

## 'GADAR'" 1914-1915

PROF MALWINDER JIT SINGH WARAICH

### *'BUGLE OF WAR'*

A 'Bugle Of War', in the form of '*Ailan-e-Jang*' is sounded, of revolt against slavery by thousands of Indians, mostly Sikhs, settled in Canada-U.S.A. in the early years of the twentieth century. They had been girding up their loins for years and formed "Ghadr Party" in March 1913, with the avowed object to stir up a Ghadr in India, like the 1857 one at the most opportune moment.

'Lo, that moment had come as England had declared War on Germany on 4-8-1914.

Now the British masters can be cornered'.

In the issue of Ghadar, the weekly journal of the party, dated 4-8-1914, War is declared vide *Ailan-e-Jung* published therein. Thousands respond to the call to sail to India instantly to wage a war of do AND die. The dollar wealth which had in fact initially allured them, earned by their hard labor had lost its charm in the flush of love for the Motherland.

*'This "Declaration of War" was not the handiwork of a "paper tiger"'*.

This comes out straight from none else than the 'Tribunal,' the Court with extra-ordinary powers which tried Ghadrates in "Lahore Conspiracy Cases" in 1915-16. It found that the movement had

“deve1oped into a FORMIDABLE organization to cause mutiny  
resulting in the resolve to go to India when war broke out.

### *FROM FRUSTRATION TO AILAN -E- JANG*

The Indian settlers in American continent had to face troubles, travails besides humiliation during their stay abroad. Their predicament is best conveyed in two lines of Punjabi in free verse echoed by all of them `

*"Desh Pain Dhakke, Bahar Mile Dhoi Naa '*

*Sada Pardessian Da Des Koi Naa"*

(Humiliated back home, no solace abroad.

For us aliens no refuge around).

This desperate moaning and self-pity literally through a metamorphosis, is transformed into a clarion call for "War" :

*"War Against KING EMPEROR : Ghadr of 1914 – 15".*

*"Challo chaliye desh nun yudh karan,*

*Eho bachan te farman ho gae"*

(Let us go to our country to fight,

This is our ultimate compact and command).

Two documents, independent in origin dated 1910 vocalize the line of thinking which was emerging around that time. Although the Indian settlers in American continent had problems galore right since they set their feet there with the dawn of the century but their woes were becoming more and more acute and besides more acutely felt now.

Perhaps the virtual ban on new entrants into Canada including the families of old settlers imposed in 1908 may have triggered such like expressions, foreboding of the impending developments.

Writings like these two were to herald the era of propagation of revolutionary national resurgence which was later institutionalized in weekly publication like "*Ghadar*" and revolutionary poetical series "*Ghadar-Di-Gunj*" after the formal launching of Ghadar Party in 1913.

Such like writings had a dual function i.e. an expression of sentiments while at the same time stimulating complementary responses like a chain reaction.

(A)

***KHALSA PAMPHLET***

Posted at Highgate, London 17-9-1910.

*Vande Matram: Khalsa*

*"He whose soul no slavery fills.  
He who rides the fiery steed.  
And to righteous battle speeds,  
Saves the weak, oppressor kills.  
He is of the Khalsa,  
He alone, and none, but, he ."*

- - Guru Govind Singh

He Said

*"The insatiable Goddess of Duty demands a bloody sacrifice.  
Is there any one amongst you who will tear his heart and pour forth his blood  
instantaneously to propitiate this hungry Goddess ?"*

At this the surging multitude sank into dumb silence! It was in the year 1699 AD, that one of those historical movements which make or unmake an epoch dawned its eventful lights on the scenes of Anandpur.

Great, was Plato, when he wrote his ideal 'Republic', great was Geurgus when he translated his military ideal into gigantic fact of a *Spartan* State, but greater by far is the Republic `of this great INDIAN THIS KHALSA OF GURU GOVIND SINGH'; so beautifully balanced in its philosophic and practical aspects that philanthropy ceases to be weak and becomes as sharp as a sword.

"Such was the birth of the great Khalsa. The Guru himself tells us in his biography that he was sent to this earth to restore the 'Glory of God and for the liberation of man' by extirpating the wicked and the tyrannical. Before death he was asked who was his successor. He took up the Guru Granth Sahib and enthroned it and declared that no human being can succeed him as a leader of the Khalsa, but the Khalsa was to be led and commanded and ruled by Guru Granth Sahib and PRINCIPLES alone." "Wherever" said the dying Guru, "five of my disciples assemble, there know ME. TO BE PRESENT."

"My disciples" O, Guru, where are those "MY Disciples" ?

To be your disciples, to be your true Sikhs is to be a lion, a Singh, to tolerate no oppression.

It is to be a life-long warrior - not to prostitute the sword in the furtherance of the wrong, but to consecrate it by the propagation of virtue.

"When, Oh, when shall we find "My Sikhs" to the number of five, for there our Guru will be present amongst us, and when Guru Govind Singh is present amongst us, Good God ! Then the woe and degradation and the downfall of our race and soil is gone for ever! Indeed such five men as he breathed into life on that first day of Baisakh are sufficient to ennoble the whole nation.

Over the whole forest the jackals of famine and tyranny, and treachery are stalking , victorious — where is the Singh — the lion who at his thundering will assert the lordship of his native soil. This Khalsa — the Guru created as a sword in the hand of Mother Bharat — not far Punjab alone. The great Guru and his sons and followers poured forth their blood in unmeasured quantities, destroyed the tyrants and threw back the invaders. At present the whole body of the Motherland from Himalayas to Cape Camorin is dying. her blood sucked off — Punjab where every stone has a tale of some Sikh martyrdom to tell: Bengal where Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Nanak lived and preached; the Deccan. where the ashes of the mighty dead are treasured in the Godavari are groaning under the death disease.

Patna, the very birth place. of the Guru is a weeping slave; and Anandpur, the city of Joy is buried under the heap of treachery and shame. The Guru told the Brahmins that to repeat the prayer is no Dharma but to act the prayer is real Dharma. Will he not hurl the same lance at us, when he sees us repeating the prayer like parrots unconcerned amidst the wailings and weeping's of the three hundred millions as if that was a music and keeping engaged ourselves in repeating our 'Japji and 'Shabads'.

