

Ghadar Party *Reminiscences*

D. CHENCHIAH

Edited by :
Parminder Singh

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Publisher:

**Desh Bhagat Yadgar Committee
Jalandhar**

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Price: Rs. 50/-

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Printed at:

Printwell, 146, Industrial Focal Point, Amritsar

INTRODUCTION

I

After the first war of independence in 1857, the Ghadar movement of 1914-15 was the first spectacular anti-imperialist upsurge which, in many respects, took qualitatively cogent and systematic initiative in formulating the agenda of the Indian people for their liberation from the British Raj, consciously put its human stock in the cauldron of fierce and militant war against the imperialist rule, and did not shirk from sacrifices leading to death penalties, imprisonments and confiscation of properties. Besides there being a commonality of name between these two historical times i.e. Ghadar, the participants in these wars were primarily from the peasant stock and, in the first instance, all and, in the second a majority had a military background.

The Ghadar movement of 1914-15, though started by the immigrants- mainly Punjabis- to the pacific coast of United States of America and Canada, rose because of the experiences of economic and social distress that they had to pass through as peasants in their native land. This distress of the peasantry was mainly a result of the revenue and land policy of the British Raj in terms of the *handobast* of land as enunciated and implemented by it for collecting revenue and various other levies from the peasants. One easily discernible effect of these revenue policies was the dwindling of the land holdings per peasant household and also a visible increase in the number of peasants turning into mere tenants. According to one estimate, as mentioned in Waryam Singh Sandhu's *Ghadar Lehar Di Gatha (Legendary Narrative of Ghadar Movement)*, the number of tenants increased five folds between the years 1872-73 to 1902-03. Similarly

the average land holding per peasant household contracted from 8-12 acres to 3-8 acres. The increase in the number of the tenants and decrease in the size of the land holdings was directly the result of the rise in the number of indebted peasants and their inability to repay their debts to the money lenders. Professor Puri in his book *Ghadar Movement: A Short History* has taken recourse to Barrier's data in which it is shown that 120,000 acres of land was sold or mortgaged during one fiscal year of 1886 and by 1891 four million acres of land was mortgaged. Though Malcolm Darling in his *Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt* argues that increase in debt is essentially because of the availability of credit and therefore of prosperity, the indebtedness of peasantry essentially underlines the agrarian crisis emanating from the inability of the peasantry to pay the land revenue and other sundry charges such as police and military levies, upkeep and bringing up of government horses and, above all, water charges. The contradiction of the model of agricultural system conceived and implemented by the British rule becomes visible in the simultaneous increase in the land prices and the widespread indebtedness giving way to distress sale of land. The other symptoms of distress were the frequent occurrences of the famine and the spread of deadly diseases like plague. The causes behind a calamity like famine lie in the continued export of wheat to England, more than the quantity imported from America and Russia into that country, even during the years of scarcity of agricultural produce. The handling of the situation arising out of the spread of plague by resorting to violent methods on the part of the administration led to unrest and spread of protests among the people.

In order to find a way out of this deepening economic crisis, the Punjabi peasants, in the first instance, went to Hong Kong, Shenghai, Malaya etc; and from there, after being told by the Chinese about the prospect of earning more, went to the pacific coast of America and Canada. These people being mainly illiterate served first as guards, watchmen or policemen in Hong Kong or Shinghai and as labourers in factories and lumber mills in America and Canada. Although they emigrated to the New World (as it was know at that time) to earn the

livelihood and to ease the pressure of economic distress on their families back in India, the treatment meted out to them surely resulted in the fostering of a new consciousness. There they, first of all, experienced racial discrimination because of their 'uncultured' and 'uncouth' way of life from the stand point of the then developing New World and also because of the fear in the minds of the white workers of being displaced by these hardworking people. These conditions of deprivation and discrimination seen in the context of the right of freedom enjoyed by the natives and their sense of belongingness to a nation gave rise to a sentiment of anger in the minds of the immigrants against the British colonial power. This new consciousness can be seen to be behind a large number of Punjabis settled in America getting organised under the banner of Ghadar Party founded for a violent overthrow of the imperialist British Government in India. This vision of the Ghadar Party pertaining to an armed insurrection particularly in the Indian Army against the British Government can also be attributed to the presence of a large number of ex-army personnel amongst the immigrants. Another reason can be traced back to the paradigm of Sikh culture and tradition based upon the notion of sacrifice and valour that the army recruits were made to imbibe after joining the military service. This was done by the army authorities in order to enliven in them the idea of belonging to a martial and, therefore, distinct race. A close ideological affinity was sought to be established between the concept of a martial race and loyalty to the throne. It may be characterized as an ironical twist that the notions of sacrifice and valour so assiduously cultivated by the colonial authorities turned to become the cultural foundation of the Ghadar movement when the Punjabi immigrants in the New World encountered the above-mentioned conditions of deprivations and discriminations.

II

The signification of the Ghadar movement discussed above and the causes lying behind its rise has been put under strain by a section of historiographical writings which have come out in the recent past. One kind of historiography, which claims for itself as

belonging to the mainstream position i.e. the nationalist historiography, places it on the margins of national struggle because of its inability to achieve its aim in the practical sense of the term. Under this trend the Ghadarites are praised not as persons equipped with or having a potential to develop into an ideological strength required for achieving the goal of the freedom of India but only as brave and sincere individuals ready to lay down their lives. The second trend of historiography, which is of recent origin, has attempted to see the Ghadar heroes as belonging to a sectarian understanding of Sikhism and, it has, therefore, tried to communalise this movement. In order to attempt to comprehend the importance of the ideological thrust of the Ghadar movement, to see its expanse and also its intellectual foundations and potentialities, and to bring it out of the above mentioned historiographic approaches, the attempt should be to get hold of as much sources throwing light on this movement as possible. These sources may range from the articles and poems written by the Ghadarites themselves, their analysis, however rudimentary, of the contemporary trends in the nationalist struggle found in their writings, assessment about them in governmental records to the proceedings in the courts etc. Another significant source pertains to the memoirs of the participants belonging either to the core or the periphery of the Ghadar movement. These memoirs preserved in written or oral forms open up not only new store of information in terms of events or persons but also have the potential to become source material for developing an evaluation of this movement in the meta critical sense of the term. The meanings embedded in these memoirs or reminiscences should, of course, be not understood or presented as having an absolute truth value, but must be comprehended in relation to other sources or historiographical discourses or approaches. At the same time these memoirs or reports, nevertheless, constitute a significant and many a times an authentic source for developing an analytical understanding about any historical epoch. Their significance also lies in their peculiar form containing a rich material about the lesser known and sometimes hidden facts about the *dramatis personae* involved in the historical events being talked about or

described in them. In this sense they essentially humanise the otherwise analytical historiographical discourse.

The memoirs of Mr. D. Chenchiah which contain his experiences, his attitudes bordering upon analytical reasoning, his narration of the beginning of the Ghadar movement and the subsequent developments and, moreover, his presentation of different participants both in terms of their concrete life patterns and ideological stances, enrich our understanding about the Ghadar movement. They also open up new horizons for its significative comprehension so far as the human material involved in its genesis and development is concerned. A brief analytical note upon its signification and significance which follows, is attempted in order to respond to certain issues having been raised in connection with the making and development of the Ghadar movement.

III

Born in 1890 at Kanigiri in Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh, Darsi Chenchiah (also spelt as Chenchayya) went to United States to study B.Sc. (Agriculture) at the California University, Berkeley. Professor Puri in his *Ghadar Movement: A Short History* refers to the fact that he was one of the six students from different parts of India who responded to the offer of scholarships which were instituted in the name of Guru Gobind Singh by Baba Jawala Singh and others for higher studies in American Universities. But the biographical sketch in *National Biography* does not mention this fact and merely states that in America he came under the influence of Lala Har Dayal. He himself writes in his memoirs that he started working for the Ghadar Party there, was sent by it to Burma for organising Ghadar there in the army and police units, and was imprisoned and sent to India as a prisoner.

After his release from the prison in 1919, he joined the Congress Party. He remained a member of this Party upto 1935 but could never subscribe to Gandhi's philosophy and his brand of politics. In 1936

he joined the Socialist Party only to leave it in 1940 to become a member of the Communist Party of India (CPI). He was deeply interested in the welfare of the workers and, therefore, remained president of the labour union of the Simpson Company in Madras. He was again sent to prison in 1942 for organising a workers strike.

Chenchiah had a modern outlook towards religion and was against superstitions. In this connection he stood for the abolition of *purnit* system. He remained associated with theosophical society and Brahma Samaj as well.

Along with his wife Subhadramma he remained active in the field of social reform. He organised Hindu Destitute Young Women's Orphanage and helped the prostitutes to be rehabilitated in life. Besides contributing to women's education, he encouraged widow remarriage. He died on 30th December, 1964.

IV

A. The first issue which emerges in the first part of these reminiscences is that of the relationship between the intellectuals supposed to be guiding the Ghadar movement which was in the making at that time and the participating people who were primarily workers in the factories and the farms at that time.

Chenchiah's reminiscences begin with the coming together of the Indian students first in two different hostels, one for the Punjabi and the other for the non-Punjabi students. They eventually shifted to a single hostel named Na'anda Hostel after the name of the world famous seat of learning in ancient India. Lala Har Dayal is also mentioned to be living there towards the end of 1912 and the beginning of 1913. An interesting fact emerges from part I of these reminiscences that there existed some differences between Punjabi and non-Punjabi students on account of cultural backgrounds. For the resolution of these differences, a joint meeting was called. Lala Har Dayal addressed this meeting and impressed the students with his call

to liberate India from the yoke of British rule and the political necessity thereof. In this meeting it was Mr. Jatindra Nath Lahiri, a Bengali student with a background of having remained an active participant in the terrorist movement in his province, who is shown to have convinced Lala Har Dayal of the need to make the Punjabis to fight for India's freedom. Lahiri showed it to be the only means to strengthen the struggle for freedom as they were on the side of the Britishers during the Ghadar of 1857. From Chenchiah's memoirs it can be inferred that it was Mr. Jatindra Nath Lahiri who prompted and prepared Lala Har Dayal for the role that he eventually played in the Ghadar movement. While talking about the process of finalising the plan of the impending Ghadar in these memoirs, it is again Lala Har Dayal and Jatindra Nath Lahiri who are seen to be actively engaged in conceptualising it and giving it a concrete form. In the same way the first part of the plan of the Ghadar, which focused upon its initiation in Kashmir and reasons behind this decision, is mentioned in these reminiscences as being the handiwork of the intellectuals in the movement comprising the students and Lala Har Dayal.

The reading of the above stated references seems to take us to an inference that in the conceptualization and planning of the Ghadar, the intellectually active rein was in the hands of persons like Lala Har Dayal and Lahiri. They seem to be the active agents with reference to the persons who were required to implement the plan in the passive sense of the term. The attempt to bring in this idea under discussion is not to pass a judgement upon the veracity or otherwise of the facts recorded in this connection. Our attempt, in fact, is concerned with the philosophical idea of truth in statements given by an observer as a subjective being. Mr. Chenchiah has brought forth in black and white what he actually observed or he directly experienced. In another sense his report belongs to his perception of what he saw or passed through. The perceptual truthfulness of a historical event does not preclude other aspects or details which escape the observer's perceptual sight. A historical event does not occur at a strictly delimited conceptualisation of space and time. The making of a significant historical event is complex in the sense that a single

participant's perception does not help to reach its historiographical truthfulness and signification. In order to reach it, an analysis arising out of a complex interaction between its various aspects is what is required. Only this analytical exercise is capable of overcoming the limitations of the renderings of a historical event or movement in the oral sense of the term. A comprehensive analytical exercise, nevertheless, takes into consideration the value of a pool of information ingrained in oral historiography. This analytical exercise does not belittle it but, in turn, enriches the historical meaning of an event or a movement by bringing under analysis personalised information also and the value judgement provided by it. In this sense memoirs, reminiscences, or other kinds of oral records help in expanding the already given historiographical knowledge.

