Ghadar Movement: Its Origin and Impact on Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and Indian Freedom Struggle

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The purpose of this paper is to shed light on the Ghadar Movement, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and their impact on the Indian freedom movement. These events played a significant role in shaping various political and religious movements in Punjab which led to the freedom of India. The Ghadar movement originated in 1912 out of discontent, injustice and discrimination against the Sikhs/Indians immigrants in the USA who came to North America to seek better life.

The Jallianwala Bagh massacre occurred because people opposed the oppressive and draconian Rowlatt Bills which gave almost unlimited power to the British police and authorities to arrest anyone and send them to jail for any reason or no reason, without following proper legal procedures. It was an oppressive act which was passed primarily to suppress the demand for freedom of India. A martial law was declared and announcements were made by banging a tin in different parts of Amritsar on that doomed day which warned people not to gather. Most people who gathered at the Jallianwala Bagh had come from many neighboring villages to participate in the Vaisakhi celebrations. Jallianwala Bagh was 6-7 acre open area which was walled from all sides except for five entrances. Four of them were quite narrow admitting only a few people at one time. Jallianwala Bagh is only few hundred yards from the Golden Temple which is the most sacred Sikh shrine in India. Khalsa was established on the Vaisakhi day by the tenth Guru of the Sikhs – Guru Gobind Singh. It is also a major festival in Punjab celebrated by all communities. Most people were not even aware of any such announcements. Many of them had gathered over there because of a call from the Indian National Congress party in order to protest the Rowlatt Bills commonly known as Rowlatt Act. People gathered peacefully at a place called Jallianwala Bagh at Amritsar and were listening to speeches by various leaders. They were massacred by the British Indian army led by General Reginald Dyer by blocking all the entry and exit gates and opening fire. This took place on April 13, 1919 at Amritsar.

Regardless of how these events unfolded, the fundamental reason behind them was the India’s slavery of the British.

Sikh Emigration to Canada and US

In order to understand the Ghadar movement, it is important to understand its underlying reasons. The Sikhs and other Indians came to Canada and US for better life and opportunities for themselves and their families. The agriculture land was being subdivided into smaller landholdings and it was becoming
more and more difficult to survive on smaller pieces of land. In order to fund their own lavish life style in Indian and Great Britain and to fund WWI, the British Indian government levied heavy taxes which were getting heavier for a common person. Emigration to other countries was a good way of improving one’s financial status because the pay was much higher in other countries. They did not have any political agenda at that time. Most of them were Sikhs who were marginal farmers and artisans in Punjab. There was a series of droughts in Punjab after the British took over Punjab. Many Sikh farmers had lost quite a bit of their ancestral lands to Hindu moneylenders and were in a financial trouble. Drought and failed crops had sapped the energies of the general population and of farmers.

Punjabis had heard about better opportunities abroad, and by their very enterprising nature, were not afraid to take risks. Most immigrants from India who came to Canada and US were Sikhs. They started to come to Canada as laborers and semi-skilled workers towards the end of 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th century. Many of them were former soldiers in the British army in India, Singapore and Hong Kong. However, they had never even imagined that being the part of the British colonial Empire, they would face discrimination, inequity and injustice on foreign lands because Great Britain had announced that all subjects will be treated on equal basis in all its colonies. They experienced discrimination firsthand in Canada and US. The US was the former British colony over which the British held a significant sway. Thus the Sikh discontent and the Ghadar movement grew out of discrimination and humiliation in foreign lands. Their ‘King Emperor’ did precious little to alleviate their misery.

The first Sikhs ever to enter Canada were on an official trip as part of the Hong Kong army regiments which were traveling through Canada in commemoration of the Queen Victoria of England’s Diamond Jubilee in 1897. They liked the land and vastness of the country and some of them stayed there and invited their relatives and friends.

Things went unnoticed until about 1906. However, when the Sikhs started to emigrate to Canada in more noticeable numbers, the Canadian government wanted to stop their emigration to Canada. In fact, it wanted to get rid of the Indians who were already there and tried to force them to move to British Honduras (now an independent and almost a third world tiny country known as Belize\(^1\)).

A religious function was held at the second floor of Gurdwara Sahib Vancouver to discuss this situation. An Indian delegation of two Sikhs named Bhai Nagar Singh and Bhai Sham Singh Rajput were selected to go to British Honduras for a fact finding mission. They were instructed to write a signed letter daily from that country describing full details, circumstances, climate, and labor situation at every stay of their journey to the Chief Khalsa Diwan. These two individuals were most reliable and honest people who knew English well.

This delegation went to British Honduras and found out that the climatic conditions were very poor and wages were too low and some Indian families over there were living in miserable conditions and in abject poverty. There was a great danger of malaria and yellow fever. The Indian delegation did not agree to move to Honduras in spite of great pressure and financial lure by the Canadian government.

\(^1\) A country in South America bordered on the north by Mexico, to the south and west by Guatemala and to the east by the Caribbean Sea. Belize has an estimated population of 327, 219 as of 2012.
The seed of discontent that manifested itself as Ghadar movement in the US was actually sown in Canada as early as 1907 with the establishment of Khalsa Diwan Society in Vancouver. It provided a place of worship, communal consciousness, rallying point, and even practical help by providing food and housing, and legal assistance. This was the place where the Sikhs discussed their issues and took important community decisions. Most of them worked in the lumber mills, construction, and farms where they often encountered, jealousy, racial slurs and even physical attacks from the white people. In 1907 racial riots broke out in Bellingham, about 20 miles south of the Canadian border in the Washington state. All the Sikhs and Indians were driven from their homes by the white mobs. All of these factors solidified the unity of the Indians regardless of their faith. A similar episode happened in Marysville near Yuba City in California in 1908.

“Twenty citizens of Live Oak Saturday night attacked two housed occupied by seventy Hindus who had been discharged from Southern Pacific Company and ordered the Hindus to leave town.

The Hindus were driven to the edge of the town and told to travel. One went to Yuba City and swore to complaints charging the members of the mob with stealing $1950. He also took the case to the British Consul at San Francisco.”

The Indians were not allowed to bring their wives and children to Canada. To make things even more difficult, the Canadian government came up with another plan to keep the Indians out. They used a three prong approach:

1. Put a condition on all immigrants that their sea voyage should be direct and continuous from India and they must not change the ship at any port between India and Canada.
2. Made it mandatory for each passenger coming from India to show $200 cash.
3. Worked up the Canadian public against the Indians and spread hatred against them. That put a great stress on them and their families and created hatred towards them in the minds of the majority white community.

A Canadian immigration law was specially designed to keep the Indians out because there was no direct ship voyage from India to Canada. Most people could not afford to show $200 for each family member which was a very large sum over 100 years ago. The Komagata Maru ship incident of 1914 is a textbook example of such extremely biased and unfair treatment of the Indians. The Komagata Maru was a Japanese ship which was hired and renamed “Guru Nanak Jahaj” by Gurdit Singh in 1914 to bring the Indian passengers to Canada.