The sword which he gave to protect Dharm and Desh, has not that very sword traded on treachery.

A Sikh was hailed as a patriot by the Motherland and as a hero by the world abroad. ` But Oh Shame! Now Sikh has become a nickname for tiller at home; a synonym for a laborer or *Kooli* in the coasts of both the Pacific and the Atlantic.

But this cannot last long. The Guru will not leave us.

Even as he said, the sparrows shall kill the hawks.

The trumpet call of duty is sounded and it is never too late to mend.

Therefore. Awake, Oh, Khalsa arise. Oh, Khalsa, and never again shall we be fallen.

Liberate BHARAT MATA from the clutches of MALECHCH FRANGIS.

SAT SRI AKAL.

B.

***RULES AND REGULATIONS OF HINDUSTANI ASSOCIATION OF VANCOUVER  
(CANADA)***

(Issued under the signatures of SUNDER SINGH, the Secretary on 23-10-1910).

[The nomenclature Hindustani Association, and the frame-work delineated in this document emerged as the prototype of "Ghadar Party" which indeed was formalized as "Hindi Association of Pacific Coast in March 1913 at Portland, U.S.A."]

Some excerpts from this historic documents are reproduced from the original, which sounded an alarm at the highest echelons of the British Empire, i.e., India Office at London.

**NAME**

This association shall be called Hindustani Association.

**OBJECT**

To establish LIBERTY, EQUALITY AND FRATERNITY of the Hindustani nation in their relations with the rest of the nations of the world.

**MEMBERS**

Every Hindustani by his birth-right is eligible to become a member of this Association, and on the following conditions:

(1) That he must sign an application that he will carry out the objects of the Association to

the last of his ability.

(2) That he will eliminate prejudice of caste, color and creed for himself.

### **MANAGING COMMITTEE AND OFFICERS**

Managing Committee will be chosen by a ballot or vote in general meeting. The Committee will then choose other officers.

### **MEETINGS**

Ordinary meetings will be held every week to discuss and promote objects of the association.

Significant to note that under the innocent looking name of Hindustani Association (later Hindi Association) a revolutionary outfit was in the offing.

Then the membership criteria and the obligations symbolized a truly national identity transcending the limits of caste, creed and color.

Finally, the organization was truly democratic wherein all the powers and authority flowed from bottom upwards.

### ***THE CHURNING SCENARIO.***

Both U.S.A. and Canada encompass a huge mass of land of which particularly in case of the latter is uninhabitable. Of the rest there are industrial centers scattered throughout in the lengths and breadths of the two countries. For all intents and purposes the First category was out of reckoning for Indian settlers. As for the industry, the Indian emigrants being predominantly villagers, semi-literate with a large sprinkling of ex-servicemen who had some exposure to unfamiliar places and countries were naturally not much attracted to. Their natural instinct was to places which first of all were climate friendly. As a matter of coincidence almost all of them voyaged via East Asia, prodding through the Pacific and landing on the Western Coast of the American continent. -`

Initially almost all of them ventured into the province of British Columbia in Canada

because of the Empire link since it too was a Dominion of the Empire. But after 1908 or so, the trend changed in favor of America both for the aforementioned restrictions as well as for the relatively higher wages down south. Again the favored region in U.S.A. also was the West Coast, or the Pacific Coast for the familiar climate. Thus in the State of California area around San Francisco, and in the adjoining States of Oregon and Washington the city centers of Saint John, Portland, Seattle, Astoria were among the prominent concentrations favored by Indians.

Background wise 80% of them were Punjabi Sikhs from districts of Lahore, Amritsar, Ludhiana. Hoshiarpur. Jullundur and Ferozepur which till 1947 was considered CENTRAL Punjab. They were employed as agricultural laborers, in laying across of new railway lines. in Saw—mills. and in reclaiming forest lands. In the process, some Indian students who could not afford the exorbitant expenses of education in England were attracted to - ' U.S.A. which afforded "inter—alia" the scope of part-time or seasonal employment to meet their expenses there from. Of these two in particular i.e., Kartar Singh from village Sarabha in Ludhiana, and Vishn Ganesh Pingale from Poona both played a stellar role in the saga of freedom struggle ultimately offering themselves at the altar of liberation in Central Jail Lahore on 16th November 1915.

According to Prof. Jagjit Singh. the author of a pioneer publication on the movement. "Pacific Coast Klalsa Diwan Society" was established with the initiative of (Sant) Baba Wasakha Singh (of Dadehar —Amritsar) and Baba Jawala Singh (of Thathian, Amritsar) in their potato farm at Stockton, the enormity of the farm earning them the title of "potato ` kings". Among the socio-cultural service rendered to the Indian community through the famous Gurdwara. which was destined to become a birthplace of the impending revolt. they ran a sort of work centre for the students therearound. This social proximity between the students and the lay Indian emigrant emerged as the integrating factor in the movement.

Quite an important part in this movement was played by the rebel intellects in exile prominent among them being Lala Hardial, who became the founder Secretary of the

Party. Prof Teja Singh (later Sant Teja Singh of MASTUANA). Bhai Parmanand (Lahore) Sh Tarak Nath Das from Bengal and Shyamji Krishan Verma.

It was then a veritable confluence of brain, brawn and youth a unique synthesis of S-disparate social segments which seldom really blend in the same stream. Truly enough **Baba Sohan Singh (Bhakna Amritsar) the founder President** got embedded in the memorial Plaque commemorating the Ghadar Party located adjacent to his village abode:-

***“Which was the First Party that blazed the trail of freedom and equality ·***

***THE GHADAR PARTY***

***which came into existence in America in March 1913***

***WITH THE COMBINED EFFORTS***

***OF INDIAN WORKMEN. PATRIOT INTELLECTUALS IN EXILE AND STUDENTS IN AMERICA.***

*(Translated from the Original in Punjabi ).*

Much against the too deeply embedded myth among the high brow, it was a movement of the collectively not originating as a brain wave of arm-chair pseudo-radicals, but in the welter of a transparently vast vortex of mass interaction both at micro as well as at macro levels.

