the Sikh=Danger paradigm? Terry Milewski opens the segment (with the young man performing Gatka in the background) asking the following questions:

We began with a question. How can these things happen? How does it happen that a separatist movement from the other side of the world flourishes in Canada after killing hundreds of Canadians? ... And how can a mass murderer25 be revered in the public as a martyred hero? ... How does it happen, that people openly wear the colours of a group banned by Canada’s government as a terrorist organization?26 ... And what about politicians? How come they are so quiet about the glorification of violence? (Milewski, CBC National, June 28, 2007)

The question of “how can these things happen” in the wake of terror alerts begins to support the idea that by uncovering the terrorism in our backyard, we can police and guard against those dangerous others that have taken their issues from the “other side of the world” and placed them into our world. Questioning how a community can revere a “mass murderer” as a “martyred hero” signals that this community’s morals and ethics, their values, are not in line with Canadian values – the nature of the Oriental savage

25 The mass murderer that Terry Milewski is referring to is Talwinder Singh Parmar. Parmar was a founding member of the Babbar Khalsa, which has been involved in the struggle for an independent Sikh nation-state (from the Punjab, India region). Public Safety Canada lists ‘entities’ that are believed to associated with terrorism and the Babbar Khalsa is listed as one such ‘entity’. Parmar was charged in 1985 with weapons, explosives and conspiracy offences by the RCMP (in connection to the Air India bombing); however, the charges were dropped given lack of evidence. Parmar was never convicted of any charges linked to the Air India bombing. In 1992, Indian police officials killed Parmar with gunshots. A float at the Surrey Vaisakhi celebration on April 7, 2007 presented Sikh shaheeds (martyrs) and Talwinder Singh Parmar was presented with this group. Although Parmar has not been convicted in the Air India bombing, Terry Milewski still positions Parmar as Canada’s worst mass murderer. (http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/sikh-politics-canada/; (http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/prp/ns/le/cle-en.asp#kbkki13)

26 A handful of Vaisakhi attendees were wearing clothing items with the insignia of the International Sikh Youth Federation, which is also listed by Public Safety Canada as an ‘entity’ associated with terrorism.
cannot be easily wiped out. Further, Milewski asks how can people be flaunting the
colours of a terrorist group that has been ordained as such by the Canadian authorities;
clearly, the morals of these Eastern ‘others’ are badly out of synch with Canadian culture.
As Milewski constructs this divide between ‘us’ (the Canadian white nation-state) and
‘them’ (the hyphenated intruders of Canada’s delicate moral fabric), he openly challenges
the notion of multiculturalism. This rhetoric seeks an answer to the question: can we have
multiple cultures living under the umbrella of one nation-state? The answer that the CBC:
The National seems to be moving towards is the idea that there is an innate quality about
these ‘others’ that cannot be changed by a Canadian environment.27

I would like to respond to some of the questions posed by Terry Milewski’s ‘take’
on Vaisakhi. Firstly, how does a separatist movement flourish after thousands of
Canadians are killed? The issue, as I have previously discussed, around having a separate
Sikh nation-state is to ensure that the rights and freedoms of Sikhs are protected; as the
minority population in India they have faced some unusual challenges and terrible
treatment enforced by the Indian government. The hundreds of Canadians killed on the
Air India bombing also had dual and triple identities of Indo-Canadians and Sikhs. This
act is not just a horrific act for Canadians but for Sikhs and for all hyphenated identified
Canadians. Secondly, the mass murderer that Terry Milewski identifies is Talwinder
Singh Parmar; he was under surveillance prior to the Air India bombing, charged with
weapons, explosives and conspiracy charges by the RCMP and released due to lack of
evidence. He was later extradited to India where he was killed. Talwinder Singh Parmar’s
picture was held up as a Sikh martyr by certain members of the Sikh community for the

27 Evidently, they ascribe to the ‘nature’ side of the long-standing psychological nature v. nurture debate.
Vaisakhi celebrations. From this, extrapolating unified support for Talwinder Singh Parmar from the 400,000 Sikhs who reside in Canada seems to prematurely denounce a community based on the acts of very few. When Terry Milewski later shows a photo of Parmar (strongly possessing the male Sikh identity with a turban and a full beard) and describes him as “the worst mass murderer in Canada’s history”, the Sikh=Danger construction becomes cemented in the viewer’s understanding of Sikhs. This condemnation despite the fact that Parmar was never charged for or found guilty of the murders of the Air India passengers by Canadian officials.

Milewski also questioned the involvement of Canada’s political leaders with the Sikh community: especially their silence towards the ‘glorification of violence’ situated in this community. Milewski discusses this with ‘cultural insider’ Taraq Fatah – incidentally not Sikh – who “is one immigrant from Punjab who smells something rotten in Canada’s ethnic politics” (Milewski, June 28, 2007). Fatah questions the Sikh separatist movement without acknowledging the issues faced by the Sikh population in India:

Why would somebody come to this country and want unity for Canada but the break up of India? Does any politician have the guts to ask these Khalistanis what is it that you are looking for that you did not find in the blood bath of 1947 when India was first divided? It takes one guy with an exotic looking dress, a big beard, and a huge head dress to say mister Member of Parliament we will work to defeat you or we could deliver you 10,000 votes. (Fatah, June 28, 2007)

Earlier in the segment, Fatah claims that “these guys [Sikhs] have figured out Canadian politics” and implies that they are able to control Canadian politicians by holding out a tantalizing offer of voter support or threatening political candidates’ opportunity for election. The political prowess of the Sikh community is also identified by Milewski’s
observation: “after all Canada’s 400,000 Sikhs are a politically plugged in community with their own Punjabi radio stations and newspapers. They can mobilize voters in many swing ridings especially in BC and Ontario” (Milewski, June 28, 2007). When an ‘exotic’ Oriental with terrorist inclinations can simply walk in and alter Canada’s political leadership processes, alarm bells must be going off for Canadians who would feel this as a threat to the nation-state of Canada. Especially when the threat is located in the very real bombing of the Air India flight that took 329 lives. The voice of Parviz Madon, whose husband was killed in the Air India bombing, cautions Canada’s politicians:

We need to stop that. We need to stop our politicians from attending those type of events. I’m sorry I know this is about your votes. But that is dirty business. You don’t want to be associated with a group that is linked to terrorism. You don’t want those kind of votes. (Madon, June 28, 2007)

The media positioning of Sikhs as ‘undesirable’ to mainstream Canada has not been newly hatched in 2007 but rather, has a long-standing legacy in keeping the Asiatics out of “White Canada”.

Framing the social and political ‘race’ climate of Canada, “White Canada forever” was the most popular beer parlour ballad being sung in the summer of 1914 (Kazimi, 2004). The ballad’s sentiments were echoed by the reigning Prime Minister of Canada, Robert Borden, as he established Canada as “a white man’s country” (Dua, 2000). The media were quick to define it as the ‘Hindoo problem’ when ‘Asiatics’ began arriving on Canadian shores. In the famous case of the Komagata Maru, a chartered ship, upon which 376 British Indian passengers arrived at Vancouver’s shores on May 23, 1914, Gurdit Singh had chartered a ship in Hong Kong to transport his fellow countrymen from the shores of Hong Kong to Canada. As did most early Canadian settlers, regardless of origin, those on the ship simply wanted to realize their dreams of ‘making it.’