According to Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna, “Bhai Sahib [Gudit Singh] hired the Komagata Maru (Guru Nanak Jahaj), a Japanese ship for six or more months and directly reached from the port of Calcutta to Vancouver.”

According to some other accounts, the Komagata Maru sailed from Hong Kong to Shanghai, Yokohama, and then to Vancouver, British Columbia as per plan. 376 travelers on the ship

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3 Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna, Meri Ram Kahani, Ed. Rajwinder Singh Rahi (Sangam Publications: Samana, 2012), 73
were Indians, out of which 340 were the Sikhs, 24 Muslims, and 12 Hindus. The Komagata Maru ship was not allowed to dock at the Canadian shore and was forcibly returned to India from Vancouver. When the ship reached at Calcutta, India at the Baj Baj ghat, about 17 km from the Calcutta port, a train was waiting for the passengers to take them directly to Punjab. The Sikh insisted upon depositing their holy book Sri Guru Granth Sahib to a local Gurdwara and many of them did not want to go back to Punjab. They were fired upon by the police. As a result many people were injured and killed. This incident gave boost to the Ghadar party and its cause.

**Sikh Emigration to the US**

The Sikhs started to emigrate to the United States of America well over 100 years. San Francisco Chronicle writes, “The four Sikhs who arrived on the Nippon Maru the other day were permitted yesterday to land by the immigration officials. The quartet formed the most picturesque group that has been seen on the Pacific Mall dock for many a day. One of them, Bakkshlled [sic] Singh, speaks English with fluency, the others just a little. They are all fine-looking men, Bakkshlled Singh in particular being a marvel of physical beauty. He stands 6 feet 2 inches and is built in proportion. His companions-Bood [sic] Singh, Variam [sic] Singh and Sohava Singh-are not quite so big. All of them have been soldiers and policemen in China. They were in the Royal Artillery, and the tall one with the unpronounceable name was a police sergeant in Hong Kong prior to coming to this country. They hope to make their fortunes here and return to their homes in the Lahore district, which they left some twenty years ago.”

World War I had just ended in 1918 and India, especially Punjab, paid a hefty price both in terms of human lives lost and money spent on the war. At least 400,000 Punjabis were forced to go to war in various parts of the world. A large number of them died in different theatres of war. Even though the original Ghadar movement started and ended before the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, it continued to shape various political events in Punjab. The Ghadar movement had a major impact on various Sikh Morchas (agitations) in Punjab in the 1920s and gave rise to the Babbar Akali movement which had a significant impact in the Doaba region (Jalandhar, Kapurthala, and Hoshiarpur districts) of Punjab. The Sikh lost hundreds of people in those morchas. The Ghadar movement peaked with the murder of Michael O’Dwyer at Caxton Hall in London on March 13, 1940 who was the former Lt. Governor of Punjab. It was he who had ordered the massacre of the Punjabis at Jallianwala Bagh. Both these events created political turbulence that had worldwide consequences. Both these events shook the very foundation of the British Empire in India.

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4 San Francisco Chronicle April 6, 1899, p.10
Babbar Akali movement was a great threat to the British Indian government after the Ghadar movement. The government was acutely aware of the hostilities of the Canadian Sikhs towards the government for executing many Babbar Akalis. This is evident from a letter written to His Majesty’s Under Secretary of State for India by H. G. Haig, Officiating Secretary to the Government of India.

“2. In May last a letter written by one Giani Harnam Singh of the Khalsa Diwan Society, Vancouver, to a Sikh newspaper in Amritsar, Punjab was intercepted. This letter described the proceeding of the Diwan of the Society held at Vancouver in the preceding March. At that meeting Resolutions were passed expressing sympathy with the families of the executed Babbar Akalis, condemning the actions of the Punjab Government and calling upon Sikhs to help the families... 5. In the opinion of the Government of India the interest in the Babbar Akali spirit displayed by Sikhs in Canada and America points to a general revival of the seditious activity among the Sikhs in those countries which was originally associated what is known as Ghadr movement.”

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5 Secret No. 147, Government of India, Home Department, (Political), dated Delhi, 11th November, 1926, P&J (5) 1884 1926.
“Hindu” Discrimination in California\textsuperscript{6}

According to the official report to Gov. WM D. Stephens, called “California and the Oriental,” published by State Board of Control of California in 1922, makes these comments about the Hindus, (as all Indians were called back then),

“The Hindu, in the opinion of the Commissioner of the State Bureau of Labor Statistics, is the most undesirable immigrant in the state. His lack of personal cleanliness, his low morals and his blind adherence to theories and teachings, so entirely repugnant to American principles, make him unfit for association with American people. These references apply to the low caste Hindu or Sikhs. Reports from official authorities concerning these people on file in the office in the State Board of Control are unfit for publication.”\textsuperscript{7}

This statement smacks of pure racism and bias against Sikhs and other persons of India.

The State Board of Control of California report paints a dismal picture of the ‘Hindus’ in California. A letter written by Shaughnessy And Atherton Attorneys at Law of Stockton, California (counsel for the Hindus in California), dated February 16, 1920 to State Board of Control in Sacramento says,

“The number of Hindus in California is fast decreasing. About five hundred of them have left for India the last year. A rough estimation of their distribution over this state is given below:

\textsuperscript{6} Hindu was a generic name used for all Indians at that time in the US and Canada which included Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims.
\textsuperscript{7} State Board of Control of California, \textit{California and the Oriental} (Sacramento” California State Printing Office, 1922), 115
You are familiar, of course, with the fact that none of them are now permitted to enter the United States; and none of them have been permitted to bring wives and children here and a very few of them have married here.”  

According to this report there were about 77% Sikhs, 19.2% Muslims and only 3.8% Hindus in California in 1922. Even though this report is prepared primarily against the growing influence and presence of the Oriental immigrants, especially the Japanese, it was the Sikhs who were the primary victims.

The report makes extremely derogatory comments about the Hindus and Sikhs and says, “The Hindu has no morals... The low caste Hindus and Sikhs not eligible to citizenship in the United States, but in a very few cases natives of India of high caste have proven to the satisfaction of the courts their Caucasian blood and have been admitted to citizenship... One investigator for the State Board of Control state that Hindus, although ineligible to citizenship and therefore not entitled to legal ownership of land under the California alien land act, nevertheless own many parcels of land in California and are purchasing more land.”

This document shows how the racial bias and caste system propagated by the Brahmanism in India found its way to the US government and how it was used to determine the eligibility for granting citizenship.

While the Indians were prohibited from bringing their wives and children from India, a wave of “picture brides” were arriving from Japan in large numbers. Many Japanese marriages were initiated by the exchange of photographs between the parties. Usually, a young man from the US would send a picture to his parents and they would take it to the parents of a prospective bride and negotiate a marriage. When both parties agreed, immigration papers were initiated and visa was issues to the “picture bride” to come to the United States. The marriage was often consummated at the arriving dock with a marriage ceremony. This practice was approved both by the Japanese and American governments. The following table shows the number of picture brides from Japan to the US.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sikhs</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Imperial Valley</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammadens</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>Sacramento County</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Around Willows</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,600</td>
<td>San Joaquin County</td>
<td>300</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fresno County</td>
<td>300</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Scattered</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The figures given for the periods from July 1, 1911, to February 29, 1920, have been added by State Board of Control of California gathered at the United States Immigration Station at Angel Island, just outside San Francisco.

