

## PERSPECTIVES ON THE GHADR MOVEMENT

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Ghadr Movement, which played a pioneering role in the freedom struggle of India, has not found its due place in the contemporary historiography. Great injustice has been done to the sacred memory of the Ghadrtes, who as champions of the rights of their people, laid down their lives for freedom and honour of their country. Popular history books have completely ignored the significance of the Ghadr movement in the country's struggle for freedom. Politically oriented and distorted versions of the movement have been propagated. Some historians, with their elitist approach, have ingeniously tried to deify and project Indian revolutionary intellectuals abroad as founders and guiding spirits of the movement, who galvanized the simple – minded, humble flock of people-the illiterate peasants and labourers into revolutionary action. As a result of this misplaced emphasis, the heroic sacrifices of these simple, unknown and less sophisticated folks have been left unsaid and unsung by these historians.

Literature on India's freedom struggle is voluminous. New books are also being added to the list. These books are not objective in their approach and fail to provide a correct perspective on the Ghadr movement, which deserves to be called a forerunner of the country's freedom struggle. It is noteworthy that the Sikh Ghadrtes conspicuously differed from the other freedom fighters, not only in their temperament and training but also in their principles and programmes, their value system and world-view, their political convictions, agenda and outlook. These issues are crucial to the understanding of the character and development of the movement. Harish K. Puri, in his Ph.D. thesis on the Ghadr movement does not study the movement in the context of Sikh history and tradition. He takes no cognizance of the strong ideological moorings of the Ghadrtes and calls it a peasant rebellion. He overlooks the social processes and the historical sequence of cause and effect in relation to this movement. Hence, his understanding of the movement is not very accurate.<sup>1</sup>

The Ghadr movement, which was founded on the Pacific Coast of America, in May 1913, was manned by immigrants from Punjab, majority of whom were Sikhs from the Punjab countryside. There were several forces and factors that led to the emergence of this movement. Indian immigrants in America were the victims of racial discrimination. All sorts of insults, indignities and humiliations were heaped upon them. They also faced racial attacks. Their efforts to secure justice in the courts of law failed. They looked upto Indian government's intervention for remedial measures. They sent petitions and deputations to the Governor of Punjab and the Governor General of India appealing to their sense of justice and seeking help for their cause.

These fervent prayers, petitions and deputations evoked no response from the government. Immigrants came to realize that they could not be treated as equals in America until they were free. It was in these circumstances that Hindustan Association of the Pacific Coast was formed. Sohan Singh Bhakna, a lumber mill worker was elected its president and Lala Hardayal was elected its general secretary. The head quarters of the association was established in San Francisco. The foremost objective of the Hindustan Association was to liberate India from the British rule, through an armed rebellion. "Rifles and blood would take the place of pen and ink", was their motto.<sup>2</sup> They believed that a revolutionary movement required a revolutionary response from the participants.

A historian must capture the passion, fervour and ideological motivation of the creative and vibrant Sikh community which stood in the forefront of the Ghadr movement. He must take into account the spirit, ethos, world-view and goal of these revolutionaries who were determined to root out discrimination and injustice and usher an era of freedom and justice. Rallying centres of all Ghadrites, whether Sikh, Hindu or Muslim were the Gurdwaras. All communities pledged to fight under one banner, as the issue of communal identity was less important for them than efforts to combat British imperialism. They had the urge to stand united in the face of challenge. With glorious heritage of chivalry, selfless service and martyrdom, the Sikh character revealed itself at its best in deeds of kindly service to their fellow countrymen in foreign lands. Gurdwaras enabled them to seek inspiration from the Guru's word and relate to Sikh values and ideals. Institution of Langar emphasized the principle of equality and universal brotherhood. With their liberal social ethos and tradition of sacrifice embedded in their psyche, the Sikhs displayed enough moral strength to prove their patriotism for their motherland. Ghadr movement was almost wholly manned by the Sikhs, who listed the maximum volunteers and raised huge funds out of their hard earned money. Out of the 24 members of the working committees of the Hindustan Association, majority were the Sikhs.

