

Bhai Mewa Singh Lopoke – the immortal martyr of Canada

(Sohan Singh Pooni)

In this paper, we have talked about Bhai Mewa Singh Lopoke – the immortal martyr of Canada.

Bhai Mewa Singh had shot dead a White Officer named William Hopkinson working in the immigration office. Making a suit against Bhai Mewa Singh, he was executed to death. Who was this William Hopkinson and who was Bhai Mewa Singh? What enmity did Bhai Mewa Singh have with Hopkinson? Why did Bhai Mewa Singh shoot at Hopkinson? Many writers have presented Bhai Mewa Singh as the murderer. No doubt, it is a bad act to kill someone by shooting. But the Canada community has ever been taking Bhai Mewa Singh as martyr and his day of martyrdom is celebrated every year. Was Bhai Mewa Singh a murderer or a martyr? We go into probing the questions in this paper, though in brief.

Bhai Mewa Singh was born in village Lopoke in tehsil Ajnala of district Amritsar in 1880. The village is about fourteen or fifteen miles away on north-west side of Amritsar. His father's name was Bhai Nand Singh Aulakh. Bhai Mewa Singh had one brother also named Dewa Singh. Like other migrants, Bhai Mewa Singh also had come to Canada in 1906 for better prospects of livelihood. Here he worked at the Green Chain of Frazer Mill in Westminster near Vancouver.

While living there, Bhai Mewa Singh came in close contact with Sikh community leaders like Bhai Bhag Singh Bhikhiwind and Bhai Balwant Singh Khurdpur. In company with them, he visited the

numerous Indian dwellings to collect funds for building the first Gurdwara of North America in Vancouver. Inaugurated on 19 January 1908, Bhai Mewa Singh took Amrit in this gurdwara of Vancouver on 28 June 1908. He was a gentleman of religious nature. After his job hours, he spent most of his time in meditation and in serving the visitors in gurdwara. Bhai Mewa Singh was not married.

By 1908, about 5200 Indians had entered Canada. Majority of them, about 90%, were Sikhs from Punjab. Among these Sikhs, a good number was of the Sikhs who had served in British Indian Army. The Sikhs were very proud of their services rendered in honour and favour of the British battles. They considered themselves as loving sons of the British Empire. Since Canada was a colony of British Empire, so the Sikhs considered it their right to come to the land of their Emperor, live and work over there. But they were disillusioned on coming in Canada. They had to undergo disgrace and humiliation on the roads of Vancouver. They fell prey to racial discrimination. While walking along the roads, their hearts felt knife-cut when they were called 'Hindu slaves'. These racial differences bruised the soul of Bhai Mewa Singh.

Even Canadian government was discriminating the Indian migrants in an organizational way. In 1907, the voting right was withdrawn from the Indian migrants. No doubt, the Indian migrants coming to Whites' colonies got political awareness which was dangerous for British Empire. So to restrict the entry of Indians in Canada, the British government in consultation with Canadian government devised racial rules in 1908 for 'direct voyage' with at least 200 hundred dollars in pocket as necessary condition. With promulgation of these racial rules, the entry of Indians in Canada was totally stopped. Because of the 'direct voyage' condition, the

Indian migrants already living in Canada could not afford to call their families from India. In October-November of 1908, the Canadian government concocted a conspiracy to send all the Indians living in Canada to British Honduras but the Canadian Sikhs did not let it succeed. Under effect of such a bad treatment, the Indians living in Canada started realizing that the main reason of such maltreatment with them was the slavery of India. They started realizing this also that the only way of getting rid of this slavery was through armed struggle only.

The Indians living in Canada and America joined together to form Ghadar Party in April 1913. Its aim was to undertake an armed struggle to free India and then establish America-like Secular Democratic Republic there. All members of the Ghadar Party considered themselves Indians. No religious matter was discussed in the Party. Religion was individual issue of everyone. It was obligation of every member of the Party to support the freedom struggle; it may be in any part of the world.¹ Bhai Mewa Singh too started working for the Party in company with workers like Bhai Bhag Singh and Bhai Balwant Singh.