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8 State Board of Control of California, *California and the Oriental* (Sacramento: California State Printing Office, 1922), 122
9 Ibid, 197
10 Ibid, 160
On the other hand, there was a virtual ban on bringing wives from India. Only a handful of women from India arrived during this period and the population of the Indian immigrants decreased rapidly and almost came near extinction by 1946.

The ‘Hindus’ (which implies Sikhs here) came to the US and farm laborers, but due to their hard work and frugal habits, they were slowly turning from laborers to landlords. Before they were able to buy land, they started to lease it, employed other Indians and American and eventually started to become landlords. They were employed in Fresno, Kings, Madera and Tulare counties in orchards and vineyards. They were employed in Yolo county and Salinas valley in the sugar beet farms. The California and the Oriental reports highlights this fact, “The number is rapidly growing less, for the change from employed to employer or lessee is rapidly placing the Hindu in the position of “little land lord.” The Hindu will not farm poor land. The wants the best and will pay for it. Consequently the American owner who can get a big rental for his land desired the Hindu. He will pay.”

### Congressional Hearing Related to Indian Immigration to the US at Washington

The Indians fought hard against the repressive immigration policy of the US and used whichever avenues were open to them. A hearing took place before the Committee on Immigration in the House of Representatives (Sixty-Third Congress) on February 13, 19 and 26, 1914, and on April 16 and 30, 1914 in which the “Hindu Immigration” case was heard and decided.

Two Indians Sudhindra Bose\(^\text{12}\) and Bishen Singh submitted a letter and pleaded the case of the Indians in front of this committee on behalf of the Pacific Khalsa Dewan Society and the Hindustan Association of America on February 12, 1914 pleaded the cause of the Indians. In this letter they tried to present the Indian population in the US as the subjects of the British government and claimed some privileges and protection under international law. They also argued that in the event such protection is not provided to

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\(^{11}\) Ibid, 161

\(^{12}\) Sudhindra Bose (1883 - May 26, 1946) was born in Keotkhali near Dhaka (now in Bangla Desh). He came to United States in 1904 and received a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Iowa in 1913. He was Lecturer in Oriental Politics at the University of Iowa.
them, this would create a diplomatic stalemate between those two nations. The fact is the British government did not want to protect them because they were simply considered troublemakers. It further argued,

“At present the Hindus are the citizens of the British Empire, and have the same international civil status as the Canadians or Australasians. In international law a Hindu is protected by the British flag. Any attempts to place an important portion of the British Empire in a position of irritation with the United States would be unfortunate at this moment, as it might create another cause of diplomatic friction between the United States and Great Britain.”

The fact is that there was no treaties between the US and Great Britain that would prohibit the United States from excluding Indians when it came to immigration to the US. Sudhindra Bose did try his best in answering a battery of questions in front of this powerful committee, but gauging the mood of the Committee, no answer could have ever satisfied them. This letter was perhaps written with all the good intentions, but it did not produce the desired results. Since there was a racial tension and opposition to the “Orientals” at time who are considered to be of the Mongolian origin, the Indians wanted to differentiate themselves and argued that the Hindus are not “Mongolians.” They said that the Hindus are Caucasians race and that their classic language Sanskrit, points to their unmistakable kinship to all Aryan races of modern Europe.

Even though this may be technically correct in the case of the Northern Indians, it is not entirely true. Indians from the South are of Dravidian origin. This argument does not make sense from the Sikh perspective because Sikhism believes in equality of human race. This argument was probably made due to two reasons: 1) The Indians did not want to be bracketed with Chinese and Japanese and they thought proving themselves as Caucasian race might give them some break; and 2) there might have been the influence of Brahmanism working behind such statements because the spokesman of the Indians was Sudhindra Bose, a Hindu.13

This committee had 15 members. Almost the entire committee was extremely biased against the Indians from the very beginning. Here is an excerpt from the hearing and a statement form Mr. Denver S. Church, a member of Congress (7th District) from the State of California,

“That brings me this proposition: While we can get along, yet there are 350,000,000 of them over there, and they are coming and they going to continue to come, because conditions are so bad over in their own country. It is a self-evident fact that sooner or later we will have to exclude them. Why not do it now when we are masters of the situation?

The Chairman: Have you heard of any of the leaders teaching any anarchistic ideas

Mr. Church: Of course, the Hindus down in my country, in the interior of California, are there for the purpose of getting jobs so as to earn money to send back to India. I have heard that occurs in the

13 (Letter submitted to the US Congress and part of the Congressional records.) Hindu Immigration Hearings Before the Committee on Immigration House of Representatives Sixty-Third Congress Second Session Relative to Restrictions of Immigration of Hindu Laborers February 19, 1914 , (Washington Government Printing Office), 52
sections around the bay. I cannot give you any definite information as to whether they teach revolution and anarchy. There is no doubt from what I have heard that they do and that these people are acquiring all the knowledge they can do as to be in a position in the future to rebel against the form of government under which they are at the time living.\textsuperscript{14}

This indicates how biased the Immigration Committee in the US Congress was and how they were worried about “revolution” in India against the British against whom the United States itself had rebelled and freed itself from the British slavery. It also indicates that the California Indian immigrants, who were predominantly Sikhs, were active in throwing the British out of India.

**Ghadar Movement, Its Origin and Development**

Sohan Singh Josh writes about the birth of Pacific Coast Hindustani Association,

“On some day in July 1912, the Indian mill workers gathered at Portland. Harnam Singh Kotlanaudh Singh, and some others from Bridal Veil, Pandit Kashi Ram and others from Saint John, and Bhai Sohan Singh Bhakna and others companions participated in this meeting. A decision was taken to establish Pacific Coast Hindustan Association and to open its office by renting a house. All those who were present, became its members. Bhai Sohan Singh Bhakna was appointed its president, Babu Guru Dutt was appointed its general secretary and Pandit Kashi Ram was appointed its treasurer. . . Lala Thakur Das, who was working with Pandit Kashi Ram in Saint John, suggested to President Sohan Singh Bhakna and others to invite Lala Har Dayal who lived in San Francisco, to lead this effort. This suggestion was accepted in the Portland meeting and Lala Thakur Das was given the responsibility of persuading Lala Har Dayal to accept this role.”\textsuperscript{15}

Thus the ground work for the solidarity of the Indians had begun in the US. One Thakur Das wrote a letter to Lala Har Dayal in 1912 to come to Oregon. “In a reply Har Dayal notified him about his visit to Saint John on December 25, during the Christmas holiday. All the friends were happy about this news that the work will now begin. However, only 3-4 days before the appointed date, they were disappointed to know that Har Dayal would not be able to make it to Saint John then, but during the last week of March 1913.”\textsuperscript{16}

According to Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna, one of the founders of this association, “In 1912 our factory ‘Lifton’ was closed for one month due to Christmas holidays. So I went to a factory in Astoria where approximately 250 Indians worked. Among them Bhai Kesar Singh was highly regarded by all and they all particularly trusted him and I also stayed with him. When we discussed the pros and cons of the national independence, then we reached a conclusion that without action and sacrifice and the ability to show the results, one cannot achieve freedom. So it is important to start a national war and to prepare an army of the Indians patriots in the US which should be above communal lines, and being an Indian each of its soldier should enroll himself in it to achieve freedom for his motherland... At the end, both of

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, p. 82
\textsuperscript{15} Sohan Singh Josh, *Ghadar Party Da Sankhep Ithias* (Ludhiana: Chetna Parkashan, 2007), 107
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, 107
us decided that we should call a meeting on the coming Sunday in order to establish a society for that purpose... At the end, the society was established which was called “Hindi Maha Sabha. Its president was Bhai Kesar Singh, Vice President a Muslim and I was elected the Secretary. The primary goal of this association was set “to free India after uniting all Indians into a national chain.”