In Vancouver, the Khalsa Diwan Society and the United India League, with their head quarters in the same Gurdwara, mobilized their protest against the Alien Land Law(1913) which restricted the rights of Indians to own land in Canada.<sup>3</sup> They also directed their propaganda against British rule in India and co-ordinated their activities with the branch of Hindustan Association in Vancouver. Revolutionary activity in Canada was further intensified when the Canadian government passed stringent Immigration Law (1917) restricting the entry of Indians to Canada.

The Ghadrites launched a magazine called 'Ghadr' in English, Urdu and Punjabi for free distribution. Urdu and English editions of 'Ghadr' were edited by Hardayal, whose powerful writings lent him an aura of romance as a revolutionary. Hardayal was inspired by his ideologue V.D. Savarkar. In 'Ghadr' magazine, he extensively quoted

from Savarkar's book, 'The First War Of Indian Independence-1857.' The book was published in London in 1909 and was instantly proscribed. Punjabi edition of 'Ghadr' was edited by Kartar Singh Sarabha, a stalwart of the revolutionaries. Every issue of the 'Ghadr' exhorted the Indian people to unite and fight against the British rule. It launched a vigorous attack on the British imperialism. It highlighted the miserable plight of the Indians under the British rule and also the issues of racial discrimination and attacks against Indians in America and Canada. Written in such virile and compelling language, the Ghadr literature became quite popular in India, Europe, Canada, America and several other countries. A few examples of this virile language are given below:

- Without blood O` patriots ! will the country awake ?
- Rise, gird up your loins, Rise, Gird up your loins, Rise
- Rise, O, lions!, Rise, Pluck your courage, serve your country.
- Why do you disgrace the name of Singhs? You have forgotten the majesty of lions.
- O, Brave Khalsa, Wake up, country is in the throes of tyrnny.
- Follow Guru's injunction: Play the game of love with your head on your palm<sup>4</sup>: This motto was written on the title page of every issue of 'Ghadr'.

The British government adopted various measures to stop the circulation of 'Ghadr' and other such publications particularly in India. The outbreak of First World War, in 1914, suited the object of the Ghadr party to spread an armed rebellion in India. The time was most suitable as the British were involved in War. British reverses involving large scale casualties of Sikh soldiers from the rural areas seemed to the Ghadrites a right stage for their objective. They wanted army soldiers to join their revolt against the British. As Germany fought against England, the German Government and the Ghadrites had the British as their common enemies. The Ghadrites sought financial help from Germany to buy arms and ammunition in order to overthrow the British rule.<sup>5</sup> Berlin Committee was formed to help the Ghadrites. Overseas Indians were exhorted to reach India and launch a revolution. They formulated plans to infiltrate the Indian army and incite the soldiers to fight against the British. With financial support from Germany, several ships were chartered to carry arms and ammunitions to India. Filled with death-defying courage, hordes of immigrants rushed homewards to liberate their motherland. It was unfortunate that the plans of the revolutionaries were leaked out to the British. Ships, with arms and ammunition, commissioned to reach India were diverted elsewhere or taken captive on reaching India, by the British Government. Much harm was caused to the movement by the spies, informers and loyalists of the British Government.<sup>6</sup>

Path, the revolutionaries had chosen to tread for themselves, was beset with all kinds of obstacles and difficulties. They had envisaged that their countrymen would

whole-heartedly join them in their revolutionary activities. But on reaching India, they soon realized that they had laboured under an illusion. Gurdwaras in India were under the control of corrupt Hinduised Mahants and Pujaris, who enjoyed a patronage of the British Government. Whereas the overseas Indians prayed in the Gurdwaras for the success of the mission of the revolutionaries, these Mahants and Pujaris expressed no sympathy for their cause.<sup>7</sup> Lack of popular support was a big handicap for the revolutionaries. Yet, filled with an indomitable spirit and an unbounded optimism, starving, thirsting and labouring hard, they toured the Punjab countryside in batches of 15 to 20, collected people with the beat of drums, inspired them with revolutionary speeches and poems and exhorted them to overthrow the British. A young revolutionary Kartar Singh Sarabha used to cover a distance of 40 to 50 miles in the rural areas, each day, on his bicycle<sup>8</sup>.