#### ***CASCADE OF PUBLIC GATHERINGS***

The flames of sedition began to spread slowly over California and Oregon in which States there were a number of Indian emigrants.

The first fruits were the establishment in Astoria (Oregon) of a Hindustani Association towards the end of 1912 or beginning of 1913. At a meeting which was addressed by one Munshi Ram, Karim Baksh, Nawab Khan. Kesar Singh (43) Balwaut Singh (6) and Kartar Singh (39). Kesar Singh was elected President and Balwant Singh Secretary.

{Note: The figures given in brackets signify the respective serial number of each in the list of accused in Lahore Conspiracy Case. Kesar Singh is Baba Kesar Singh of THATHGARH,



Amritsar, who eventually became Vice-President of the Party. Balwant Singh was from SATHIALA, Amritsar and Kartar Singh, the famous "SARABHA" from village SARABHA, Ludhiana.

**The avowed objects were :**

- a. Receipt of vernacular papers from India.**
- b. Importation of youth from India to America for education with a view to their devoting their lives to "national" work in India.**
- c. Weekly meetings to discuss politics —**

**The result of which in the words of Nawab Khan one of the approvers in the case; was that the "*MEMBERS BEGAN TO FEEL FOR THEIR COUNTRY.*"**

Nawab Khan also tells us that the "Hindustani Association" had much the same ideas as the subsequent "Hindi Association" He states

**"THAT IT AIMED AT THE UNITY OF INDIA OF ALL  
CREEDS. EDUCATION AND OPPOSITION TO THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT"**

[Judgment or Lahore Conspiracy Case]

In this series; scores of meetings continued to be held at important centers where Indians had a sizeable presence on the West Pacific Coast. A graphic account of such meetings occupies as many as 8 printed pages of the said judgment. This chain of meetings reached the climax in August 1914, i.e. after "Declaration of War" on 4th August 1914.

Of these the last but one was held at Fresno (California) on 9th August which was addressed among others by Barkat Ullah (later the Vice President) and Ram Chand.

***"The audience was exhorted to leave for India at once; arms would be supplied in India on arrival and the time had come at last.***

***while England was at war, to expel the British from India.***

***Subscriptions were collected and a list of volunteers prepared in which 200 or 300***

***Sikhs promised to go to India at once."***

**The aggregate figures of those who beckoned the call of "do and die"**

**ran into "some thousands"**  
**as per the said judgments (Both from the said judgments),**

*THE KOMAGATA MARU EPISODE*

This episode with no apparent nexus with Ghadar Party 'per se', forms a vital link in the cause-effect cycle of developments in the denouement of the movement. It was purported to be an attempt plain and simple to circumvent the covert ban on the entry of Indians into Canada since 1907 in a big way. This ban itself had something to do with the Intelligence reports about seditious activities of Indian emigrants in Canada which was a part of British Empire despite its autonomous status as a Dominion.

To start with, a Japanese ship "KOMAGATA MARU" was hired by one (later called 'Baba') Gurdit Singh of SARHALI — Amritsar an enterprising businessman of the day. He floated a concern in the name and style of "Guru Nanak Steamship Company" for the purpose of the voyage. The "modus operandi" proposed for the purpose was to book the passengers direct from India to Canada to meet the crucial pre-condition of "direct sailing" imposed by authorities to exclude the Indians from entry into Canada since no such facility was in fact available, thereby safeguarding themselves against the blemish of racial discrimination.

There are reasons to believe that the organizers of the voyage as also most of the passengers had not expected a smooth landing at their destination points i.e. Vancouver port where it arrived in last week of May 1914. The ship was detained by Canadian authorities off the coast followed by hostile confrontations between passengers and the local Indians on one hand, and the Canadian authorities on the other, often reaching the brink. Ultimately, the ship was sent back along with its passengers with small mercies in the form of rations, coal, provisions etc.

This nightmare inflamed the passions of already restless emigrant Indians even before the passengers faced a bloody reception on its return to Calcutta in last week of September 1914. The Ghadar Party expectedly took steps to rope in the passengers in its plan of

insurrection and deputed {Baba} Sohan Singh Bhakna the President for a tie up. He proceeded to Japan soon after carrying with him 200 pistols and 2000 rounds for delivery at Yokohama port of Japan, which he accomplished.

Interestingly, while Baba Bhakna was on his way to Japan war between Germany and England broke out on 4-8-1914, which was also the moment of launching of Ghadr in India. The British intelligence got the wind of all this and they made full and thorough preparations for the "reception" of the ship at Calcutta, at the Budge Budge Ghat. It culminated in an indiscriminating firing by police on the totally unarmed peaceful passengers, some with their families and children killing at least 20, and injuring as many in the process, when the passengers refused to comply with the patently arbitrary command of police to "board" the train which was only a ploy to place them under arrest.<sup>9</sup> Expectedly the impact was tremendous on Indian national psyche, both inside the country as well as abroad.

### *THE RETURN VOYAGE OF GHADRITIES*

**"Before the departure of the main body of men from America it appears that a certain number had been sent on in advance."**

(Judgement — Lahore Conspiracy Case).

They travelled back in a number of ships like "Nippon Marti", "Mexico Maru" and a few others, each making its scheduled stop at various ports "en route", each of these stops being eventful.

One of these, (only to illustrate the nature of journey), left U.S.A. for Hongkong on 29th August 1914 with 60 or 70 such passengers. The passengers spent most of the time on board committing, the songs/poems of "*Ghadar—di—Gunj*" to memory and several meetings were held at which the British government in India was reviled. At Yokohama, Ram Rakha and Amar Singh are said to have left the ship in order to obtain arms and a new passenger came on board namely Pandit Parmanand of Jhansi (U.P.). The next stop was Kobe where a ship was met with a number of Indians on board from Vancouver. At Nagasaki

Nidhan Singh (CHUGHHA - Ferozepur) and Piara Singh (LANGERI - Hoshiarpur) and three others left the ship with the intention of proceeding directly to Shanghai.

