



Sailing on the high tides

Indian presence in Aotearoa dates back to the late 18th century. European trading ships crewed by Indian seafarers travelled to New Zealand during the exploration, sealing and timber voyages. It is unknown who the first Indian migrant to New Zealand was, but it is certain that Indians were regular travelers to New Zealand as lascars (sailors or seafarers) or sepoy (soldiers).



View of Pondicherry (French colony in India) where the Saint Jean-Baptiste left with a crew of 232 (including 53 lascars) in July 1769. Most died before reaching New Zealand waters.

Source: Musée de la Compagnie des Indes

Two Muslim lascars – Mahmud Qasim and a young Bengali named Nasrin may perhaps have been the first Indians to set foot in Aotearoa.

Suffering from scurvy, the Captain took the remaining crew, including the two lascars ashore multiple times to collect water and greens that helped restore the crew's health.

Leaving Pondicherry, India in June 1769 on aboard the St Jean Baptiste (a ship of the French East India Company), it arrived in New Zealand and anchored for two weeks in Doubtless Bay, Northland.

Sadly, both young sailors died in Peru on their continuing voyage in April 1770.

Pre 1880

Early Presence

Up North

The earliest known Indian resident of New Zealand was a Bengali man. He too was a lascar who jumped the ship "City of Edinburgh" in 1809. He happily lived with his Maori wife in the Bay of Islands.

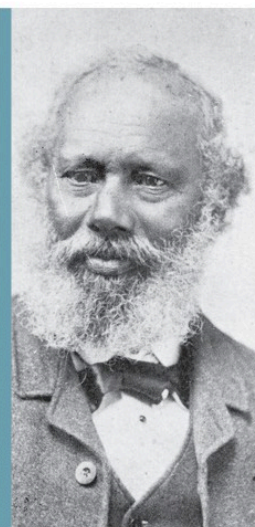
Down South

In 1814, six Indian lascars were known to have stolen a boat from the whaling ship "Matilda" and sailed to land. Only three survived to settle in the Otago region. One survivor, said to be from Surat, West Gujarat wore a moko (Maori tattoo). He spoke English and Maori and lived with his Maori wife and son on Stewart Island later in 1844.

Black Peters

The first Indian to achieve public notice was Edward Peters, an Anglo-Indian from Bombay who had arrived in 1853.

Known as 'Black Peters', he was the one to find gold in the Tuapeka region in Otago. Unfortunately, an Australian was credited with the discovery and Peters was denied both reward and recognition. Later, due to public outcry, he was granted a small weekly allowance. Peters died in 1893.



Edward Peters

Ref: 1/2-008040-F
Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand
/records/228077/53



Choosing Aotearoa

The 1890's sets the beginning of the first wave of Indian immigration.

The first Indian sojourners were mainly men chasing prosperity. Most were here temporarily; just long enough to improve their wealth, livelihood and social status back in India, which was much harder to obtain due to droughts, overpopulation and underemployment.

Emigration was easily influenced by returning family members and village men from overseas. Those returning to India spoke of green pastures and fewer immigration restrictions which made Aotearoa a prospective destination. This started chain migration.

To survive, manual labour was the most obtainable but these jobs often paid very poorly. Wealthier and educated men opened businesses according to their family trade such as shoemakers and tailors. Indians were commonly referred to as "Hindoos", although the small Indian community objected to this term.

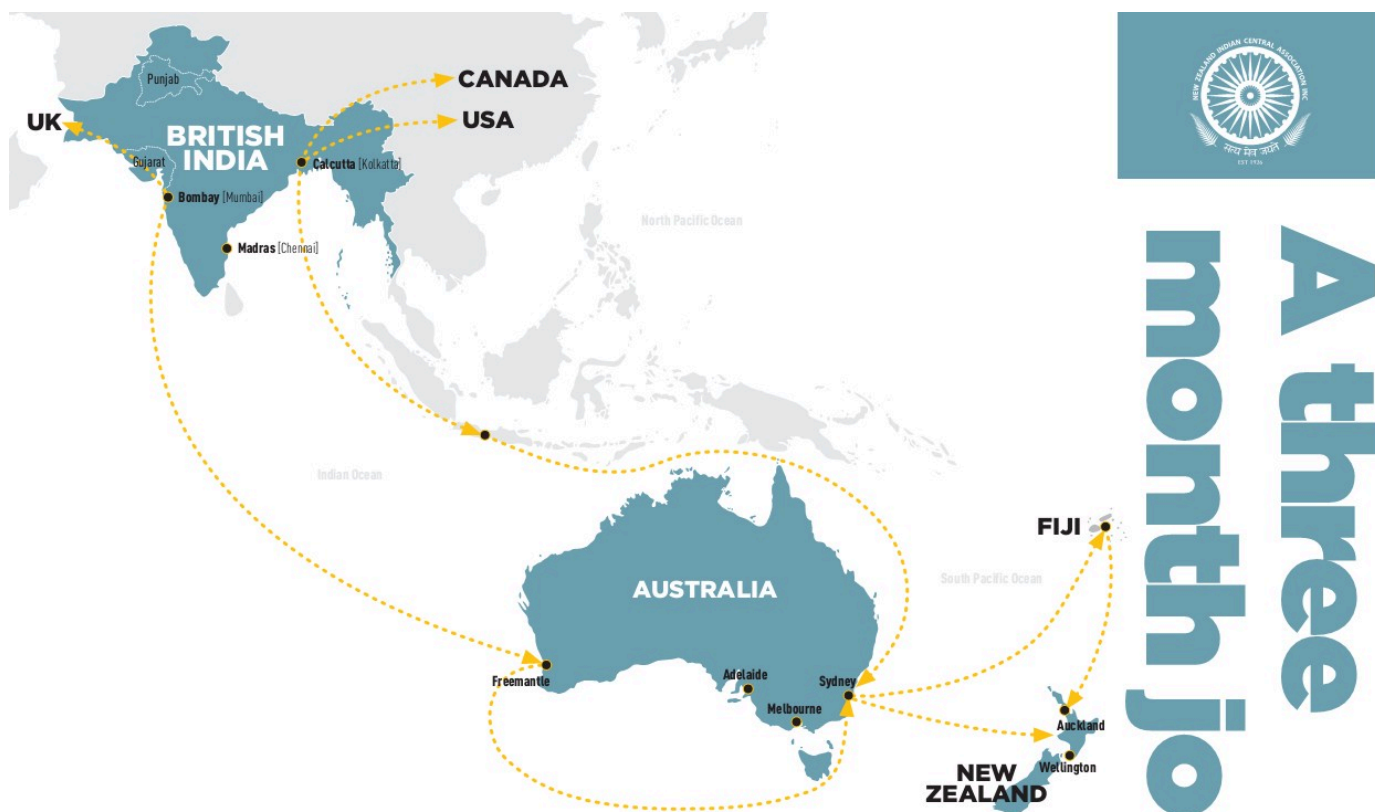
Over the next 20 years, the Indian population fluctuated with tighter immigration laws and the outbreak of World War I. Many migrants returned home after a short stay due to illness and the cold weather. Others stayed and created family homes for future generations.