It is in this context that the relationship between the intellectuals and the common participating persons in the Ghadar movement should be gauged. In almost all the historiographical discourses on the genesis and development of the Ghadar movement in the United States in particular, the principal force engaged in organising it was understood to be first the scattered bodies of immigrant workers in different parts of the United States on or nearer to its western coast and then the apex body christened as Hindi Association of Pacific Coast. In these discourses an intellectual like Lala Har Dayal was seen to be a person invited simply to help them. The emphasis upon practical activity for India's liberation, no doubt, helped them to reject Bhai Parmanand's suggestion to limit their plan to only inviting the Indian students on scholarships for preparing them ideologically for the overthrow of the British rule. But the inputs by Lala Har Dayal in the sphere of ideas certainly strengthened and further developed their focus upon the practical activities. Similarly the position in Chenchiah's reminiscences centres around the primacy given to the contribution of Lala Har Dayal and Lahiri. In real terms, if we combine the inputs in these two kinds of discourses, the relationship between the intellectual leaders like Lala Har Dayal and other activists becomes dialectical. Both of these parts of the Ghadar movement strengthened each other and in the process made the

conceptualisation and praxis of the Ghadar movement gain in its richness and reach. Chenchiah's reminiscences can contribute in a significant manner in developing a comprehensive understanding of the discourse of the Ghadar movement if read and analysed alongwith the work done in the different bodies of the workers and other activities of the Punjabi immigrants. The bringing in of the cultural and religious background of these immigrants in this interactive exercise would further enrich our understanding of the Ghadar movement. The depth of this dialectical interaction can not be fully measured without a reference to Ramnath Puri, P.S. Khankhoje, Tarak Nath Das and the ideological relationship that their writings had with those of Krishnji Varma, Madame Cama, Bhupendra Nath Dutt and V.D. Savarkar.

B. The most interesting part of Chenchiah's reminiscences is his description of Lala Har Dayal as a person. These pages lead us to have an insight into the inner being of Lala Har Dayal who had always endeavoured and succeeded to living a life in accordance with his ideas and that too effortlessly. His carelessness about his personal needs like good, warm clothes in a cold country, shoes through which rain water could not enter, or for money required for basic needs of life underscores a personality which was miles away from a way of life commensurate with the dominant pattern of life in a modern industrial society. His aversion for the predatory nature of the imperialist stage of the capitalist development got translated into his carelessness about his material comforts. Lala Har Dayal is shown like those persons in the anarchist movement in the Western world who had rejected everything bourgeois or every institution or tradition of the prevailing dominant system. He was not a backward looking spiritualist brag but a forward looking democrat committed to fight for the freedom of the Indian people. Lala Har Dayal's careless life concerned primarily with the arena of ideas is brought into sharp focus in these memoirs by comparing it with another pattern of life which is dedicated only to the planning of everything and its practical execution. This second pattern of life was that of Jatindra Nath Lahiri. He brought with him strict discipline both in matters of body and

organization which was the hallmark of the Bengali freedom fighters mentioned here as terrorists. According to Chenchiah's reminiscences both of these life patterns were not opposed but complementary to each other. Chenchiah said that Lahiri's commitment to vigorous discipline both in personal and organisational matters proved very useful for the building of the organisation around the issue of Ghadar. It was again Lala Har Dayal's inspiring ideas and speeches which made Chenchiah what he proved to be in his march to Burma and later on during his incarceration in different jails in Singapore and India.

C. Another important fact which attracts our attention is the selfless lives that the Ghadarites lived. The conditions that they passed through and withstood while in military custody in Singapore could have been borne by men of steel only. To live in absolutely dark rooms without any ventilation and also without the provisions for basic personal hygiene for months together and then to maintain mental balance required, to say the least, super human strength. The physical conditions in these barracks and the humiliations that these patriots had to endure, expose not only the inhuman and cruel face of imperialist rule but also bring forth the heroic qualities and steadfast commitment to the ideas of freedom in our Ghadar heroes. The most spectacular instance of self sacrifice for the protection of one's comrades is that of Bhai Balwant Singh Granthi who took upon himself the charges for which Chenchiah was accused of. He did so in order to save Chenchiah from being hanged which finally resulted in his (Bhai Balwant Singh's) hanging.

The paradigm of selfless sacrifice in the Ghadar movement as exemplified here in the instance of Bhai Balwant Singh Granthi is central to the significance by virtue of which it is known or understood. The heroic fight that our Ghadari Babas gave in most difficult conditions prompted Professor Randhir Singh to draw a parallel between the Ghadar movement and the Paris commune of 1871. Professor Randhir Singh, in his lecture delivered at Mela Ghadari Babian Da in 1992 made the audience remember that Karl

Marx characterised Paris commune as a revolutionary event despite his reservations about the correctness or otherwise of the decision of the proletariat to embark on the path of armed insurrection at that historical juncture. Karl Marx did so on account of the heroic praxis of the working class and stood by it. Similarly, Professor Randhir Singh further said that the praxis of the Ghadarites in the most trying circumstances and their sacrifices makes this movement also a revolutionary occurrence in the history of our freedom struggle.

D. A significant understanding pervading in the reminiscences of Chenchiah is that of the characterisation of Ghadar movement as a nationalist project. In this characterisation there is no place for comprehending it as a movement launched or organised by the people who claimed to belong to a distinct and sectarian religious identity. This understanding of the Ghadar movement without any communal overtones comes out on account of the absence of the language of communalism in the discourse of these memoirs. The ease with which conceptual terms like 'Punjabee' and 'Sikhs' are used interchangeably bears witness to the fact that a term denoting a religion did not carry a communitarian meaning bordering upon communalism in a discourse which lies outside the discourses like those of Singh Sabha meant to chalk out a distinct religious identity. At people's level such communal meanings did not exist at all.

E. These reminiscences are full of information about the Burma plan of the Ghadar Party. These pages are replete with information about what they planned, and which deficiencies were there in that plan. But these pages are more valuable for an analysis of the persons entrusted with the duty to execute these plans. Chenchiah wrote, without any compunction, about the personality of Jodh Singh who was the leader of the group sent to Burma. Jodh Singh's mental weakness ultimately led him to turn approver. But, again, the limitation of a single man's memory comes to the fore when we see that the same Jodh Singh, after the pricking of his conscience, refused to depose as a prosecution witness in another case in America. As Sohan Singh Josh writes in his *Hindustan Ghadar Party: A Short*

History, the same Jodh Singh prepared himself for any eventually, refused to be on the side of the prosecution for securing his stay in America, and ultimately turned insane and died in an alien land.

Another important information in this book which needs further probe is Chenchiah's comments upon Singapore mutiny by the Muslim Rajput soldiers of the British army. He characterized them as Muslim fanatics and was not sure, while writing his memories of Ghadar movement, of the connection of that uprising with the Ghadar Party. These memories about Singapore Uprising are neither, strictly speaking, memories nor constitute an authentic report as these were written on the basis of somebody else's reporting. This part, therefore, needs further probe.

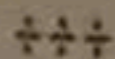
The most significant piece of information in these reminiscences is that of Sun Yet Sen's characterisation of British imperialism and the significant position, in his opinion, that India occupied in the international arena of national liberation struggles at that time. British empire enjoyed prestige and was secure as a leader of the international imperialist system because a large country like India with its rich natural wealth and huge man power was its colony. This statement given to Chenchiah by Sun Yet Sen is pregnant with serious and multifaceted meanings if placed in the context of the history of colonial period ranging from the rise of modern imperialist regimes in the West to the present times.

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Note: Wherever required some words or punctuation marks have been changed in order to affect minor grammatical changes. The changed words have been placed in brackets. (Ed)

THE GHADAR PARTY : REMINISCENCES

PART I

The last week of December, 1912* saw the birth of the Ghadar movement at Berkely, U.S.A. I remember this vividly, since the seeds were sown for this movement a week after my arrival at Berkeley, which is 12 miles from San Francisco.

There were about thirty Indian students in the University of California, Berkeley at that time, comprising mostly Punjabees and Bengalees. They were living in two hostels started by them: (i) Punjabee Hostel and (ii) Non-Punjabee Hostel. I was attracted to the Punjabee Hostel, since I learnt that the great Indian leader, Lala Har Dayal, was residing there. I used to read his articles in the Modern Review, and I was attracted to him for his progressive ideas. When I went in search of him at Berkeley, I was directed to the Punjabee Students Hostel. But I soon found that I was not "welcome" to these students. I was surprised at their attitude towards me, a new arrival. They told me that there was one more hostel where Madrasees and other Non-Punjabee students were living. I went to this hostel and I was welcomed by them. So, I joined this hostel.

I soon found that these two Hostels contained students of two different political ideologies in which they sincerely and intensely believed. All the Indian students were agreed as to the emancipation of India from foreign rule. As regards the methods to be employed for achieving the same, they were poles apart. The Punjabee students

* Though there are different views about the actual date and place of the founding of the Party, but according to Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna, the Ghadar Party was launched in the last week of March, 1913 at Sacramento. This is more or less the accepted view now. (ed)

believed in the overthrow of the British rule in India by armed revolt and they were ready for all the sacrifices and sufferings involved in such a revolt. But the Non-Punjabee students believed in non-violent methods. These were mostly Bengalee students who first went to Japan to study sciences and industries, only to be utterly disappointed. So they drifted to U.S.A. where they had no language trouble and where they could earn for their maintenance, while prosecuting their studies in the universities. They wanted to devote their attention to studies only, pass the examinations, return to India with a loyal, political record and enter government service. Thus they hoped to improve their prospects in life. At the same time, they wanted to serve the cause of freedom, if they could. I liked these ideas myself and I liked their hostel.

But it was soon clear to me, that these differences in ideologies were dividing the students more and more and bringing them to a clash with each other. At that time, there were two Indian leaders, Bhai Parmanand and Lala Har Dayal, who alone could advise students to patch up their differences. They suggested that a meeting of all the Indian students in the California University should be called and that they would address them and thus explore ways and means to unite them. The meeting was held in the Punjabee Hostel, just a week after I arrived at Berkeley, in the last week of December, 1912. Mr. Har Dayal addressed us. He was an eloquent speaker. It was the first time that I heard such a great speaker, and met such a great patriot and revolutionary. He exposed the British imperialism, and the harm it was doing to India and to the world at large. He spoke about the urgent necessity for destroying it in the interests of humanity. He was a great critic and his arguments were quite convincing. He pointed out that India was the heart and soul of British imperialism, but for India, British empire would have been nowhere. Therefore, he exhorted us that it was the sacred mission thrown on us to wipe out the British rule in India and thus rescue the humanity from this demon. He also told us that the progressive people of the world were looking to us, the Indians, to fulfill our historic duty. He appealed to us, the Indian youth, and impressed (upon) us to undertake this noble task.

He told us that there was no better education, no greater ideal in life and no nobler religion than to destroy the British imperialism. He ended his inspiring address with: "Prepare yourselves to become great patriots and wonderful warriors. Great suffering and sacrifice are required of you. You may have to die in this revolutionary cause. Anybody can be a collector or an engineer or a Barrister or a Doctor. What India needs today is warriors of freedom. Better death in that noble cause than living as slaves of the British Empire".

This thrilling speech made us spell-bound. One of the students who was thus influenced by him was Mr. Jitendra Nath Lahiri, a Bengalee post-graduate student. He had arrived in U.S.A. just recently like me. His great part in the terrorist movement of Bengal was unknown to us then. He was keenly watching the reactions of each student to the inspiring call of Lala Har Dayal.