°The next stop was at Manila and there the passengers were met by Hafiz Abdulla, president of the local Ghadar Society and two others. A meeting of Indians was held on shore which was addressed by Nawab Khan and Jaggat Ram (of HARIANA - Hoshiarpur). The later is said to have delivered the following message :

**"For sometime past we have been sending you the Ghadr newspaper in order to prepare you for the mutiny and now the time for mutiny has arrived.**

**England is engaged in life and death struggle with Germany.**

**With her attention thus occupied we can, without difficulty,**

**'drive the English out of India.**

**Don't let this opportunity slip by you for you will never get another such for centuries.**

**Join us now and be ready to kill or to be killed on arrival in India."**

A quantity of seditious literature was also distributed in the meeting.

"While the ship was at Manila a telegram was received from Nidhan Singh from Shanghai giving warning that a strict search would be instituted on arrival at Hong Kong, both for arms and seditious literature. Consequently the passengers collected all the sedetious papers on board and threw the in the sea. All evolvers and ammunition in the possession of passengers had been collected previously by the leaders"

#### *PUBLICATIONS: THE "GHADR" & "GHADR DI GUUNJAN"*

The legendary Baba's, as the Ghadarites came to be venerated, improvised most apt media of propagating and inculcating the revolutionary ethos among the vast mass of Indians both back home as well as among those living abroad.

"Ghadr" was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1913 from party head-quarters- "THE YUGANTAR ASHRAM."

The word YUGANTAR denoted ' new era', and was possibly adopted from the title of a Bengali journal of the day which was the mouth piece of Bengali revolutionaries in the

earlier years of the century.

The first issue of the paper was brought out in a hand machine operated by Kartar Singh Sarahha and one Raghbir Dyal from UP. Chief Editor Lala Hardial used to write in Urdu which was then translated into Gurmukhi (Punjabi) by Kartar Singh. The very title of the paper - GHADAR symbolized that 1857 Ghadr was the model. It aimed at combining a mass upsurge with a military revolt. It was based on the presumption that unless military joins the uprising it cannot succeed. (*Hail the foresight of those who proved right since the British quit India in 1946-47 only when Navy revolted in the wake of I.N.A. trials in the Red Fort, and people of Bombay came out in thousands in their support facing bullets coupled with the reports of this revolt spreading to Army and Air Force*).

The bold "Ghadr" headline carried with it a white inscription

***"Angrezi raj da dushman, Urdu, Gurmukhi AKhbar."***

**(Enemy of British rule, Urdu Gurmukhi paper).**

On top of "Ghadr" a line from Guru Granth Sahib was reproduced :

***We Tau Prem Khelon Ka Chao***

***Sir Dhar Tali Gali Mori Aoi- -***

[IF YE DESIRETH PLAYING GAME OF LOVE- - ]

[ENTER HEREIN SPORTING HEAD ON YOUR PALM- -].

On the two side top comers VANDE (on left) and MATRAM (on right) were highlighted.

Vande-Matrani (Mother : I bow to thee) was the title of a song in a Bengali Novel "Anand Math" by Bankim Chander Chatterjee portraying a Sanyasi revolt against Malech rule.

This novel was a scripture for the later revolutionaries like legendary Sardar Bhagat Singh.

"VANDE MATRAM"

continued to be the war cry of the freedom struggle

till it was substituted by INQLAB ZINDABAD after April 1929

i.e., the throwing of a bomb in Central Assembly by Sardar Bhagat Singh

and Sh B.K. Dutt while shouting this (latter) Slogan.

**The contents of the paper "Ghadr" covered a wide spectrum like:-**

- a Ways of economic exploitation by British rulers in India.**
- b Exposure of "true character" of political moves of British government in India.**
- c Reproductions from Vir Savarkar treatise on 1857 Ghadr.**
- d Guidelines to Indians living in America.**
- e Exposure of British intervention in International affairs.**
- f A few revolutionary poems later published in separate volume serialized as  
"Gadar di Gunj".**

***"GADAR DI GUNJ"***

Language employed was of down to earth hue, colloquial. The poems written by warriors for warriors lacked the literary finesse but had an electrifying effect (This scribe once met a contemporary of Baba (Shahid) Bhan Singh (of village SUNET) in 1968. He, in a nostalgic mood started reciting those lines, with a zeal and passion "beyond description , with his face burning like coal based on interviews with the surviving Ghadri Babes during 1960's, 70's and 80's.

it came out that every Ghadrite martyr spent his "last night" chanting these poems.

Legendary Kartar Singh, a young man yet antler twenty (24-5-1896 to 16-11-1915) after the frizzling out of projected rising on 19-2-1915 had planned to leave India for Kabul along with (Shahid) Jagat Singh (SURSINGH -Anuitsar) and (Baba)HarnaimSingh TUNDI LAT (KOTLA NAUDH SINGH) - Hoshiarpur. Somewhere near the border, they had all gone to sleep. Around mid-night Kartar Singh at once got up and exhorted his comrades to return instantly to reorganize the remnant resources. It was learnt that the impetus for this "about turn" was the recollection of one of his favorite lines from "Ghadr di Gunj"

*"Banee Sir Sheran, Kee Janaa Bhajj Ke .*

(Lions confronted, Flee not). -

The spread of "Ghadr" spirit even among the most converted fortress of the Empire viz: the army; and geographically transcending even continental barriers was mostly due to the

electrifying impact of these "echoes of mutiny."

In Ludhiana, the students in the boarding houses, age-mates of Kartar Singh duplicated their copies to fill up the void created by import constraints. ·

### *ARRIVING AT "HOME"*

Not surprisingly the British authorities had anticipated the implications of this influx of Ghadrities. Arrangements had been made for arrest and detention of all of them at the Indian ports. Some of these, Kartar Singh being one of them chose to land in Colombo Ceylon to evade arrest. "ZAIL GHAR" a Ludhiana (near the clock tower) was the screening and interrogation centre. (Ironically this historic building was demolished in 1970's for constructing a shopping centre instead !. The leaders were kept under detention while the rest were ordered to be interned i.e. confined to their respective villages. Consequently all the top leaders including the President (Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna) and the Vice-president (Baba Kesar Singh Thatgarh) were sent to jails, thus depriving the movement of its seasoned leadership — one of the important causes of its eventual "failure."