1890-1920

The hawking period, began in the early 1890's and extended into the early twentieth century. In this period, a few turbaned strangers appeared on New Zealand roads peddling cloth, chutney, herbs, or semi-precious stones. Although their distinctive appearance made them highly conspicuous the actual number of Indians was very small.

Sikh hawker Joala Singh Belling, who worked as a peddler with his horse, was an early Indian immigrant to New Zealand. c.1920

Source: Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, F-52817-1/2



A three month journey

The journey by boat was a treacherous one, which took over two and a half months to reach New Zealand after having made numerous stops at various ports. The passage started by train journey to the ports. They carried dried snacks for part of their meals.

Although fares were relatively affordable, many bought third class tickets. Sleeping arrangements were on deck and passengers had to be tied down with ropes to avoid being washed overboard.

Adding, to the long journey, some voyages ended at Australian ports where many would have to wait in transit for the next sailing to New Zealand or Fiji, often with no shelter, little food and money.

Australia remained an important part of the journey especially when a direct shipping link was introduced from Sydney to Auckland in 1916.

“

My father emigrated to New Zealand in 1924 when I was just a little boy. Before he left, he told me that when he'd saved enough money, and I was old enough to conform to the country's immigration laws, he'd get a permit for me to join him.

I waited eagerly for this. There was terrible poverty in Gujarat. I was thirteen when my father sent for me. I was so happy!

I came on the P & O ship Strathnaver with a group of friends and relations. They were mostly going to join their fathers, too. It was very crowded on board. The ship was a good one though, with every facility you could want.

We sailed from Bombay to Colombo, Freemantle, Adelaide, Melbourne and then Sydney. We stopped at each port for two or three days! That gave us plenty of time to look around.

In Sydney, we boarded a much smaller ship to take us across the Tasman to Wellington. It was quite a change. The sea was rough and tossed us about. I was very glad when we finally sailed into Wellington Harbour.

”

Ranchod Govind

Passenger vessel "P&O Strathnaver"

Source: Australian National Maritime Museum on The Commons
URL: https://www.flickr.com/photos/anmm_thecommons/8434134138/

Navsari and Surat regions of Gujarat State in western India and Jalandhar (formerly known as Jullundur in British India) and Hoshiarpur in the Punjab are where the early Indian migrants came from.

This photo appeared in the Auckland Weekly News on 9th July 1914 with the caption:
"Undesirable Indians and their baggage being transferred from an Island steamer to R.M.S. Niagara at Auckland after failing to pass the education test."

Source: Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, W. Beattie: AVNS-19140709-50-1



Arrival in a Strange Land

These years were never easy, the winters were unbearable, everyone experienced the financial hardships, accommodation problems and the discrimination against Indians was evident. Some slept under the open skies, whilst they travelled on horse, tram and bicycles to various towns in search of employment. Work was not easy to obtain, as knowledge of the English language was limited. Despite all these difficulties, life went on and these men tried as best they could to assimilate amidst the people of New Zealand

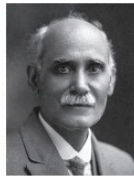
Chain Migration A sense of Family

Many Indians were related by kinship; their passage assisted by New Zealand based relatives in what became known as 'chain migration'. For others, their common rural heritage within the Punjab and Gujarat regions was a sufficient bond. Such fellowship helped them to settle in and provided a reminder of their responsibility to family in India.

Early Pioneers

Bir and Phomen Singh Gill

Brothers Bir and Phomen Singh Gill sailed to New Zealand from Punjab around 1890. Bir worked as a hawker, specialising in herbs in the central North Island. He joined the NZ army serving as a cook at Trentam Military Camp. Bir married a Maori woman and had a daughter. His younger brother, Phomen initially worked in Auckland for a Muslim confectioner. He then moved to Wellington as a hawker selling sweets, chutneys and curries from his suitcase. Phomen met his future wife Margaret here and they later settled in Wanganui. He opened a confectionery business on Victoria Avenue called Abraham Singh & Co, Indian Lolly Manufacturers with his business partner Charlie Abraham (a Muslim). He set up more shops in New Plymouth and Palmerston North. Phomen and Margaret had four children. Phomen died in Palmerston North in 1935.



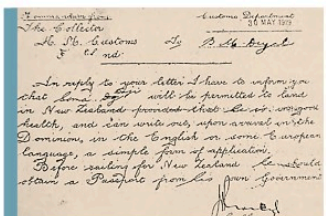
Source: Alexander Turnbull Library, Peter Singh Collection (PAColl-720)

Keshav Daji

Keshav Daji came from a coastal village in the Navsari region of South Gujarat. In leaving his village, he became part of the first phase of chain migration from India and was possibly the first Gujarati to settle in New Zealand in 1902. He was employed by the NZ Police in Auckland where he could assist new arrivals with permits.



Source: Uka Chhita Collection



Letter for a permit issued by the Customs Department to Soma Daji, a new immigrant in Auckland 1919.

Source: Indians in Pukekohe 1918-2006; Chhita, Uka

Mohammed Kara

An early Gujarati Muslim immigrant, Mohammed Kara arrived in New Zealand in 1907, after first emigrating to South Africa. Mohammed settled in Christchurch, where he operated a small shop by about 1912. He was then joined by his son aged 13 in 1921.



Indians, as British subjects were able to enter New Zealand freely before 1899, unlike other Asian migrants such as Chinese, who as 'aliens' faced restrictions from the 1880s.

The Immigration

Restriction Act of 1899 imposed a stringent dictation test in any European language that barred most Indians from entering. But this was only a minor barrier to those determined to come as the application information was memorised at special 'cramming schools' in Fiji, en route to New Zealand. Some even learned to sign their names in English with assistance from the ship's Captain.

By 1908, Indian residents who wished to leave New Zealand and then return had to provide a thumbprint in order to get a re-entry permit. This print could confirm that another Indian was not trying to sneak into the country. The procedure remained until the 1920 tightening of restrictions against all Asian immigration.

Large gathering of Indians taken with Sastri (middle holding cane) with prominent community leaders near Grafton Bridge, Auckland.

Source: Unknown



Invited but unwelcomed

The primary concern which drew to the attention of the Indian community was the colour prejudice against them due to the policies of the White NZ League.

In 1922, Srinavasa Sastri was sent by the Indian Government to Australia, New Zealand and Canada to investigate the living conditions of Indians overseas. He met and addressed the issue with a large gathering of Indians at St. Benedict's Hall in Auckland. His response was reassuring in that the NZ Government would be favourable to his recommendations. This gave the small Indian communities hope and encouraged them to set up formal organisations.

INDIANS IN NEW ZEALAND

MR. SASTRI'S OFFICIAL REPORT

A FAVOURABLE IMPRESSION.

[FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.]

LONDON, 28th March.