Mr. Jitendra Nath Lahiri M.Sc. may be still alive. He was living in 1935 in Serampore* (?) a town situated about 40 miles from Calcutta. He was then the superintendent of belt manufacturing company. I remember to have come across his name, as a candidate for M.L.A. during the last general elections. He may be an M.L.A. of West Bengal legislature today. He is credited with the theory of "Bravest dead is the safest" to the Bengali terrorist and proved it by shooting the then governor of Bengal in Anderson Hall, Calcutta (in) round about 1905, in a public meeting.

Mr. Lahiri was the only student who pointed out certain incorrect notions of Har Dayal. The hot, hot discussion that followed sowed the seeds of the Ghadar movement in U.S.A. It is like this: Har Dayal criticized the religious leaders in India and particularly Swami Vivekananda, who was recently inspiring the youth of India. He pointed out that he had read all the public lectures of the Swami Ji in India about souls and gods and the world after death, but not a word against the blood-stained British rule in India, and therefore,

* When Mr. D. Chenchiah is not sure of his facts either on account of forgetfulness or lack of proper information, he puts a (?) mark at that point. (ed)

called him a coward. Mr. Lahiri took objection to this. He contended that Swami Ji was just the opposite of what Har Dayal remarked. He said that he knew, that in the private and secret talks, Swami Ji spoke against the British Rule and inspired his followers with the revolutionary ideas, to dare and to die, if necessary, in destroying the British Rule in India. Under the then political conditions in India, Mr. Lahiri said, the Swami Ji could not do anything openly. He praised the patriotic favour and the great courage of Swami Ji and called him a brave patriotic leader. In contrast to Swami Ji, Lahiri called Har Dayal a coward, in so much as he ran away from India and imprisonment. To make speeches in U.S.A., which is about twelve thousand miles from British India, cannot be termed brave. Thus, he criticised Lala Har Dayal's prejudices and weaknesses.

Lala Har Dayal defended himself by stating that he was ignorant of the secret views of the Swami Ji on this vital question of India's liberation. He explained why he came away from India. The Indian police dogged him day and night, he could do nothing there. So, he followed the great example of the greatest (of the) modern revolutionaries, Mazzini of Italy and Sun Yet Sen of China, to prepare and lead a revolution from outside the motherland. This reasonable explanation did not satisfy Mr. Lahiri. He asked Har Dayal what he had done for the cause of India's freedom during the last six years of his voluntary exile from India. He charged him with having wasted his eminent revolutionary qualities in lecturing on Anarchism, free love and comparative philosophy in U.S.A. He addressed in the end thus: "Mr. Har Dayal! Don't you know that hundreds and thousands of Indians are living outside India? Don't you know that most of these are Punjabees? Don't you know that they are the best of fighters? Don't you know that during the last war of independence in 1857, the Punjabees helped the British and thus destroyed the chances of our country's freedom? I dread to think of our fate in the coming war of independence if the Punjabees will be against our freedom movement? Here is the wonderful human material for you to inspire them with patriotism! No Indian leader is better fitted than you to

prepare and lead the new Ghadar Party from U.S.A. and other foreign countries".

Har Dayal thought over it for a few moments and expressed his sincere and heartfelt thanks to Mr. J.N. Lahiri for his wonderful constructive suggestion (s). Within a month after this, Lala Har Dayal went to meet and address the Punjabee labourers in California State. He spoke about the necessity for the formation of the new Ghadar party for overthrowing British imperialism in India. He pointed out to these brave men about the miserable part played by their grandfathers in the last war of Indian independence and the necessity for their wiping out that stigma and establish India's independence. The Punjabees responded wonderfully to this message of freedom. Most of these Punjabee labourers served once in the British Indian Army and fought some wars. Later on, they were attracted towards America on account of high wages paid to agricultural labourers. They had their relatives and friends in the British Indian Army. Har Dayal easily inspired them with patriotic fervour. Mass meetings were held wherever the Indians lived in California state. They welcomed him, showered their respect on him and asked for a constructive program. They felt happy and satisfied when he wanted them to form the Ghadar Party, and to start a revolutionary newspaper-Ghadar- in Punjabee (i.e.) Gurmukhi, Urdu and other languages of North India. He appealed for money and volunteers. He got both in abundance. The Sikhs responded (the) most. The head office was started in San Francisco. It was named, I believe, Yugantar Ashram. A printing press was acquired. The Ghadar Party newspaper was supplied free to all in every part of the world espousing the cause of Indian independence. Donations poured in from all parts of the world.

Thus the great Ghadar Party was formally inaugurated within three months after Mr. Lahiri's constructive suggestion to Lala Har Dayal in the meeting of the Indian students during the last week of December, 1912, or the first week of January, 1913.*

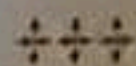
*Here Mr. Chenchiah is himself not sure of the date of the meeting about which he did not have any doubt in the beginning of this part.

I remember this historic occasion even now vividly since it effected a revolutionary turning point in my life. Among the students (who) attended the meeting, the following were attracted to this revolutionary call:

1. Mr. Jitendra Nat Lahiri of Calcutta
2. Mr. Kartar Singh
3. Mr. Kedar Nath (?)
4. Mr. B.N. Sarma B.A., B.L. of Guntur (Andhra)
5. Mr. Ranjit Singh Jain (Later on Prof. Jain of Benaras (Hindu) University)
6. Mr. P.J. Venkayya (of) Hyderabad
7. Mr. Govind Behari Lal M.A. (Now in USA as (a) representative of newspapers)
8. Mr. D. Chenchiah

I do not remember any other student. Among the above No. 1, 2, 3 and 8 continued to the end; (the) fourth worked for a while.

(3.9.1956)



PART II

PLANNING FOR LIBERATION OF INDIA

The Sikhs in the U.S.A., most of whom were employed as agricultural labourers, were each earning on (an) average Rs. 300 per month. When they came into the Ghadar movement and they decided to liberate India from the British rule by armed revolt, they supplied enough money and volunteers to carry on the work of printing and publishing the newspaper-*Ghadar*-and distributing the same free to whoever that wanted it. Donations poured in from all parts of the world.

Then the Ghadar party had to plan for the achievement of its cherished goal viz. India's independence. Many discussions took place between Har Dayal and the students who were the only intellectuals to assist him in such a vital matter.

The students who joined the Ghadar party (established) a hostel, named Nalanda, at Berkeley and were carrying on discussions among themselves very intensely. Har Dayal used to reside both at Yugantar Ashram (Head Office of the Ghadar Party at San Francisco) and also at Nalanda Hostel at Berkeley. The students used to spend the week-ends (i.e.) Saturdays and Sundays at the Head Office. Besides the office work, writing articles, dispatching the newspapers and keeping accounts, they helped Har Dayal in planning for (the) liberation (of India). In doing these, special mention might be made that Mr. Kartar Singh (Sarabha) was devoting much of his time for Ghadar organization whereas J.N. Lahiri helped in planning by his invaluable advice. The rest of the students helped in looking after the management side.

We soon came to the conclusion that we could not liberate the whole of India at the same time; that only one province after another

would have to be liberated. Which province should be liberated first? Many discussions took place on it. It was finally thought that the British could easily put down revolts in the provinces on the sea coast. So, the liberation of North India should be tried first. But North India was very extensive. Which is the province that should be freed first? Then we came to the conclusion that the mountainous parts were more suitable than the plains for the guerrilla warfare. The example of Switzerland, (remaining) free in Europe through centuries in spite of many wars engulfing the continent of Europe, influenced our decisions. Finally, we selected that Kashmir and North West Frontier, which were the most mountainous and which were far away from the sea coast, should be liberated first.

After deep deliberation, considering the feeble resources at our disposal, we finally decided to embark upon liberating Kashmir to start with.

Why did we prefer Kashmir instead of North West Frontier? The social, religious and economic inequalities between the ruling class and the ruled were very wide in Kashmir. The masses were Mussalmans, but the ruling class consisted of a small minority of the Hindus who monopolised the government jobs, owned the lands as Zamindars and monopolised trade and banking. They, the Hindu minority, controlled the entire economy of Kashmir. The masses i.e. the Muslim peasants were ignorant, poor, helpless and were exploited by the powerful minority who formed less than 10% of the total population. We considered that the Ghadar Party could easily rouse the masses against their exploiters and thus bring about a revolution.

We had to think next about the military possibilities for success. The British rulers would send their armies against the revolutionaries. How to incapacitate these armies? The Ghadarites being mostly Sikhs could enter the British Indian Army and through their relatives and friends, could bring about revolts in the army, if they marched into Kashmir. If this major assistance was ensured, the Ghadarites in the other provinces also could contribute to the success of the plan by disturbing the peace in their respective provinces so that the armies

stationed there could not be diverted to Kashmir. The mountainous nature of Kashmir would eminently suit the revolutionaries against the vast armies of the British. Thus the republic of Kashmir could be set up in a few years.

We had to decide the approximate date (by which) the Kashmir Republic could be set up. We concluded that it would take not less than ten years. So, it was finally resolved that we must make Kashmir a republic by 1925, then start liberating North-West Frontier, then Punjab and next U.P. and so on. We brought a big wall-map of India, marked the boundaries of Kashmir in red ink very prominently and wrote on it: "Republic of Kashmir in 1925" in bold letters.

Our people were thrilled with this constructive though modest plan. To popularise this program, effective propaganda was undertaken by means of newspapers, meetings and conferences. The Punjabi labourers in U.S.A. were satisfied with this decision. They themselves began to contribute articles, poems, etc. They began to address even public meetings. Many intellectuals arose out of them. They were sincere and brave. These labourers, till recently, were very ignorant and illiterate. They suddenly became politically conscious, highly patriotic and intensely revolutionary. As a result, the Ghadar movement passed rapidly into the hands of these masses.

In this connection, I must mention the wonderful qualities of leadership exhibited by Lala Har Dayal. He had absolute confidence that these people could be developed into first-rate warriors of revolution. He allowed them full freedom to speak and write in their own language, in spite of lack of polish and culture in their writings and utterances and thus allowed them to develop (learn) by their own mistakes. Many abusive words found their place in their propaganda literature. Har Dayal, understanding mass psychology and knowing all the defects, defended them on the ground that language used by them was most natural to the masses, since such a language alone appealed to them. So the Ghadar literature developed and satisfied the needs of these simple, patriotic and martial people of Punjab. The results of the next three or four years justified the convictions of Lal Har Dayal.

Even the terrorist movement in Bengal paled into insignificance in the face of the mass Ghadar movement in the estimate of the British rulers. The congress movement at that time was a very moderate movement which was confined to a handful of individuals of highly intellectual class. Their aim was to secure a few of the most highly salaried jobs.

So, the British rulers started to crush the Ghadar movement with their enormous resources. They wanted to wipe out this movement in its very source in U.S.A. For that purpose, they wanted to do away with Har Dayal who was the virtual leader of this movement.

BRITISH ATTEMPT TO DO AWAY WITH HAR DAYAL

The British imperialists introduced a number of spies into the Ghadar movement. They spent vast sums of money to buy the political leaders of California State. They finally influenced the Government of California state to arrest him. I do not remember today what charges were framed against Har Dayal. The charges had nothing to do (with) the Ghadar movement. I believe that he was charged with preaching anarchism. No doubt, the charges were political. But it was not easy to convict a popular political leader like Har Dayal and send him to jail. The great intellectuals of U.S.A knew this philosopher and revolutionary. He was once a professor of comparative philosophy in a first-rate University in U.S.A. He was the most well-known leader among the many foreign revolutionary societies which were then functioning in the U.S.A. San Francisco was the headquarters of most of these organisations. At that time, the revolutionary societies of Russia, China, Ireland, Japan, Turkey etc. were located there. Har Dayal was the friend, philosopher and guide of these societies. He was, moreover, the greatest exponent of the philosophy of Anarchism in U.S.A. His public lectures used to attract many progressive intellectuals. Moreover he was not a mere theoretician. He tried to live what he preached. So the great intellectuals of U.S.A. voiced their strong protest against the arrest of Har Dayal. But the Federal Government at Washington had no

powers under the constitution to interfere with the action of the state government of California.