28 Sir Robert Borden was a Conservative turned Unionist who was PM from 1911 to 1920.
29 The Continuous Journey stipulation was passed in 1908 to prevent Indian migration. The Canadian Order in Council required that an individual must purchase a ticket from their ‘home’ port to their final destination: Canada. Interestingly, there were no ticketing arrangements between India and Canada and also no ships that came directly from India to Canada. The Canadian government also pressured ships not to accept South Asian passengers from Hong Kong to Canada. Given this, many Indians were stranded in Hong Kong after the 1908 Canadian government order. (Buchignani, Indra & Srivastiva, 1985).
With the power to say who can land, who belongs and who does not, Canadian officials would not permit the passengers of the *Komagata Maru* to disembark. Further, no one was permitted to communicate with the passengers or Gurdit Singh but those same officials. To deal with the illegal restrictions placed on the passengers of the *Komagata Maru*, the two thousand British Indians residing in Vancouver hired a lawyer: Edward Bird (coincidentally, the only lawyer in Vancouver who would take on such a case).

When Edward Bird attempted to meet with his clients, he was told that if he tried to gain entry to the ship, he would be pushed off the gangway (Kazimi, 2004). Ex-police officers were armed with guns borrowed from the militia to police the *Kamagato Maru*. While British subjects were encouraged to resettle in different parts of the Empire, the movements of the ‘Asiatic’ or ‘African’ British citizen were subject to a two-tier system: the other, preferential, tier being for the Occidental (Said, 1979). The passengers of the *Komagata Maru* never were allowed to disembark on the shores of the ‘white man’s country.’ I introduce this incident to not only describe the early Canadian ‘race’ climate but also to trace the media involvement in the beginnings of the nation-building project of present-day Canada.

Multiple objections were provided as to why the ‘Oriental other’ should not be allowed to settle in the ‘Occidental’ country of Canada, but the incapacity to assimilate is the most telling; as it continues to be perpetuated in the contemporary media discourse of Canada. In an editorial piece in the *Victoria Daily Colonist*, we find this:

> Under most conditions it will be difficult to blend the various races now here into a wholesome Canadian citizenship. To admit the Oriental, especially before a political and ethical reserve is built up in Canada, would make the task of Canadian citizenship almost a hopeless problem. (February 20, 1912)
A few weeks later, another editorial comment in the *Victoria Daily Colonist* states that the writer's "objection to the Asiatic is that he does not and cannot assimilate with the white race" (March 9, 1912). Chinese and British Indian men, without wives and families, performed most of the early migration to work as labourers (Dua, 2000). Inhabiting this position of 'temporary worker' (involved in the actual nation-building processes like laying down tracks for the Canadian railway system), did not provide any benefits to these Asian men as they were forbidden to sponsor their wives and children; inviting families would be a detriment to the imagined white nation-building project (Dua, 2000).

The question will arise, are the wives and families to come here under the Indian social laws ... as they are exercised among various sects, are they to come under our system? ... Polygamy is a part of the sociological conditions of the Hindu, so the question comes up as to whether they all or only one or two wives of each person is to be admitted ... with the advent of family life among the Indians here how are the laws to be administered among them? Are they to have native leaders and the joint magistrate system, or will the matter be left in the hands of the police? These are all questions to be considered before Hindu women are to be allowed to come to British Columbia. (*Victoria Daily Colonist*, February 9, 1912)

The Oriental Others' non-assimilability is not just a form of resistance they have consciously adopted; it is bound in their (my) cultural and sociological 'condition'. This 'condition' even complicates Canadian administration of laws such as policing (another issue in today's contemporary Canadian discourse – with special task forces dedicated to policing the Indo-Canadian problems of gang and domestic violence). Canada was not willing to have the 'White Canada Forever' dream exterminated:

If they were permitted to come in unlimited numbers, they would in a short time so occupy the land that the white population would be a minority. If British Columbia is not kept "white", Canada will become Asiatic. (March 9, 1912)
The threat to whiteness launched a heavy media surveillance campaign, leading to headlines reading: “To Rid City of Undesirables” and discussions about cast-iron policies determined “to rid Vancouver of the alien undesirables who are claimed to have been responsible for much of the unrest here” (Victoria Daily Times, February 13, 1912).

Local papers were also sharing news releases about preventing “Hindoo [from having] a foothold in the milk business” in the article titled: “Refused License to Hindoo Milk Vendors” (The Vancouver World, June 5, 1914). Beyond not assimilating into Canadian culture, the other problem with the ‘Hindoo’ was that he was preventing ‘white’ men from gaining employment. “The Hindu displaces white labor in all sort of labor, because he is a cheaper workman … [for] long as we have white men of England … we should give them first place” (Victoria Daily Times, February 10, 1912). What reason could the media give for having an obligation to the white men of England and their superior position to the Oriental? “If the Hindu came into this country and conformed to our standards of living, and in sanitary and moral conditions met the standards demanded, then we might have no objection to him” (Victoria Daily Times, February 10, 1912).

When Gurdit Singh’s chartered ship arrived on the shores of Vancouver, the headlines exploded with constant monitoring and discussion about the problematic Hindoos.

As the Komagata Maru passengers were not permitted to disembark, concerns about a shortage of food and provisions earned the following rebuke: “… the Komagata’s passengers have nobody but themselves to blame. It is not the business of the immigration service to supply provisions to ships and the officials will not do so” (The Vancouver World, June 4, 1914). From hunger strikes to the writs of habeas corpus being refused, The Vancouver World reported the details from start to finish. Even possible
arrangements made by British Indian officials for limited entry would not help the passengers of the Komagata Maru.

... these will not be admitted into the country under any condition whatever ... there is no intention to admit the Komagata people ... the Komagata will have to be escorted to the high seas to make sure that the passengers do not attempt any high-handed action, and endeavor to make a landing at some outlying British Columbia point" (The Vancouver World, June 17, 1914).

Headlines announcing, “Another Hindoo Ship Coming” served to cultivate even more fear of the problematic ‘other’; leading to requests by local officials for “armed forces” to be brought to Vancouver from Ottawa to deal with possible riots as “a large number of Hindoos from the Pacific coast state are moving toward the border” (The Vancouver World, June 23, 1914). The following day, The Vancouver World reported that “[determination] to put an end to the entry of East Indians was declared time and time again” by the thousands who had shown up for a public meeting summoned by Mayor T. S. Baxter regarding the Asiatic issue. The resolution openly adopted deportation of the passengers of the Komagata Maru “[and] that stringent legislation be enacted whereby such immigration may, in the future, be entirely restricted from admission to the Dominion” (The Vancouver World, June 24, 1914). This particular issue of The Vancouver World also introduced lengthy comments from various readers presenting their concerns and issues with Asiatic migration to Canada. Here are a few snippets:

And whereas it is the universal opinion of all citizens resident upon the Pacific Coast of the Dominion of Canada, that the influx of Asiatics is detrimental and hurtful to the best interests of the Dominion, from the standpoint of citizenship, public morals and labor conditions. (The Vancouver World, June 24, 1914)
There has never been an Oriental immigrant who has ever shown a willingness to enter into the frontier life of this country. They are content to pick the plums of civilization. This is truly a question of life or death of the national life of Canada. *(The Vancouver World, June 24, 1914)*

We have here now about 4000 Hindoos, which is more than we want and now we have these others at the gate - not knocking at the door, as has been said – but clamoring that they will come in, despite our laws. It seems to me that we as men should say that they shall not come in. *(The Vancouver World, June 24, 1914)*

All good British subjects respect the law, even though they may not approve of it. There is a species of anarchy in the attitude of these Hindoos which, if white people were the offenders would be vigorously suppressed. We are all alike in wishing our own working people to have food and enough to live upon, and we do not want any sort of immigration that, by cutting wages and lowering the standard of living tends to degrade our people to Asiatic standards. *(The Vancouver World, June 24, 1914)*

The passengers of the *Komagata Maru* were British Indians, belonging to the Dominion and possessing a common citizenship with Canadians; yet were highly undesirable citizens for the white nation dream for Canada. To good/white Canadians, British Indians, as illustrated by the above quotations, were detrimental, hurtful, lazy, greedy, selfish (not settling in remote frontier Canada but in bustling urban areas) and responsible for degrading the living conditions and moral standards of the Canadian population.