Doing dire injustice with the passengers of the Kamagatamaru ship on reaching Vancouver on 23rd May 1914, the Appeal Court of British Columbia announced a verdict against the passengers on 6 July 1914. Orders were issued for return of the ship. The Ghadari leaders of Vancouver wanted that, in case of return of the passengers of Kamagatamaru ship, they should, on reaching India, take part in the rebellion to be undertaken for freedom of the country. For this

¹ ਬਾਬਾ ਸੋਹਣ ਸਿੰਘ ਭਕਨਾ ਨਾਲ ਮੁਲਾਕਾਤ: 1967; ਪ੍ਰੋਮ ਸਿੰਘ ਬਜਾਜ, *ਦੋ ਪੈੜਾਂ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਦੀਆਂ (ਲੁਧਿਆਣਾ, ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਸਾਹਿਤ ਅਕਾਡਮੀ, 2004), ਪੰਨਾ 55*

purpose, they kept supplying Ghadar literature to passengers in the ship and now they were trying to send them weapons also.

The Ghadri leaders in Vancouver tried to purchase weapons in Canada. Not succeeding in the purpose of getting the weapons here, Bhai Mewa Singh, Bhai Bhag Singh, Bhai Balwant Singh and Babu Harnam Singh Sahree reached the city Sumas on 16 July 1914 across the America border from near Abtsford to purchase weapons. Babu Tarknath Dass, the Bangali revolutionary leader, had already reached Sumas from the city Seattle in America. They spent the night in hotel 'Sumel' there. After breakfast on the next day, they purchased revolvers from the 'Ridge Thomas' store. After some time, Bhai Mewa Singh was arrested while crossing the border through bushes to reach Canada. On searching, the police found two revolvers hidden in the possession of Bhai Mewa Singh. Packets containing 500 rounds were also found from the left and right stockings and his inner wear.² Bhai Mewa Singh was imprisoned in New Westminster Jail.

Malcolm Reid, Head of Vancouver Immigration Department and the interlocutor William Hopkinson had meeting with Bhai Mewa Singh in the New Westminster Jail. Police Inspector William Hopkinson had come from Calcutta to Vancouver in 1908. He worked as interlocutor in the Canadian Immigration Department in Vancouver Centre, but his actual job was to spy for the governments of India, England, Canada and America. He kept vigilance on the activities of Indians residing on the western coast of Canada-America. His main job was to encourage rift in the Indian community and harm the

² W. C. Hopkinson to Samuel Backus, Commissioner of US Immigration, San Francisco, July 20, 1914, PRO. C.O 42/980

patriotic group of Indians. He had built up a pro-government lobby by 'purchasing' Bela Singh Jian, Babu Singh Litran and Ganga Ram Baria (Sahota Tatt) from the Indian community in Vancouver. With help of these people, he spied into the Indian community and informed the government about activities of the Ghadarites.

Malcolm Reid and William Hopkinson made an offer to Bhai Mewa Singh in jail to give a statement that the weapons found from him belonged to Bhai Balwant Singh, Bhai Bhag Singh and Babu Harnam Singh Seehra and they had sent these weapons for the Gujarati revolutionary Hussain Rahim living in Vancouver. As such, he would be released after minor punishment. He threatened him also that in case of non-compliance, he would be sentenced for five or ten years. But Bhai Mewa Singh refused to give such an anti-Ghadarite statement. He said clearly: "You may cut me into pieces but I shall not tell alie for your sake."³

Malcolm Reid and William Hopkinson were very much disappointed of Bhai Mewa Singh. But still with the hope that he might give the anti-Ghadarite statement in time to come, he was released on 7 August 1914 after a fine of fifty dollars. But Bhai Mewa Singh could see through all their tricks.