The report of the Government of India by the Right Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri on his mission to Australia, New Zealand, and Canada has reached this country. So far as New Zealand is concerned, he found that his compatriots suffered under two difficulties, and those are apparently not very serious - exclusion from the benefits of the Old Age Pensions Act and the difficulties of securing employment. In view of the fact that there are probably no Indians who fulfil the conditions regarding age required by the Old Age Pensions Act, and it is unlikely that they will be eligible for some years to come, no great hardship, says Mr. Sastri, should result from the matter being allowed to stand over for the present - a course which was suggested by the Cabinet.

"When the time comes," the report proceeds, "I have no doubt that the claims of Indians will receive a sympathetic consideration. In this belief I am strengthened by the assurance given me by the Minister of Public Works that any Indians who could not find employment elsewhere would be provided with work by the Government in order to enable them to earn a livelihood.

"I should like to dwell on one feature of the situation which affects Indians both in Australia and New Zealand," says Mr.

Sastri in conclusion, "and which, to my mind, calls for immediate improvement. It is the absence of a coordinating and protecting agency which could help the Indian community to realise its existence as a corporate entity, and assist individual members of the community in combating difficulties which arise from day to day. Neither in Australia nor in New Zealand do Indians possess sufficient education to take care of themselves. They are scattered over a very wide area; they are drawn from various classes, and they lack the equipment for organised effort. The Dominion authorities with the best will in the world cannot help them to overcome the shortcomings of defective education.... Other countries provide the necessary aid to their nationals in the person of a Consular Officer. India maintains no such agency in the Dominions. Doubtless, the Indian population, both in Australia and New Zealand, will, in future, probably be a dwindling factor, but this can of itself be no justification for a neglect of the interests of those who are there. From several quarters I received suggestions or requests that this should be supplied.

Extracts taken from Evening Post, 9 May 1923

Source: paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspaper/E19230509_2.106

The arrival of the Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri in New Zealand. The Indian visitor (on left) met at the wharf at Wellington by the Hon. W. Downie Stewart, Minister for Customs and Internal Affairs. Auckland Weekly News, 20 July 1922.

Source: Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, AVNS-19220720-45-4



1920-1950

Punjabi labourers employed by O. C. Finer lived in his cottage at Tuhua (King Country) between the wars.

Source: Country Section, NZICA



Rural Settlement

The rural development of the North Island provided many Punjabi settlers with their employment opportunities. Apart from hawking by the earliest arrivals, the first significant occupation was cutting flax in the swamps of the Hauraki Plains and the Waikato. This was soon accompanied by ditch digging in the same area as farmers converted water logged swamps into drained dairy pasture.

The residential areas of the early rural settlers were clearly influenced by the location of where they could find jobs. Hard physical labour, long hours and rigorous living conditions were typical experiences for several decades.



Horse drawn hawkers caravan with clothing goods in Jerusalem, Bay of Plenty.

Source: Country Section, NZICA



Punjabi scrub cutters during the 1920s.

Source: Country Section, NZICA



Sketch: A Punjabi gang of flax cutters' camp by Alf Moody. The European on the right Douglas Hunter, owner of the Waikaka Flax mill, Patetonga (Hauraki) speaks to Chaichal Singh (known as Charlie). The details in this sketch show the Punjabis holding sickles used to cut the flax. One man inside the tent cooks chapatis (flat Indian bread). The Union Jack flies over the campsite as a reminder to New Zealanders of the Indians' status as British citizens.

Source: Ken Hunter, Patetonga

scrub-cutters
farming **FLAX-CLEARING**
swamp-clearing
drain-diggers
peddlers

Gujarati Market Gardeners and Punjabi Dairy Farmers

After 1936, as rural labouring declined, more Indians moved into market gardening in Otahuhu and Pukekohe. Punjabi Sikhs, who often had farming experience, settled mainly in the Waikato district and took up dairy farming.



Market gardening in Pukekohe.

Source: Bakhat Singh



Milkhi Ram Fermah's white pine timber mill business near Whakatane c. mid 1930s

Source: Country Section, NZICA



Narain family on their Glenside dairy farm, Johnsonville, Wellington 1948.

Source: Kanti Bhalla



Mangal Singh and his sons at their Mt. Cosy Jersey Stud farm in Otterohanga

Source: Country Section, NZICA

Dullab and Laxmi Jerambhai with daughter Kamala at their Ponsonby fruit shop.

Source: Kamete Ranchhod

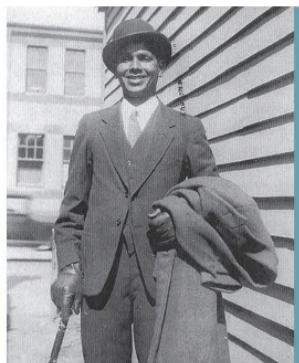
After the hawking period in the late 1930s, saw a shift where Indians worked in hotels and in manufacturing and processing industries. The Gujarati Indians worked hard to acquire capital so they could open fruit and vegetable stores.

By the 1930s, the largest Indian community lived in Auckland although there were reasonable size communities in the main centres of the North Island. A small handful settled in Christchurch.

It was common for new Indian migrants to live in boarding homes owned by settled Indians. Camaraderie from fellow Indians helped settle new arrivals and, for some speaking English opened doors into non-Indian society.

As these communities grew, so did a more structured social life even though only a few women were living here. Indian community groups sprang up and became a place to socialise, express your concerns or practice your culture – they also took an active interest in Indian politics.

The number of Indian women in New Zealand increased slowly after the Great Depression, although Government efforts to restrict Indian immigration continued until WWII.



Naran Ramji on Tinakori Road in Wellington during the early 1930s. He worked at the Osborne Manufacturing Company and shared accommodation with six other men. "Each had a chore to do every day, on Sundays they all dressed up and went out together."

Source: Suresh Ramji



Dahya Hari & his wife Bankor in their shoe repair shop in Otorohanga c 1942.

Source: Malki & Shobhina Changanani

kitchen-hand fruit & vegetables
bottle-collectors
hawker brick-maker
RAILWAYS

Hawking

For new immigrants, hawking fruit and vegetables was often a short stepping stone to new lines of work. Prices were cheaper than the shops due to the small outlay. The shopkeepers called for the council to either abolish the stands or increase their licensing fee. In Wellington, Indian hawkers were moved from the main city streets to less populous city-edge areas and later this was followed by Auckland. Almost half of the total licenses were held by Indians across both cities. Hawking eventually died out in the mid-1930s.



Indian hawkers in Auckland as appeared in Free Lance July 1926.

Source: Auckland Institute and Museum



Life Town



The Bhana family stand outside their house on Adelaide road in Newtown, Wellington.

Source: Ajit Soma



B.V. Chhiba and M Budhia at his bottle collecting depot in Christchurch.

Source: Christchurch Star Sports, 23 September 1967, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington Ref: N-P1250-13



Ravji Kara with his Fruit and Vegetable Truck.

Source: Ajit Soma

Thakor Parbhu in military training, Waiouru c.1950

Courtesy: Thakor Parbhu



Indians and War

Indian ANZACS were just as determined to fight for their new country, despite encountering a sometimes unwelcoming attitude.