Ghadrites achieved some success in organizing their revolutionary activities in central Punjab but these activities were more in the nature of sporadic and impromptu guerilla operations. They could not rise to such dimensions as to assume the shape of a mass upsurge. Ghadrites were able to mobilise support of patriotic elements among the Indian soldiers of units namely 23 Cavalry at Lahore and 26 Infantry at Ferozepur.<sup>9</sup> But their plans were intended to cover a far wider area, in a much wider network. Some of the Singh Sabhas were sympathetic to the Ghadrites, Bhai Takht Singh entertained the delegates of the Ghadr Party when they visited Ferozepur. Daljit Singh, Assistant Editor of the, 'Punjabi Bhain' a monthly publication of the Sikh Kanya Maha Vidyalaya, Ferozepur joined the Ghadrites and became a Secretary of Baba Gurdit Singh, a leader of the Ghadr party. According to a report, 'the methods to be employed by the delegates of the Ghadr party in pushing the campaign in India appeared to have been discussed in the weekly meetings of the Singh Sabha at Lahore... A member of the Singh Sabha in advocating these measures spoke of creating a spirit of awakening among Hindus and Sikhs'. Ghadrites also enjoyed the support of two popular Sikh mystics Bhai Randhir Singh and Baba Vasakha Singh, who were sent to Andamans as life convicts.<sup>10</sup>

The unfortunate episode of Koma Gata Maru cast a gloom among the Ghadrites and intensified their anti-British fury. The barbarous manner in which the Koma Gata Maru tragedy was enacted at Budge Budge Ghat had no parallel. A group of Sikh immigrants returning from Canada became the victims of British high-handedness. Many innocent Sikhs were mercilessly killed, others were wounded or imprisoned for no fault of theirs. This incident was universally condemned and the Sikh public opinion was greatly mobilised against the British. As a reaction, William Hopkinson, the hated Inspector in the Immigration Department at Vancouver was killed by Mewa Singh, a Ghadrite who later made a confessional statement and was hanged<sup>11</sup>.

In a short span of 4 to 5 years all the leading activists of the Ghadr movement were captured by the British. They were charged with criminal conspiracies. 291 accused were tried: 42 of them were sentenced to death, 114 transported for life and 93 were awarded varying terms of imprisonment.<sup>12</sup> Annals of their courage, bravery and martyrdom have few parallels in history.

A dispassionate historian has to analyze the factors and forces which caused a setback to the movement. It would be befitting to carry the torch of research into some of the hitherto overlooked aspects of the movement like the lack of centralized leadership, lack of unity and the cleavage that grew up between the communities. There were some who flaunted their rationalism, articulate speech and intellectual gifts but they lacked moral courage and would often shun to hold the gun. Lala Lajpat Rai observed that persons like Hardayal kept themselves in the background and avoided danger. They goaded the assassins but covered their own tracks skillfully. The ignominious story of their surrender to British imperialism is often concealed, although it constitutes a black chapter in the history of the Ghadr movement. Hailed as great freedom fighters and revolutionaries, they have to be tried and judged at the bar of history.

This was in sharp contrast to the revolutionaries, mostly Sikhs, who pledged that rifles and blood would take the place of pen and ink. They were simple minded people, sincere and steadfast to their cause, who were never afraid to wield the gun, when needed. Image of a saint-soldier was imbedded in their psyche. The flame of liberty, lit in their hearts, could never be extinguished. They were subjected to innumerable oppressions and tortures, their houses were burnt and their lands were confiscated. But they remained firm and unbending and fought for justice, freedom and human dignity and laid down their lives for this cause. They truly deserve to be applauded, honoured and glorified. Here it is relevant to quote the confessional statement of Mewa Singh, in 1914, who had eliminated William Hopkinson. The statement reflects his socio-religious orientation and nobility of thought: "My religion does not teach me to bear enmity with anybody, no matter what class, creed or order he belongs to nor had I any enmity with Hopkinson. I heard that he was suppressing my poor people very much. I being, a staunch Sikh, could no longer bear to see the wrong done both to my innocent countrymen and the Dominion of Canada... and I, performing the duty of a Sikh and remembering the name of the God, will proceed towards the scaffold with the same amount of pleasure as the hungry babe does towards its mother. I shall have the rope around my neck, thinking it to be a rosary of God's name."<sup>13</sup> Mewa Singh laid down his life upholding the glorious Sikh tradition of martyrdom for a righteous cause.