But the commercial rivalry between U.S.A. and Britain was fast growing at that time. U.S.A was aspiring for leadership of the world overtaking Britain. Woodrow Wilson, the then president of U.S.A. was himself a professor. He was a leader who was conscious of the aspirations of his people. Added to this, there was William Jennings Bryn who was the secretary of state and who was then well-known as the opponent of British imperialism and its rule in India. He once visited India and wrote a book against the British rule there. He was thus a great friend of India. Both those great statesmen of U.S.A. wanted to withdraw the charges against Har Dayal and thus save the fair name of their country. But the constitution of U.S.A. stood in their way. Finally, Har Dayal was advised and actually helped to leave U.S.A. The police connived (in) his escape. The revolutionary Irish lady who stood bail to the extent of about Rs. 30,000 (Thirty Thousand) for him, did not mind losing it. Thus, the British imperialists thought that they succeeded in striking at the root of the Ghadar movement. But this movement grew mighty strong and spread among the masses by that time. It was impossible to root it out. On the other hand, the Ghadarites got furious and began to work to wreak vengeance on the British imperialism which separated their beloved leader from them. The declaration of First World War provided them with the opportunity they were waiting for. This was the chance to show the potentialities of their movement.

RAMCHANDRA: THE NEXT LEADER

Mr. Kartar Singh should have naturally succeeded Har Dayal as the leader of Ghadar Party, but he was too young to take up the leadership. The other Punjabee leaders, though sincere, were not strong enough intellectually. So they accepted Ramchandra who came to U.S.A. with the glory of a political sufferer. He was a self-exile to U.S.A. along with his wife. The Punjabees in U.S.A. liked him, respected him and chose him as leader in the absence of anyone better than him. But we, the students, were not impressed by his

intellectual equipment; he might be alright to illiterate masses, we thought. Personally, I did not know Ramchandra much. There was no time either. The declaration of the First World War brought about a great change in the outlook and in the plan of the students. The program of making Kashmir a republic before 1925 became too small a goal. We believed that Britain's troubles were an opportunity for us. We believed that we could sufficiently upset the British rule in India, even if we fail in the end to drive the British out of India. In this period of transition, Ramchandra was inadequate to provide effective political leadership to our movement.

I believe that the leadership gradually became collective, since Kartar Singh and other Sikh leaders who were connected with the movement from the beginning and who developed it must have dominated over Ram Chandra, (and) who must have been reduced to the position of a titular head. Anyhow, most of the Indian students were compelled to leave Berkeley and San Francisco (because of) the changed circumstances created by the war. So they had no time to understand Ramchandra.

STUDENTS AND THE GHADAR PARTY

The students had two leaders from the beginning. Lala Har Dayal inspired us by his eloquence, but lacked capacity to chalk out a constructive program. Lahiri had this practical experience to organize, but he was a very poor public speaker.

Mr. Lahiri had vast experience and played a leading part in the terrorist movement of Bengal. He picked up the students inspired by Har Dayal's eloquence and united them in a new Hostel known as the Nalanda Hostel. He did not admit anyone who was not willing to sacrifice his all for the cause of liberation of India. I remember roughly that the following students numbering about ten were in the hostel:

1. Jitendra Nath Lahiri
2. Kartar Singh
3. Kedar Nath (?)

4. B.N. Sarma
5. P.J. Venkayya
6. Ranjit Singh Jain
7. Verma (?) of Bihar
8. Govind Behari Lal
9. Henry Edward Pandyan of Tamil Nadu
10. Iyer (?)
11. Myself (D. Chenchiah)

Mr. Lahiri was a graduate of Chemistry of the University of Calcutta. He stood first in the marks obtained. He was sent to U.S.A. by the terrorist party of Bengal to learn to manufacture bombs. He joined the California University and was carrying on research in explosives for his M.Sc. degree.

In order to equip us, the recruits for Indian revolution, he made us read plenty of books on the revolutions of the world and in particular of France, Italy, China and Russia. He discussed with us the causes for the successes and failures of these revolutions. He made us read the biographies of famous revolutionaries, particularly of Mazzini, Rousseau, Sun Yat Sen, Prince Kropotkin, Guru Govind Singh, Savarkar and their writings. Colonel Todd's *Annals of Rajasthan* and the life of Rana Pratap Singh were his favourite books. The history of Rajasthan and the glorious achievements of these warriors in the cause of freedom always inspired us. Achievements of Indians in the cause of civilization gave us legitimate pride. Max Muller's books were great eye-openers to our glorious ancient civilization. We took great pride in our ancient history. At the same time he made us read such books so as to make us despise the British imperialist rulers and overthrow them. *The Economic History of British India* by Romesh Chander Dutt and *The Indian War of Independence* by Savarkar were helpful in this respect. These studies were helpful to us philosophically and intellectually. But they were not enough to make us practical revolutionaries. He wanted us to become physically strong and brave like the terrorists of Bengal. He

explained the importance of self-defensive exercises and trained us himself in boxing, wrestling and fencing. He taught us also how to make cartridges besides rifle-shooting and revolver shooting.

He gave us talks on the history of terrorism in Bengal, how it started, what mistakes it committed in the early stages of crude organisation and how it developed cell system. (He also told us about) the division of functions into recruiting, training in Samithis and Talimkhanas, planning armed raids, capturing arms and ammunitions and collecting money by looting the stooges of the British Rule in India. They used to send persons to foreign countries to specialise in the bomb-making and fencing.

The Indians in those days were afraid, as a rule, of white skin. In order to get rid of this inferiority complex, the revolutionaries used to be taken out in the evenings to Maidans to pick up quarrels with the British soldiers, to beat them and to escape arrest.

At one time the football team of the Bengalee students defeated the team of the British military in the finals. What an enthusiasm it created among the youths! Tilak himself, who was ignorant of the developments in Bengal, took the best Maharatha swordsmen to Aurobindo and advised him of the necessity for self-defensive exercises among the Bengalee youth. Aurobindo told him that the Bengalee boys were already familiar with these exercises and arranged a friendly match. At that time, the best two Bengalee experts were not available. The third best fencer, Mr. J.N. Lahiri himself had to fence. In two minutes, the Maharatta expert was defeated. Mr. B.G. Tilak, our great national leader, was pleasantly surprised. Having been informed how training had been going on among Bengalee youth, he felt happy and wished them success.

Under the intellectual and spiritual leadership of Aurobindo Ghosh, and with the organisational capacity of Barin Ghosh, his brother, the terrorist movement of Bengal grew into a big organisation.

The vows of secrecy and celibacy etc. were very strict. Every one of (them)* had to take a vow that (they would) devote all (their)

*This is a reference to the Bengali terrorists.

attention and energies, till (they) completed the age of thirty for the attainment of only one goal to i.e. make India free from foreign rule. Even those who were married were compelled to observe the vow of celibacy till the age of thirty. He told us very many interesting stories, how these married boys converted their wives to their views, taught them how to use the dagger to protect their own honour and the honour of the ladies in their families. I may state here that the British, having failed in their attempt to cow down the intellectuals, instigated their henchmen, Nawabs and Rajahas, to employ rowdies and riff-raffs to trespass the houses of respectable people to molest their women. Those attempts shared the same fate thanks to the indomitable courage of the wives of the revolutionaries who rose to the occasion.

Mr. Lahiri told us the secrets of successful organisation of terrorism in Bengal and advised us to do similarly in other provinces also. He pointed out how this can be evolved into guerrilla warfare which would be necessary for the successful operation of revolution in Kashmir and later on in other provinces in India. Unless and until this was developed, one could not prevent the British armies from being diverted to Kashmir. This necessity was always (driven) into our ears and was made a part and parcel of our life mission in India.

While getting this training in terrorism and guerrilla warfare from Mr. J.N. Lahiri at the Nalanda Hostel at Berkeley, we spent our week-ends helping the management of the office of Ghadar Party at San Francisco. We, the students, were the only intellectuals with whom Lala Har Dayal could discuss planning for achieving India's independence.

I can write a lot more about the training by Mr. Lahiri and the rules and regulations of the terrorist movement of Bengal but I consider that it is unnecessary.

LALA HAR DAYAL

Before I proceed further (with) the history of the Ghadar Party, as I know it, it may be appropriate to write what I had known of Har

Dayal as a man, as a revolutionary and as a philosopher of anarchism.

After he left U.S.A., his leadership of the Ghadar Party ceased, as far as I know. What he did in Europe during the first world war in order to liberate India from British rule, I do not know. The history of the Ghadar Party could never be completed without an idea of the great personality of Lala Har Dayal. Information on this aspect may have to be gathered from various persons and records. I happen to be one of these persons. I had the rare fortune of being with him and working with him for a period of more than a year, from the origin of the Ghadar Party in January, 1913 until his arrest and voluntary exile from U.S.A. in the year 1914. That was the most eventful period of his life as far as I know.

He used to come to our Nalanda Hostel whenever he wanted to think seriously. We, the Indian students, were his co-workers in the head office of the Ghadar party at San Francisco.

As a political revolutionary, he worked for the freedom and independence of many countries. He worked against feudalism and imperialism in every country. He was the most sought-after leader whether the revolutionary society was Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Turkish or Irish, etc. At that time the offices of these societies were situated at San Francisco. He used to bring some of these foreign revolutionaries to lecture to us about their experiences in their respective countries. The most spectacular among them (were) Russians, both men and women, who (had) escaped from their exile in Siberia and manage (d) to arrive in U.S.A. we learnt many interesting lessons from them.

Har Dayal was the greatest intellectual exponent of the philosophy of anarchism in San Francisco. He was sincere and true to his convictions. It was said that he had a wife at Delhi. She used to remit regularly some money for his maintenance. But he did not believe in money, being a sincere anarchist. So he used to give it away. In a day or two after receiving the money, he would be without any money. He would go to the houses of his numerous friends when he got hungry. He would be received by them with love and respect.

There were times when he would go without food. He would forget even hunger sometimes unless someone reminded him about it.

The respect which he commanded in the progressive intellectual circles, could be understood from an interesting incident. At the annual conference of anarchists, syndicalists, social anarchists and national revolutionaries at San Francisco in 1913 his speech was the best. It was interrupted by repeated cheers. One of the important persons (who) attended (it) was a beautiful American lady of great reputation. When Har Dayal sat down, she kissed him. Cheering and uproar increased. Some demanded "Kiss once more", others wanted an explanation from her. She said that Har Dayal was the bravest among them and that his heart was whiter than that of the whitest man. She also remarked that it was a privilege for her to kiss him and that she would remember this incident all her life.

His simplicity of life was proverbial. He would wear old and worn dress, and appear as a very poor man. His overcoat was full of holes. We, in the Nalanda Hostel, tried to persuade him to buy a new one, specially since winter was approaching. One day he got money from his wife. We thought it was the best time to compel him to replace the old overcoat by a new one. We stole his old overcoat during the night time. We told him in the morning why we did so. On the same night, he returned with another overcoat. He began to exhibit it to us and extol how good it was. We were surprised to see (an) old overcoat, bought from a second hand store, since it had small holes. He was happy and contented with it, but not we.