Over the years, the requirement for labour continued to grow and as Mr. R. B. Angus\(^\text{30}\) stated: “Well, you know we want this to be a white man’s country … But there is no doubt the Japanese and Hindoos make splendid laborers, and are needed in the British Columbia canneries and for the construction of the railroads through the mountains. The Hindoos are splendid men in the lumber industry also.” *(The Vancouver

\(^{30}\) Mr. Robert Bladworth Angus (1831-1922): He was the president of the Bank of Montreal until 1913 and then remained as a director. He was also involved in the following companies as a director: the Canadian Pacific Railway Co., Dominion Bridge Company, the North West Land Company and the Laurentide Company. On May 9, 1914, R. B. Angus arrived to his home in Montreal with his son and daughter after a trip around the world. His comments in this newspaper article are in response to the reception given by the viceroy of India, Lord Harding and Lady Harding in Delhi where the Viceroy expressed his concern about the threatened exclusion of Asiatics in British Columbia.
World, May 9, 1914). Immigration laws have shape-shifted over the years as has the ‘white man’s country’ rhetoric. In the Canadian grand narrative, multiculturalism has replaced the “white Canada forever” national imagining. Yet, as I enter the contemporary headlines, I am hard pressed to believe that we are living the ‘nice’ multicultural Canadian identity we claim so earnestly for ourselves.

On February 21, 1992, The Vancouver Sun headlined: “Sikhs unlikely to end violence after election”, with a report on the newly elected Congress Party in Punjab, India. The headline does not place the geographical location of the reported Sikh violence but given that it is published in The Vancouver Sun, it is likely that anyone just skimming the paper’s headlines would infer that Sikhs are being violent in Canada. Further, I would be curious to know if reporter Ben Tierney had actually visited the villages in Punjab where he claims “… Sikh terrorists had placed posters in villages throughout the Punjab threatening to kill the first five voters to cast a ballot in every polling station and the majority of Punjabis responded by staying behind the bolted doors of their homes” (Tierney, 1992). As the majority of the population in the Punjab region are Sikhs, it is interesting that Tierney linked the word Sikh with terrorists, but used the identifier of “the majority of Punjabis” for the innocent citizenry, who also happen to be Sikh.

Connecting terrorism and Sikhi binds danger and the Sikh faith into an inseparable unit. I continue to read the article, looking for the violent acts committed by Sikhs prior to, during or after the elections but nowhere do I find a report of actual violence committed by Sikhs to support the headline: “Sikhs unlikely to end violence”. I only find speculation that “[the] vote in the Sikh-dominated rural areas, where the terrorists are most feared, was estimated at just 15 percent”; does no one else wonder what the voting statistics
looked like for the year before? Since the Punjab state has had challenges with the Indian governing bodies, there could very well be another explanation for this poor voter turnout.

In the 1990s, a wave of reporting Indo-Canadian gang violence began. In a 2005 community-based theatre production: Here and Now, David Diamond's Headline Theatre\textsuperscript{31} interrogates the space around Indo-Canadian gang violence. Diamond questioned the use of racial profiling (by the media) when identifying gang violence linked with hyphenated Canadian identities (i.e., Indo-Canadian gang violence). The media never seems to profile the Hell's Angels as a 'white' gang. Names of certain Indo-Canadian young men became linked with the Indo-Canadian gang discourse. The following are a selection of headlines from the 1990s:

4 charged in 'execution style' murders of Dosanjh brothers (Mall and Mall, The Vancouver Sun, June 10, 1994);

Two more accused in murder: Charges have been laid against two men believed to have been involved in planning the drug-related slaying of Vikash Chand at car dealership in 1998 (Kines, The Vancouver Sun, August 27, 1999); and

Los Diablos became known as the East Indian Mafia in the '80s: Johal's criminal career was launched from within Los Diablos in 1989 when he teamed up with Faizal Dean to offer dial-a-dope cocaine (The Vancouver Sun, December 22, 1998).

Headlines like these sensationalize and build up the idea of a pervasive gang violence and drug culture within the Indo-Canadian community. The weight of such crimes by these hyphenated others is also enforced by such statements as "[the] Dosanjh murder investigation cost $1.5 million and was the largest police investigation in Vancouver

\textsuperscript{31} Headline Theatre is strongly influenced by Theatre of the Oppressed – which was created in Brazil in 1971, with the specific goal of dealing with local problems. It has since grown to centres worldwide, all professing: "We believe in Peace, not in Passivity!" and "Above all, we believe that the Theatre of the Oppressed is of, about, by and for the Oppressed.”

history. The subsequent nine-month Dosanjh murder trial was the longest and most expensive in B.C. history” (Hall, *The Vancouver Sun*, December 7, 1998). The cost of having these troublesome Indians, Hindoos, Asiatics, Orientals and other people of colour is seen to be borne by the white Canadian taxpayer. The violent, dangerous constructions around Indo-Canadian men continue to be perpetuated by media reports. In “Ring leader of Indo-Canadian crime guilty of kidnapping”, Kim Bolan reports “[the] conviction … is being hailed as a victory by police agencies that have struggled to get the upper hand in the increasingly violent underworld of Indo-Canadian gangs” (*National Post*, March 10, 2006). As a way to gain the upper hand with this increasingly violent underworld, BC went so far as to establish the BC Integrated Gang Task Force.

The newest monitoring of violence comes from both within and without the Indo-Canadian community. South Asian domestic violence hit the headlines creating quite a stir – and serving as another pervasive form of violence seen as being used within the Indo-Canadian community. As an ardent feminist and a Sikh, equality and freedom from oppression are embedded in my DNA and this issue sits close to my heart. The deaths of Navneet Kaur (Phoenix), Manjit Panghali (British Columbia) and Navreet Kaur Waraich (British Columbia) should never have happened. Positioning women as second-rate citizens is not located only in the Indo-Canadian community (as Canada’s Attorney-General Wally Oppal suggests), but permeates across most cultures, with domestic violence as an inevitable outcome of such a position.

Following the well-publicized deaths of these women, questions from some non-Indo-Canadians have become insulting, as they locate me as a victim of the ‘pervasive’ domestic violence within ‘my’ culture. However, when the media begins to report
statements from cultural insiders explaining the backwardness of the one billion plus
Indians and diasporic South Asians, I begin to understand how Indo-Canadian men are
predetermined to be violent ‘wife-beaters’ as Indo-Canadian women are predetermined to
be passive victims:

Keep in mind that people are still coming to Canada from places such as India
where these freedoms [for women] may not exist. They arrive with traditional
values and suddenly their world opens up to them. And this can threaten their
husbands, and their families (Hutchinson, *National Post*, April 7, 2007).