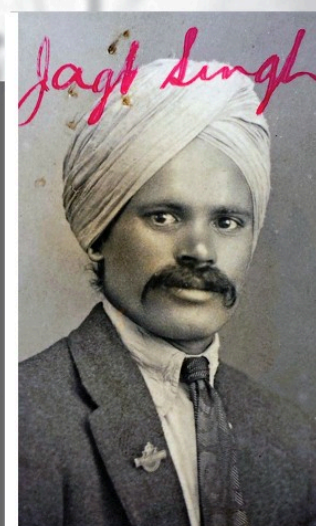
There were barriers to signing up. Many could not serve unless they were male natural-born British subjects. Adding to this, some Indian men were either too old to enlist, could not speak English well enough or had dietary requirements.

Very few Indian New Zealanders actively fought in World War I. It was mostly Sikhs who volunteered, although many were rejected. Some successful volunteers were assigned to the Maori Reinforcements. After 1916, the New Zealand Army did not take on any more Indians.

At the end of WWII, the NZ Army conscripted men at the age of 21 to undertake compulsory army training. Upon this news, a quick return to India was welcomed to escape this. Those who appealed against training, worked for the NZ Army.

Jagt Singh was one Punjabi sikh who did enlist in 1914 as he had already served military duties in India before his arrival to NZ. He travelled to Egypt, serving in the Dardanelles Campaign before being wounded in Chunuk Bair, Gallipoli, where he earned medals for bravery.

Another Indian ANZAC was Ratan Chand Mehra. Mehra's death is honoured with many others on the walls of Auckland War Memorial Museum, as he served for the 4th Reinforcements of New Zealand Rifle Brigade. He fought during the bitter French winter before dying on the 3 December 1917 in Ypres Salient, Belgium.



Jagt Singh in 1921. His RSA badge can be clearly seen on his lapel.

Source: Ref:128 874/1921, Archives New Zealand, Wellington

Picnic in the park, Wellington Indian Community c. 1952.

Source: iStockphoto



Growing communities

Informal community gatherings were common and became a place to socialise, express your concerns or practice your culture – they also took an active interest in Indian politics. Initially, these gatherings were held at homes. Community halls were hired for more formal functions and meetings.

In the decades between 1920 and 1940, there was a significant increase of intermarriages with both European and Maori women. The number of Indian women in New Zealand increased slowly after the Depression.

Diversity in self-employed jobs and commercial interests resulted in well dressed, prosperous individuals.

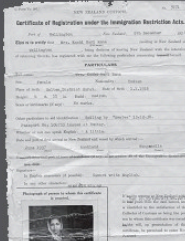


A group of Punjabi men meet a Customs Officer in Wellington c. 1940

Source: Madanraj Bange

As a result of the 1920 Immigration Restriction Act, Indians were usually denied entry permits, but they continued to come by other means.

Frequent trips back to India allowed for more family members to migrate adding to the growth of the communities. Returning men brought their young sons to help run businesses and to gain better prospects in later life. Wives were left in India to look after young children, extended families and the elderly.



Kashi Hari Rama's Certificate of Registration, 1938.

Source: Wellington Indian Association



Manawatu, 1945.

Source: Central Districts Indian Association



Christchurch, 1951.

Source: Christchurch Indian Association



Taumaranui and Manunui, 1955.

Source: Country Section Indian Association



Pukekohe, c. 1922.

Source: Pukekohe Indian Association



Wellington, c. 1926.

Source: Wellington Indian Association



Auckland, 1939.

Source: Auckland Indian Association



The White NZ League policy is a historical reminder about the discrimination faced by Indians in New Zealand. These series of cartoons appeared in various tabloids.

The Alien Wave, Ellis, Free Lance, 1920

Numbers of Asian immigrants increased sharply in 1919 and 1920, reversing a long term trend. The Chinese opened fruit shops and laundries; many Indians formed contract work gangs in the countryside.

Source: The Unauthorized Version: A Cartoon History of New Zealand, Grant, I.F.1980



Your Daughter?, W Blomfield, Observer, 1920

Concern about intermarriage sprang from the common belief that Asiatics were inferior beings, and the fear of 'piebald New Zealand'.

Source: The Unauthorized Version: A Cartoon History of New Zealand, Grant, I.F.1980



The Coming Artist, W Blomfield, Observer, 1919

This cartoon portrays an Indian labourer painting a white map of New Zealand black, inciting the fear many white New Zealanders felt about impending 'hordes' of Asian arrivals. The anxiety that New Zealand was irrevocably being altered by 'mass' immigration was felt by many white residents, along with a coexisting inability to effect any preventative change.

Source: mp.natlib.govt.nz/details/704-46801 Reference Number: A-302-1-192 Object 146801



A Black Outlook, Observer, 1914

This early cartoon appeared in the Observer, Volume 34, Issue 23, 14 February 1914
Big Draper: Help! Police! Drive this thing out of the country or I'm ruined!

Extended: Mr J. Court, who pointed out that several of the Hindoos had been already licensed, said that the question was a very serious one. It was most unfair that these hawkers by paying £1 a year, should be allowed to compete with shopkeepers who leased premises at the rate of £1 a week per foot, and who in addition had to pay heavy rates.

Source: paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/news/papers/00191402/4.2.6.2



The Hindoo Peril, Glover, Truth 1917.

At the 1917 Imperial Conference, New Zealand was asked to allow wives and children of already settled Indians to enter the country.

In this cartoon a British politician is attempting to open a door that New Zealand has shut against Indian immigrants.

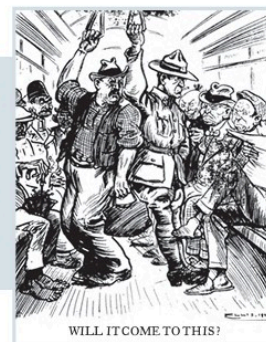
Source: The Unauthorized Version: A Cartoon History of New Zealand, Grant, I.F.1980



Will it come to this?, Ellis, Freelance, 1920.

The fear that 'white' New Zealanders would be crowded out of their own country by Asians is reflected in this cartoon. A working man and a returned soldier are having to stand in a tram because Chinese and Indian men had taken over the positions of comfort and privilege. The cartoon appeared in the New Zealand Freelance in 1920, the same year that the Immigration Restriction Amendment Act gave the government the power to keep out 'unsuitable' immigrants.

Source: The Unauthorized Version: A Cartoon History of New Zealand, Grant, I.F.1980

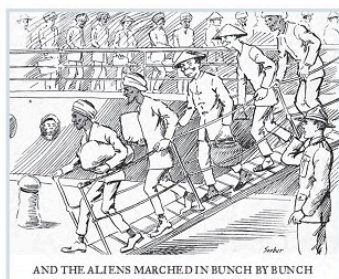


And the Aliens Marched in Bunch by Bunch

This was on the cover of the journal of the Returned Soldiers' Association, Quick March, Vol 3, No 28, 1920

Extended Title: The Insignificant Digger: Well; whatever it was we fought for, it was neither high prices nor cheap labour. If these new style landing parties are going to continue it might as well to set up an Expatriation Department for the benefit of ex-soldiers.