On another occasion, we found that his shoes were very old. There were holes in the soles. Rain water used to get inside. Our efforts at persuading him to buy a new pair failed. We became anxious about his health. We bought a new pair, placed it at his cot, while he was in sound sleep. We wanted to hide the old pair. But Kartar Singh warned us, took it and threw it away in a distant dustbin.

We used to live in a flat in the first floor. There was a staircase from the pavement leading to our flat directly. In the morning we went down to collect the milk bottles and newspapers left for us on the

staircase. To our surprise, we saw one day Har Dayal sleeping soundly on the staircase. We demanded an explanation for this strange behaviour. He smiled and said, "I came home very late in the night. You were all sleeping soundly. I was afraid that I might disturb your sleep by walking to my room. I assure you that I had very good sleep on the staircase". He was too sensitive to cause the least trouble to others.

At Yugantar Ashram at San Francisco, we were taking coffee with him one morning. We worked late in the night and we were hungry for some solid stuff like bread, biscuits, butter and eggs on the table. He understood our disappointment. He brought a basketful of biscuits, placed them on the table and praised them to the skies. We put them in our mouths but could not bite them. They were very hard. We all laughed and told him that we were afraid of damage to our teeth. Har Dayal came to our rescue by his characteristically simple reply: "Please dip the biscuits in hot coffee and they would become as soft as you like".

At another time, while lunching, Mr. G.B. Lal complained that there was not enough salt in the curry and made much of it. Har Dayal was ready with his characteristic reply, "Well, Lal, you can add more salt in the dinner". He was indifferent to his food, drink, taste, clothes and sleep. He hated to possess money. He was a modern Rishi.

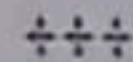
It was a peculiar characteristic of Har Dayal to change his ideas rapidly and act up to them. He preached what he believed and expected everybody to do similarly. He was an orthodox Hindu. He became an ardent Arya Samajist. He then charged into an atheist, a socialist and finally an anarchist. We used to make fun of his rapid changes. We asked for an explanation for these somersaults. He answered one day with a smile with a biblical quotation: "when I was a child I believed as a child, when I became a youth, I believed as a young man, when I grew old, I did as an old man", something to that end. I did not wonder when I read recently that he was finally a Professor of comparative philosophy in a Norwegian University and died as a Buddhist.

I have had the privilege of knowing some great men in my life. My nature is also a changing nature. I used to attribute this to the period of transition in our country. But when I look back at these great men, spiritual, moral and intellectual giants, they were all simple like children in actual day to day life. The only other leader that was really simple like Har Dayal, as far as my knowledge goes, was Sun Yat Sen.

It was no wonder to me when I read that about five hundred Ghadarites were hanged, about seven hundred and fifty were sentenced for transportation for life in the Andamans, that about five thousand were convicted and imprisoned and some ten thousand were interned in Punjab during the First World War.* No political party, to my knowledge, had sacrificed so much in so short a time for the freedom of the country. Har Dayal's great personality was no doubt responsible to a great extent.

From the days of partition of Bengal to the day of independence of India, it is a long period. Many political parties, many men and women, worked for this great and glorious achievement. We are indebted to all of them. When the real facts relating to this long history are written, the part played by the Ghadar Party, and its leader Lala Har Dayal would be remembered gratefully by the future generations of India.

13.9.1956



* The figures quoted here are exaggerated. Full details have been provided in History of The Ghadar Party.

PART III

GHADAR PARTY

In this third part, I propose to deal with the Ghadar Party's developments during the first year, after the declaration of the First World War in 1914.

We, the Indian students belonging to the Ghadar Party as well as other Indian students in California University were poor. We usually worked as agricultural labourers in California state during our summer vacation (i.e.) June, July and August in the fraternal company of Punjabi labourers. We used to earn about Rs. 400 a month, spend about Rs. 100 for our upkeep and save about Rs. 300. We finally returned to the University after the summer vacation with about a thousand rupees in our pocket to continue our studies.

As usual, during the vacation preceding the declaration of war, we went to work in the agricultural farms. The news of the declaration of the First World War reached us while we were working in the fields in different parts of California state. We managed to meet together within a week at Berkeley and discussed the ways and means of utilising the opportunity afforded by (the) war for liberating India from the clutches of British imperialism.

Mr. J.N. Lahiri gave us the lead once more. After much serious and prolonged discussions, the following decisions were arrived at:

1. The plan for making Kashmir a Republic was given up.
2. That the Ghadar movement, though it had become popular among the Indians living in foreign countries, was practically non-existent in India, even in Punjab, which ought to be the heart and soul of the movement.
3. The Sikhs in U.S.A. were the most militant Ghadarites. They

should return, as many as possible, to India, to join the British Indian Army and thus prepare their own people for armed revolts. Those who would not join the army, should organise underground work for the purpose of printing and (dissemination) of propaganda literature, securing of arms and ammunition, and carry on the guerrilla war.

4. It would be possible, thus, to prevent some regiments being diverted to Europe to fight the enemies of Britain.
5. If the British were defeated in Europe, and if our guerrilla war developed, our prospects of success in our struggle would brighten up.
6. So the original program made one year ago, to liberate Kashmir by 1925, was given up as too small and trifling, when compared to the opportunity offered by the war to make our movement for armed revolt in the whole of India. We welcomed this great chance.

This was the main program tentatively chalked out for the Punjabi members of the Ghadar Party. This program satisfied Mr. Kartar Singh. He was instructed to begin working for this program thereafter.

As regards the non-Punjabi students, a different program became necessary. Mr. Lahiri insisted on their learning some essential things in U.S.A. for becoming successful guerrilla leaders in India, namely cutting telegraph wires, blowing up bridges and such other things which can dislocate communications as much as possible. Moreover, they should join the military training classes in the American universities. Since the President of California University, being pro-Britisher, had disallowed the Indian student joining the military training classes ever since the starting of the Ghadar movement, we, the Indian students, decided to join such other universities which would allow us to join the military training classes.

Mr. Lahiri predicted that the war would go on for some years; that in course of time, developments for India's liberation, such as

fresh attempts by the Indian revolutionary exiles living in the European continent, by the activities of the terrorist organisations of Bengal etc. would begin. He also expected that the enemies of Britain could be persuaded to help us by way of military training and by supplying men and materials to fight the British rulers in India. So, he advised the non-Punjabee students to wait and watch the developments and then decide. Mr. Kartar Singh, Mr. Kedar Nath (?) and I agreed with Mr. Lahiri's suggestions. But Mr. B.N. Sarma (Andhra) insisted that we must return to India, (our Karmbhumi) immediately and work there and that we had no longer any business to stay in U.S.A. He also warned us that impediments to enter India would crop up as the war developed. Soon after that, he left U.S.A. and reached India. After a period of nine months we received a card from him. The following Indian students, namely, Mr. G.B. Lal, Mr. Ranjit Singh Jain, Mr. P.J. Venkayya and others dropped out of this movement altogether. But H.E. Pandyan continued to remain with us until we realized that he was acting as a spy for the British.

Mr. J.N. Lahiri went to Chicago University (?) to learn more of explosives and also get some training from retired military officers of the U.S.A. He tried to learn as many facts as possible about the Indian forts, ordnance factories etc. I went away and joined the College of Agriculture, Utah State which allowed me to join the cadet course.

I was thus cut off from the commander and the Head Office of the Ghadar Party at a very critical time. We were strictly prohibited from corresponding with each other about the program of works. So I find it hard to write an authentic report about the working of the Ghadar Party in U.S.A. and India for a period of one year after the declaration of world war. But I came to know about certain facts in spite of these impediments. Mr. Kartar Singh persuaded the leaders of Ghadar Party to send as many Ghadarites as possible to India to carry on the work there. In fact with the leaving of Mr. Kartar Singh and other leaders to India, the party work was transferred to Punjab, though the H.Q. at San Francisco remained in name only. The

smuggling of propaganda literature by any and easy means into India continued. Arrangements for printing, reprinting and cyclostyling were established in India itself. Even in the earliest days some persons learnt some important songs and articles by heart and when they returned to India, they wrote it down. Mr. Kartar Singh was fortunate in having some excellent co-workers who were determined to sacrifice their all for the cause of liberation of India. When they returned to India, he gathered them all and continued to work out his mission. He finally evolved a plan for the achievement of independence of India by armed revolt. It was said that he wanted to avoid the mistakes committed during the war of independence in 1857. He aimed at a concerted action to start the rebellion on a particular date all over India. All this I learnt by rumours only in course of time from very many reliable comrades. But the fact remains that what I have written in this paragraph is not an authentic report. The records of Lahore conspiracy cases and Rowlette Report and few living comrades who worked with him could help better.

Mr. B.N. Sarma, B.A., B.L., M.Sc. wrote a card from Guntur about nine months after he left U.S.A. He stated in it: "It is red-hot there, but ice-cold here". What he meant to convey by that laconic letter was the paradox of the Indian liberation movement, being very intense among the Indians in far off America, while there was not even a whispering campaign in India itself against foreign rulers. This must be correct as far as south India was concerned.

Mr. J.N. Lahiri wrote to me from Chicago (?) about some developments. He came to know from his friends in India that there was a traitor, a spy among us in the Nalanda Hostel at Berkeley. In a few days it became known at Berkeley that Mr. H.E. Pandyan was that spy in the service of the British council at San Francisco.

Mr. J.N. Lahiri also informed me that the Indian revolutionary exiles in Europe had met in Germany and organised themselves under the leadership of one Mr. Gupta of Bengal terrorist fame; who escaped to Germany some two or three years previous to the first world war.

In order that the research scholars may find out facts about this Mr. Gupta, I may state what I learnt from Mr. Jitendra Nath Lahiri. He was reputed for planning. Most of the raids, attempts at political assassination of British rulers and securing of arms etc. were planned by him in Bengal as a leader of terrorists. Later on his counter spies in the Bengal police department warned him of his impending arrest. He escaped to Germany with the consent of the terrorist party some time in 1912 or earlier.

Mr. Gupta came to an understanding with the German government for the overthrow of the British government in India on the principle of mutual assistance. The immediate result was that the Indian students in Europe and America would be given military training in actual warfare in Europe. The first batch of twelve graduates from U.S.A. left for Germany under the leadership of our J.N. Lahiri himself. My application was rejected on the plea that I did not complete my graduation and that I could go in the second batch after a few months in June/June 1915.

In June/July, I was expecting a call to go to Germany. But then I received a letter from the Ghadar Party at San Francisco that enough number of Indians for military training in Germany had volunteered from Europe itself and that I must take up some other work. The call came asking me to meet at the Head Office of the Ghadar Party in person. So I went and met Mr. Ramchandra during June/July 1915. I was surprised to know that all my old friends in the Head Office and in the printing press had left for India and I found myself in the midst of strangers.

24.9.1956

PART IV

THE INDO-GERMAN PLAN TO LIBERATE INDIA

I received a letter from Mr. Ramchandra, leader of the Ghadar Party at the headquarter office at San Francisco. I received it in June/July 1915. I was at that time a student at Utah Agricultural College, Logan, U.S.A. The letter stated that my services were required, that the plan to send me to Germany for military training was given up and that I should go to Asia. So I went to San Francisco. I arrived at the Head Office of the Ghadar Party at about noon. Mr. Ramchandra was not there. All the persons present in the office were strangers to me. All my old comrades had left for India. I was myself pining to contribute my mite to the cause of liberation of India from British rule.

An hour later, Mr. Ramchandra arrived. He told me hurriedly thus: "A steamer shall be leaving in an hour to Philippines. Two of our Ghadar leaders are travelling on it. You have to work with them. You may join them now if you wish. In that case, you must hurry up and start at once. There is no time to get money from the bank for buying you ticket and other expenses. You may buy the ticket with your money and get the amount refunded from the leader on the steamer. If you do not want to start now, you may start by the next steamer after a week."

