

**Address by H.E. Ms Neeta Bhushan, High Commissioner  
on the launch of film “Punjab to Aotearoa”  
(16<sup>th</sup> May 2025)**

Namaskar and Warm greetings to everyone,

**Shri Parminder Singh ji, Radio Spice**

**NZ Punjabi Multimedia Trust Team,**

Distinguished leaders and members of Indian Diaspora,

Friends,

Ladies & Gentleman!

It is a great honour to stand before you today as we celebrate the formal launch of Punjab to Aotearoa - a powerful 50-minute documentary that traces the inspiring journey of Punjabi pioneers in New Zealand. This film is much more than a historical narrative. It is a heartfelt tribute to the rich heritage, enduring resilience, and invaluable contributions of the Punjabi community in shaping the multicultural fabric of Aotearoa. It seeks to inspire future generations by preserving and honoring the legacy of those who paved the way.

2. The contribution of Punjabi community to New Zealand in agriculture, business, education, public service, and culture are truly commendable. Their legacy is one of hard work, unity, and deep-rooted values. This documentary serves not only as a reflection of the past but as a beacon for the future inspiring younger generations to cherish their heritage and take pride in their identity.

**3. As we all know that the Punjabi community has a long and proud history in New Zealand. Punjabis began settling here in the late 1800s and early 1900s, mostly coming from farming areas in Punjab, India. After the 1980s, more Punjabis moved to New Zealand, thanks to relaxed immigration rules and a need for skilled workers, especially in farming. Today, Punjabi Sikhs are a key part of the dairy industry. Many own and run farms in areas like Waikato, Taranaki, and Canterbury. They work hard and bring new, modern farming methods that help the industry grow. The Punjabi community also adds great value to New Zealand's culture. Festivals like Vaisakhi and Diwali are celebrated with joy and are welcomed by the wider community. Every year, the High Commission of India works with Associations, Community Organizations to celebrate our rich traditions. Punjabi language classes, Bhangra dancing, and cultural events all help keep our culture alive and enrich New Zealand's diversity.**

**4. Young Punjabi New Zealanders are also doing well in many careers, including medicine, law, business, and engineering. The Punjabi community is a great example of hard work, resilience, and pride in culture. Their contributions continue to make New Zealand a more vibrant, diverse, and inclusive country.**

**5. I also would like to add that as part of the Government of India's initiative to promote Indian cinema and films around the world, the High Commission of India in Wellington has undertaken several efforts to**

support this vision. We are pleased to share that we have collaborated with local cinemas and successfully hosted Hindi Cinema Festivals in January and February 2025. These events, attended by over 200 members from both the Indian and Kiwi communities, have served as a dynamic platform to foster cultural exchange and enhance the global visibility of Indian cinema.

6. Today, We are honoured to host the premiere screening of “Punjab to Aotearoa” at the High Commission that stands for friendship, dialogue, and mutual respect between India and New Zealand. It is only fitting that such an important story be shared here, with all of you.

7. I would also like to extend my thanks to Shri Parminder Singh Ji and the dedicated team at the NZ Punjabi Multimedia Trust. Your work from research and filmmaking to engaging with community voices has resulted in a documentary that is both meaningful and memorable. Thank you for preserving this vital chapter of Punjabi history.

8. In closing, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all those who have roots in Punjab or cherish its legacy. Let us celebrate this moment with pride, with purpose, and above all, with unity.

Thank you

Jai Hind!

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