Source: ourboys.recollect.co.nz/modes/view/5138#d611567



'Keep off the grass!', Glover, Truth, 1921.

Prime Minister William Massey as a police constable holding back the European would-be immigrants behind a locked gate and letting Chinese and Indians go past.

Extended Title - P.C. Bill - 'Now, then you "Pommies", stand back there! We're not running any more cheap excursions just now - we're concentrating on cheap labor.' The Government has suddenly stopped assisting ex-service men and other British immigrants. The influx of Chows and Hindus, however, it still allows

Source: https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZT/1921/04/16.2.3.1



New Zealand Indian Central Association

Three regional Indian Associations formed the roots of the national body.

The Oath of Allegiance to Indian Association [Country Section]

Written in Urdu, the oath reads:

"Before God I swear that I shall willingly render all possible assistance to this Association; and that whenever the Association requires any service from me I shall gladly comply, regardless of what that service may be."

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Manawatu-Hawkes Bay (Central Districts) Indian Association
Est. 1945

Office bearers of the New Zealand Indian Central Association, 1939.

INDIANS FOREGATHER.

NEW ZEALAND ASSOCIATION
FORMED.

A meeting was held in Tamarunui on July 24, when representatives from the three local Indian associations existing in Auckland, Wellington and Tauramunui attended, and Dr. B. S. Share presided. The New Zealand Indian Central Association was formed and Mr. S. N. Mahraj [Auckland], Mr. Ranji Hira [Wellington], and Indar Singh Radhawa, [Tauramunui], were unanimously elected president, vice president, and the general secretary, respectively. It was decided to register the association.

Shanti Vasanji and Thakor Parbhu celebrated one of the first grandeur Indian weddings in Wellington in 1957. Leader of the Opposition Walter Nash was among the many guests.

The logistics of hosting such large weddings became feasible once Indian Associations established community halls.

Source: Thakor Parbhu



Settling in, Settling down

1950-1970

After World War II, came an important development for the Indian community. There was progressive change in the immigration policies in 1958 which allowed New Zealand born Indian daughters to bring in husbands from other countries. Previously, the Act permitted only sons to bring in wives and minor children.

The first Punjabi girls for whom husbands were allowed were the two sisters Preeto and Jeeto in Pukekohe. These sisters married two brothers from Fiji – Ganges and Sakatar Singh in 1960.

Sikh Weddings

One Sikh wedding was conducted in New Zealand before World War II. Kartari Singh came to New Zealand as a young ten year old with her father in 1925. She was one of the few Indian females living here. To solemnise the wedding, a copy of the Sikh holy scriptures *Adi Granth*, was sent to New Zealand from India. Her wedding to Surain Singh was conducted by her father. Kartari and Surain were married on 25th November 1932.

In 1961, three of Kartari's daughters married three young men from Punjab in the town hall at Te Aroha. These sisters were the second generation of Punjabis to be married in New Zealand.



Wedding Photo of the Singh sisters: Mulneet with her husband Santokh, Daljeet (sitting) with her husband Jasvir and Harjeet with her husband Harpreem.

Source: Country Sider, NZCA

Hindu Weddings Makangopal - Bhana

The wedding of Santi Bhana and Rama Makan was possibly the first Hindu wedding. The wedding was celebrated in the local news – Rotorua Daily Times on 20 May 1948. Santi wore her late mother's sari. The bridegroom, Rama was escorted to the house of his friends, where he was met by the bride's friends, who blessed him with holy water.



Shanti Bhana and Rama Makan on their wedding day, 15 May 1948.

Source: Bay of Plenty Indian Association

Presenting herself for the first time, the bride adorned him with a garland of flowers before changing into her bright scarlet wedding attire with her gold jewellery and bangles. The Hindu ceremony was conducted in Sankrit (in which the religious books were written), and lasted for an hour and a half. The couple made no verbal replies but at set times walked around the fire to solemnise their union. A reception was held later which was attended by 200 guests from around the country.



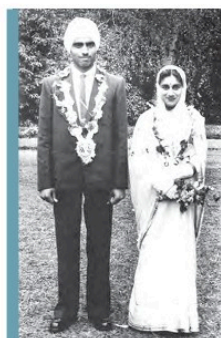
Wedding of Satnam Singh and Harcharni Ram, 30 March 1963. Both were born in New Zealand.

Source: Satnam Singh

Up until the 1980s, the Hindu community in New Zealand had no local Brahmins (priests).

This role was performed by a small number of Gujaratis, (who were not Brahman), who knew the appropriate spiritual and cultural practices to conduct Hindu weddings.

Source: Wellington Indian Association





Rise of Women

Christchurch Indian Women and Children at a park. Year Unknown.

Source: Nilesh Ganda

The women sought companionship through each other, exchanging ideas and recipes, and kept traditions alive. Mahila Samaj (Women's Auxiliary), were formalised through the Associations. This was the beginning of the Indian women voice in the community.



The first Mahila Samaj of the Wellington Indian Association 1971.

Source: Wellington Indian Association

Indian women and children arrived in greater numbers after WWII to help in businesses that their husbands and fathers had setup. The cold weather and loneliness were a big hindrance.

Food was also a major problem. Indian vegetables were not available in New Zealand. They learnt to grow their own chillies, coriander, garlic and eggplant. Boats from Fiji came at the most twice a year with spices and lentils which were stored in large drums until the next visit.

How would you live the life of Hina Govind?

It is 1945. You are 17 years old and live in a small fishing village. Three young men from New Zealand meet you and a marriage is arranged for you.

Do you?

A long way from home

"Mum (Shanti) lived in Dannevirke for 64 years leaving everything behind in India. She lived in a two storey house raising 9 children along with looking after other men who came to work, supporting them all while in a new country! She would manage all the laundry without a washing machine. Mum never learnt English and preferred to keep her native language Gujarati alive."

-Suresh Patel (son)



Prime Minister John Key visits Shanti Patel in 2014 at Shires Fruit & Veg Market. The 92 year old fruit and vegetable family business in Dannevirke was established by her father-in-law Chhibha Panchia who assumed the name "William (Bill) Shire" in 1919.

Source: Paul Patel

Choose Dansukh Kanji, a grocer. Dansukh is a widower with two very young children.

He is a steady, quiet, reliable man who seems more interested in getting a mother for his children than a wife for himself.

The place is isolated. You miss the company of family and friends in India. The cold wind drives you insane. The shop fails to prosper, but you and your husband enjoy quite a successful marriage. You have 10 children. You start becoming interested in the rights of women and spend the last seventeen years of your life trying to improve their conditions

Choose Krishna Govan, a dashing looking young man, who works as a printer.

You do not again get the chance to marry. In your mid-thirties, you go to work in the neighbouring houses, washing clothes and dishes. Your brother's children call you 'fuiba' and let you live out your old age in a corner of the house.

Decide to marry Ram Sukla, a quiet young guy whose small shop in Wellington just manages to keep in business.