Wally Oppal (Attorney-General for British Columbia and Minister Responsible for
Multiculturalism) locates the gendered violence neatly packaged in the Indian racial
identity with:

Those of us in the criminal justice system know there is a disproportionate
number of domestic assaults in the South Asian community ... Regrettably,
people are still in a state of denial about... [the] clear evidence of gender bias in
the Indo-Canadian community. Young girls are not as valued as young boys ...
Teachers tell me that so many Indo-Canadian boys are uncontrollable from a
disciplinary perspective. They bring that conduct to their personal relationships.
But many people don’t want to talk about that. They just don’t want to do
anything about it. Saving face is too important in our community to admit there is
a problem, but it’s obvious (Hutchinson, *National Post*, April 7, 2007).

Although uncovering the issues that have traveled in the lineage of some Indian
communities is an important step in addressing the horrors of domestic violence, situating
all Indo-Canadian young boys and men as “uncontrollable” is problematic. It is exactly
this type of rhetoric that supports the 1912 and 2007 notion that the Sikh, Indian, Asiatic,
Hindoo, Indo-Canadian cannot assimilate because of their inherent social and cultural
condition (*Victoria Daily Colonist*, February 9, 1912), (Milewski, June 28, 2007).
PAURI VI: MULTICULTURAL TUBE SURFING

Ik Onkar, Sat Nam, Karta Purak, Nirbhum, Nirvair, Akal Moorat, Ajooni Saibhang, Gurprasad, Jap, Ad Such, Jugad Such, Hai Bhee Such, Nanak Hosee Bhee Such

If the media can prescribe difference, can they also promote commonality? Allow for, perhaps even encourage, multiple-cultures under the Canadian state umbrella? With “multicultural media” becoming more fashionable and more visible since the mid-1980s (Ginsburg, 2002), Vancouver has also acquired several multicultural media venues: newspapers, radio shows and television programs. In February 2002, Multivan Broadcast Corporation received a broadcast licence for a multicultural television station; they now serve as Vancouver’s multilingual station. Broadcasting in 22 different languages, Channel M’s mission is to “bring a vision of diversity, respect, and inclusiveness to our community by celebrating our differences” (http://www.channelm.ca). Three million residents have access to Channel M in the Lower Mainland of BC. With the slogan: “[diversity] is the one thing we all have in common — and we celebrate it every day at channel m”, Channel M presents Vancouver and Victoria residents with multilingual programming. For the last three years (since 2005), Channel M has presented the Vaisakhi celebrations in a one-hour special. Channel M communicates aspects of “cultural” groups’ social/collective identity with culturally focused media coverage (on

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32 The Mool Mantra is the first pauri (stanza/step) of Guru Nanak Dev Ji’s compilation: Jap Ji Sahib. The Jap Ji Sahib is recited by many Sikhs as their morning prayer and is also the opening prayer of the sacred Sikh scriptures: the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Although, my very humble translation cannot illuminate the measure of this sacred mantra, for the sake of this paper, I have included a very basic and simple translation. All is one. True form. Doer of everything. Beyond fear. Beyond vengeance. Beyond the image/form. Infinite light. Guru’s nectar. Meditate. True in the beginning. True for all time. True Now. Nanak forever true.
events like Vaisakhi and Chinese New Year); it also approaches the events from the perspective of one on the inside and showing the gaping holes in institutionalized media coverage that the ‘white’ Canada viewer might never have noticed otherwise.

Before I provide a close reading of Channel M’s Vaisakhi 2007 celebration segment, I would like to touch upon the idea of cultural celebrations in a multicultural environment like Canada. In *Shows, Selves and Solidarity: Ethnic Identity and Cultural Spectacles in Canada* (2001), Paul A. Bramadat explores the roles of cultural celebrations: featuring Winnipeg’s Folklorama. Winnipeg’s Folklorama is a very large event, a two-week summer festival with approximately forty ‘ethnic’ groups represented. While Folklorama is a much larger event, similar celebrational elements are located in the brightly coloured bhangra\(^\text{34}\) dance outfits, dhol\(^\text{35}\) players marching to the Vaisakhi beat, fashionably hip salwaar-kameezes,\(^\text{36}\) sholay padooray\(^\text{37}\) and hot cups of chaa\(^\text{38}\) as a part of what Bramadat identifies as the “ethnic cultural spectacle”. He further defines his use of “spectacle”:

> as an organized event in which a group represents itself both to its own members and to non-members. Such events are spectacles to the extent that they are highly dramatic, entertaining, and (in literal sense) extraordinary; that is, these are special occasions or periods in which audience members are expected to be engrossed and often entertained by a demonstration of some aspect of a community. (2001, p. 3)

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33 See: http://www.folklorama.ca/
34 Bhangra: North Indian dance and musical style.
35 Dhol: Large musical drum usually found in Northern Indian dance and music performances.
36 Salwaar-Kameez: A long tunic top and pleated pant bottom worn primarily by Punjabi women but also worn across India and Diasporic communities. Can also be worn by men.
37 Sholay Padooray: Northern Indian chickpea dish with fried bread.
38 Chaa: Indian tea (referred to as chai in many Western contexts) with various spices and herbs usually served with milk and sugar.
Although I find the term ‘spectacle’ problematic with its multiple definitions, from “a grand display” to “[an] unwelcome or deplorable exhibition; a painful sight”, I find it interesting that a slight variation (spectacles) refers to eyeglasses that are “used to correct defects in vision” (Webster’s Dictionary, 2002). As Vaisakhi is located on the streets of Vancouver and Surrey, it is a highly public celebration with an open door policy inviting all Canadians to attend. Though Gurdwaras (Sikh spiritual places of worship) play a strong role in organizing and funding the structural aspects of the event (e.g., hiring police officers), the faith is not overly emphasized in the celebratory spaces provided by sevadaars (volunteers) who do everything from purchasing groceries to cleaning up the garbage along the route. This volunteerism is located within the Sikh tenets of seva and langar and the spirit of the Lower Mainland’s Vaisakhi celebration is much like a big block party – something that is slowly becoming embraced by a wider Canadian community – with entertainment and refreshments along the route.

Vaisakhi provides a space of cultural displays from folk songs, dance and music to distinct cultural food and beverages. Vaisakhi is not designed to be an outwardly staged performance of Punjabi, Sikh, Indian, South Asian or Indo-Canadian identity or culture but to serve as a celebratory event for those of the Sikh faith. However, Vaisakhi is slowly being assimilated into a wider mainstream Canadian culture; with over a 100,000 attendees, the Vaisakhi celebrations are peaceful with no violent incidents (Green, September 2, 2004), family friendly (a spiritual event with no alcohol served) and provide free food and entertainment. Bramadat (2002) proposes that these “ethnic cultural spectacles” serve to support “the formation and maintenance of ethnic identity” and can alter the status of hyphenated Canadians from those who face discrimination in

39 From the Latin spectare – to see, to watch
their day-to-day reality to being seen as cultural ambassadors. Bramadat (2002) also suggests that Canadian identity may be augmented for the “ethnic” Canadian when ethnicity is celebrated in the national context. In this space of cultural ambassadors, Indo-Canadians can narrate their own stories of who they are rather than putting up with the prescribed identities the media has placed upon them.