Weakened it was there by but paralysed not being a true inheritor of the traditions of a "Sangat"- the congregation.

To fill in this efforts were initiated to contact the Bengal revolutionary group based at Varanasi. Ultimately Rash Bihari Bose of Hardinge Bomb Case (1913) assisted by his aide Sachindra Sanyal were entrusted with the responsibility of top—most leadership.

Consequently, a movement built brick by brick by thousands of "nameless" workers was handed over to a new leadership at the most crucial stage. Leaving aside the merits.

Demerits of the repercussions of the aforesaid choice it is a most befitting testimony to the spirit of self-denial and absolute lack of the star performers in the movement there was not even a remote suggestion of dissent in the matter. An added attraction for the choice in inviting Bengali leaders was the revolutionary fervor in Bengal, although concentrated mostly on individual acts of terrorism, and they could be expected to provide pistols.

bombs badly needed for the success of the proposed uprising.

The activities undertaken by revolutionists thereafter were comprehensive in scope, encompassing the whole of North Western India where most of the British Indian army was stationed.

The judges of the Tribunal listed as many as 17 such activities.

To enumerate, only a few would suffice: —

a **The seduction of students**, the main focus centred around students of Khalsa and Islamia High Schools at Ludhiana which contributed a sizeable number of active revolutionists, some of them having been assigned most sensitive jobs, like maintain active link with troops.

b **The seduction of villagers** — Villages around DHUDIKE (then in Ferozepur, now in Moga District) had their meeting point in this village. This is what the judges called "Dhudike Gang." SANGOWAL in Jullundur was another centre of revolutionists for spreading the tentacles of the movement in Doaba region. SURSINGH — DADEHAR - MARHANA villages in District Amritsar and (then) Lahore District covering the Majha zone. Besides in a significant development the ".latha" of (Bhai Sahib) Randhir Singh got affiliated with the movement. Initially outraged at the desecration of Gurdwara Rikab Ganj at Delhi by the Government for extending the precincts of (then) Viceroy House (Now Rashtrapati Bhavan) in 1911 i.e. during the construction of new capital at New Delhi (which till 1913 remained at Calcutta), the members became part and parcel of the movement, playing a stellar role in the proposed rising on 19th February 1915 at Ferozepur Cantonment. Most of its members belonged to Narangwal — Gujjarwal - Sarabha belt of Ludhiana District.

c) **The seduction of troops** — What upset the government most was the degree of success obtained by the Ghadrites in winning over the British Indian troops. The magnitude and sweep of this impact lies hurried in secret chambers of the government under the glaze of indifference to this glorious saga of those who faced bullets after summary trials in Court Martials. There were rebellions en masse<sup>7</sup> not only among troops stationed in India but also those in Malaya and Singapore.



Around Lahore the Mian-Mir cantonment where 23rd Cavalry was posted and Ferozepur where 26th PUNJABIS was stationed became active centers of Ghadrite activities. From 23<sup>RD</sup> Cavalry alone as many as 12 servicemen were sentenced to death in one go at DAGSHAI and hanged in Ambala Centre Jail on 3-9-1915.

d **The use of revolutionary literature** alluded to above.

e **The looting of treasurers** - proposed but not accomplished.

f **Collection of arms and manufacture of bombs.**

### *THE DAY - 19TH FEBRUARY 1915*

On the basis of feedback from army units and the public in general the all important decision of an uprising on 21st February was taken on 12-2-15 in the Lahore headquarters of the Party under the stewardship of Rash Bihari Bose.

Accordingly messages were relayed to the various centres. also signifying the opening signal for insurrection. But in the meantime police: had been able to penetrate into the innermost circle via the person of one Kirpal Singh. A spy planted for the purpose.

Somehow the leaders learnt of the leakage of the date of 21st to the police. So on 16<sup>TH</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> February, the date of revolt was advanced to 19th February to pre-empt the government strike. But the wily Kirpal again got a hint to this effect also on 19th morning and fore-planned a police raid on party headquarters which materialized the same afternoon.

The Ghadrites in general however. being unaware of the aforesaid raid by police at Lahore went ahead as per their plans. A sizeable number assembled on the outskirts reeds of Ferozepur Cantonment under the overall coordinator Kartar Singh. He went into the army lines but learnt of the sea-change in the wake of the date-leakage and came back dejected to declare a dispersal. Interestingly, the "Jatha" of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh consisting of 60 or 65 members, all dressed in dark blue wear, carrying a harmonium to give the look of a "Kirtani Jatha" had boarded the train for Ferozepur from MULLAN—PUR (DHAKA), on 19-2-15, about 10 miles from Ludhiana; the nearest to Gujjarwal - Narangwal. (Many of them.

later identified were put on trial in the supplementary Lahore Conspiracy Case )

### *THE "PRICE"*

The wheels of government machinery swung into top gear after having "nipped the evil in the bud."

Sir Michael O` Dwyer, the Punjab Governor (later notorious for having authored) Jallianwala Massacre of 1919 and ultimately assassinated by Shahid Udham Singh in 1940, bared his fangs in manipulating a legislation by British Parliament establishing a TRIBUNAL of one Chief and two special COMMISSIONERS` (not judges) with untrammelled powers both procedural and substantive.

### *"NA VAKIL. NA DALEEL NA APPEAL"*

(SANS COUNSEL, SANS ARGUMENT, SANS APPEAL)

#### *A. LAHORE CONSPIRACY CASE*

This "blank cheque" put at the disposal of the Tribunal, over-shadowed by a rabid Anti Indian Punjab Governor was exploited to hilt. Of the 61 accused before it in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, as many as 24 were sentenced to death, 27 to transportation for life with forfeiture of property, 6 to lesser sentences and only four were acquitted.