You and your husband are surprisingly happy. After ten years and three more children Dansukh dies. You live in the extended family and bring up the children. You join the Mahila Samaj and assist the local women.

Decide not to marry at all.

Your husband turns out to be a mean man. He and you have little in common. He sends you back to India. Your family is quite well off, and you spend your time in religious prayers



Keeping Culture Alive



Members of the Sikh faith clean and place new covers on the flagpole of the Nishan Sahib (religious flag) on Vaisakhi (Sikh New Year).

Source: Paul Singh Bains

Places of Worship

Religious practices moved to places of worship. The Sikh gurdwara (temple) at Te Rapa was the first in New Zealand when it opened in May 1977. Small Hindu mandirs (shrines) were created within the association halls. Religious practices and the observance of festivals became more common with the arrival of women. Numerous places of worship of varying religious dominations started appearing from the 1980s, to cater for the influx of the increasing Indian ethnic diversity in New Zealand.

Nurturing language

Since 1950s some of the Indian associations started classes in Gujarati language and culture for the new generation of New Zealand born Indians. Classes were held on Sundays where children would learn reading and writing by a volunteer teacher from the community.

Other languages, such as Punjabi, Marathi, Bengali and Hindi, were maintained within families. Formal teaching of Hindi began in Wellington in 1985, and Fijian Hindi classes started in the 1990s.



Source: Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kaitiaki
Ref: ABHS 950 WS242/79, 89/2/31 Pt 1



Source: Anant Gulabadi

India's Freedom

India's Independence from the British colonial rule on 15th Aug 1947, was a significant moment for Indians in New Zealand. People tuned in to hear the momentous speech "Tryst with Destiny" delivered by India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru on the radio. The day was celebrated with speeches, picnics and sports around the country. Many Indians closed their businesses for the day to mark the occasion. Indian flags waved high in the air as they paraded around the parks. It was a proud patriotic day, ending with the Indian National Anthem – *Jana Gana Mana* and continues today.



Source: Kanti Bhula

Dancing Belles

Indian dancing was discouraged by men of the Indian communities. There were no professional trainers in the classical traditional arts of Bharata Natyam or Kathak. Slowly, traditional folk dances (Gujarati garba and Punjabi bhangra) and dance with religious aspects were taught to help preserve culture. Indian folk dances became part of the NZ Indian identity in the mid 1960s, where they were openly performed to the public, especially at town fairs.



Source: Bhukhan Parbhu

A hard day's work. Indian growers in Pukekohe enjoy some cold beer at a friend's house.

Source: Ramon Wallash



Time Pass



Friends preparing hangi on a farm at Pukekohe.

Source: Ramon Wallash



Picnic in Island Bay, Wellington. Year Unknown.

Source: Kanti Soma Ramji

"Well in those days they were all frilly skirts, and bows, and long plaits with ribbons in our hair. Every second Sunday we used to have Indian movies in Eltham. All the families from Taranaki used to go to Eltham and because we lived in Stratford everybody would call in to Mum and Dad's place for a cup of tea. Mum used to like entertaining and she would always have snacks ready for them. We would all have a cup of tea before we went to Eltham."

- Aroona Patel



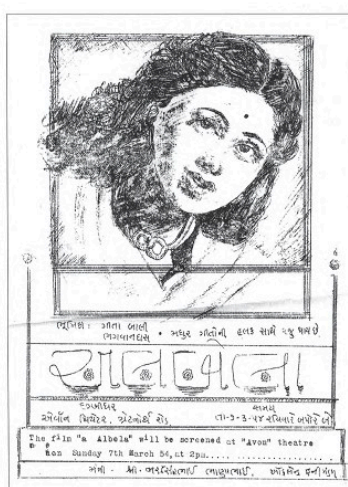
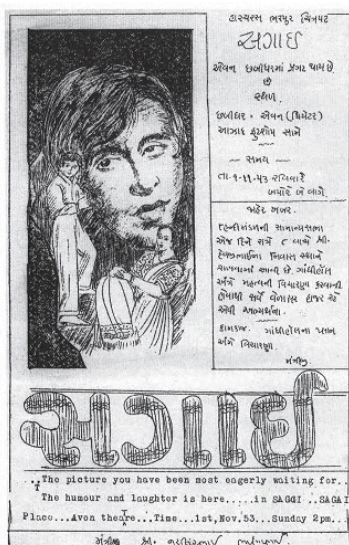
Indian movies (commonly known as Bollywood now days), were a popular Sunday afternoon social occasion that brought local communities together. From the 1940s, cinema theatres such as the Astor in Auckland and Ascot in Wellington were hired. Indian movies also travelled to Waikato which brought the Punjabi community together, in the 60s and 70s. Film reels were brought in from Fiji where they would be loaded onto a train destined to a town waiting for the next screening.

Source: Aro Westra, Indian Community 1979 (5476)



Punjabi couple shopping in Queens Street, Auckland, 1953.

Source: Country Section Indian Association



Hand drawn Hindi movie posters, 1953.

Source: Auckland Indian Association



Indian children were expected to work, not only at school but also in the home and business. After the chores, school homework was another requirement as most parents had high expectations of getting a good education.

Source: Ref: ANM-0108-F Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. Records/22686644

Genda Singh (left) was a Punjabi who arrived in New Zealand as a young man. After years of working as a scrub cutter and farm labourer he fulfilled a dream and with his son Chanan (right) bought a farm on the outskirts of Wanganui in 1952.

Source: Nancy Sweetrick, 'Indians - Early immigration', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/community-contribution/1825/genda-and-ghanan-singh-1950s> (accessed 20 June 2017)



Generation Integration

1970-2000

The real rewards from this land of opportunity were reaped by the future generation of the early Indian pioneers. The Indian communities made considerable movement assimilating into NZ society. Young Indians were encouraged to go to universities to gain a professional qualification and were opting for a New Zealand way of life.

Four Generations

When Rama Parag left India in 1913, leaving behind his mother, wife and new born child, little did he know that his descendants would make New Zealand their permanent home.

Like other sojourners, Rama arrived in Wellington disembarking off a cargo ship. He earned his living by collecting beer bottles. A decade later, he called for his 12 year old son, Ranchhod to join him. Together, they would earn enough from selling fruit and vegetables to buy a house.

Ranchhod married in his early twenties. In 1951 (after World War II), Ranchhod, his wife and 13 year old son Raman (Ray) returned to New Zealand to continue their hawking business. Ranchhod joined his local Association and helped with rationing rice to members.

Raman took over the family business at the age of 16 and continued for a further 16 years before his keen interest in cars would become a profession. He opened four car dealerships over a period of 35 years with his son Mahesh. During this time, the property industry was appealing. Together they would move on to establish The Ranchhod Group (Property Division) based in Auckland and The Ranchhod Foundation, a charitable organisation supporting communities in need.



Raman Ranchhod (right) with his son Mahesh, Directors of Ranchhod Group 2013.

Christmas Cheer



Buying Christmas presents for the family. Year Unknown.