On 4 August 1914 started the First World War. Hardly seventeen months had passed after formation of the Ghadar Party. The Party had not prepared well for creating rebellion on reaching India. But finding the enemy entangled in War, the Ghadar Party gave a call to the Ghadarites to create rebellion on reaching India. Under compliance of the order, the Ghadarites of Canada also started

³ Statement read for Mewa Singh by his lawyer at his trial of October 30, 1914; Trial Transcript.

boarding the ships for rebellion on reaching the country. Hopkinson, who till date had been trying not to let any Indian reach Canada, was now trying his utmost to not let any Indian go from Canada to reach India for rebellion. It was foremost for him to stop Bhai Bhag Singh from going and for this he was ready to take any step. In order to torpedo the Ghadarite activities, Bela Singh Jian, under abetment of Hopkinson, shot dead Bhai Bhag Singh Bhikhiwind, President Khalsa Diwan Society and prominent leader of Ghada Party and his companion Bhai Badan Singh in gurdwara of Vancouver on 5 September 1914. Bibi Harnam Kaur, wife of Bhai Bhag Singh had already died in January 1914. With death of Bhai Bhag Singh, his quarter to three year old son Joginder Singh and six month old daughter Karm Kaur became orphans. Bhai Mewa Singh could not tolerate all this. Bhai Mewa Singh made up his mind to murder the Hopkinson, the force in fact behind the traitor Bela Singh.

In reality, there were many reasons behind the decision of Mewa Singh to murder Hopkinson. There was a long list of wicked deeds of Hopkinson behind it. Hopkinson had caused great harm to the group of patriots of the country. Immediately after reaching Vancouver, he had written articles in newspapers about the revolutionary activities of Tarknath Dass. As a result, Tarknath Dass had to go to America after leaving Vancouver. Hopkinson had sent reports to the governments of Canada, England and India that the migrants of Vancouver were getting influenced by the socialist views and those were dangerous for the British Empire in India. Consequently, the Canada government framed such laws of immigration that made coming of Indians to Canada impossible. In the conspiracy concocted in October-November 1908 to send all the Indians in Canada to Honduras, Hopkinson was at the forefront. He made repeated efforts

to expatriate Hussain Rahim, a popular leader of Indian community, from Canada. Likewise, he got expelled another popular and revolutionary leader Giani Bhagwan Singh from Canada in 1913. In the strife of Kamagatamaru, Hopkinson had played a villainous role.

The secret activities of Hopkinson were not confined to the limits of Canada only. He used to keep a watch on the activities of the Ghadarites living at the west coast of America. He used to get secret reports of the Ghadarites living in Seattle, Portland, Astoria, San Francisco and Stockton. He had collected proofs against Lala Hardyal, got him declared anarchist and then expelled from America. In August 1914, thousands of Ghadarites were boarding planes after leaving Canada and America to go to India and create mutiny in the country. Hopkinson was trying his level best to stop the Ghadarites boarding the planes and was sending lists of these people to the British government in India. And now he had got murdered Bhai Bhag Singh, the most loving and popular leader of Indian community.

Case was going on in Vancouver in the Provincial Court of B.C. against Bela Singh Jian, the murderer of Bhai Bhag Singh. A few days before, Hopkinson had got released from murder case 'one' fellow of Bela Singh connected with 'pro-government' group,⁴ and now the same person was coming to the jury to give evidence in favour of Bela Singh. It was 21st day of October 1914. It was twelve minutes past ten of the morning. Hopkinson was standing reclining against the wall in the verandah quite close to the entry room of the court. Walking in the verandah, Bhai Mewa Singh reached quite near Hopkinson. He had both of his in pockets of his platoon. Reaching

⁴ Mr. Justice Aulay Morrison to Secretary of State, Ottawa, November 9, 1914. Archives Canada, RG 13, Vol. 1467.

close to Hopkinson, he took out his pistol and, moving a step forward, he shot at Hopkinson with his right hand. Hopkinson tried to catch hold of Bhai Mewa Singh but Mewa Singh in haste shot more shots at him. Hit with shots, Hopkinson fell on his knees and caught thighs of Mewa Singh. Bhai Mewa Singh hit Hopkinson on his head many times with the butt of the pistol caught in his right hand. Then he threw the revolver down, took another revolver from his left hand in his right hand and shot at him more shots.⁵ Many people present in the court saw the murder committed. But they were threatened with fear. They could dare not come out and quietly closed the door of the court room.⁶

Hopkinson had received four shots. One shot pierced through lower of his left thigh and went out. Second shot hit him at the left of his back. With these two shot, no vital organ of his body was damaged. But two shots proved fatal for Hopkinson. One of these had hit him on the sixth rib of lower part of his chest. This shot passed through his right lung, tore open the heart and then got stuck near the third rib on the left side of chest.⁷ Hopkinson died on the spot. Mewa Singh had done the murder of Hopkinson at 'public place'. After committing murder, he did not try to run away. Quietly, he gave the revolver to sweeper and said: "I shoot. I go station."⁸ On arrival of Police, Mewa Singh offered himself over to the Police without any resistance.