Thus the “Hindi Maha Sabha” also known as “Pacific Coast Hindustan Association,” was established in the city of Astoria, in the Oregon states of the United States of America. This was later known as Ghadar Party.

According to a statement published in the Stockton Daily Evening Record of December 6, 1913, “International (foreign) money order to the amount of $26,282.82 were sold by the Stockton post office during the month of October The Indians had transmitted $18, 489.27 in October. Of this amount, $18,469.27 was sent to British Indian offices.” This amount was sent in a single month which amounted to 70.30% of the total foreign money orders sent by the residents of 16 other countries living in the Stockton area most of which were Europeans. The next second highest was Japan where $3908.00 were sent. This became a cause of alarm in the US and this issue was raised in the US Congress.

Role of Lala Har Dayal

Lala Har Dayal was born in Delhi in a Hindu “Kaisth” family in 1884. He was a brilliant student. He received his M.A. in English from Government College Lahore and an M.A. in History the next year. Then he went to Oxford University for further studies. He came back to India in 1908 and returned to England again where he published the Bande Matram newspaper. According to British Intelligence documents,

“He was the cleverest of the young Indian extremists in Paris, but he was quite unbalanced in his views and much handicapped by ill health. In April 1911, he was in California and contributed to the Modern Review (July 1911) an excellent article on “India in America,” giving his address as Berkeley, the suburbs of San Francisco where the University of California is situated. In 1912 he was appointed lecturer on Philosophy and Sanskrit at Stanford University.”

In February 1912, he was appointed the General Secretary of the Ghadar Party and the Chief Editor of the Ghadar (Ghadar Di Goonj) newspaper. He wrote revolutionary articles in Ghadar which originally started in Urdu. Later, it was published in Gurmukhi and other India languages. He had lectured on anarchism at Stanford University before he joined the Pacific Coast Hindustani Association. According to Giani Wadhawa Singh, the former Granthi of Stockton Gurdwara, “After this, Lala Har Dayal did not have any correspondence or connection with the Ghadar Party. He died in Philadelphia in 1939. There is no doubt that the foundation of the Ghadar Party was laid down before he joined the party, the work of the

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17 Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna, Meri Ram Kahani, Ed. Rajwinder Singh Rahi (Sangam Publications: Samana, 2012), 79-80
19 Means a scribe in Sanskrit.
20 25 Har Dayal, S9DCID profile in the India Office Library
party went on with full force after he left, but the office work that he did for the party and the work he did for the newspaper for five-and-a-half months will stay alive in the history of the Ghadar Party.”

Har Dayal also addressed meetings in various towns in America in support of the Indian revolutionary movement until March, 1914. Then he was arrested by the authorities of the United States Government, with a view to his deportation as an undesirable alien. Released on bail, he escaped to Switzerland possibly with the help of the Ghadar party. After the war broke out, he joined the Indian National Party, which worked in Berlin under the directions of the German Foreign Office. It seems like his love affair with Germany did not last long. In his book he described his experiences and the reasons that have led him to change his attitude towards British rule in India. Har Dayal writes, “The history of Germany during the last fifty years may be described as the tragedy of a whole society. This nation is utterly sick in head and heart. It has lost its wits, and it has killed its conscience. "Whom the gods destroy, they first make mad." It will take a very long time to restore this demented and demoralised people to health and sanity.”

Har Dayal almost became a mouthpiece of the British government in his later years. He expressed that England has been in the field of creating colonies and France is not far behind. Thus it was a good idea to support them in their endeavor and cooperate with them. He writes, “Among European nations, England has been already in the field for a century, and France has also acquired vast dependencies in Asia and Africa. It is; therefore, wise to co-operate with these nations for the establishment and continuance of good government in Asiatic countries, whatever colour the flag may have.”

In short, he propagated perpetual slavery of India and all the other nations colonized by Great Britain and France. After reading this statement one wonders what kind of mindset he possessed and why he flip-flopped on independence of India and other slave nations. His book leaves little doubt that he was in league with the British intelligence.

Here are the views of Michael O’Dwyer about Lala Har Dayal,

“He arrived in the United States early in 1911, and established himself at Berkeley, California, where seditious movement had been at work for some years to corrupt the Indian immigrants, chiefly Sikhs, of whom several thousand had settled since 1907 along the Pacific coast from Vancouver to San Francisco.

Har Dayal found the ground prepared and at once set to work to sow the seed... The infamous Ghadar newspaper, which openly incited to murder and mutiny and urged all Indians to return to India with express object of murdering the British and causing revolution by any and every means, was started by Har Dayal in 1913.”

Ghadar Party published the first issue of “Ghadar di Gunj” (Echo of Mutiny) in November 1913. Kartar Singh Sarabha wrote in the first issue: "Today there begins 'Ghadar' in foreign lands, but in our country's tongue, a war against the British Raj. What is our name? Ghadar. What is our work? Ghadar. Where will

22 Lala Har Dayal, Forty-four Months in Germany and Turkey (Westminster: P.S. King & Son, Ltd., 1920), 28
23 Lala Har Dayal, Forty-four Months in Germany and Turkey (Westminster: P.S. King & Son, Ltd., 1920), 53
24 Sir Michael O'Dwyer, India As I Knew It (London: Constable & Company, 1925), 186
be the Revolution? In India. The time will soon come when rifles and blood will take the place of pens
and ink."

Modern Hindu historians, especially those under the influence of the Hindu nationalist BJP (Bhartiya
Janata Party) give much credit to people like Har Dyal to push their Hindutiva agenda. He worked with
the Gadharites for less than six months. He seemed to have revolutionary ideas and played an important
role in the formation of the Ghadar movement in its initial phase. However, he did not stick with the
Ghadar ideology very long and made an about turn soon after he left the United States. His views and
deeds are at variance. On the other hand, the Sikh Ghadarites fought fearlessly and their commitment to
the Ghadar movement was unflinching. There were some Hindu and Muslim Ghadarites like Rash Bihari
Bose, V. G. Pingle, Sachindranath Sanyal and Maulana Barkatulla who fought with great passion and paid
a heavy price.

