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Hugh Johnston

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Hugh Johnston : The Voyage of the Komagata Maru: The Sikh Challenge to Canada's Color Bar before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru: The Sikh Challenge to Canada's Color Bar*:

In May 1914, 400 Sikhs left for British Columbia by chartered ship, resolved to claim their right to equal treatment with white citizens of the British Empire and force entry into Canada. They were anchored off Vancouver for over two months, enduring extreme physical privation and harassment by immigration officials, but defying federal deportation orders even when the Canadian government attempted to enforce them with a gunboat. The leaders of the group, who were thought to be closely associated with the nationalist, terrorist movement in India, were finally persuaded to return to India. They were by then full of revolutionary fervour against the Raj. On their disembarkation at Calcutta, troops opened fire while attempting to control the passengers, and a number of them were killed. The event, which had already raised a great deal of interest and concern among the governments of India and Canada, was now invested for Indian nationalists with a tragic significance which can be compared to that of Jallianwallah Bagh, while Gurdit Singh, the leader, was acclaimed as a heroic revolutionary figure by eminent Congressmen. The author has produced the first thoroughly researched study of a stirring event, basing it on official accounts from both the Canadian and Indian sides,

as well as the reminiscences of the only passenger still alive at the time the book was written. Apart from its interest for the student of the Indian nationalist movement, this book has obvious relevance for those interested in race relations and the history of immigration laws within the British Empire.