⁵ Evidence of witness W. A. Campbell, REX VS MEWA Singh, Vancouver, October 30, 1914, Trial Transcript.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Evidence of Dr. George F. Curtis who performed post mortem examination of Hopkinson's body, REX VS MEWA SINFG, Vancouver, October 30, 1914, Trial Transcript.

⁸ Evidence of James McCann, REX VS MEWA SINGH, Vancouver, October 30, 1914, Trial Transcript.

Regarding Hopkinson's death, telegrams were rung from Vancouver to Ottawa, Ottawa to London and then to Delhi in India. Immediate information was sent to Governor General of Canada, Secretary for State sitting in London and Lord Harding, the Viceroy of India. H.H. Stevens, MP of Conservative Party in Vancouver and enemy of India at once asked Prime Minister Borden in writing to forcefully deport all the Indians from Canada.⁹

The Canadian government took out a big funeral procession of Hopkinson in Vancouver. Hundreds of police officials, firemen, immigration-custom officers and employees of American Immigration Department and CPR were going in the funeral procession. More than two thousand people were there in the procession. On the way, there was one policeman in civil clothes after every Indian. Police was scared that the Indian migrants might try to shoot at Malcolm Reid, Head of Immigration Department and Chief of Police even.¹⁰ Malcolm was to be shot dead along side of Hopkinson. On 21st October, he was to accompany Hopkinson from Immigration Office to the Court. But he had reached his office late. Hopkinson, after a long wait, went himself all alone.¹¹ Thus luck had saved Malcolm Reid.

Nine days after Hopkinson's murder, hearing of the case against Mewa Singh started on 30 October 1914. Government had delayed the process of the case of Bela Singh Jian murderer of Bhag Singh so that Mewa Singh could be sentenced at the earliest. Hearing of the case was going on with Mister Oile Morrison, Chief Justice of the BC

⁹ H. H. Stevens to Borden, October 21, 1914. Archives Canada, File 536999, pt 9.

¹⁰ The Sun, Vancouver, October 26, 1914.

¹¹ Melcolm R. J. Reid to W. D. Scott, October 22, 1914, Archives Canada, RO 76, Vol 561, File 808722, pt 2

Supreme Court. He was to decide the case with help of 12-member jury. Mr Taylor Crown was Prosecutor and Mr Wood was the defense pleader. The Court-room was full to its capacity with hearers of proceedings of the case but all those were Whites but four Indians only. Officials of the Court had mischievously not allowed Indians to enter the Court. Bhai Balwant Singh, Granthi of Vancouver Gurdwara, and other Indians were standing outside the Court. They hoped to look at Bhai Mewa Singh from outside but this hope was not fulfilled. Doors of the Court were closed and a plate of 'court is full' was put at the out.

Proceedings of the case started. Bhai Mewa Singh was told that he was accused of murdering Hopkinson. W.A. Cambel, James Macain and Paul Caldwell were put as eye-witness. Detective Samstrum and Mac Donald gave their statements. 'Report of Coroner' was presented. In this report detail was given of the shots fired and the damage caused due to them. The two revolvers used by Bhai Mewa Singh on the event of murder and the bullets taken out of Hopkinson's body were put before the Court.¹² During this time, Bhai Mewa Singh kept standing calm and quiet and all carefree of the proceedings of the Court.