Most of the judgments passed on the accused were most casually worded, verging on the cryptic; they could not possibly have been able to bear the scrutiny of any appellate court. Be as it may, the question of award of death sentence to as many accused as 24. at one go attracted the attention of the highest authorities in India i.e., the Governor General, As for the legal formalities. the Punjab Governor being the final confirmatory authority "duly confirmed" the sentenced. There was of course a provision petition of mercy which was availed of by one or two out of 24.

So more practical rather than legal considerations the matter, went to the Governor General's Council.

The judgment had been pronounced on 13-9-1915. These 24 prisoners were put in

the "death cells." The date of their execution was fixed in course of time as 5-10-1915. The "last night" was spent by them in shouting greetings with each other from their individual cells, reciting poems expressing the vindication of their resolve to die at the altar of liberty. Early morning of 5th October they were waiting for the parting knock of the warder with a bucket full of water for the "last bath" when they were informed of the deferment of the executions, What actually prompted the Governor General to intervene is thus explained by Baba Sohan Singh Bhaknain his autobiography "JEEWAN-SANGRAM", he himself being among these 24.

“We learnt that Sh. Raghunath Sahai and other well wishers of the national cause who had. on their own choosing been following the course of ‘trial’ constituted a Committee of Lawyers which went along the relevant documents to Pandit Moti Lal Nehru, father of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru at Aliahabad. Pandit Nehru opined that of these 24 there were as many as 17 who had been arrested before they set their feet on the Indian soil. They then met the Indian Legal Members of Viceroy Council, like Sir Abi Imam who were persuaded to reason with the Governor General resulting in the said screening of the case.”

When the case evidence was reviewed from a legal angle, the lacunae were too glaring to be ignored. The Tribunal had proceeded on the simplistic presumption that the acts of all the conspirators (accused) done "upto July August 1914 were acts of conspiracy to wage war acts thereafter when once the war started, acts in furtherance of war, and in abetment of such war."

Under the indian Penal Code the conspiracy charge attracts life sentence whereas waging war itself may be visited even by death sentence. "Prima facie" the Tribunal regarded the "Declaration of War" (Ailan-e-Jang) of 4-8-1915 as the clinching proof of `Waging of War` since all the subsequent criminal acts of conspirators would "ipso facto" fall in the category of acts of war per se" by virtue of this unequivocal assertion lending these acts the color of WAR. .

Be as it may there was no limit to the dismay of men like Sir Michael O` Dwyer to see persons like Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna. The arch conspirator and war monger escaping the gallows where as those unknown persons like three local collaborators from village Gilwali, AMRITSAR, namely Sardar Bakshish Singh. Sardar Surain Singh s/o Sardar Bur Singh and Sardar Surain Singh s/o Sardar Ishar Singh were sent to gallows (besides 4 leading revolutionists viz. Sardar Kartar Singh Satabha, Sh Vishnu Ganesh Pingle, Sardar Harnam Singh Siakkot and Sardar Jagat Singh of Sursingh, Amritsar. The lessons of the post-judgement developments were duly learnt by the Tribunal. This was visible even to the naked eye when they gave their verdict in the supplementary Lahore Conspiracy Case.

#### ***(b) SUPPLEMENTARY LAHORE CONSPIRACY CASE***

In sharp and glaring contrast the overall trend of sentences awarded was towards moderation. Also because most of the luminaries of the movement had already been dealt with in the former case. Of the 74 tried 5 (actually 4) were sentenced to death, 18 to transportation for life, as many as 36 awarded lesser sentences, whereas the number of acquittals was 15.

Later there were subsequent trials in the series extending up to 4th Supplementary case. These cases had a few odd accused who were arrested later (had been "absconding"). Besides. there were a chain of related cases such as Mandi (H.P.) Conspiracy Case, Burma Conspiracy Cases (I and II), Ferozeshahr Murder Case, Anarkali Murder Case. Jagatpur Murder Case, Nangal Kalan Murder Case, Padri Murder Case, Walla Bridge Assault Case, Gurdaspur Arms Act and Dacoity Case., and in U.S.A. the Chicago Conspiracy and San Francisco Conspiracy Case .

#### ***c COURT MARTIALS***

However as mentioned earlier the extent and magnitude of sentences imposed on army men suspected of Ghadrith activities may well run into hundreds of death sentences.

Sardar Ram Singh "Majithia" in his memorable writing delineating the contribution of Punjab in the freedom struggle had cited some data, admittedly sketchy in this regard.

He has mentioned :

**A 2-3-15 — 5<sup>TH</sup> NATIVE LIGHT INFANTRY posted at Singapore—Court-martial death sentence to 3.**

**B 13 -3-15 — 2 more added.**

**C 23-3-15 — MALAYA STATE GUIDE (Singapore) — Court Martial- 5 shot dead.**

**D 105 LIGHT INFANTRY — Singapore—As many as 41 were order to be shot dead and 125 given prison sentences.**

**E 24-4-15 — 12<sup>TH</sup> CAVALRY —Court Martial at Meerut (UP.), 4 sentenced to death and hanged in Meerut Jail.**

**F 24-4-15 — 128 PIONEERS —(Meerut) Two hanged to death.**

**G 28-6-15 T SINGAPORE — a businessman hanged for inciting soldiers.**

As the names mentioned in the said text indicate most of those executed at Singapore happen to be Muslim and those in India, Sikhs.

It needs be mentioned that the Ghadrities while returning to India for Ghadr had been halting at the ports on the way and had openly approached the Indian troops stationed there for joining the movement.

Even though the data cited above is scanty, but it can be reasonably surmised that it exposes only a tip of the iceberg.

#### ***D) WAS IT ALL A CONSPIRACY'?***

Conspiracy is always hidden, secret, and covert; otherwise it ceases to be one. From the accounts relating to the origin and development of the movement. vividly portrayed in the Judgement of [First] Lahore Conspiracy Case, this dimension was wholly missing in this case. From day one. all was open, rather too open. The only exception which proverbially. proves the rule was the choice of the date of uprising — 21st February, later 19th February 1915.