Source: Paul Singh Bains



1971 - An exotic Indian display. Girls dressed in traditional costume at the Wellington Christmas Parade.

Source: Anmol Lala



The Exodus of Indo-Fijians

In 1953 the Fijian Indian community in Auckland held a function to celebrate the composition of a song for the new Queen Elizabeth's visit to Fiji on her tour of Commonwealth countries. Shown from left are Mr Devji, Mrs Rao, Mr Rao, Dr Satyanand, Mrs Satyanand, composer Mr Pooran Singh, Mrs Suku and Mr Suku. The young boy at the front is Anand Satyanand, who was governor-general from 2006 to 2011.

Source: Jacqueline Leckie, *Fijians - First waves of immigration*, Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/photograph/9975/fijian-indians-1953> (accessed 18 June 2017)

Although there had been a small number of earlier Indian migration from Fiji to New Zealand, the major influx followed the 1987 and 2000 military coups in Fiji. Indo-Fijians were directly being targeted by the military and thousands fled to New Zealand. Others left because they saw few prospects of advancement for themselves, and especially for their children.

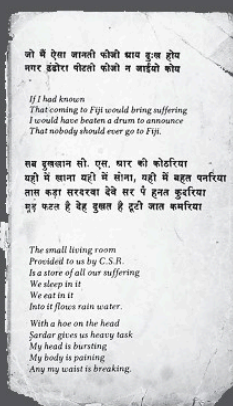
Some Indo-Fijians had kinship links with Gujarati and Punjabi communities, however, most Indo-Fijians were descendants of the Girmitiyas. Most of them spoke both Hindi and English languages.

A large portion of the new Indian immigrants from Fiji were from business and professional backgrounds, and sought to relocate their skills and capital to New Zealand.

A little history

Between 1879 and 1916 about 60,000 Indians were hired to work under harsh and restrictive conditions in Fiji's sugar industry. The workers called themselves Girmitiyas, a word which evolved from the English word 'agreement'. A unique Indo-Fijian culture developed, making them distinct to earlier New Zealand Indian settlers.

Most of the migrants chose to remain in the islands after the end of their five-year contracts. Their descendants constitute the bulk of the present Indo-Fijian population, the rest being descendants of Gujarati traders and Punjabi agriculturalists who arrived as 'free' immigrants either directly to Fiji or en-route to New Zealand in the 1920s.



The words to these two songs describe the dire living conditions endured by Indian indentured labourers working on sugar plantations in Fiji in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

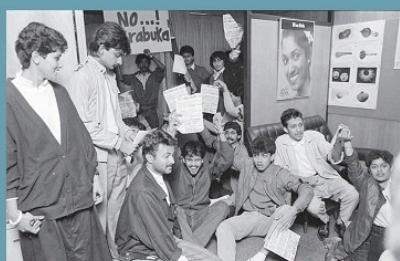
The first Fiji Association

Like many other Indian communities, the Fiji Association was established in Auckland in 1977. It organised sporting and cultural events and sponsored Indian dancers and musicians from Fiji and India.



When Rajiv Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, visited New Zealand in 1986, children of the Fijian Indian community were waiting to greet him with traditional Indian ceremonies at Auckland International Airport. Trisha Singh anoints him, while Shona Singh holds a golden plate with burning camphor.

Source: Fairfax Sunday Newspapers New Zealand, Auckland Star Collection, www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/photograph/9975/fijian-indians-1953



Members of a group calling themselves 'Fiji Freedom Fighters' occupying the Fijian High Commission in Wellington, protesting against the military coup in Fiji.

In 1987, the Fijian military commander Sitiveni Rabuka, overthrew the democratically elected government of Dr. Timoci Bavadra (an Indo-Fijian).

Fiji Freedom Fighters in the Fijian High Commission, Wellington, New Zealand.

Source: Photograph taken by Ross Gilson. Copyright post Newspapers. Photograph copyright and photo of the Evening Post and Dominion newspapers Ref: 01/176022/001. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. Ref: 01/176022/001

Kalimpong Kids - A group enroute to New Zealand aboard the SS Janus in 1925.

Known as the Kalimpong Kids, these children were sent away with consent from their families at a young age by a Scottish Presbyterian missionary in the early 1900s. These children suffered deprivation and hardship because of their 'mixed cultures'. They were educated with English and given manual and social skills before resettling in New Zealand at the age of 15 or 16. Boys arrived in New Zealand to work on farms, and girls provided domestic help. The scheme operated from 1908 to 1938. One hundred and thirty Anglo-Indian youngsters came to New Zealand over several decades; the first 30-40 of them settling in Dunedin.

You can read more on the Kalimpong Kids here: www.kalimpongkids.org.nz

Source: Jane McCabe, University of Otago

Since the late 15th century, when Britain was in India, the children born to British men and Indian women began to form a new community. This minority population of mixed European and Indian descent were referred to as Anglo-Indians.

There were approximately 300,000 Anglo-Indians in India at the time of Indian Independence in 1947. It was a time of insecurity and uncertainty for them, as they were socially and culturally similar to the British in India. They left India in large numbers to English speaking Commonwealth countries.

Anglo-Indians are well known for their Western ways: they are Christian, speak English as a first language, have European names and traditionally dress and eat in western ways. Many could 'pass' as European.

Anglo-Indians may have been the earliest Indians to migrate to New Zealand. The late 1940s - 1980s saw the highest numbers of Anglo-Indians arriving in New Zealand. 327 Anglo-Indians were recorded in the 2013 census.



The Invisible Indian



Frederica Hay (nee Coventry) was an early Anglo-Indian immigrant newly married in Calcutta to Robert Hay (an Englishman, who worked as an engineer in Dunedin), arriving here in 1869.

Source: Robyn Andrews, Massey University, asianz.org.nz/bulletin/being-anglo-indian-nz-fredericas-story



Christine (4) and her sister Margaret (8) with their mother arrived in Auckland in March 1949.

In India, Christine's family had enjoyed a refined English-influenced lifestyle. She recalls the culture shock the family experienced on arriving in New Zealand where they initially stayed in boarding houses until her father found work.

Source: Robyn Andrews, Massey University, asianz.org.nz/bulletin/being-anglo-indian-nz-christines-story



Raj Days to Downunder is a book of life stories by Dorothy McMenamin of Anglo-Indians who lived in Colonial India and immigrated to New Zealand.



Festivals



Many traditions that were brought to New Zealand from India have been maintained since the first settlement in the nineteenth century.

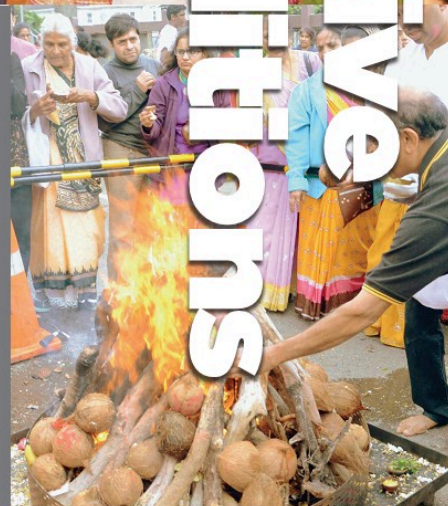
The Indian communities have provided the space and place to help create and reproduce cultural identity through the performance of traditional cultural activities such as music and dance.