Another role that Bramadat aligns with the ethnic cultural spectacle is “public education about ethnic identity” performed by “fighting general prejudice” (Bramadat, 2002, p. 8) and “reducing religious illiteracy” (Bramadat, 2002, p. 9). As a spectacle, Vaisakhi serves to provide an educational forum which could correct the image nonhyphenated Canadians seem to have of Indo-Canadians. Bramadat’s final point on the nature of ethnic cultural spectacle is that:

...festivals such as Folklorama might represent sites par excellence in which young people can engage in the creative negotiations of identity ... An expression of identity couched in the aesthetic and cultural language of the American ethos of consumption could demonstrate to a particular group that it is possible to be Indian (or Croatian, Italian, or West Indian) in a distinctly Canadian way. (Bramadat, 2002, p. 15)

Channel M’s Vaisakhi 2007 segment presents Vaisakhi through a roving field host at the Surrey celebration and main commentators hosting from a fixed location at the Vancouver festival. Bhinder Sajan (the field host) not only chatted about Vaisakhi with attendees from local politicians to Sikh children but also provided some educational commentary about the practices performed during Vaisakhi (for example, why food is served). The main host, Tarannum Thind, is a popular and regular Channel M media figure and is joined by Doctor Harjot Kaur Singh, an Amritdhari Sikh who wears a turban. Both provide commentary on the floats but Dr. Harjot Kaur Singh provides a deeper understanding of the Sikh faith – increasing religious literacy. Not only do
sevadaars at the Vaisakhi celebration act to educate the Canadian public, but this Channel M broadcast also distributes information about Sikhs, Indo-Canadians and Vaisakhi in a very public forum. Education is necessary to foster respect and inclusiveness; Channel M provides a glimpse at how hyphenated identities operate in a distinctly Canadian way: thus narrating the role of Bramadat’s cultural spectacle.

As in the *Samosa* discussion, I will first delve into a reading of the visual representations (void of sound bytes) of Channel M’s coverage, producing a visual montage of frozen photographic stills constructing a different type of prescribed Sikh identity and culture in the Canadian context.

Field Host: An Indo-Canadian women (Bhinder Sajan) wearing a blue salwaar kameez and blue dupatta passing out oranges and speaking to the camera. People coming up to her and taking oranges with a Fruiticana truck parked behind the stand at the Vaisakhi parade.

Vaisakhi Channel M Main Hosts: an Indo-Canadian woman with a red dupatta draped over her head (Tarannum Thind) and a turbaned Sikh woman wearing white (Dr. Horjot Singh) speaking to the camera.

While the *Samosa* piece emphasized the male Sikh body as the primary active agent at Vaisakhi and by extension the Indo-Canadian community, as ‘he’ was used as the opening figure, Channel M’s segment introduces the female Sikh body as an active, involved and speaking Sikh agent. Further, ‘she’ occupies a diverse range of forms from a young dupatta wearing Bhinder Sajan to a turban-wearing doctor: Harjot Kaur Singh. Various individuals are receiving oranges from Bhinder Sajan as she performs seva, which introduces the Sikh tenets of seva and langar immediately. As both of the 2007 Vaisakhi celebrations fed approximately 100,000 attendees each, Channel M acknowledges the labour of love that occurs year after year during Vaisakhi, a labour of

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40 Dupatta: a scarf worn primarily with a salwaar-kameez outfit
love which is notably absent from all other local media representations. Combing through the stack of articles post-Vaisakhi, I find: “Separatists angry after Sikh parades” (The Vancouver Sun, April 21, 2003); “Sikh separatist shouts views from stage” (The Vancouver Sun, April 11, 2005); “Harper building up Sikh goodwill” (National Post, April 27, 2005); “Very Vaisakhi: Annual parade attracts close to 70,000 people to Surrey streets” (Now, April 19, 2006); and “Sikh parade slammed for violent slant” (The Province, April 18, 2007), but nowhere do I see headlines about seva and langar.

The diversity of the Indo-Canadian community presented in the Channel M segment locates women, children (both male and female), grandparents, teenagers, mothers holding children and men with turbans, head coverings, or bare heads as members of this diverse community. With children enthusiastically waving, the event feels like a happy family affair and not a covert separatist assembly of organized terrorist groups. Lingering on the Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara float emphasizes the presence and teachings of the first Guru of Sikhi. For those who have some awareness of Guru Nanak Dev Ji’s
teachings, they will know that he confronted the inequality inherent in gender, caste and
class. As yoga and Eastern spirituality has become more popular in the West, most people
understand 'Guru' to have the connotation of a spiritual teacher while some even
understand that it refers to a teacher who illuminates by removing darkness. The
spirituality aspect provides another option for thinking about Sikhi; it separates members
of the Indo-Canadian Sikh community from the ever-present threat of the terrorist and the
Sikh=Danger construction. Channel M shows us a very different narrative for the Sikh
embodiment than the CBC: The National Samosa segment.

Camera focuses on local CTV hosts\textsuperscript{41} Bill Good, Tamara Taggart, Mi Jung Lee
and others who are joining in the Vaisakhi celebration

Young Sikh man with a turban

Pan out on the Vaisakhi crowd

Pan in on four women walking through the crowd

Pan onto a group of Sikh men of diverse ages

Canada Post banner with a group of multi-ethnic postal workers (including an
older Sikh gentleman pairing his Canada Post uniform with a turban) walking in
front of a Canada Post truck decorated with shiny navy blue fringe

Focus in on the postal worker - the elder gentleman wearing a turban

...Kids waving at the camera; adults join them

Premier Gordon Campbell chatting to the camera in an Indian outfit with his head
covered.

While the CBC: The National piece attacked politicians for attending the Vaisakhi
celebration as an attempt to solicit the 'ethnic' vote, having local media celebrities (Bill
Good, Tamara Taggart and Mi Jung Lee) present emphasizes that this is simply a
community event where the wider community is welcome to participate under the
multicultural umbrella. To progress this community narrative further, Canada Post (a

\textsuperscript{41} CTV is a Canadian news conglomerate with a British Columbia chapter. Bill Good is the anchor for
CTV 9 (the News at Six co-anchored with Pamela Martin). Tamara Taggart is CTV's Weathercaster during
CTV News at Five, CTV News at Six and CTV News at 11:30. Mi Jung Lee is the anchor and producer of
national organization) participated with a large Canada Post truck decorated as a pseudo-float with a multicultural group of Canadian postal workers: including a Sikh man with a full beard and wearing a turban. The hybridity of Indo-Canadians is apparent here with a visually identifiable Canada Post worker in uniform who is also visually identifiable as a Sikh. While the CBC: The National piece offered the view that Sikhs are transplanting “their issues onto Canadian soil”, this example of hybridity indicates that there is a strong attachment to being Canadian while honouring cultural roots. The presence of Premier Gordon Campbell (as expressed earlier) was seen as problematic behaviour for a politician in the Samosa piece, but as there are 400,000 Sikhs in Canada, a part of the voting public, why shouldn’t politicians come out to meet all the Canadians that they represent? Seeing children waving enthusiastically for the camera creates a friendly, joyful energy usually found connected to celebratory events. While Samosa insinuated that Sikh children are involved in the glorification of violence, this presentation shows a different perspective of Sikh children.

Gurdeep Arts Canada truck with banners focusing on the dance (bhangra) and acting courses offered

Three turbaned Sikh men singing; one is playing a musical instrument

Young girls wearing very traditional and decorative village-wear carrying jugs of water on their heads

Young boy wearing a turban

Young girl waving

Child with a cap waving and enthusiastically jumping up and down on the Gurdeep Arts float

All the kids begin waving and trying to get on the camera

Two young boys with their hair in rishi knots and coverings
This grouping focuses on the courses being offered by an Indo-Canadian organization: Gurdeep Arts for children and adults to learn to sing, play musical instruments, dance and act. Displaying educational providers that promote cultural fine arts challenges the CBC: The National notion that Sikhs only train for terrorist activities. The float and its occupants raise awareness about the community’s commitment towards preserving the fine arts of Northern India, and not just training boys in Gatka (Northern Indian martial art form) as suggested by the CBC: The National piece. Showing young girls wearing traditional and decorative village clothing while carrying jugs of water on their heads marks what traditional village life used to look like. Although, the CBC: The National Samosa segment suggests that the Oriental is resistant to ‘modernization’; this presentation of what village life used to look like demonstrates how Punjabi Sikhs have also been influenced by the processes of modernisation.