I had no more work in U.S.A. So, I decided to start at once. Mr. Ramchandra took me to the steamer and introduced me to Mr. Jodh Singh, the leader and to Mr. (Sukumar) (?) Chatterjee. Mr. Jodh Singh, the leader, came from Germany and was entrusted not only to explain the scheme for freeing India, but also had the control of the purse for the operations in the East Asiatic Zone. I occupied the vacant berth in his cabin.

I got information from Mr. Jodh Singh (which was) something like this: "The desire of the Punjabee soldiers to rebel against the British was very strong. The propaganda of the Ghadar Party among the Punjabi regiments was growing stronger and stronger. Many of these regiments have refused to go to Europe and were being court-martialed. Those regiments that were being sent to Europe by force knew full well that they would be killed anyhow. The mentality of these soldiers was: 'why not kill their British officers in the trenches'. The percentage of deaths among the white officers was increasing. The Punjabi soldiers do not like to kill the Germans. So the British military authorities are hurling these Punjabi troops against the Germans with machine guns placed behind. Thus, they were being caught between the German troops in the front and the British machine guns behind. They are deserting to the Germans who are receiving them with open arms. The Muslims among them were being persuaded by the Turks to go to Turkey and join the Turkish army and thus fight the British."

About the Indo-German scheme for liberating India, Mr. Jodh Singh gave me the following information: "The Indian revolutionaries living in Europe met at Berlin under the leadership of one Mr. Gupta, a Bengali terrorist leader. (I have forgotten the names of other Indian revolutionaries). They approached the Kaiser's government for help to drive the British out of India. The German government wanted to win the war in Europe. The British were getting troops from all parts of their vast empire to fight in France. Most of these colonial troops came from India, especially from Punjab, in hundreds and thousands. If the Indians can be made to rebel, the British army would be locked up in India itself. Thus, the British and the French would be defeated in Europe. The British would agree to be defeated in Europe rather than lose India.

"The Indian revolutionaries in Germany were happy that the Ghadarites were working in the British Indian Army to rise in revolt. They suggested a big plan of coordinated action by the various

revolutionary parties, including the Ghadarites and the Bengalee revolutionary party. There was the excellent human material for military purposes in all the mountaneous regions that stretched like an arc from the Arabian Sea in the West and the Bay of Bengal in the east-Hindukush mountains, Himalayas, Assam Hills etc. containing Baluchistan, North West Frontier, Kashmir, Himachal, Nepal, Bhutan, Assam etc. The Indians, who were being trained in actual warfare in Germany, were assigned to go to these regions, recruit soldiers, give military training, and lead the rebellion from these regions. The German government would supply arms, ammunition and money, if required, German military officers also, who had been stranded all over Asia and America (and thus prevented) from joining the German army in time when the war started. The scheme also included liberation of Burma etc. The Ghadarites in America and Asia should try to enter Burma via Siam, and liberate Burma. The Ghadar Party in U.S.A. was entrusted with the responsibility for the operations in Burma. The German government agreed to buy arms and ammunition in U.S.A. and supply (the) same for this operation. They also agreed to supply money and if required some German military officers also, who had been stranded in U.S.A., Philippines, China and Indonesia. It was stated that about two crores of rupees would be spared for this purpose.

"In India Mr. Kartar Singh and others would coordinate their work with this Indo-German scheme for a simultaneous rising, if possible, on a date to be fixed. Meanwhile, the German army was expected to reach India via Persia and Afghanistan. Then would be the time for all sections to rebel in India simultaneously."

Mr. Jodh Singh who was sent directly from Germany was to be in charge of the money to be spent for Burma's liberation for recruiting the Indians from South and North Americas and East Asia for our campaign via Siamese mountains. The German consul-General at San Francisco was in touch with the leader of the Ghadar Party there. Two steamers were dispatched with arms and ammunition

from the West Coast of U.S.A., one to Sunderbans in Bengal for Bengalee revolutionaries and the other to Siam. Mr. Ramchandra gave me two secret letters to be delivered to the German Consul-General at Manila. I did not know the contents of these two letters. I came to know later that they related to the two steamers mentioned above. Mr. Chatterjee, Mr. Jodh Singh and I were traveling together to Manila where we would be told what arrangements had been made to send us to Burma and the nature of the work to be assigned to each of us.

In those days, everything seemed possible. The success of the Germans in the war was believed to be certain by most countries. The British rulers were nervous in India. The Ghadarites believed that they were expected to do great things and that the times were favourable for their success. The war might prolong for years. Even if the British were to be victorious in the end, they would be very tired, weak and despirited. If once we disturb peace in India and upset law and order, the possibilities for guerrilla war were many in India, in view of the vastness of the country and its mountains, hills and valleys. We were ready to believe in anything as we were ready to die, if necessary, in the cause of liberation of India from foreign rule. With this readiness to die, we got superhuman strength and dared to do even the impossible. We were not afraid of failures which we considered as stepping stones to future success. We were filled with enthusiasm and happiness over the noble ideal of killing the modern rakshasas and demons. We were Abhimanyus. We were content with that kind of reasoning. We were filled with intense hatred against foreign rule and wanted to liberate India at any cost.

On the steamer to Manila, I studied my companion Mr. Jodh Singh. To my utter surprise, I found him to be an ignorant and timid man, devoid of any training for the very responsible work entrusted to him. He was afraid that everyone on the steamer, who tried to communicate with him or me, was a potential British spy. He decided that he must not talk to anybody. Even when we were at the dining

table, he would turn his eyes this side and that and would tell me that so and so must be a spy. I considered that Mr. Jodh Singh was afraid for nothing and that he was a fool and a coward. I could not bear the strain of his foolish fears and discipline. Finally, I left his cabin and ceased talking to him before we arrived at Tokyo on our way to Manila.

Our steamer stayed in Japan for three or four days for loading and unloading cargo. So I took this opportunity to meet Sun Yat Sen, the great Chinese revolutionary, who was then living at Tokyo, preparing for the second revolution in China. His son was a student at the California University along with me. So I made bold to see him and get inspired by him.

Mr. Sun Yat Sen explained the world political situation like this: "The British imperialism was the greatest enemy of freedom and independence of the underdeveloped and weak countries all over the world. Britain got its strength by the exploitation of India. So long as the British were ruling India, they would continue to remain a menace to the freedom of weaker nations. The Indians must overthrow the British rule in India first. Till then, there would be no hope of freedom for weaker nations. It was the sacred duty that history has placed on the shoulders of the Indians to help the humanity by liberating their own country first. The world war was an opportune time to make a beginning."

When I asked him if China was not suffering from the imperialism of Japan, he smiled and said that Japan was not strong enough by itself to rule China and it was not our enemy No. 1. Japan was being backed by the mighty British to attack China. Like India, China's greatest enemy was British imperialism. China could hope to become free and independent only after the British rule was overthrown in India by a successful armed revolt by the Indians. This message by the greatest revolutionary leader cheered me up and I felt contented that I was doing the right thing.

At Manila, we three Ghadarites were living in three different

hotels. I met the German Consul separately and delivered to him the two secret letters entrusted to me.

Three German military officers met us all and explained to us their plan of action for the liberation of Burma. When I told them what I thought of Mr. Jodh Singh, they did not agree to make changes at that stage. So I had to accept the plan as it was evolved at that time. We were to go first to Bangkok, Siam where we should have our headquarters. We should receive the recruits who would be coming from various parts of America and East Asia, (and) send them to Burma over the mountains of Siam. The steamer with arms and ammunition that left America was expected to dump the arms in some forests on the coast of Siam; we should arrange to transport (the) same to Burma. The Ghadarites working in Malaya, Siam and Burma as engineers, contractors and labourers would help us in this matter. Some Ghadarites who have been entrusted with the task of contacting Punjabi regiments and the military police in Burma would meet us at Bangkok.

But how to reach Bangkok from Manila? We have to travel on steamers which must pass through Hong Kong and Singapore which were British ports where Indian passengers were being arrested and detained. So, we decided to avoid regular steamers and arranged a Chinese steamer to take us directly to the international port of Amoy and Swatow on the east coast of China as a first lap of our journey. Then, another Chinese steamer directly took us to Bangkok. The German Consul made all these arrangements for us. We three, Mr. Chatterjee, Mr. Jodh Singh and I went first to three different hotels at Bangkok. Jodh Singh went underground soon after arrival without intimating to us his address. It became almost impossible to contact him. It was left to Mr. Chatterjee and me to meet the local Punjabees and prepare the ground. Mr. Chatterjee was very intelligent and capable. He could easily make friends.

Some days later, others arrived. The most important among them were Bhai Balwant Singh Granthi from Vancouver, Canada, Mr.

Thakur Singh from Shanghai and Mr. Shiv Dayal Gupta from Burma. The latter gave us a report of his having come into contact with the Punjabi regiments and the Punjabi military police in Burma and told us that they would help us and come over to our side when the time become opportune.

Meanwhile the British government was also getting ready with their preparations to deal with us. The first to arrive was a Punjabi detective, an old man of sixty with a grey beard, and established himself in the house of the leader of local Arya Samaj. He started contacting us in our houses and (would) tell us all kinds of cock and bull stories of revolts in the army as a result of Ghadar movement. He invited us to his house. All of us, the Ghadarites, excepting Mr. Jodh Singh, began to take precautions. We could not get an opportunity to warn Mr. Jodh Singh.

We immediately hurried up with our program. The work was divided like this: Bhai Balwant Singh was to be our leader. From the beginning, he impressed us (with) his great moral, spiritual and intellectual qualities for leadership. All excepting me (were) to march to the mountains on the borders of Burma and (establish) camps there. I (was to) remain for the time being in Bangkok, secure job in the University of Bangkok on the strength of my B.Sc. degree and help our party as a liaison officer between those (who) arrive and the military camps in the mountains. The German military officers who (were) to work with us were expected to arrive at any moment. The whereabouts of the steamer that left U.S.A. with arms etc. (were not known to us but it was) expected to arrive soon. We decided upon these things, but we failed to contact Mr. Jodh Singh yet.

The Indian detective became very active. We found that highest police officers in the Siamese government were all Britishers who once worked in India, retired on pension and got appointments with Siamese government itself. The government of Siam was weak. We did not know then that the British government could easily coerce the Siamese government to get at us. We believed in the statement

made to us by the German Military officers (who) met us at Manila that international law would protect us from being handed over to the British Indian government. We expected that if the worst was to happen to us, we would be sent back, according to international law, to the last foreign port from which we came. We came from international ports of China and we might be deported to those ports. Anyhow, we felt nervous over our safety at Bangkok and hurried up our preparations to go to the mountains on the Burma border. Meanwhile, we were trying to contact Mr. Jodh Singh and inform him about the developments.

I was then informed to my utter surprise that Mr. Jodh Singh was in the house of the Indian detective and was being entertained by him. So I rushed to his place. But the detective did not give me even a moment to be alone with Mr. Jodh Singh to warn him about the danger. While shaking hands, I kept on shaking and scratching his palm with my forefinger with the hope that he would understand the hint. I came back and reported the matter to our party men who began to take trouble to meet him and warn him. But it failed. The British police acted immediately. The local Arya Samaj leader who was acting as the host to the Indian detective woke me up at my residence at about 4.00 A.M. and informed me that Mr. Jodh Singh was successfully persuaded by the detective to dine and drink and reveal everything that he knew about our plan for liberating Burma.