The two categories of revolutionaries had divergent views not only in terms of their revolutionary consciousness but also in their cultural orientation. Uneasy alliance

between the two categories often resulted in friction between the two. Some Hindu activists in the movement were proud of their intellectual attainments and looked down upon the immigrant Sikhs as a 'unlettered people' and a 'crowd of rustics'. Hardyal's friend, Daris Chenchiah described them as that 'wonderful human material'.<sup>14</sup>

The Sikhs, on the other hand, looked upon the Hindus as English knowing Babus who were cowardly, crafty and unscrupulous in the use of funds. A centralized leadership which could integrate the two elements was lacking. The British also played one community against the other. They openly manipulated and opened clear arenas for communal competition. Revolutionaries, who had rallied around Hardyal for leadership, found him lacking in the courage of his convictions. He could not cope with the mounting pressure of Ghadr enthusiasts for immediate sounding of the bugle and recourse to armed rebellion to synchronise with the out break of War. In such a situation only those leaders could prevail who were in tune with the overwhelming passion of the masses. Hardyal was at his wits end. His arrest, in April 1914, provided him an opportunity to quit the scene, escape and conceal the inconsistencies in his attitude. He, no longer, remained an uncompromising revolutionary and turned a *volte face*. He declared that the cause of Indian nationalism could best be served by India's remaining in the British empire. He deplored terrorism as a 'mixture of heroism and folly'. He said that majority of Hindu patriots now stood with the Indian National Congress and followed Gandhi who preached and popularised passive resistance and who advised the nationalists to boycott the British schools, law courts, councils and everything British in the country.<sup>15</sup>

After his stay in Germany for 44 months, where he had mustered support for Ghadrites, Hardyal moved to Sweden and turned his critical lens on Germany, describing it as a the 'hot bed of militarism and chauvinism'<sup>16</sup> which must be taught that her dream of emerging as a world-power cannot be realized. An issue of 'India' (London) dated March 14, 1919, quoted Hardyal as saying, 'I avow publicly my conversion to the principle of Imperial unity with progressive self-government for all civilized nations of Empire.'<sup>17</sup> Hardyal disassociated himself from the revolutionary struggle against British imperialism in unequivocal terms: 'The events and experiences of War have led me to modify my political opinion in some respects. I think that the British Empire in Asia and Africa is, after all, a necessary institution as those people cannot defend themselves against German, Turkish and Mohammedan invaders without the help of British officers and soldiers. In my opinion, the dissolution of the British Empire in Asia, would be a great calamity as it would not result in the establishment of independent nation-states, but only a change of masters. I have, therefore, come to the conclusion that the nations, which now form part of the British empire, should try to receive Home Rule within the Empire and should co-

operate with England for the defence of their countries. English administrative genius has built up a fabric which should be improved and developed but not overthrown'.<sup>18</sup> He voluntarily returned his German passport on February 2, 1919. The German Foreign Office, reported with a touch of bitterness that, even after this date, Hardayal spoke of his plans to reorganize the Berlin Committee and to constantly ask for official German aid by letter and by telegraph.<sup>19</sup>

The man, who goaded the revolutionaries to gird up their loins against British imperialism, now wrote, "It is part of wisdom for us not to tempt fate but stay under the protection of the British fleet and arms in our quiet and sunny home of Hindustan, and to make the best of our position in our Empire".<sup>20</sup> Hardayal also waxed eloquent over the quality and blessings of English literature: 'No Oriental nation would be loser if it forgot its own tongue and learned English instead.... A primer of English history was worth more than all the histories of Asia.'<sup>21</sup> At yet another place, he wrote, "The Empire cannot develop as an organic healthy state if the orientals prefer their barren literature and their uninspiring history to English literature and English history." The man who was a rebel against the British Government, taking part in anti-British propaganda during his stay in Germany (1914-1918), suddenly severed all connections with Germans after his departure from there. His book 'Forty Four Months in Germany and Turkey' published in England, contains most vicious denunciation of Germany and an effusive praise of the British Empire. He lamented that 'Indians have yet not learned to love and cherish the institution known as the British empire'.<sup>22</sup> India Office London saw to it that the book was translated into Hindi and distributed free of charge in India.