Khushwant Singh, while paying a tribute to Har Dyal writes,

“What made his reputation impregnable was the fact that he was also a revolutionary who spurned
government patronage, directed the Ghadar Movement in its early years in the US and Canada, became
the principal adviser of the German Government’s attempt to foment a revolt against the British Raj
during World War I. Then like his equally distinguished contemporary Veer Savarkar, he took a complete
somersault, apologised for his past errors and pledged loyalty to them... He became an ardent admirer
of the British as a “truthful people... who had a moral and historical mission in India.” The British
government had his pronouncements translated into Hindi and distributed free in India.” 25 This pretty
much sums up his commitment to the Ghadar movement and the cause that he so dearly espoused.

**Ghadar Movement Operations and Plans**

Even though the Ghadar movement originated in the North America, its operational field and primary
target was India. Its primary purpose was to cause a rebellion against the British government in India
and set India free from the British yoke with the help of arms. Its initial goal was to inculcate the Ghadar
thinking in the minds of the people of India and the British Indian army and attack British establishments
using all means, including violence.

It is often said that the Sikhs have been making history, but they have been careless in preserving it. This
is also true of the Ghadar movement. The Ghadar movement was conceived and organized by the Sikhs
in North America, but various communist parties in India, who were not even on the scene for many
more years, have tried to misappropriate it and claim its ownership. The Ghadar movement was not a
communist inspired movement at all. It is true that some communists did join it, but they did so at a
much later stage when the original Ghadar movement was gone for the most part. They were allowed to
join it because of the secular nature of the fight against the British. The fault lies primarily with the Sikhs
who abdicated their responsibility in preserving the Sikh legacy. It is encouraging that the Sikhs have
finally become aware of this issue in the last few years.

The British Indian army was not only settled in India; but also got involved in various war theatres throughout the world where they were ordered to go as British mercenaries. The British in India had hit a sweet spot when it came to getting army recruits from Punjab. They exploited the young men of Punjab and used them as fodder in both World Wars. In order to accomplish their goal, they pitted one community against another in getting maximum number of recruits. Both Muslims and Sikhs were the backbone of the British Indian army. Interestingly, Sikhs, who made only 2% of the total Indian population, provided at least 25% of the military recruits.

While the goal of the Ghadarites was to throw the British out of India as quickly as possible, the princely states tried to outdo each other in sycophancy of the British. They spent enormous amount of money on WWI and WWII and sent a large number of soldiers to international war theatres. The Maharaja of Kapurthala during the visit of Viceroy of India Montagu Chelmsford spared no words for the praise of the Viceroy and told him how his state had contributed more than 4000 recruits towards the war efforts and how he had extended war loans totaling 1.2 million rupees and over 300,000 rupees toward war efforts. The Viceroy, in turn praises him for subverting the Ghadarites in this state, “Your Highness has recently given one more proof, though none was needed, of the loyalty of the Kapurthala State to the British Government. During the recent troublous times through which the Punjab passed as a result of the influx of seditious agitators and returned emigrants the State co-operated whole-heartedly with the Punjab Government in its efforts to expatriate crime and to bring the guilty to justice. The movements of such of these persons as entered the States were kept under careful surveillance, and the efficiency of State Police was demonstrated by the success which was achieved.”

During WWI, the Germans were fishing in the troubled waters of India through Persia and Afghanistan through the tribal areas of the border. This is documented by none other than the infamous General Reginald Dyer (also known as butcher of Amritsar) who writes, “They were pouring their agents, with their lying propaganda, into India via Persia and Afghanistan. Afghanistan, like Persia, was nominally neutral, but she was breaking her neutrality by many open acts of aggression, and was offering every facility in her power to the German agents in their passage through her territories, and thence into the Punjab.” On the other hand, Germany’s ally Turkey was Mahommedan and the Muslims in India were asked by the British to fight against their co-religionists by the British.

According to General Dyer, “These tribes were generally friendly with the British, but Germans had bribed them heavily and had moreover assured them that Germany had turned Islam [sic] and that the Kaiser William himself was a convert to their religion. As the Sarhad tribes were always out for a good thing for themselves, and as they believed the lie about the German conversion, they had allowed themselves to be tricked into helping the Germans.”

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26 Speeches by Lord Chelmsford Viceroy and Governor General of India (Simla: The Government Monotype Press, 1921), 202
28 Border
29 Ibid, 17
General Dyer was a ruthless man who did not hesitate to bend the law or bluff people in order to achieve his goals. When dealing with the lawless rebels near the border of Iran and Baluchistan 1916, he acted as a general when he was not. He writes,

“Meanwhile, though I was not yet a General I determined to act the part. The 28th Light Cavalry made crossed swords for my shoulders and the necessary red tabs. The former were considerably bigger than the regulation pattern, but were otherwise well made. Then Landon and I went off by car to Nasaratatabad.”

Plan to Infiltrate and Attack Military Cantonments

The Ghadarites had infiltrated at least 20 military cantonments in Punjab, UP and other parts of India in order to create a rebellion. However, their first targets were the Lahore and Ferozepur cantonments in Punjab. The soldiers of 23rd Regiment had asked for an earlier date. The soldiers had another reason to be piqued at the British government. They were being sent to other countries as fodder for WWI for the British. The expectation was that once the revolt is launched at these two military bases, it was going to spread in other military bases in India as well. The date for the army revolt was set for the night of February 21, 1915. Contacts were made with the army men in these bases. Due to the treachery of one Kirpal Singh, the plans of revolt were leaked to the police. As a result, most of the Ghadar leaders were arrested and the plan died.

Various groups of revolutionaries had gathered at Ferozepur in large numbers. Bhai Randhir Singh (founder of Akhand Kirtani Jatha) arrived at Ferozepur railway station with a party of about 60 men with him to participate in the revolt. They sang hymns with harmonium as they passed. The white policemen thought they were a singing party and let them pass without any problem. Bhai Randhir Singh was arrested and sent to jail by a special tribunal in the Second Lahore Conspiracy case. He was sentenced to death along with other 23 people by this tribunal. However, due to the intervention of the Viceroy of India Lord Hardinge, only six people were hanged including Kartar Singh Sarabha. Bhai Randhir Singh, along with other 17 people were sent to prison for life. This account is provided by Lord Hardinge (Viceroy of India) himself in his biography, My Indian Years 1910-1916.

“The Lahore Conspiracy gave me much trouble at this time. No less than twenty-four men were condemned to death by a Special Tribunal. I went to Lahore to see the Lieutenant Governor, Sir M. O’Dwyer, and told him categorically that I absolutely declined to allow a holocaust of victims in a case where only six men had been proved to be actually guilty of murder and dacoity. He recommended that only six [sic] of the twenty-four should have their sentences commuted. I agreed to commutation in these cases but submitted the remaining eighteen cases to the judgment of the Law Member. He proved to me conclusively that in the case of all except six actually guilty of murder and dacoity, they had been convicted under a clause of the penal code which could not entail a death sentence.”