A close-up of the turbaned men carrying the Nishan Sahibs and the turbaned men representing the Panj Pyaray.

Following the Panj Pyaray on their Vaisakhi walk

Focus on a traditionally attired panj pyaray carrying his ceremonial sword close to his face

Pan on the crowd at the Vaisakhi celebration

Focus on kirtani

Pan on the crowd at Vaisakhi Channel M logo.

Here is a poignant point of intersection with the CBC: The National Samosa piece which presented a similar visual montage. In the spirit of the Channel M presentation, this visual clip presents the Panj Pyaray as part of a cultural and spiritual festival where a diverse population can participate.

42 Many of the villages in Punjab no longer require individuals to fetch water from the well (which was traditionally done by women, who would carry water jugs on their heads).

43 Ceremonial swords

44 Five Beloved

45 In this case, a turbaned, bearded man is performing kirtan but a kirtani in the Sikh tradition could be either female or male (not gender oriented). Kirtan involves the singing of hymns (in a devotional, bhakti tradition). In Sikh, Kirtan hymns usually come from the Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji.
community comes to celebrate in a family-friendly setting. The five men are all wearing saffron-coloured turbans and clothing with full beards, and carrying ceremonial swords just as they were in the CBC: The National piece. It is the different visual context preceding this clip that alters the symbols and meanings from one piece to the other, from Sikh=Danger to Sikh=Spiritual. Splicing the images of the sword-carrying men with the shots of the crowd and adding the man performing Kirtan alters the message about the Five Beloved from sword-carrying terrorists who glorify violence to five men honouring their sacred customs – the very origins of their religion.

To evaluate the sound bytes for the Channel M segment, I will present several segments and conduct a short reading of each segment (similar to the examination of the CBC: The National’s *Samosa*).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tarannam Thind:</th>
<th>And this is the Guru Nanak float.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harjot Kaur Singh:</td>
<td>Guru Nanak plays a huge role in the Sikh religion and he based the whole Sikh religion on three principles: on reciting the name, naam jap-ana; dharma dhi kirath karna, on earning honestly by the sweat of your brow; and vand shakana, sharing your earnings with others. And that plays a big part in the Sikh’s life on a day-to-day basis.</td>
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In this passage, the main host, Tarannam Thind, points out the Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara float in a manner similar to how a parade host would present organizations’ floats at the PNE\(^{46}\) or Santa Claus parades. The invited co-host, Dr. Harjot Kaur Singh, provides an educational voice speaking to the role of the first teacher of the Sikh faith: Guru Nanak Dev Ji. She informs the viewer as to the three principles that are pivotal to the Sikh way of life. She provides the English translation and the Punjabi tenet. The first tenet, naam jap-ana translates directly (as Dr. Singh states) to reciting the name. It describes the act of repeating a mantra and meditating upon that mantra – a very spiritual practice.

\(^{46}\) Pacific National Exhibition is a fair held annually in Vancouver, B. C., Canada.
Eastern concept. Dharm dee kirath karna is a well-established and honoured Sikh tradition of earning honestly by the sweat of one’s brow. As the majority of Sikhs came from Punjab, India’s breadbasket, this tenet supports the grueling agricultural work Sikh farmers have participated in for hundreds of years.

Sikhi is positioned as such that if you wish to pursue enlightenment, you do not have to shed your life and meditate in a cave; rather, you continue living your life in the world, working and being involved with your family and community while using the Sikh dharmic code to seek enlightenment. This path merely requires thrice-daily meditation and acting in ways that follow Sikh values of promoting and advocating equality, interacting with all beings with compassion and maintaining a state of oneness with the Divine, whether you are tilling your fields or helping your children with their homework.

Sharing your earnings, vand shakana supports the idea of seva (selfless service). As Bramadat (2002) suggests, Vaisakhi – especially through the educational narrative of the Channel M presentation – can serve to educate the public about Sikh identity and enhance religious literacy.

Harjot Kaur Singh: singing hymns from the Siri Guru Granth Sahib relates to different aspects of human life, so happiness, death, health, wealth, marriage, family life – every aspect of human experience is covered and so when you sing the hymns, you sing the hymns relating to your experience and it creates a vibratory effect that affects your being and your health.

Dr. Singh presents another teaching moment with an explanation about the Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. While she does not elaborate on the function and role of the Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji as serving as a body of hymns and scriptures – revered as the living embodiment of spiritual mantras, prayers, hymns and poetry from the Sikh Gurus and Hindu and Islamic spiritual mystics – she hints at the spiritual relevance of these sacred
scriptures. By not inundating the audience with her knowledge, she provides a glimpse of what is present in the Sikh teachings, but leaves space for the audience to consider what else is there and possibly engage in further discussion. The references to the different aspects of human life experiences from death to family life embedded in the collection of hymns illustrates the commonality that this young religion has with other world religions: all speak to what people go through in their lives. It is not a code for military action or violent separatism, but songs that can enhance any experience – from happiness to sorrow – by serving as a meditative space. While the CBC: The National: Samosa segment situates Sikhi as a faith that glorifies violence, this rendition locates the Sikh faith as a spiritual, meditative religion.
The incidence came on the heels of an immigration plan that was in the works to have Sikhs with the surname Singh or Khan to change those names so as to avoid administrative mistakes. Too many Singhss and too many Khans that was the problem. And now we got a controversy over the fact that elections Canada has said that it is alright to have burqua covered Muslim women to vote in the elections when it is very clear that the voters have to be able to be identified when they are going to the polls... This is all very simple. We have laws in this country. They are spelled out and they are easy to get a hold of. If you are immigrating to this country and you don’t like the rules that are in place then you have the right to choose not to live here but if you choose to come to a place like Canada then shut up and fit in. ... These are the rules. There’s the door. If you don’t like the rules, hit it. We don’t need you here. You have another place to go. It’s called home ... (Allen, 2007)

But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so we’ve come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and security of justice. ...I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. ...Let freedom ring. And when this happens, and when we allow freedom ring - when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God’s children - black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics - will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!" (King, 1963)

The words of Frantz Fanon echo in my mind as I hear these comments of not belonging: “[my] body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in the mourning ...” (Fanon, 1967, p. 113). The CKNW Bruce Allen radio commentary on the ‘immigrant bashing issue’ produced outrage to the inflammatory “[these] are the rules. There’s the door. If you don’t like the rules, hit it. We don’t need you here. You have another place to go. It’s called home”. This type of rhetoric is neatly infused in the
marginalization of ‘other’ bodies which is a part of the long-standing colonial vaudeville theatre project. The characters of this satirical street theatre name those who are unwanted and not needed by white Canada; yet continue to exploit their labour to build railways across this nation, feed the nation as farm workers and raise their children as live-in nannies. This “[dissection] under white eyes, the only real eyes” (Fanon, 1967, p. 116) produces an ambiguous state for the dissected. The process of watching, monitoring, recording and processing the behaviour of others has been well discussed by several theorists (Erving Goffman, Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said and Michel Foucault) and is also well entrenched in our popular culture (from Big Brother to Survivor).