During the proceedings, Mewa Singh stood in the witness box, took oath and answered the questions asked by the defense counsel Mr Wood. Mewa Singh confessed the allegation of murdering Hopkinson. Thereafter, the defence counsel Mr Wood read out in the Court the written statement of Mewa Singh. Mr Wood had prepared that statement on the same morning with help of the court-interpreter Mrs Dalton. Bhai Mewa Singh had given this statement

¹² REX VS MEWA SINGH, Vancouver, October 30, 1914, Trial Transcript.

not in his defense but had done so with the purpose to make his plea public through the Court. In this statement, Bhai Mewa Singh had tried to disclose all those atrocities committed upon Indians in Canada and why he had committed murder of Hopkinson. Bhai Mewa Singh had said in the statement: ***“My name is Mewa Singh. I am a God-fearing man and offer prayer daily. I have no words on my tongue to tell what various difficulties, hardships and harassments I had to pass through in Vancouver. . . . We Sikhs go in gurdwaras to offer prayer but these wicked ones opened fire in the Gurdwara, killed Bhai Bhag Singh and thus desecrated the sanctity of Gurdwara. These sinners have orphaned two innocent children. The treacheries committed by these wicked ones in the Gurdwara have put my heart on fire. Mr Reed and Mr Hopkinson are responsible for all this. For the honour and prestige of my religion and community, I have killed Hopkinson. It was beyond me to tolerate all this.”***¹³

It was further said in the statement: ***“. . . Had all this taken place in your church, you Christians even could not have tolerated this because, by doing so, you would have taken yourself as a dead nation. For a Sikh also, it is better to die than bearing with such acts in gurdwaras. . . .”***¹⁴

“. . . “ I have all the time been insisting that I need no Vakil. I hope for no justice. I know that I have shot at Hopkinson and I have to die for this. I am giving this statement for this purpose that the public may know what suffering we have been going through. We have never got any justice from judges, police or from any other

¹³ Statement read for Mewa Singh by his lawyer at his trial of October 30, 1914, Trial Transcript.

¹⁴ Ibid

source. I am giving my life for this purpose that the people may know all this. . . .”¹⁵

“ . . . Our worthy judges and lawyers must realize as why Hopkinson has been fired at. The ones who always do misdeeds and commit crimes after drinking are considered correct by the Immigration Officers and we, the God-fearing true people, are trampled under feet. Abiding by God’s Order, I can bear this no more. . . .’¹⁶

Bhai Mewa Singh did mention this also in his statement as how Hopkinson was compelling them to give evidence in favour of Bela Singh, the killer of Bhai Bhag Singh. *“ . . . When we going to post office, Hopkinson spoke to me on the way: ‘Now you are to stand witness in favour of Bela Singh. You change sides to stand in favour of Bela Singh; otherwise, it shall be very bad for you. You also shall have to go on the same way on which Bhag Singh and Badan Singh have gone.’ He threatened me. I asked him: Mr Hopkinson! You have bribed me and now you are threatening me. Who are you telling to that I shall be killed like Bhag Singh and Badan Singh? What is all this going on? After taking dollars from me, now you are asking me to stand witness in favour of Bela Singh, and you are threatening to kill me.”¹⁷*

Further it was said in the statement: *“ . . .For the whole night, the thing has been gnawing me that it is me on one side who does meditation and these people are coaxing me for false statements.*

¹⁵ Statement read for Mewa Singh by his lawyer at his trial of October 30, 1914, Trial Transcript.

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Statement read for Mewa Singh by his lawyer at his trial of October 30, 1914, Trial Transcript.

*They are trying to humiliate me and entangle me in problems. The wicked thing has been pricking me throughout night and, thinking so, I could not sleep that I shall suffer bad name for this. . . . It is a matter of about three days after this that I was passing through Hastings street where I met Babu Singh. He said: "Which side are going to witness? To our side or to the other one?" I said I shall speak the truth. I shall tell the same thing what I saw in the Gurdwara. Then Babu Singh started abusing Bhag Singh, who had been killed, and said: 'We have killed him.' Again he called him severe names. . . . Then Babu Singh threatened me; 'If you did not give evidence in our favour, we shall have to do something with you.' Babu Singh kept calling me severe abuses but I said nothing. Babu Singh said again: 'It is our rule in Vancouver. We can do whatever we like. Immigration is at my back. I can set you right. You can do nothing. My writ runs here. I shall set right all of you.' After coming back from Babu Singh, I started thinking about it seriously that all that shall have to be stopped. Then I gave true evidence in the Court. After that, I fearfully moved about in Vancouver. Once again Babu Singh met when I was going alone. He said: 'If ever again you are seen walking in Vancouver, we shall not spare you.' I thought seriously about it again that I must do something about it. I thought it better to die rather than suffer such humiliation. I shall die a brave man's death . . ."*¹⁸