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30 Ibid, 50
31 Lord Hardinge, My Indian Years 1910-1916 (Frome and London: Butler and Tanner Ltd., 1949), p. 130
Jallianwala Bagh Massacre

On 10 December 1917, the Viceroy of India Lord Chelmsford appointed a Sedition Committee, popularly known as Rowlatt Committee named after its chairman. Its charter was to investigate and report on the nature and extent of the criminal conspiracies connected with the revolutionary movement in India, and to advise as to the legislation necessary to deal with them. Harbans Singh writes, “... Based on the recommendations of this committee, two bills, popularly called Rowlatt Bills, were published in the Government of India Gazette on 18 January 1919. Mahatma Gandhi decided to organize a satyagrah (non-violent civil disobedience campaign) against the bills. One of the bills became an Act, nevertheless, on 21 March 1919. Call for a countrywide hartal or general strike on 30 March, later postponed to 6 April 1919, was given by Mahatma Gandhi.”

There were riots in Amritsar and Lahore in April 1919 along with “passive resistance” against the Rowlatt Bills that the government had passed. Dr. Saif-ud-Din Kitchlu and Mr. Satya Pal, the two main agitators were called to the Deputy Commissioner’s office, arrested and sent off to Dharamshala (now in Himachal Pradesh) by car. This led to a general strike in Amritsar and mobs attacked some government buildings and banks. They injured and killed a European guard named Robinson. The Town Hall, the telegraph office and the National Bank buildings were wrecked. Two European officials of the bank Mr. Stewart and Mr. Scott were murdered. The crowd was stopped and fired upon near the railway footbridge.

On April 13, 1919, several thousand unarmed Indians, peacefully assembled in Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar, to listen to several prominent local leaders speak out against British colonial rule in India and against the arrest and deportation of Dr. Satya Pal, Dr. Saif-ud-Din Kitchlew, and few others under the unpopular Rowlatt Act. Michael O’Dwyer had declared a martial law which not announced. He probably made some announcements about it in some localities in the city beforehand, but the general population was not aware of it. The political instability made it very difficult for him to stay in Punjab much longer after the Amritsar massacre. He says, “I arrived in India in November, 1885, and was posted to Lahore, the capital of the Punjab. I left Lahore and the Punjab for good in May, 1919.”

General Reginald Dyer brought in fifty riflemen; forty Gurkhas armed with their traditional weapon, the kukris and two armored cars and marched towards the Jallianwala Bagh with a clear intention of killing a large number of people and thus teaching the Punjabis a lesson.

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32 Harbans Singh ‘Jallianwala Bagh Massacre,’ The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism
33 Sir Michael O’Dwyer, India As I Knew It (London: Constable & Company, 1925), 27
Figure 2. Entrance Gate of Jallianwala Bagh

Figure 3. Martyrs Well At Jallianwala Bagh
Sardar Udham Singh’s ashes were brought back from England to India in July 1974. They were paraded throughout Punjab and other parts of India in a specially decorated bus. That bus also visited my college Guru Gobind Singh Republic College, Jandiala, Jalandhar in Punjab. All the students and college staff received the float with great enthusiasm. Various leaders of Punjab accompanied Sardar Udham Singh’s ashes and briefly spoke on that occasion. Among them was S. Amar Singh Dosanjh, the editor of *Akali Patrika*.
“Dyer had a minute glimpse of the assembly of the people in the Bagh where the seventh speaker, Durga Das was speaking from the platform. The earlier six speakers were Rai Ram Singh, Dar Singh, Abdul Majid, Brij Gopi Nath, Hans Raj and Gurbakash Rai. Dyer, who was in independent commands of the force under him, was not to consult anybody at this point of time. He had already made up his mind to act in a way which might be a lesson-giving to the people of Punjab. Not losing even a minute, he at once ordered his sepoys to adopt kneeling position, a usual posture for a soldier to fire. The firing order was given and the numerous volleys of shots began to pierce into the bodies of the people in the Bagh.”

Firing continued for about ten minutes until the ammunition was exhausted. It panicked the crowd and they ran in all directions. Many jumped into the well in the hope that it might save their lives. They were soon drowned. Those who held on for some time drowned under the weight of others. There was no one to pull them out. That well is still present. All the exits and escape routes were blocked by the army. General Dyer personally directed the fire where the crowd was the thickest or in the direction people were rushing in order to save themselves.

General Dyer knew well in advance that people were gathering at the Jallianwala Bagh, but he did nothing to disperse them nor did he give them the chance to escape. The Martial Law was in place, but most people came from villages far away from the city and they were not aware of it.

Ironically many people in England supported General Dyer. Joseph Rudyard Kipling, an India-born British writer who won a Nobel Prize in Literature in 1907, supported the actions of General Dyer. He claimed Dyer was "the man who saved India." He started a benefit fund which raised over 26,000 pounds sterling, including 50 pounds contributed by Kipling himself. The money was presented to Dyer when he settled in England on his retirement. On the other hand, Rabindra Nath Tagore, who later won the Indian Nobel Prize in poetry, condemned this barbarous act and renounced his "Knighthood" that the British Crown had granted him in 1915 by writing this letter:

"Your Excellency,

The enormity of the measures taken by the Government in the Punjab for quelling some local disturbances has, with a rude shock, revealed to our minds the helplessness of our position as British subjects in India. The disproportionate severity of the punishments inflicted upon the unfortunate people and the methods of carrying them out, we are convinced, are without parallel in the history of civilised governments, barring some conspicuous exceptions, recent and remote."

Figure 6. Jallianwala Bagh Memorial
B. G. Horniman writes,

“Floggings were a common feature of the administration of Martial Law in Amritsar as in other areas. The sentences were inflicted by summary courts for trivial offences on trumpery evidence. The public flogging of some men who were alleged to have been concerned in the assault on Miss Sherwood, was an exceptional incident, akin to the crawling order. These men had not been tried or convicted for the crime. They were awaiting trial. But to create an example, they were brought to the scene of the assault, and publicly flogged in the street.\textsuperscript{35}

\textbf{Murder of Michael O’Dwyer by Udham Singh}

Udham Singh was an eye witness to this horrible event and it had a major impact on him. On 30 August 1927 Udham Singh was arrested at Amritsar for possession of unlicensed arms. Some revolvers, a quantity of ammunition, and copies of a prohibited Ghadar Party paper called “Ghadr-di-Gunj” (“Voice or Echo of Revolt”) were confiscated from him. He was prosecuted under section 20 of the Arms Act. It took him another 21 years to take revenge, after he reached England and shot Michael O'Dwyer dead at Caxton Hall in London on March 13, 1940. Udham Singh did not try to fled the scene and took full responsibility of his act of bravery. In fact, he defiantly said,

"I did it because I had a grudge against him. He deserved it. He was the real culprit. He wanted to crush the spirit of my people, so I have crushed him. For full 21 years, I have been trying to wreak vengeance. I am happy that I have done the job. I am not scared of death. I am dying for my country. I have seen my people starving in India under the British rule. I have protested against this, it was my duty. What a greater honour could be bestowed on me than death for the sake of my motherland?"