Presumably the conspirational dimension had something to do with the suspected "German connection" which had been dealt with under the heading

"THE CONNECTION OF THE REVOLUTIONISTS WITH GERMANY?"

Unable to cite any evidence (which is quite understandable) the Tribunal found indications which point to the suggestion that there was some understanding that some assistance was rendered by individual Germans, and that the revolutionists considered themselves in league with the German enemies of the King Emperor.

Now, of course, it is 'history' and there are on records quite a few instances to justify this suspicion. Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna describing the Komagata Maru episode says. "while it was its way back ) was anchored in Japanese port, since the war had started German submarine "Edmen" was feared to damage the ship. [The Baba managed to secretly contact the German Council and settle a secret code to be employed to ward off such an eventuality.

The second instance relates to Baba Hari Singh. He was among those had been left behind in U.S.A. to manage YUGANTAR ASHRAM. The Ghadrites struck an arms deal with a German firm to provide on cash a shipload of arms and ammunition. He was made in charge of the operation and started from USA on 15-4-1915 but due to unforeseen developments landed in Indonesia in September 1915 without accomplishing the task. He settled under the assumed name of Usman Khan, which ultimately gave him the identity of HAR1 SINGH USMAN. He played a vital role in forming Indian Independence League and in I.N.A. during the Second World War. He returned to India in October 1948 and died 'unnoticed' on 15-8-1969.

e *WAGING OF WAR* "

Stung by the "of the road "review of the death sentences in the FIRST CASE, the Tribunal by hindsight became "wiser" in the Second Case. While in the former it dealt with question of applicability of Section 121 of Indian Penal Code concerning WAGING OF WAR. admittedly a core issue ; just in less than 3 pages in the latter case they dwelt

on the issue quite extensively covering as many as 17 pages.

It may be surmised that the actual reason was the "rebuff", which was lying buried in the secret files, but the net outcome that only 7 out of 24 initially awarded death sentence were hanged; was well known. In the 17 page exposition it was stated that since "in the present Case it has been argued by Defence Counsel that even if the facts alleged are found to be established, they do not amount to acts of war, or attempts at war or abetment of war, but to a lesser offence- such as the conspiracy or preparation as the case may be.' To those familiar with criminal trial, the said argument which is attributed to the defence counsel in this second case is a most common argument SELDOM MISSED in criminal trials – that the specified alleged acts even if proved do not PROVE the grave (say murder charges ) but a lesser offence say culpable homicide. In any case it is inconceivable that as many as 7 defence lawyers would not have used this argument in relation to not even once forever one accused out of as many as 61.

The inference is obvious by its very nature. that charge "WAGING OF WAR" is a class by itself as it has POLITICAL ramifications since it strikes at the roots of a political system by challenging its very legitimacy.

That is why the "RULE OF LAW" of which the Angle-Saxon world is so proud, is given a go by while dealing with the revolutionists.

Accordingly there is some "sense" in the jibe hurled at the Punjab Governor by Sardar Bhagat Singh that they were guilty of `WAG1NG A WAR. they should, instead of being hanged, be handed over to the firing squad of the army." (Letter addressed to him on 20-3-1931, i.e. 3 or 4 days before their execution.

In any case a word, here, be said to the credit of the tribunal that they characterized the Ghadrities as REVOLUTIONISTS and not TERRORISTS or ANARCHISTS which were the words used world wide while trying such like cases involving charges of treason or insurrection against the government of the day. it is a different matter, however, in essence this was a revolutionary movement since it sought to change the SYSTEM as such and was not directed against some specified individual ruling the country.

## *SAGA OF JAILS*

End of the trials was the end for only those who attained martyrdom, but not for the rest. Most of whom were sentenced to transportation for life, which was only a euphemism for spending the best part of life in the inhuman life in Cellular Jail in Andamans. The latter often envied the former who had "passed" the test of patriotism, whereas they themselves were yet "on probation." Aptly put by Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna "that for a revolutionary, whether he be in jail or outside, faces challenges continuously since his struggle is basically against oppression and injustice." It shall be worth while to touch upon briefly on this jail interlude but in two separate phases viz.

- (a) relating to those convicted in the first case (Andeman)` and
- (b) concerning the rest (Indian Jails).

This classification is essential since the former were actually "transported" i.e. sent to Andamans, while the later were not, despite their too having been awarded similar sentences. The change in policy in the matter was not incidental. The former had, notwithstanding the brutal treatment and the "iron curtain" of secrecy, had put sense in the heads of jail authorities, though at the cost of lives of at least of them in addition to the inconceivable punishments, deprivations and humiliations hurled on the survivors. The net result however, was that the Andeman jailors literally "raised their hands" and flatly refused to accommodate Ghadrite convicts of the subsequent cases. (A tribute!) .

### *(A) TRAVAILS IN ANDEMANS*

Parodying the famous Urdu verse in praise of Kashmir being the only heaven on this earth. without exaggeration or "poetic license" it can well be said "if there were a hell on earth — it was this, this and (only) this."

The very initial step of neither getting the prisoners medically examined nor caring for the upper (age) all of those sentenced to transportation were transported there.

Reaching there they were briefed by political prisoners like Ganesh Savaritar, and Vinayalr



Savakrar (the Savarkar Brothers from Maharashtra) that both the Jail Superintendent and the Jailor were very cruel. They allotted inhuman quantity of labor work. Unable to cope up with the same some of (even political) prisoners committed suicide.

"Ghadrites gathered to ponder and resolved that they would do labor but only that which is well within human capacity. To start with the KOHLU (oil processing) labor was held as inhuman and was to be declined.

Secondly, no disrespect be shown towards jail officials, but if they insult us, we shall retaliate to the hilt."