" . . . These people have defamed us. They think that Sikhs are nothing. We have been humiliated. There is no judge to listen to us. These four persons are everything. Bela Singh, Babu Singh, Mr

¹⁸ Statement read for Mewa Singh by his lawyer at his trial of October 30, 1914, Trial Transcript.

Reed and Hopkinson consider themselves God. . . . The government listens to Hopkinson only. We are never bothered about. For the government, we are two-pice valued starving coolies and Hopkinson's every word is law. Because of this, I have murdered Hopkinson and am sacrificing my life"¹⁹

The crime having been admitted by Mewa Singh, the hearing of the case took one hour and forty minutes only. On the basis of the decision of the jury, the Judge Morrison indicted Mewa Singh as criminal and ordered him to be hanged on 11 January 1915. On ²⁰hearing the punishment, there was no sign of any remorse or regret on the face of Bhai Mewa Singh. He wanted to see the nine-month old orphan child of Bhai Bhag Singh. When he could not see the child from the crowd outside, he started reciting these Gurbani hymns loudly:

Sura so pehchaniye jo larey din ke heit //

Purja purja kat marey kabhun na chhadey khet //

While reciting these hymns, he started walking calmly to the prison cell.²¹

The defence counsel Mr Wood wanted to enter 'mercy appeal' to save life of Bhai Mewa Singh but Bhai Mewa Singh did not allow him to do so. Not finding any way out, Mr Wood pleaded before Justice Minister in December that Bhai Mewa Singh was not in right mental balance, so he should be sent for medical checkup. Justice Minister C.

19 Ibid

G. Doerty ordered the superintendent of New Westminster Mental Health Institute on 3rd January 1915 that Mewa Singh be examined and the report be sent at the earliest.²¹

J. G. Mackem, the Superintendent of the Mental Health Institute examined Bhai Mewa Singh on 5th of January. Mewa Singh did not do any untoward action which may show that he was not mentally sound and his life could be saved. Bhai Mewa Singh declared that he had killed Hopkinson in quite safe and alert mind and he was ready to undergo any punishment for this. Mr Mackem sent report on the same day to Justice Minister that Bhai Mewa Singh was absolutely well mentally.²²

Waiting for the D-day in the Provincial Jail of New Westminster, Bhai Mewa Singh was living in high spirits.²³ At 7.30 AM on 11 January 1915, Bhai Mewa Singh went to the gallows while reciting "*Har jas re mana gae lae jo sangi hae tere.*" At the time of hanging, Bhai Mit Singh Pandori as Granthi performed the final religious rites. At quarter to eight, Bhai Mewa Singh was hanged till death. Despite rain and severe cold, four hundred Indians had collected outside the New Westminster Jail. As soon as the dead body was brought out, they shouted slogans "*Long live the immortal martyr Bhai Mewa Singh!*" Marching in rows of five each and reciting hymns from Sri Guru Granth Sahib, they reached the Frazer Mill, four miles away, with dead body of Bhai Mewa Singh and performed the cremation with full solemn rites.²⁴

²² J. G. Mackay, Acting Superintendent, Insane Asylum, New Westminster, January 3, 1915

²³ Malcolm R. J. Reid to W. D. Scott, October 22, 1914.