While the revolutionaries clenched their fists, boiled with rage and wrote threatening letters to the man who had blatantly ditched them and jeopardized their movement, it was no easy task for the British Government to judge the motives of a man who had undergone a sudden dramatic change of heart to come forward and shake hands with the British. According to a report of the Director of intelligence, Hardayal was still, at heart, a revolutionary, 'who lacked courage to execute his convictions'.<sup>23</sup> The report characterized him as 'an opportunist who is apt to temper his conduct to the prevailing winds'.<sup>24</sup> A judgement, in the first Lahore Conspiracy Case, described Hardayal as 'a dangerous monomaniac, devoid of any trace of moral and physical courage, who while inducing his dupes to go to a certain fate, carefully kept himself out of trouble'.<sup>25</sup> A man with such marked inconsistencies and profound contradictions in his character and career was certainly not fit to lead the way of revolutionaries.

As noted earlier, politically Hardayal had made a turn around and had safely aligned himself with the Gandhian ideal of Home Rule for India. Culturally, he toed the line of Damodar Das Savarkar, President of Hindu Maha Sabha, although he had

leaned towards the Arya Samaj in his early days. In the 'Ghadr' literature, frequent references were made to Savarkar's ideas and ideology. It is noteworthy that there are remarkable similarities between Hardyal and Savarkar. During his student days in England, Savarkar had started the 'Free India Society' and had organized students for revolutionary activities. He was charged with murdering an Englishman and was tried and sent to the Andemans, in 1910. During his detention in Andemans jail, under harsh conditions, Savarkar underwent a serious metamorphosis. He decided to renounce his struggle against British imperialism and focus on Hindutava which aimed at establishing Hindu Rashtra in India, through a process of Hindu identity building. One can find an echo of Savarkar's views in Hardyal's declaration, "Future of the Hindu race, of Hindustan and Punjab, rests on these four pillars: (i) Hindu Sangathan, (ii) Hindu Raj (iii) Shuddhi of Muslims and (iv) conquest and Shuddhi of Afghanistan and the frontiers. So long as the Hindu nation does not accomplish these four things, the safety of our children and great grand children will be ever in danger and the safety of the Hindu race will be impossible."<sup>26</sup> This was a declaration which Hardyal chose to call his 'political testament'. Both Hardyal and Savarkar passionately appealed to the communal instincts of the Hindus, both delinked themselves from mainstream nationalism and promoted Hindu nationalism instead. Both worked for the narrow sectarian ends of the Hindus, setting a very bad example for the revolutionaries who had pledged to work across communal lines. Secular character of the movement was undermined.

Both Hardyal and Sarvarkar appealed to the British Government for amnesty.<sup>27</sup> Both bartered the country's independence to secure their own personal freedom. They allowed their selfish interests to prevail over the wider interests of the movement. In a letter dated November 14, 1913, Savarkar wrote to the Home Minister of the Government of India, "If the government in its manifold beneficence and mercy releases me, I for one cannot but be the staunchest advocate of constitutional progress and loyalty to the English Government which is the foremost condition of that progress... Moreover, my conversion to the constitutional line would bring back all those misled youngmen in India and abroad who were once looking upto me as their guide... The mighty alone can afford to be merciful and therefore where else can the prodigal son return but to the parental doors of the government."<sup>28</sup> Hardyal toed the same line and bowed before the British Government for amnesty. When he received the letter from the India Office stating that he would be allowed to return to India without fear of arrest or subsequent prosecution, he replied, "I beg to thank the Secretary of State for India and the Punjab Government for their kindness and magnanimity in granting me a legal amnesty. I shall return to India in course of time in accordance with the stipulations which I beg to accept."<sup>29</sup> The two apostles of revolution threw off their mask and proved that they were singularly devoid of any sense of honour or grace. They came to serve their own

interests, deceiving and leaving the lives and fortunes of their followers at stake. Factionalism and fights in the ranks of the revolutionaries were due to lack of sincere leadership which gave a fatal blow to the movement.