As a result of this, he and other Ghadarites were arrested that night itself by the British police and that I could not be apprehended. It was too late that night to arrest me as I was away from my residence. He confessed that he was ignorant of the old man being a detective and believed innocently that he was a real Arya Samajist leader. Now, if I wanted, he would help me to escape to the forests on the borders of China. I agreed to accept his offer. So I collected the important documents in my hand bag and tied a few clothes in a small bundle and left the house. We went to the Spanish hotel known to me. It was still dark. I left my samans (baggage and personal effects) there

and promised to return soon. We were not watched and followed. We disappeared in the dark. We planned like this: that I should hide in some house till 8.00 P.M. when I should meet him at the nearest suburban railway station. Meanwhile I got disgusted and bored remaining in that house and went out on a rickshaw at 6.00 P.M. I was pursued by a car after a while and arrested by a British police officer. The latter took me to his bungalow and told me that he would bring some tea for me. Meanwhile, I destroyed my notebook and all written matter available on my person. The constable on duty there did not understand who I was and what I was doing. The British officer took me directly to the International jail where my samans from my house were brought and kept ready. The samans left in the Spanish hotel remained there only.

In the jail I met Bhai Balwant Singh, Mr. Thakur Singh, Mr. Chatterjee and Mr. Shiv Dayal Gupta. Mr. Jodh Singh was not with them. He was kept in a separate place and was thus segregated. I was informed that Mr. Jodh Singh drank for the first time, revealed everything to the detective, and all his records, dairies, accounts and address of hundreds of Ghadarites etc. of Germany and Europe and America and East Asia had fallen into the hands of the British police. The others took precaution to destroy all incriminating matter. But what (was) the use? Mr. Jodh Singh supplied enough to reveal our plans and reveal the address of the leaders.

What are we to do next? We had no contacts outside the international jail in order to attempt to escape. The superintendent of the jail was a Siamese officer who was very kind and considerate to us. He told (us) that the Siamese government was a puppet government and that the real rulers were the British. He told us that all our efforts to get international law to be applied to us to go back to the last foreign ports from which we came would not be permitted by the British. We found it finally, after a month, that he was correct. British imperialists caught us and they would send us to India. So, we thought. We were taken on a Siamese government steamboat by

the Siamese police under the direct control of a British officer and transferred to a cargo steamboat lying far away from the Siamese coast. There, we were surprised when we were handed over to the police of the Singapore government.

Our attempt to liberate Burma from the foreign British rulers failed. We had to try then to save our lives from the British imperialists and Indian spies and traitors.

10.10.1956

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PART V

HANDED OVER TO THE BRITISH

We were ill-treated and tortured by the British police officer-in-charge. Firstly, he hand-cuffed each of us separately and then joined us two and two by a third hand-cuff. So, we became three pairs. These cuffs were never removed for four or five days at a stretch till we arrived at Singapore. Day and night, whether we went to lavatory or when sleeping or awake, the pair continued to be treated as one person. We were not given water to wash even our teeth and no food or water was given for 36 hours continuously. Then, the police officer supplied something like a few biscuits to eat, once a day. All six of us (i.e.) three pairs were allotted only a space 12'x4' during nights for sleeping. The smallest of this group - Mr. S. Chatterjee and I were fisted mercilessly. On the third evening, the police officer came with a British lady and a camera to take snapshots of us all. Mr. Chatterjee requested for some salt. For daring to ask, Chatterjee was slapped. Mr. Chatterjee told him (the officer) that he was a bully and called him a coward and a brute, and abused him to his heart's content. He made use of his tongue which alone was free. This had its effect on the brute. The officer did not show his face thereafter. From then on, instead of the British officer, the Malaya police looked after us. The change meant actually that we got only a little more drinking water now and then. They pitied us and sympathised with us, the victims of this inhuman treatment.

This ill-treatment by a British imperialist brought about a remarkable conviction in our minds. We became convinced about the wickedness of the British imperialist system and the justification for our attempt to destroy it.

ARMED REVOLT BY THE INDIAN REGIMENT

We came to know that this ill-treatment was because of vengeance on the part of the British for the inhuman murders of the British men, women and children at Singapore by the Rajput Muslim regiment stationed there. All the British population of about 352 were wiped out without exception by the communal fanatics in the said regiment. It seems that it refused once to go to Europe, while in India. So, they were transferred to Singapore to prevent the disaffection (from) spreading among other regiments. At Singapore, they were again ordered to go to Europe. Some of them thought that they were again being shipped to fight the Turks. So, some of them went out with their rifles and plenty of cartridges and shot dead every man, woman and child belonging to the British Race, residing there. They captured Singapore and remained its masters for four days. A Japanese warship re-captured Singapore from the Rajput Muslim regiment and restored it to their imperialist ally the British. Meanwhile, the real rebels who actually took part in shooting escaped to adjacent countries. Those who did not take part in the revolt and remained neutral, were arrested, court-martialed and shot or transported to undergo life imprisonment.

INFORMATION BY SHROPSHIRE REGIMENT

How far this account was correct, I did not know. When we were ill-treated and tortured in solitary confinement continuously for about six months at Singapore military detention Barracks, we were anxious to know the reason behind the ill-treatment of us. The soldiers of the Shropshire regiment who were stationed at Singapore later on confirmed the above statement when they were escorting us to Calcutta. We were then convinced of its truth. Even then, it is not clear to me how far this Rajput Muslim regiment was influenced by the Ghadar , ropaganda.

To continue my report, I may start where I left it. We, the six prisoners, were handed over to the British Military Department then (1915) ruling at Singapore. We were imprisoned in the detention Barracks each in a room with a full wooden door which was always

closed, day and night for about six months, and we were cut off from others. We were always kept locked up in the dark room except twice a day for a few minutes. We were allowed to go to latrine in the mornings and (have) a short walk for a few minutes in the afternoon within the compound. We were not allowed to talk or communicate with any one. We were supplied enough water only to drink. Tooth brush was not allowed; only toilet paper for cleaning was supplied; a bucket of water once a week for washing the body was also allowed. The door was opened thrice a day just for a minute only to allow us to take the plate kept outside the door with food. Correspondence was prohibited. Books were not allowed. Later on, Bible was given to me at my request. Our health deteriorated. We remained dirty without cleaning our teeth, without shaving and without a good bath with soap, for six long months.

Even our voices became strange to us. Some more Indians used to be brought and imprisoned now and then. We did not know who they were. We came to know that one of them was Amar Singh who was later on implicated in the Burma conspiracy case and sentenced for about 42 years. He used to be beaten and whipped, probably for complaining or protesting against ill-treatment. There was also in detention Mr. Gupta, a multi-millionaire of Benares, later on of congress fame, for a few days. Later on, Mr. Harman Singh (Sonar) and Mr. Har Charan Das were admitted. These two belonged to Ghadar party. They volunteered in U.S.A. to work as sailors on the steamer that brought arms and ammunition. This steamer finally took shelter in the Batavia Harbour. While these two Ghadarites were trying to go back to U.S.A, they were arrested by the British on the high seas and brought to Singapore. The German military officers who were deputed to assist us in the Burma campaign were also caught and brought to this jail. The brains of some inmates in the Barracks were affected, some temporarily only, according to their respective constitutions, as a result of this continued solitary imprisonment for six months or more at a stretch.

STEALING BY BRITISH SOLDIERS

We saw very often a surprising sight in this military jail. The Indians and the Chinese who happened to arrive by steamers were brought to the office. The Indians were mostly Sindhu merchants. "Search for bombs" by the British assistance used to begin. The fear of arrest made these innocent merchants helpless. They used to be called inside the office for questioning, while their boxes with valuable silks and other costly goods used to be left pell-mell in the verandah. The British soldiers and their officers were not ashamed to grab some valuable goods and hide them. The merchants in their anxiety to escape to freedom, used to run away with what was left of their goods, without a word of protest. We pitied these miserable Britishers for their robbing and stealing. No wonder that the British empire decayed through its own moral weaknesses. The decline in the moral character of the rulers must be expected, when the imperial system itself is based on its greater efficiency in killing, murdering, robbing and looting weaker nations.

OUR TRIALS

Now, our trials began. One Anglo-Parsi, a clerk, by becoming an agent-provocateur suddenly rose to the high position of a special detective officer by concocting evidence against the Rajput Muslim Sepoys. He was the first to question us. He was quite ignorant of our case. He was not evidently provided with files relating to us. In our experience, we noticed that the British officers alone were allowed to read our files. He used to abuse us and provoke us and got tit for tat from us. He failed miserably. But I was later on told that he was successful in provoking the Rajputs. When any of these sepoys pleaded innocence quite honestly, he used to provoke them with words like this: "you coward: you are pleading innocence: you are afraid of death. You pig! How dared you kill the British? You deserve to be shot. In reply the brave Rajput used to say out of pride, "I am afraid to die you say. Yes, I killed the British in Singapore, shoot me."

With such false confessions extracted from the innocent Sepoys, he produced "evidence" against them before the court-martial and got

them convicted. Some of them were shot and many were sent to Andamans. For rendering this "meritorious service", his British masters raised him to the position of a "special detective officer" with liberal pay.

He abused me and called me a coward. (I did not understand his tactics to provoke me). In reply I told him that I would shoot him, if I had a revolver. For this reply of mine, he raised an alarm; the brave British soldiers rushed in and dragged me out of office to my cell. After a while, the Colonel and Major and other officers arrived with their red angry faces. I was accused of threatening to kill their trusted officer. "You wanted to kill us; you threaten our loyal and trusted officer with shooting; you are punished with hand-cuffs for a week and only water for this period." Then they left me. I can imagine how Mr. Amar Singh must have fared at the hands of these abusive agents' provocations. He was very spirited, as we noticed from his heroic behaviour under torture.

The second officer who tried to tackle us was a British detective officer from India—a big fellow - and (he) always appeared to be worried as if his empire was crumbling to dust. He provided himself with big blue-covered books. Whenever we contradicted his accusations, he used to open the blue books and read the relevant portions from them. I personally found that what he quoted from the volumes was correct about myself and other members of the Nalanda Hostel at Berkeley. I came to the conclusion that one of the members of the Hostel must have been a spy; otherwise, the details, table talks and discussions that took place in that Hostel could not have been reported so accurately. Then I thought of Mr. Pandyan who was later on suspected by the Indian students at Berkeley. I wanted to know for certain if he was the spy. I got an opportunity to put this suspicions of mine to test. I happened to get some big envelopes printed with false addresses for smuggling the Ghadar newspapers to India while we were working at San Francisco in 1914-15. Mr. Pandyan accompanied me to the printing press. Nobody else knew of this fact. I suggested to the officer that Mr. Pandyan must have done it. "No"

came the reply. I had another opportunity to verify the soundness of my suspicion about Pandyan. There was accurate reporting by Pandyan against all the members of the Nalanda Hostel, but he took care to omit Mr. B.N. Sarma's name. I knew that Pandyan had a soft corner for Mr. B.N. Sarma. After some years, I got confirmation of this. Pandyan became a Superintendent of police under the Madras government. Mr. B.N. Sarma told me that he met his old friend and that Pandyan confessed the truth to him. To his credit it must be said that Pandyan refused to give evidence in open court against us. For this refusal, he was detained for some days in jail, immediately after he returned to India.

To continue the report: the white detective officer returned to India, I believe, satisfied that we were real Ghadarites and that we attempted to cross the Siamese Border into Burma to rouse the Sikh regiments to revolt. After some weeks, another British detective officer interrogated us. I think that his name was Mr. Denham, who was specially brought to India to deal with Ghadar cases. He was tall, heavily built and young. He tried to tackle us always with a smile. He always attempted to persuade us to confess and thus escape being shot. But he failed miserably in this attempt. Even Mr. Jodh Singh refused to confess.