Surveillance for Michel Foucault is embedded in a long historical process, which exhumes the day-to-day activities of individuals, communities and societies to police who and what constitutes dangerous, deviant, abnormal and not belonging. The use of surveillance by the institutional powers-that-be (i.e., the Church, police, mental health hospitals, prisons, etc.) have become so endemic that we have incorporated these disciplinary structures into our everyday practices. The once overtly visible power structure has now become part and parcel of our daily lives such that individuals begin to monitor their own behaviour and those around them (Foucault, 1990) (Foucault, 1990) (Foucault, 1995). Although there are many criticisms of Foucault’s work, his discussions around the establishment of power through policing the ‘dangerous classes’ is relevant to how the media is implicated in the surveillance project.

It is no secret that sensationalized media headlines (e.g., “terrorists in our midst”) get noticed and enhance profit margins. Since 9/11, policing the dangerous bodies has become a pervasive international project co-opting multiple third parties as members of
this invisible policing force. Justification for policing has gained support since events like
the attempted bombing at Glasgow airport and the Air India bombing. I understand the
fear that arises in danger. I share in the desire to reside in a safe haven not in a state of
perpetual threat and violence. What concerns me is that it is not ‘terrorist activity’ that
Bruce Allen sites as offensive to the Canadian state but it is the use of Sikh last names
(Singh or Kaur) and the wearing of burquas and turbans that disrupt the Canadian
mores. This type of policing is not located in terrorism and its appendages but in
regulating the identity markers worn by hyphenated Canadians. As noted earlier,
Canadian news media is also implicated in this process of converting benign ‘cultural’
celebrations into deviant, dangerous spaces.

**Talk Back... Take Back**

As with many other news media conglomerates, the CBC: The National inhabits
the virtual and perpetual open space of the world wide web. Their archived news
television pieces can be repeatedly watched and continued to have comments posted by
viewers. Many times, I feel isolated in my lens; “am I too sensitive?” is what I
continuously ponder. However, the comments posted in response to the airing of the
CBC: The National *Separatist Movement within Canada* overtly challenged my feeling of
isolation and sensitivity. In a period of 9 days, CBC viewers posted 416 comments.
Reading through these comments enriched my understanding that I share this struggle of
being identified into this one, tightly woven Sikh=Danger paradigm with a group of
impassioned, thoughtful ‘others’. To be clear, the 416 comments did not all match my

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47 In the Bruce Allen commentary he pronounces the Sikh name of Kaur (predominantly used by female
Sikhs as a middle name or last name) as Khan.
worldview, some explicitly supported the ‘go back to where you came from’ rhetoric and others felt that Sikh extremists have hijacked ‘their’ religion and want to have it returned to ‘them’. As with other internet spaces, the diverse range of comments posted in response to the Samosa piece produced its own string of text. In this case, because the CBC: The National does not require log-in for member-only access or entry into a private forum space (i.e., chat room), the comments become involved in a very public and open domain. The comments in this ‘Talk Back… Take Back’ section have resulted from individuals exercising an opportunity to respond to the CBC: The National piece and present their voices.

These comments serve to inform the response of viewers/commentators other than me. When the subaltern is positioned to speak (Spivak, 1985), the identity of who can and cannot voice their opinions becomes reconfigured. As a cultural commodity, identity acts as a political and economic tool – a type of currency for voice. Since “… the Orient (‘out there’ towards the East) is corrected, even penalized for lying outside the boundaries of European society” (Said, 1978), having a space to voice the Oriental perspective disrupts the gaze of the colonialist. As insiders who share the triple intersecting space of Sikh, Canadian and media consumer, the viewpoints of Canadian Sikhs are necessary to unravel the underpinnings of the Sikh=Danger construction. As the CBC: The National comment space is situated in the public domain without the illusions or actual
constructions of privacy or a parochial community space; I have opted to utilize these comments\(^4^8\) to honour the voices of the viewers/commentators.

... there is a new generation of young Sikhs in this country who unlike in the 80’s will not allow the media to create a false image of who we are. As a young Sikh-Canadian, I was appalled by this bias and misleading piece. We are proud Canadians who will no longer be maligned as Terrorists by has-been journalists ... (CBC: The National, June 29, 2007)

As I read the pages upon pages of voices arising from mostly Canadians,\(^4^9\) several themes emerged. The themes of problematic (biased) journalism; possible propaganda outcomes; Sikh=Danger constructions; anti-Sikh rhetoric and misrepresentation of Vaisakhi quickly surfaced to top of the theme pile. What I also found interesting was the use of this space as an educational forum – providing context, facts and missed dimensions to the CBC: The National airing of Samosa. Because Samosa was so polarized in the presentation of Sikhs as extremists and terrorists in a ‘war on terror’ culture, the segment clearly set the stage to provoke discussion. And thankfully, the CBC: The National allowed comments.

As Canada’s national news conglomerate, many viewers were disappointed with the biased, one-sided reporting.

\(^4^8\) I would like to acknowledge the struggle I have had with utilizing the comments posted on the CBC: The National site. As feminist research requires full disclosure of the relationship between the researcher and the ‘researched’, I still questioned my ethical and philosophical obligations to utilize these comments. While these comments inhabit the public domain of the very open internet, does the act of posting your voice on a public internet wall relinquish the voyeuristic practices of consumption and commoditisation of that voice? I also began to dismantle my own motives. This discussion could easily continue without these voices – but something tugged at me. Well below the surface of this debate was my need to have these voices (that do not commonly question the hegemonic Canadian practices of the ‘white Canada forever’ anthem) to be present in this dialogue. The comments are a part of our dialogue around ‘race’ relations in Canada. The ‘go back to where you came from’ is sitting beside ‘this is my home too’.

\(^4^9\) Some of the viewers/commentators identified themselves as non-Canadians.
... I never thought Hate-Mongering documentaries would be aired on cbc… (CBC: The National, July 3, 2007)

It is disgraceful that a national news organization such as the CBC would air this kind of propaganda. I was under the belief that news reports were meant to be free of bias and provide insightful information. (CBC: The National, July 2, 2007)

... I must say I am utmost disgusted. This "documentary" is nothing but biased and false. … (CBC: The National, June 29, 2007)

The sentiments of hate-mongering, propaganda, biased and false representations were echoed throughout many of the comments. Some commentators went further to question, “Will the CBC next be airing similar pieces on Christianity, Muslim, Islam, Palistini [sic], Jewish, extremists? Like the Christian crusades?” (CBC: The National, July 6, 2007). Some queried why certain facts were omitted such as, “Why he did not ask DAVE HAYER about his father's role in KHALISTAN movement?” (CBC: The National, July 2, 2007). And some questioned why certain activities were not identified as problematic for the general Canadian population but were so designated for a handful of Sikh children wearing hoodies with a crossed gun arrangement: “As for guns on the shirts, why aren't people complaining about majour [sic] labels printing such things on shirts that are much more widely circulated? Why target a specific group of people? I'll tell you right now; Sikhs are easily labelled as terrorists, because of their identity…” (CBC: The National, July 2, 2007).