Gandhi's ideal of passive resistance to the British was not in tune with the revolutionary ideology of the Ghadrites. The story also brings into focus the parochial outlook and pseudo-nationalism of the Congress. Despite the ideological commitment of the Congress to a secular ideal, it failed to emerge as a champion of national unity. It faltered and failed to represent Indian nationalism in the true sense. It identified itself with the religion of the multitude and socio-political interests of the Hindus. Even Savarkar believed that his real 'enemy' was not British imperialism but the minority religious groups and the secularists of India.<sup>30</sup> After many centuries of subjugation, Hindus aspired to be arbiters and masters of their own destiny. They dreamt of a Hindu Raj and their emergence as a supreme power in the sub-continent. They tried to make a religious, cultural and linguistic homogeneity as a sign of India's nationhood. Their notion of nationalism stemmed from the deeply felt insecurity of the urban Hindu middle class and was sustained, throughout, by their class interests as a counter-weight to the imbalance of their position in Punjab. In its emphasis on Hindu interests, Punjab was far ahead of other states in the country. Resurgent Hinduism under the leadership of the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Maha Sabha, especially in Punjab, stood in the way of united political action against the British. The Ghadr Movement which originated in a foreign land, with the bold initiative of Punjabi immigrants, mostly Sikhs, could not rise to the desired dimensions due to lack of adequate support and cooperation from their own countrymen.

There were several forces at work which caused a setback to the Ghadr movement. In India, Congress leaders looked upon the Ghadrites with contempt. They were more sympathetic to the British than to the Ghadrites. Tilak, the so-called militant Congressite had expressed his strong and open disapproval of the activities of the Ghadrites. Gokhle is said to have openly told the Viceroy that he would like the British to extend their stay in India. Gandhi chose to be loyal to the British during the War and the Zulu revolt against apartheid. Soon after the War, he was awarded the Kaisar-i-Hind Medal and the Zulu War Medal. In 1914, when he bade farewell to South Africa, his departing words were of praise for the British empire: "Rightly or wrongly, for good or for evil, Englishmen and Indians have been knit together, and it behoves both races so to mould themselves as to leave a splendid legacy to the generations yet to be born and to show that though the empires have gone and fallen, this Empire perhaps may be an exception and that this is an Empire not founded on material but on spiritual foundations."<sup>31</sup> Gandhi, the Father of non-violence, did not approve of the violent methods of the Ghadrites. By supporting the British empire, he did incalculable harm to the Ghadr Movement. Mendicant approach of Gandhi,

along with his creed of non-violence and passive resistance suited the British as compared to the radical tone and methods adopted by the revolutionaries, for the overthrow of the British rule. British facilitated Gandhi's emergence as an iconic and central figure around whom country's freedom struggle revolved. Moreover, Gandhi identified himself with the caste-oriented Hindu religious system. Even his call for Ram Rajya aimed at the revival of the Hindu cultural past including the perpetuation of the caste system. Along with Jinnah, Gandhi too was responsible for the two nation theory that divided India into two countries, in 1947.