²⁴ "ਮਿਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਕਨੇਡੀਅਨ ਦਾ ਲਿਖਤੀ ਬਿਆਨ", ਅਮ੍ਰਿਕਾ ਵਿਚ ਹਿੰਦੁਸਤਾਨੀ, ਪੰਨਾ 144

Bhai Mewa Singh had nowhere given any hint of the like that may show any connection of the Ghadar Party with this murder. Neither was it expected of Bhai Mewa Singh that he would give some statement that might have entangled the Ghadri leaders in this murder. But the Canadian officials were fully sure that the act of killing Hopkinson was not the sole job of Mewa Singh only. They knew that firing at Hopkinson was carried out under consultation of Ghadri leaders only and it was carried out as per their plans. Even the newspapers of Vancouver also had written this.²⁵ So the police charged the Ghadri leaders Hussain Rahim, Bhai Balwant Singh, Sohan Lal, Kartar Singh Nawanchand and Bhai Mit Singh Pandori under allegation of inciting Bhai Mewa Singh to murder Hopkinson. Natha Singh, Naina Singh, Ganga Ram, Partap Singh, Bhagat Singh, Thakar Singh, Bela Singh and Dr Raghunath, the pet touts of Hopkinson, appeared as witness in the case against the Ghadarites. But their statements did not tally with each other and since Bhai Mewa Singh had taken sole responsibility of the murder, the Judge had to free all the Ghadri leaders.²⁶

Actually, the Ghadar Party should have gone through this case of Hopkinson's murder by Bhai Mewa Singh in reference with the call given for rebellion on reaching the country. The targets of British Empire which they were going to hit in India, a similar one was here in Vancouver also. Hopkinson was a symbol of the British Empire ruling in India. He was doing an important job for the British Empire in Canada-America. The care takers of British Empire knew the importance of the 'work' being carried out by Hopkinson and they

²⁵ The Sun, Vancouver, October 22, 1914; The World, Vancouver, October 21, 1914; The Province, Vancouver, October 22, 1914; The News-Advertiser, October 22, 1914.

²⁶ Hugh Johnston, The Voyage of Kamagata maru, p. 132.

were very worrisome of his safety. Duke of Cannaught, the Governor-General of Canada had written to the Colonial Secretary Beus Harcourt on 20 May 1914 that "... Hopkinson is an invaluable officer. He is doing a very important job. If something wrong happens to him, the total structure of secret network set by him shall be demolished".²⁷ Ghadri leaders of Vancouver understood well the job of spying being carried out for British Empire by Hopkinson. That is why Hopkinson was an appropriate target in their eyes. By killing Hopkinson, they were trying to demolish this network of spying and wanted to devastate the caucus of Hopkinson that eroded the activities of Ghadar Party. With murder of Hopkinson, a horrid fear spread all around in the traitorous clique and the head and hearts of revolutionaries were fully excited.

On the day of martyrdom of Bhai Mewa Singh, the Sikh congregation performed conclusion of the 'sehj path' in gurdwara of Stockton in California. The martyrdom of Bhai Mewa Singh was highly praised in the revolutionary literature of Ghadar Party. The Indians of Canada celebrated first anniversary of the martyrdom in the gurdwara of Frazer Mill in January 1916. In 1917, about 500 Indians gathered in the Frazer Mill to celebrate the martyrdom day of Bhai Mewa Singh. At that time, only 1000 Indians resided in Canada.

For the Canadian government, Bhai Mewa Singh was a murderer. But the Indian community in Canada has always regarded him a martyr. Bhai Mewa Singh was a soldier of the Ghadar Party that was fighting a war against the British Empire for freedom of the country. Bhai Mewa Singh was martyr of this freedom struggle of India. Therefore,

²⁷ H. R. H. Arthur, Duke of Connaught, Governor General, to Lewis Hardourt, Colonial Secretary, May 20, 1914. Archives Canada

the Indian community of Canada acclaims Bhai Mewa Singh 'the immortal martyr of Canada.'

In memory of Bhai Mewa Singh, the Khalsa Diwan Society of Vancouver has named the Langar Hall of gurdwara in Ross Street as 'Shaheed Bhai Mewa Singh Hall.' The Akali Sikh Society in Vancouver has established 'Shaheed Bhai Mewa Singh Library' in his memory. 'East India Defense Committee' organizes a tournament every year in memory of Bhai Mewa Singh. On 11 January, many gurdwaras in Vancouver hold Akhand Paths in his memory and the speakers throw light on his unique life and respectful tributes are offered to him. In this way, Bhai Mewa Singh, the ever-living martyr of Canada, is a symbol of struggle against tyranny for the Canadian Indians.

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