Many of the commentators were concerned that the CBC: The National Samosa segment, with its ideological overtones, would further complicate race relations in Canada.
I am a white European and I can't believe what I see..... This perfectly shows how North Americans talk about other cultures without knowing anything about them with no responsibility [sic]. It is so typical. ...CBC did a great job to raise intolerance, prejudices and discrimination against Sikhs with sharing one sided half-information and creating fake identity. (CBC: The National, July 3, 2007)

I am a British Sikh and have never seen Scotland's struggle portrayed as some extreme perspective. So why are Khalistanis labelled extremists? It is this type of half-baked journalism that contributes to race hate crimes and general ignorance ... CBC should not allow any further reports like this because it is adds to the misconceptions of peoples and religions and helps to promote stereotyping and racism [sic]. (CBC: The National, July 6, 2007)

Some raised the issue that this type of reporting diminishes the positive contributions of the Sikh community (and other marginalized communities) as they become reduced into the single dimension of ‘dangerous’.

The CBC should also cover reports such as the millions of dollars Sikhs have donated to the new Brampton hospital, the fact that Sikhs are Canada's most politically involved ethnic minority with 7 Sikh MP's in parliament, that 500 000 Sikhs currently live peacefully in Canada working to raise their children in a peaceful and accepting environment that was often not provided to them in India, and that since 1897 when the first Sikhs arrived in Canada they have helped to form a part of the fabric of our great nation. (CBC: The National, June 29, 2007)

And a few recognized that this type of news media silenced voices who can and are willing to speak against human riots violations.

As a British Sikh (I mention British because unlike some in Punjab I have a free voice) it is my duty to stand up for social injustice and to act. As it is for Canadian Sikhs. Since and probably before the 1984 blue star massacre the Indian Govt have had an agenda to ethnically cleanse Punjab. We should be putting our efforts into achieving equality and social justice for all (wherever it be) and not trying to undermine each other. (CBC: The National, June 30, 2007)

Propaganda, defined as “[effort] directed systematically toward the gaining of public support for an opinion or course of action” (Webster’s, 2002), was of concern for some of the commentators as mentioned above; as this would perpetuate the
Sikh=Danger construction and produce anti-Sikh rhetoric. The string of quotes to follow represents the very real manifestation of that concern.

We congratulate Terry Milewski on his excellent piece. Many Sikh terrorists have entered Canada by filing bogus refugee applications. The government of Canada must review the files of all Sikhs admitted over the last few decades, and where fraud is detected, immediately strip them of citizenship and deport these people. (CBC: The National, July 6, 2007)

If such things are not controlled right now, it may become another demon ... surprisingly sikhs here in Canada are aiming at disturbing the peace and harmony of the place which they left forever many years back (CBC: The National, July 5, 2007)

It is rather unfortunate that a country like Canada, which is sacrificing its own soldiers in Afghanistan to fight terrorism, allows not only a safe haven for terrorists that threaten another democracy but seems to be encouraging it political appeasement ... Britain allowed this problem of appeasing militant minorites [sic] unchecked for decades and as a result now finds itself target of home grown terrorists. Same thing could happen to Canada. (CBC: The National, July 3, 2007)

I find it unbelievable that a group such as those shown in Sikh video are allowed to show such hatred [sic], to have parades to spread it, to have politiions [sic] pander to these "terrorists". Why not keep our soldiers hear [sic] in Canada to protect us from such extreamists [sic] or start filling out their deportation forms as of today. If they came to Canada for a new start, a new life, why don't they adopt Canada's laws and open-mindedness? To see children with guns on their clothing and parading with people screaming about killing is outrageous. THIS MUST BE STOPPED OR WE'LL HAVE OUR OWN AL'QUEDA! (CBC: The National, June 28, 2007)

Why are we tolerating the celebration of those that have blood on their hands? (CBC: The National, June 30, 2007)

Somehow Vaisakhi has become a celebration of bloodied, violent hands with the single-minded agenda of spreading hatred. And the nation-state of Canada is warned of the dangers of cozying up to these Sikh "terrorists" as it could lead to acts of homegrown terrorisms (as has already occurred in Britain). Further, these deceptive Sikhs fill out bogus refugee claims to spread and cultivate their terrorist, violent agenda on Canadian
soil. Part of the monitoring and policing of these dangerous bodies must come by
‘controlling’ the Sikh situation by evaluating all immigration claims by Sikhs, deporting
them as they refuse to adopt ‘Canada’s laws and open-mindedness’, and stopping them
before they turn into a full-fledged “Al’Queda” movement. The above quotes are a mere
sample of the anti-Sikh rhetoric that appeared throughout the comments.

My concern for this type of reporting is that it cultivates a culture of fear of the
‘other’ – in this case, the Sikh=Danger construction. Education serves as a powerful tool
to reclaim a hijacked identity. Many of the commentators spent a great deal of time and
effort in posting their comments. Some went on for pages attending to several issues that
were left out of the CBC: The National Samosa airing, while others presented specific
facts to counter Terry Milewski’s presentation such as “Terri says the Air India plane was
bombed by ‘Khalistan Separatists’ – however, as you well know, to this day it is still
unclear as to who was ultimately responsible for the bombing” (CBC: The National, July
2, 2007). Critical questions were also raised as “[what] or who is mainstream Canadian
society?” (CBC: The National, July 4, 2007). The value of these discussions, whether
they be in response to a media piece or the beating of an elderly Sikh Canadian man in
Port Coquitlam, is that they help to flush out what is happening in the Canadian think-
tank. And the educational components are vital to counter the very real influences of the
media.

Its [sic] funny how one individual in 20 minutes can influence people with his
own agenda on something so complex. Give me 10 minutes on the CBC and i bet
you i can have these same people believe the Earth is flat. (CBC: The National,
July 3, 2007)
Final Thoughts...

Colonialism does not simply state the existence of tribes; it also reinforces it and separates them. (Fanon, 1963, p. 73)

Living within a media-rich consumer culture challenges one’s ability to locate the origin of our values and assumptions (Jhally, 2002). Locating my shoe fetish as a by-product of my free will or a pervasive marketing gimmick requires a little digging into my entangled dance with media and advertising. As consumers involved in this rich process, we have learned to become highly sophisticated readers of messages embedded in advertising and media text (Jhally, 2002). Through our daily engagement with media, we have come to understand the unsavoury tones that systematically construct dangerous ‘others’ and are also able to recognize spaces that can present the same event or issue with an inclusive, holistic lens. Channel M has opened up a forum to honour the diverse voices in Canada’s multicultural society with multiple-language news offerings which incorporates coverage of issues that concern specific communities (i.e., beating of an elderly Sikh Indo-Canadian man) that do not always get taken up by local and national news media. Channel M has also been active in presenting cultural celebrations like Vaisakhi and Chinese New Year in a positive light. Recognizing and acknowledging the positive aspects of hyphenated communities fosters a relationship of belonging for those who have been implicated in possessing the ‘other’ identity. Following the newspaper-headline breadcrumbs from the late 1800s to the present has demonstrated the pervasive ‘white Canada forever’ anthem. Much to my chagrin, the phantom of colonial mores continues to haunt us and resists eradication. Within difficult dialogues of ‘race’ and colonialism, I think Canadian culture can be re-vamped as “culture is first the expression of a nation, the expression of its preferences, of its taboos and of its patterns” (Fanon,
1967, p. 196). Media, as an ideological tool, manufactures dangerous others but can also work towards a different project – one that dismantles the master’s tools. As a Canadian, as a Sikh, as an Indo-Canadian, as a feminist, the words spoken by Dr. Martin Luther King in 1963 seem to be submerged under the recent words of CKNW’s Bruce Allen, “We don’t need you here. You have another place to go. It’s called home (2007), but I have more faith in hope: the “spirit of resistance to the oppressor” (Fanon, 1965, p. 93).

We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so we’ve come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and security of justice. (King, 1963)
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