On 4 June 1940, he was committed to trial, at the Central Criminal Court, Old Bailey, before Justice On 1 April 1940, Udham Singh was formally charged with the murder of Michael O'Dwyer. Atkinson. When the court asked about his name, he replied "Ram Mohammad Singh Azad", (Ram as a Hindu name, Mohammad as a Muslim name and Singh as a Sikh name). Azad means to be free. On 1 April 1940, Udham Singh was formally charged with the murder of Michael O'Dwyer. He was hanged at Pentonville Prison on July 31, 1940.

\textbf{Role of Michael O’Dwyer and General Reginald Dyer}

Michael O'Dwyer, the Lt. Governor of Punjab, was the lynchpin of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. There is quite a bit of controversy about Michael O’Dwyer who approved the actions of General Dyer. Michael O’Dwyer writes, “General Beynon told me he was conveying approval of his action to Dyer and asked if he might add mine. I had at first some hesitation, as Dyer’s action was a military one, but on fuller consideration I thought it advisable to endorse General Beynon’s approval. He then sent the message (by aeroplane, I think) to Dyer.” The fact is this massacre could not have happened without the express approval of Michael O’Dwyer. It was Michael O’Dwyer who had endorsed General Dyer and called the massacre a "correct" action.

\textsuperscript{35} B. G. Horniman, Amritsar and Our Duty to India (London: T. Fisher Unwin, Ltd., 1920), 124-125
There was a curfew order in place in the city. People were afraid to go about their business and kept their businesses and shops closed. General Dyer issued another warning to Punjabis by issuing a notice in Urdu which is translated here:

"You people know well that I am a Sepoy and soldier. Do you want war or peace? If you wish for a war, the Government is prepared for it, and if you want peace, then obey my orders and open all your shops; else I will shoot. For me the battlefield of France or Amritsar is the same. I am a military man and I will go straight. Neither shall I move to the right nor to the left. Speak up, if you want war? In case there is to be peace, my order is to open all shops at once. You people talk against the Government and persons educated in Germany and Bengal talk sedition. I shall report all these. Obey my orders. I do not wish to have anything else. I have served in the military for over 30 years. I understand the Indian Sepoy and Sikh people very well. You will have to obey my orders and observe peace. Otherwise the shops will be opened by force and rifles. You will have to report to me of the Badmash [scoundrel]. I will shoot them. Obey my orders and open shops. Speak up if you want war? You have committed a bad act in killing the English. The revenge will be taken upon you and upon your children."

General Dyer was a military man who looked at even a normal social discord and protest as a ‘military problem’ and tried to deal with it accordingly as if fighting a foreign invading army. One person who fully exposed the Amritsar atrocities was a fearless British editor of Bombay Chronicler, B. G. Horniman. He writes,

“General Dyer said he fired, and fired well, because he did not want anyone to have to shoot again in the Punjab. What followed on the Amritsar battue— and it is not unreasonable to argue that it was a result— was wholesale shooting and bombing of unarmed people in other parts of the Punjab, and six weeks' agony under Martial Law."  

A British woman Miss Sherwood lived in Amritsar and was attacked by the mob few days before the April 13, 1919 incident. She was saved by the local residents who lived on the same street. General Dyer issued a “crawling order” and made all the people to crawl on all four who happened to pass through that street. This was a humiliating act for the honorable people who lived on that street or had to go through that street.

**Bombing of Gujranwala on April 14, 1919**

The Amritsar massacre is a well-known fact. However, the Gujranwala bombing, which is equally serious is often overlooked by the historians. This occurred during the martial law which was declared by Michael O’Dwyer with the approval of the Indian government (Montagu Chelmsford, Viceroy of India).

On April 14, 1919 well over 100 people perished in Gujranwala when three airplanes of Royal Air Force dropped bombs on civilians and fired machine gun rounds from the air. The bombing operation was carried out by two R. A. F. officers, Major Carberry and Lieutenant Dodkins. A bomb fell near the Khalsa School hostel and injured one student. There were serious protests in Amritsar, Lahore, Gujranwala and Kasur after the Rowlatt Bills were passed. On April 14, 1919, the telegraph office, post office, and

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36 Source: http://www.tutorgigpedia.com
37 undiscriminating slaughter of defenseless or unresisting crowds
railway station and collector’s office, a church, a school and a railway shed were set on fire. There were also some minor incidents at some other places. A Commission called “Hunter Commission” was appointed by the British Indian government to investigate the incidents of Punjab. An independent committee was appointed by the Indian National Congress which had collected mass evidence by talking to a large number of people, but it was not heard by the Hunter Commission. B. G. Horniman adds,

“If Dyerarchy in Amritsar had begun and ended with this incident, the disgrace to Britain would have been sufficiently deep. But it was brought to still further depths by the iniquities which followed during the six weeks of administration of Martial Law under Dyer, with the continued approval, knowledge, and co-operation of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, and also the Government of India, who had given the Lieutenant Governor a blank cheque and provided him, by a series of proclamations and ordinances, with unlimited power to override the ordinary law and destroy liberty.”

Qutubuddin Aziz writes,

“With Martial Law clamped on the Punjab by its sadist Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, who hated all educated Indians and relished inflicting the vilest humiliation and atrocities on the locals, the bloody year 1919 also witnessed the ruthless bombing of the small town of Gujranwala, barely 60 miles from Lahore, by three war-planes of the nascent British Royal Air Force the next day after British guns had mowed down unarmed Indians in the killing field of Jalianwala Bagh in Amritsar.”

The Civil and Military Gazette provided an “official report” in which the government provided its own version and downplayed the incident. According to the report only nine people were killed due to airplane bombing, twenty seven were wounded by police and aeroplanes. The report was obviously dishonest which tried to convince people that dropping of at least three 20-lbs bombs and 255 rounds of machine-gun fired at close quarters into crowds of people killed only nine people.

**Akali Morchas Joined by Former Ghadarites**

There is enough evidence available that even those Sikhs, who had served in the British army in India, Singapore, Hong Kong, etc., were quite dismayed by the treatment meted out to them by the Canadian government and citizens. So much so that they had burned their military discharge certificates and war medals that they had won in the British Indian army in different war theatres. Someone named J.A.W (who seems to be an influential person), writes,

“After a study of the files – which unfortunately are somewhat meager – referring to the Indian agitation in Canada looking to the general movement in Europe that the situation in Canada and specially on the West Pacific Coast is such that it behooves us, to at least keep well in touch with the Anti-British agitation there. In a recent conversation with a well-educated Indian gentleman – who had visited the locality – he told me that the agitation has worked up the Sikh labourers there to such an extent that those of those of them who had been soldiers in the Indian army, and had War Medals, and Army

39 Ibid, 121-122
40 DAWN, Pakistan, November 4, 2001
Discharge Certificates, in their possession, burnt them on a bonfire at a public meeting, at the same time denouncing the British in violent terms."  