This was a period of political turmoil in the country. There was a split between the moderate and the extremist wings of the Congress but Gandhi, somehow, continued to be at the helm of affairs. During this period, Reform movements of the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims which had religion as their prime motive force, were primarily concerned with the socio-religious reform of their respective communities. These movements, notably Singh Sabha Movement among the Sikhs and the Army Samaj of the Hindus did not like to have open confrontation with the British. The British government was also ready 'to encourage freedom of thought, ideas of social reform on modern lines and even social revolt so long as these did not touch the dangerous ground of politics'.<sup>32</sup> The policy of 'divide and rule' also suited the British. Clash between the communities stood in the way of united political action. Chief Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar had, no doubt, undertaken 'to protect the political rights of the Sikhs' but some of its leading members were patronized by the British Government. Therefore, Chief Khalsa Diwan could not help the Ghadrites. Government aimed at an erosion of the Sikh ideology and control of Sikh shrines through government nominated corrupt and Hinduised Mahants and Pujaris. Sikh tempers rose very high when the priests of Darbar Sahib condemned the Koma Gata Maru and Ghadrite Sikhs through a Hukamnama, issued at the Akal Takht. Two eminent religious personalities, Baba Wasakha Singh and Bhai Randhir Singh, who had supported the Ghadrites, were disowned and declared non-Sikhs by these priests. These events made it evident to the Sikhs that a political struggle with the British, with the dual objective of political freedom and the removal of government control over the Sikh Gurdwaras, was inevitable. Citadel of freedom was to be built on the ashes of martyrs of the Ghadr Movement. Grim tragedy of the Ghadr martyrs continued to cast its shadow on the future. Punjab remained in continuous ferment, while situation in the rest of the country continued to be entirely different as a result of Gandhi's call for passive resistance. Time and again, martial spirit of the Sikhs continued to assert itself against oppression and injustice. As a consequence of agitation against the Rowlatt Act, Punjab was thrown into the vortex of Martial Law.<sup>33</sup> Punjab bore the brunt of British high-handedness, as witnessed in the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre of 1919.

The Sikhs continued to be in forefront of the country's struggle for freedom. Babbar Akali Movement and the Gurdwara Reform Movement to release the Gurdwaras from government control were off shoots of the Ghadr movement which had created an atmosphere of popular discontent. All this paved the way for a new phase in India's struggle for freedom. This phase was marked by mutual distrust and rivalry among the communities. The battle for country's freedom was not fought and won on a common political platform. The so-called national movement, led by the Congress in India, had nothing national about it. Idea of India being one nation could never take deep roots. Congress failed to prove its secular credentials.

A close study of India's freedom struggle reveals that leaders at the helm of affairs always pulled in different directions and played a double game to secure their own ends and interests. Gandhi the greatest protagonist of truth and non-violence failed in his experiments at the time of country's partition. He displayed complete disregard for truth and fair play in very serious matters in which lives and fortunes of millions of his countrymen were at stake. Yet writing about Gandhi, historians have often mixed politics with history, by bestowing on him nobility, glory and greatness which actually never belonged to him. No cognisance has been taken of the supreme sacrifices of the revolutionaries of the Ghadr Movement. It is time to put the record straight and accord a due place to these heroes in the history of the country's freedom struggle, even if it is after a century after the events.

## **Conclusion**

Ghadr Movement constitutes a very important landmark in India's struggle for freedom. Although, it could not achieve its desired aim, it left a glorious legacy of chivalry, heroism, honesty, sincerity and sacrifice. In their zeal for freedom, Ghadrites were far ahead of their countrymen. They were filled with amazing courage and death-defying fearlessness which emanates from a higher consciousness that impels men to suffer and sacrifice in order to uphold causes, dear to their hearts. Saga of their colossal losses and sacrifices for the honour, glory and freedom of their motherland deserves to be written in golden letters. Movement, dominated by the Sikhs, has to be judged in the light of integrated Sikh world-view, revolutionary ideology of the Sikh Gurus and Sikh historical experience i.e. their tradition of martyrdom, which signifies the triumph of the human spirit against all odds. Concealing or twisting of facts leads to erroneous and misleading interpretations of history.

Recent years have seen a great upsurge in empirical research, leading to a paradigm shift in the interpretation of Sikh history, especially in the West. These Western scholars, with their materialistic approach, take no cognisance of the spiritual

dimension of human life. They are blind to the colossal spiritual energies generated by the revolutionary ideology of the Sikh Gurus and the phenomenal response they had over the centuries in shaping history. As a result, they provide materialistic interpretations of Sikh history, which are lop-sided and misleading. Louis E. Fenech in his book 'Martyrdom In the Sikh Tradition: Playing the Game of Love' denies the role of ideas and ideology in Sikh history. He also undermines the Sikh tradition of martyrdom. He asserts that this tradition was trumped by the rhetoric of the Singh Sabha Movement. A correct evaluation of the Ghadr Movement cannot be made by applying materialistic yardsticks.

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