Numerous Indian festivals originate from different regions and religions. Music, story, colour and food are the most common themes running through most festivals. The exuberant and pulsating Bhangra of the Punjab at Baisakhi, the Dandiya of Gujarat during Navratri, Mohiniattam of Kerala during Onam, and even gambling form part of some of the festivals.



Diwali is an ancient Hindu festival that marks the beginning of the Indian New Year. It is a time for celebration with families lighting lamps, candles and fireworks to symbolise the triumph of light over darkness, good over evil. Diwali is the largest Indian festival widely celebrated all over New Zealand.



Kabaddi is a contact team sport that originates in India. Two teams compete, each occupying its own half of the court. They take turns sending a "raider" into the opposing team's half and earn points if the raider manages to touch opposing team members and return to the home half, all while chanting word "kabaddi". However, if the raider is tackled and prevented from returning, the opposing team win the points.

Image: Kabaddi Cup being played in Auckland this year.

Source: Navtej Randhawa



Life Sporting

Sport has played an important bridge connecting the Indian community to the wider community and has also fostered a sense of collective identity among New Zealand Indians.

The history of Indian sport in New Zealand extends back almost ninety years. Tours to New Zealand by Indian Hockey teams in 1926, 1935 and 1938 provided fleeting moments where Indian achievements were applauded in the mainstream press, in contrast to the openly racist comments often levelled against Asian immigration. During these tours the Indian teams were praised for their skilled play and attracted record crowds.

These teams, especially the legendary Dhyhan Chand inspired the local young Indian men. Make shift hockey sticks made from the lids of wooden banana boxes were used to play hockey on a Sunday afternoon. Elder family members discouraged sports, as it was a deterrent to their work. Despite this, hockey became a hugely passionate sport that by the mid-30s, regional Indian sporting associations were founded around the country and in the early 1960s, the New Zealand Indian Sports Association was established.

From the 1970s, women became involved, and the range of sports expanded.

Other early sporting interests included cricket, horseracing, wrestling, boxing and cards.

Notable New Zealand Indian sportspeople include Ramesh and Mohan Patel, who were members of the 1976 Olympic Hockey Team, and cricketer Dipak Patel.



The first Wellington Indian hockey team taken after their first game against University at Kilbirnie Park in 1935.

Source: Wellington Indian Sports Club



As a member of the New Zealand cricket team, Dipak Patel played in 37 test matches and 75 one-day international matches during his distinguished career.

Credit: Getty Images



The premier cup of the annual New Zealand Indian Sports Association Queen's Birthday hockey tournament is named in Dhyhan Chand's honour. Here, women teams from Auckland and Pukekohe play at the tournament in 2013.

Source: New Zealand Indian Sports Assn.



Ratna Venkat performs Indian classical fusion with Maori poi displaying the multicultural diversity of New Zealand.



“
I am proud to be from two 'very rich cultures' where many similarities are shared. The Indian culture is very family orientated, there is a lot of love and care for our elders. It is very similar to the relationship links in the Maori culture as whanau is very important.

When I returned to my Dad's village I was able to see his genealogy right through to his forefathers and that the same is as with Maori - how we can link right back to the waka.

Raewyn Bhana
(Ngapuhi/Gujarati)

Maori boys and an Indian boy walking down the road, Waikato, 1938



Ref: WA-12555-G, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. /records/22339606

Stories tell of Indian lascars jumping ship then marrying Maori women in the earliest part of colonisation.

In the years following, Indian men peddling their wares up and down the country, who were few and far between, merged with the Maori communities, and eventually became invisible – their Indianness was absorbed into the inclusiveness of the tangata whenua.

A Maori man spoke of his Indian grandfather, who had been saved by Maori from a shipwreck. The rescued man was the only Indian in this Maori family and succeeding generations chose to identify with the Maori part of their heritage.

A third-generation Indian woman recalls how a number of the early Indian pioneer men would live with and/or marry Maori women and have children with them.

Saving for the cost of a passage on a ship back to India took approximately ten years, and some of these men had wives back in India. It was difficult for Indian women to come to New Zealand. Immigration laws in New Zealand did not encourage Asians and there was a preference for men in a pioneer society, hence many eventually married Pakeha or Maori women.

Blending Tikanga



Maori Indian snapshot in 2006

The 2006 census reported 2,610 Maori Indians (1,299 males and 1,311 females).



India NZ connection

Khyber Pass, is a key pass connecting Pakistan and Afghanistan. This is the narrow pass through which Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan and many others entered India.

The settlement of Bombay and hence the Bombay Hills is directly named after the ship *Bombay*, which landed in Auckland and brought settlers to the area in 1863. The ship itself was named after the Indian city of Bombay (now Mumbai).

Waitakere and Amritsar were declared "sister cities" in 2009

Statue of Lord Auckland was originally erected in Calcutta, India from 1848 to 1969, when it was purchased by Auckland City Council from the Government of India.



A small hunting palace near Agra, called Lal Mahal, inspired Hamilton Garden's Char Bagh garden.



Coromandel is named after HMS Coromandel (originally named HMS Malabar), a ship of the British Royal Navy, which stopped at Coromandel Harbour in 1820 to purchase kauri spars and was itself named after India's southeastern Coromandel Coast.

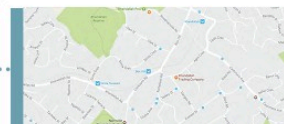
Named after the famous hill station in Tamil Nadu, India, Coonoor is a small sheep-farming district in the Northern Wairarapa

The suburb of Meeanee was named after the captured province in Sindh, India, where Sir Charles Napier commanded troops in the infamous Battle of Miani of 1843

A life-size bronze statue of Mahatma Gandhi was given to Wellington by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, on behalf of the Indian people in October 2007.



It acknowledged the commitment of the people of New Zealand for setting an example to the world of a tolerant, open and inclusive society.



Wellington suburb Khandallah was named by the settler Captain James Andrew, who had served in the Indian Army and returned from duty in 1884. The suburb was named after Khandela in Rajasthan, and has many Indian street names including Gavaskar Place and Kapil Grove named after two famous Indian cricketers.

The suburb Berhampore is named after Berhampore in Bengal.

Kirwee is a town located west of Christchurch. It was named after Karwi (Chitrakoot Dham in Uttar Pradesh, India) by retired British Army Colonel De Renzie Brett.



Cashmere suburb in Christchurch takes its name from Sir John Cracroft Wilson's farm, which originally occupied the present suburb. Wilson was born in India and named his farm after Kashmir. It has many streets and lanes with Indian place names.



Surat Bay was named after the large sailing and trading ship named Surat that was shipwrecked there on New Year's Day in 1874. The name of the ship was taken from Surat, a large trading town and port in southwest Gujarat.