### *BHAN SINGH'S CASE*

This is an apt one to show what transpired later He had some learning in English. He used to be meticulous in performing the prescribed labor. One day, while he was waiting for his turn to hand over his labor product a British guard uttered some remark in English, derogatory to (our) national honor. Bhan Singh paid him back in the same currency (in English). Thereupon the guard arrayed him before the jailor. Jailor, who, ignoring the plea of Bhan Singh slammed 6 months of solitary confinement, fetters, reduced diet and standing hand-cutting all combined for the said period. One day while standing under the constraint of standing hand-cuffs, he was chanting "JE TAU PREM KHELAN KA CHAO. SIR DHAR TALEE GALI MORI AO" in a state of ecstasy. Berry, the ill-famed jailor happened to pass nearby who started abusing him. Bham Singh, in protest refused to submit himself to standing handcuffs on the following day. Jailor arrived with a posse of 3 "Lambardars" and started belaboring Bhan Singh. Down below on ground floor his fellow prisoners were sitting in the enclosure for food. When they learnt, they all rushed above to rescue him. But the Jailor had already closed the gate of the line. They could not therefore enter but made the Jailor leave him alone. Though saved for the moment; the jailor got him thrashed the next day so much that he fell unconscious. Fellow prisoners resorted to work strike. He was shifted to jail hospital where his condition went from worse to worst.

"Seeing this, his fellow prisoners including myself started hunger strike besides

work strike. In the meantime our comrades who had been convicted in Burma Conspiracy Case also came and they too joined us in work strike. It was winter. Jailor started torturing us by forcibly getting us removed to the water tank and got cold water thrown on us. Having got removed our blankets from our cell they would thereby lie on bare cold wooden planks. Pandit Ram Rakha (of SASOLI — Hoshiarpur) died in the process. Ultimately Bham Singh succumbed to the brutal ordeal.

It was verbally, narrated by Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna to this scribe that Pandit Ram Rakha learn on the way to Andaman from Burma that the jail authorities in Andaman do not allow the sporting of any religious symbol. He, despite being a Brahmin had long back eschewed the sacred "JANEU" - the sacred thread, But he on purpose improvised one and on arrival in the jail resisted its removal leading to this fateful end to the episode. Sometime in 1921 these Ghadrites were repatriated to "Indian jails" landing after a while in YERVADA POONA. There as per jail rules they were made to sport caps instead of turbans. When they resisted, they were forcibly disrobed. The prisoners went on hunger strike. Pandit Parmanand (JHANSI) and Sh. Hirde-Ram (MANDI HP.) their fellow Ghadrites also joined it. Much as they were dissuaded by us that it was a matter of turban gap which did not touch them, they did not budge. This symbolized the principled love and affection amongst us Ghadrites, who viewed even the religions distinctions from the angle of a shared identity.

So much for the veritable hell. The Andaman Cellular Jail !

#### (B) *SUBSEQUENT CASES — INDIAN JAILS* \_

The judgment of the Supplementary Lahore Conspiracy Case was pronounced on 30-03-1916. They were shifted to Multan Jail on 3rd April, 1916.

**"But before their transfer the religious symbols (KAKARS) of the (Sikh) prisoners had been removed in Lahore jail itself."**

Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh a life convict in the case had given a first hand account of

the ordeal in Multan jail where they were kept till July 1917. He had to resort to a hunger strike as a protest against inhuman treatment extending to 40 days during which he denied himself not only all kind, of food but also water !

Then they were shifted to Hazari Bagh. While on way to Hazari Bagh, they were to pass through Ludhiana, the native district of many of them. Baba Sajjan Singh (of Narangwal – Ludhiana) has narrated a telling anecdote of their trains stoppage at Ludhiana station, in his brief autobiography.

**"My district was there at hand and I looked all around to pin point some familiar face. But so much was the dread in the air that none would venture near about our train. None would share a look with us even from a distance, nor exchange a greeting. We learnt later that the government and its lackeys had spread the word around that these persons who fight with the government had ceased to be SIKHS !**

Hazari Bagh (BIHAR) was chosen as the most remote spot to imprison these convicts. There too the jail atrocities continued. Ultimately Ghadriles planned a jail break and on the intervening night of 8/9 March 1918, 18 of them succeeded in breaking loose from the jail. Two anecdotes depicting the scenario of that all important jail-escape are quite revealing of the awe in which they were held by the jail staff.

First one — when jail alarm was sounded. The jail guards were ordered to DEPOSIT the fire arms in the armory lost the fleeing ghadriles take away their rifles !

Second One — The Ghadriles in their plan of successful jail braking had planned a loud chanting of "SHABADS" so as to drown any sound of shouting etc. from either side. Once, after this escape one evening jail warder felt that their "SHABAD" recitation was a bit louder than usual. He at once ran to the Jailor telling him that once again those Sikhs are chanting the "run away Mantra"

Of these Ghadriles one Baba Harnam Singh (Kala Sangian — Kapurthala) an ex- soldier remained in prison for 21 years continuously.

### *THE RICH. LEGACY*

The indefatigable. Babas, proverbial for their low profile. all encompassing pursuits serving spiritual, economic, educational causes, and endearing manners had to be seen and observed first hand to be truly understood. Each in his own way left the lii much richer wherever he lived and endeavored. It had something to do with their world outlook or what is called "**WELTANCHAUNUNG**" in German. Transcending their rustic roots, they evolved an all encompassing outlook personified in their activities in general but perhaps in one of the cardinal principles of Ghadar Party: that if any member of the Party is living in a country and a struggle for freedom of that country is launched, it shall be his bounden duty to join it.

Practical illustration of the same is provided by involvement of Baba Hari Singh Usman in freedom struggle of Indonesia against Dutch imperialism for which he was sentenced to be KICKED, TO DEATH.<sup>29</sup> Baba; both Indonesian sons were not "far behind? They joined INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY, and the elder one died fighting for the liberation of his FATHER-LAND !

### *CERTIFICATE OF EXECUTION OF THE DEATH SENTENCE*

Seal of the Judicial Department

I HEREBY certify that the sentence of death passed on Bhagat Singh Has been duly executed, and that the said Bhagat Singh was accordingly hanged by the neck till he was dead, as Lahore Central Jail on Monday the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of March 1931 at 7 p.m. that the body remained suspended for a full hour, and was not taken down until life was ascertained by a medical officer to be extinct; and that no accident, error or other misadventure occurred.

Superintendent of the jail

Sd. Illegible.