There are some intelligence documents that shed light on the former Ghadarits joining various Akali morchas or agitations. Many Gadharite Sikhs, who returned to India during the peak of the Ghadar movement, joined the Akalis against the British government after the Ghadar movement was faded. There were several Akali morchas or agitations in the 1920s which included Nanakana Sahib Morcha (1921), Chabian Da Morcha (1921-22, agitation related to the keys of most important Sikh shrines), Guru Ka Bagh Morcha (1922), and Jaito Da Morcha (1923).

“6. Mit Singh. – Mit Singh, a prominent member of the Ghadr Party, who recently returned to India from America (vide paragraphs 5, Weekly Report, dated 29th August) has been appointed a Jathedar at Muketsar.”

The CID (Criminal Investigation Department) was keeping tabs on them. “5. Arrival of four Akalis in Shanghai for secret work. – Four Akalis, two of whom named Harnam Singh and Gurdit Singh alias Gopha Singh, were associated with the notorious Gurdit Singh of the Komagata Maru fame, are reported to have been in Shanghai since May last, “with the object of working secretly with the Sikhs”. Harnam Singh is still there, but Gurdit Singh has gone to Mexico. Further inquiries are being made.”

**Murder of Michael O’Dwyer and Ghadar Party Connection**

There seems to be a direct connection between the murder of Michael O’Dwyer and the Ghadar Party of California. The fact is FBI was tipped off by an Indian about a possible attempt on the life of Michael O’Dwyer which in turn, had warned Michael O’Dwyer in writing about the pending danger to his life from the Sikh Ghadarites in California. In fact, FBI had advised Michael O’Dwyer to stay home if all possible and he must go out, he should do so under a police guard. The murder of Michael O’Dwyer seems to be planned by the Ghadar party, but it was Udham Singh who actually executed that plan very carefully and without divulging any details to any person.

The British India Office Library released some documents in 1997 which included many documents related to the Ghadar movements and Udham Singh, One of the secret reports from the British Consulate says,

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41 J.A.W., *Notes on the Personal View* (part of the India Office Library Archives) May 22, 1912

42 Extract from Weekly Report of the Director, Intelligence Bureau of the Home Department, Government of India Dated Simla, 26th September 1923

43 Extract from Weekly Report of the Director, Intelligence Bureau of the Home Department, Government of India Dated Simla, 17 October, 1923.
“Local police state that they have received report from an Indian informant that Indian extremists in California may be contemplating attempt on the life of Mr. O’Dwyer. In view of the criminal record of many Indians in California police consider this report should not be disregarded.

I have requested the police to take protective measures but they maintain that it is impossible to guarantee that attack by some fanatic may not take place. I am also consulting F.B.I. In the meantime all reasonable precautions will be taken.

Repeated to Washington telegram No. 62.”

There is another similar coded message,

“IMMEDIATE.

Your telegram No. 22 [of the 22nd March] concerning threats to Mr. Dwyer’s life]

If you think advisable arrange for Mr. O’Dwyer to stay in his house or other safe place with police guard until position is clarified. If after consultation with police and or F. B. I, you think Mr. O’Dwyer should take leave local or otherwise you may instruct him accordingly. As we see it no question of prestige is involved. It would be deplorable if any incident were to occur.

Repeated to Washington No. 462.”

Unfortunately, the historical facts are so twisted and beaten out of shape by some vested interests that the whole Ghadar movement is presented as if it is brainchild of the Communists or inspired by its principles. The Ghadar movement was started and dominated by the Sikhs, but they welcomed any other Indian communities into its fold regardless of religious beliefs or practices. This was a joint effort by the Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus and its primary purpose was to drive the British out of India by force.

In conclusion, the Ghadar movement lasted only 6-7 years, but it had a lasting effect on the Indian freedom struggle. In almost Akali morchas there were ex-Ghadarites who had returned from USA or Canada. Sikhs, the real heroes of the India’s freedom are being ignored by the modern historians who are either brainwashed by the Hindu nationalism or by the communists who have a tacit collusion with the Congress party and have lived off doles thrown at them by China and former USSR. By the time the Babbar Akali movement was suppressed in the Doaba region of Punjab, it has spread in other countries like Afghanistan, US and Canada. It continued with great strength until at least 1926.

In summary, all the sacrifices made by the Ghadarites played a key role towards the freedom of India. It is sad that the history is being sliced, diced, and corrupted by some modern historians in India to please one political party or another or to push one’s own political agenda. One needs to look at this issue in a

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44 No. 23, March 22nd, 1940, Decypher. Mr. Butler (San Francisco) 22nd March 1940. This message seems to refer to some earlier communication because the murder of Michel O’Dwyer had taken place on March 13, 1940.
45 Outward Telegram – This document is the Property of His Britannic Majesty’s Government, and should be kept under lock and key. (A 2127/45) Limited Distribution, Cypher telegram to Mr. Butler (San Francisco), Foreign Office. 23rd March, 1940. 6:30PM No. 4.
more objective manner and investigate the truth. During any sincere and diligent research, one would find that the roles played by the Ghadarites acted as a trigger point which unleashed many political events and each one of them brought India closer to its freedom. It was a joint effort by the Sikhs, Hindus and the Muslims, but the Ghadar movement was spearheaded by the Sikhs and thrust and trajectory was also provided by the Sikhs in which the Khalsa Pacific Diwan Society (Gurdwara Sahib Stockton) played a key role as it provided the necessary refuge, infrastructure and support. There are hundreds, perhaps thousands of unsung Ghadarite heroes whose names are never seen in the newspapers or history books, but they too played a key role in the freedom of India.

It is quite disturbing that there are too many so-called “melas” (festivals) that are being organized in name of the Ghadri Babas throughout the US and Canada. Unfortunately, these have nothing to do with the Ghadri Babas because these festivals are all about business, dance, merry-making and self-promotion. In fact, they do great injustice to our forefathers. Sikhs should shun and totally discard such fake memorials which not only belittle the sacrifices of the Ghadri Babas, but also twist our history. Sikhs need to wake up and reclaim their rich heritage.

There has also been a positive development lately. Two Sikh centennial scholarly conferences are being organized by Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society (Stockton Gurdwara Sahib in California). It is a step in the right direction in which almost 30 historians and top-notch scholars from the East and West are presenting their papers related to the Ghadar movement. Similar efforts are also taking place in other parts of the US and Canada. These efforts leave no doubt in anyone’s mind that the real heroes of the Ghadar movements were the Sikhs who suffered the most for the freedom of India.

About the Author: Dr. Tarlochan Singh Nahal is a historian and independent research scholar. He received an M.A. in English from Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. He obtained his Ph.D. in Political Science the US under the supervision of late Dr. Noel Q. King, then Prof. Emeritus, UC Santa Cruz, California. Dr. Nahal is a Sr. Staff Technical Writer in the high tech industry in California. His granduncle S. Mihan Singh was member of the Ghadar Party in California who came to the US around 1910 and passed away in Stockton, Californai in 1963. Dr. Nahal is the author of “Religion and Politics in Sikhism: The Khalsa Perspective,” published by Singh Brothers, Amritsar, India. Dr. Nahal is currently doing some research on ancient Punjab. He can be reached at tnahal99@yahoo.com.

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