SENTENCED TO BE 'SHOT' BY COURT-MARTIAL

Then began our trial before a British Court Martial. All six of us were accused of criminal conspiracy to overthrow the government of India by armed revolt and ordered to be shot after a period of three days. We were supplied with papers and pens for the first and last time to write to our homes. We did. We awaited death. Those were three horrible days for us. Mr. Denham used to meet us in that period and offer us all kinds of inducements of good opportunities in the government service in India. He advised us to save our lives by mere confessions. He promised that we would not be compelled to give evidence openly in a court of law. He assured us that none would know of our confession. To me, he particularly said, that I was young, that my mother was anxious to see me and that as graduate of an

American University, he promised to get me a Gazatted Officer's appointment. There was the Goddess of wealth and luxury dancing before my eyes; and alternately, the Goddess of death also danced. All of us refused to accept this ignoble offer to be traitors to our country and to our party.

The three days period was over. We six were taken to some other building to be shot. We sat in this order: Balwant Singh first; D. Chenchiah (myself) second and lastly Mr. Jodh Singh, as the 6th. The Major came and ordered Mr. Balwant Singh to stand up. He asked him "Do you have anything to say?" "nothing to say" was the reply. "You do not want to live?" was the next question. "Supposing you do not shoot me. Do you mean to say that I would not die! People die of so many diseases. I am dying of the disease known as British imperialism," was the brave reply of Bhaiji. He was then marched to a building nearby. We heard the sound of firing. We, the remaining five, looked at one another. Some one said "our Bhaiji is dead". But Bhaiji set up a heroic standard for us to follow.

Then the Major returned and ordered me, the second in the order to stand up. The Major told me that I was young and that I must try to live and asked me to confess. I retorted: "Mr. Balwant Singh was a married man with a loving wife and two children. He did not mind dying for his country. I, a bachelor need not hesitate." I was taken to a hall for being shot. I was "shot" by a squad of British soldiers standing at a distance, but I was not hit. Evidently, blank cartridges were used. The Major congratulated me for my bravery and took me to a room at a distance. There was our Bhaiji sitting. I felt happy at this. What a horrible torture they were committing against us to get confessions from us, we thought. Later on, one after the other, Mr. Thakur Singh, Mr. Chatterjee, etc. joined us. But, the last person Mr. Jodh Singh did not. We were surprised at this. We thought that we did wrong in allowing him to sit at the last. He might have thought that we all died and thus, there was no one left to notice his treachery. We were taken back to our cells. Later on, Mr. Jodh Singh was brought separately and locked up in his cell. He was guarded with

extra care and attention from that time. Then, Mr. Denham met us individually and told us that Mr. Jodh Singh had confessed everything he knew. So, once more, we were threatened with trial and death. But another complication set in. Mr. Chatterjee also voluntarily agreed to turn approver and gave some information. We were all upset since he was more intelligent than Mr. Jodh Singh, who knew very little about us and that too only from the time we traveled together from San Francisco. (Mr. Chatterjee told us later on that he contradicted some statements of Mr. Jodh Singh, who being a dullard, was no match to Mr. Chatterjee and thus saved us from some serious accusations). Mr. Balwant Singh wanted to kill Mr. Jodh Singh, somehow. He complained against the foreign diet that was supplied to us and demanded Indian diet consisting of Chapatees and curry. His proposal was accepted and he was also asked to cook for us. He was supplied with a big and heavy knife to chop the firewood. He decided to chop off the head of Mr. Jodh Singh with it. But, whenever the latter was taken out, the military took care to lock us all up in advance including 'the cook'.

SENT TO INDIA

After about six months of solitary imprisonment at Singapore military barracks, we, excepting Jodh Singh, were told that we would be sent to India. This gave us an opportunity to exchange our experiences. We were given a shave and a hair-cut; we were allowed to brush our teeth with tooth brush; we were allowed to bathe; we were allowed to wear our clothes. Finally, we were taken to the steamer. But to our surprise, Mr. Chatterjee also was not there. Some new persons, Mr. Harnam Singh and Mr. Harcharan Dass, were sent with us. I forgot the names of one or two more persons. We found that many of our personal belongings were stolen by the British soldiers at Singapore. My American shoes, hat, ties and collars, cash, etc. were missing in my boxes.

Later on, I met Mr. Chatterjee in India after a period of 12 years. He told me that he promised to help the British in spying in Japan. He escaped to U.S.A. and returned to India after the war was over. He

was living at Jubbalpore in 1928 as a photographer for film companies.

On the steamer from Singapore to Calcutta, we were well-treated and well-fed by the soldiers of the Shropshire regiment, who were escorting us. They were mere youths. They told us that they shot the Rajput rebels at Singapore. We came to know a lot from them about the incidents at Singapore. Much of what I had written so far was confirmed by them.

A GREAT STORY OF HEROISM

There is a story, a most amazing one, told by them. I wish that the research workers attempt to verify these details which I narrate below: In the Rajput Muslim regiment that revolted at Singapore in 1914-1915, there was a Jamadar who was the heaviest they had ever seen. He looked like a small elephant, about 500 lbs in weight. He did not take part in shooting the Britishers nor did he attempt to prevent those who wanted to shoot. He remained 'Neutral'. He did not attempt to run away when the Japanese handed over Singapore back to the British. He was arrested along with many others. He was so big, heavy and strong, that the young soldiers of the Shropshire regiment felt nervous when dealing with him. The British Military officers understood the situation, put iron chains to the hands, legs and waist of the Jamadar besides cuffs to hands and bar fetters to his legs. Whenever he was taken out of his cell, six soldiers used to guard him and (hold) the six iron chains binding him. He was finally ordered to be shot by the Court Martial. The squad that was ordered to shoot him was very young and felt nervous and did not like to shoot him. Then, they were ordered to go back. The Major suggested to the soldiers to volunteer for this work. The firing squad, consisting of older men, shot him at his heart. But the Jamadar did not die. He merely lumped. The firing squad, consisting of older men, shot him at his heart. But the Jamadar did not die. He merely slumped. The Major shot into his brains with his revolver but the Jamadar did not die. Then, the Major shot into his heart with his revolver, but even then he did not die. On the whole, he received ten shots. Finally, the

Major knelt on his chest, pressed and pressed to get rid of the air in the lungs. This incident our escort told us and requested us to reveal this amazing fact to the world. They confessed that they could not do it. One of the six soldiers that escorted us on the steamer to Calcutta, was one of the volunteers of the firing squad. I had no opportunity to verify these surprising statements and I leave it to the research scholars to do it. It is also important to find out if this Rajput Muslim regiment revolted on account of Ghadar propaganda.

AT CALCUTTA JAIL

We were handed over to the Indian Police at Calcutta and imprisoned in the Alipore Central Jail

AT ALIPORE CENTRAL JAIL, CALCUTTA

We were detained in this jail for about six months. We were treated well as far as food and lodging were concerned, but we were not allowed to correspond with any, even our families. There were no tortures; no police worries. But we were segregated from other inmates of the jail. We were allowed to spend our own money to buy food stuffs, cigarettes, playing cards, soaps, but not allowed to buy books, newspapers and magazines. So, we were practically cut off from the outside world and our families.

Before we were taken to this Jail, some Sikh prisoners used to be brought to this jail now and then. They belonged to Komagatamaru and Ghadar Party. They established their reputation for bravery. The jail authorities learnt lessons at their hands that they must treat the Sikh prisoners properly in their own interests. So, by the time we went there, the jail authorities had learnt lessons in good conduct from our comrades.

The Bengalee revolutionaries were detained in the other jail at Calcutta, Presidency jail. Hundreds of them were detained there. Now and then, some one used to be transferred to our camp. I remember one thing about the life of our comrades as told by Mr. Das Gupta. They came to the conclusion that the government had no proof against them and would keep them in jail till the war was over. Meanwhile,

they understood that the government would attempt to undermine their health and their spirit. They had decided to keep themselves healthy and strong by regular physical exercises and yogic practices. They used to get excellent books also for reading and discussions. They decided to grow younger and thus defeat the object of the British rulers to smash the health and the spirit of these patriots by solitary imprisonment, etc. Mr. Jatinderanath Lahiri, our Ghadar leader at Berkeley, was also there. If I remember well, he tried to enter India via Afghanistan when he returned from Germany. Mr. Das Gupta who used to be a student in U.S.A. happened to come to us from Presidency jail and thus we got some information about the activities of the Indian revolutionaries (there).

Other Indians were also brought to our camp. They came from various countries, but they were not politically conscious. Somehow, they were detained with us.

So, the life in the Alipore Central Jail for about six months helped us to recover our health, but nothing more. We came to know and appreciate the wonderful spiritual and moral strength of Bhai Balwant Singh Granthi and to like Mr. Harman Singh (Sonar) who was very strong and brave. We also understood that Mr. Harcharan Dass was not a steady man. He used to behave like a bafoon now and then and brought about some quarrels between us and the warders unnecessarily. But Mr. Harnam Singh (Sonar) always felt some affection for Mr. Harcharan Dass. After a period of six months in Calcutta jail, we were sent to our respective provinces.

I was taken to Madras, which was about 500 miles from my native place in Andhra. So, I was practically cut off from my family members also. I was all alone, since I was the only person detained during war time in the whole of Madras presidency.

BURMA CONSPIRACY CASE

At one time (in 1916-17) Dr. Garidam Nair, a sub assistant surgeon in this jail who was friendly with me, told me that my name was mentioned in the newspapers in connection with the Burma Conspiracy Case against Mr. Amar Singh and Mr. Siv Dayal Gupta.

etc. (I have forgotten when exactly Mr. Gupta was separated from us) I heard some rumours, later on, that Mr. Shiv Dayal Gupta was hanged and that Mr. Amar Singh was sentenced to a period of about 42 years and imprisoned in Mandaley Central Jail. I am unable to recollect more details about that Burma Conspiracy Case.

Lahore Conspiracy Case: 2nd Supplementary

In 1917-18, or thereabouts, I was taken to Lahore from Cannanore Central Jail. I felt that I was going to be implicated in a conspiracy case. The constables made very serious enquiries about me since they had to travel in North India which was quite strange to them. They were surprised to be told by the jail warders that I was a "gentleman" and could be trusted. They, therefore, received me with Namaskarams and did not try to hand-cuff me. I persuaded these Malabar police constables that it would be a nice thing to see Benaras, Agra, Delhi and Lahore, etc. on our way and thus enjoy sight-seeing. I told them that we had to travel about 2,500 miles or more and that according to law, we were allowed to travel about 100 miles a day on the average. Since this was a rare opportunity to them, they agreed to my plan. So, we came to Madras. I got enough money from my brother - a student at Madras - to cover extra expenses. When I was actually handed over to Lahore Central Jail after about twenty days of travel and sight seeing, I was lodged separately from the other co-accused in the Lahore conspiracy case: 2nd supplementary. After three or four days, I was told that the case was over and that the judgement was delivered before I arrived at the jail and that I was not wanted. So, the Punjab police escorted me back to Cannanore. At Lahore railway station I met fortunately my co-accused who like me were not convicted but would be detained in jails till the war was over. I got the details about that trial. Our leader, Bhai Balwant Singh Granthi was sentenced to be hanged. He told the court that it was he that did what I and Mr. Thakur Singh were accused of. He contradicted the statement of Mr. Jodh Singh (P.W.) and thus, purposely saved our lives. When the comrades asked him why he did so, he seemed to have stated that Mr. Thakur Singh and I (D. Chenchiah) were

uniformly brave and patriotic even when sentenced to be "shot" at Singapore and if they lived they could be useful to the country. Any how, there were lots of accusation against him and he would be hanged and that it was his duty to save as many comrades as possible. Thus, I escaped being convicted.

I do not remember any other details of that trial. But the good opinion expressed about me by Bhaiji and his expectation that I would be useful to the country had imposed, I felt, a sacred duty on my shoulders. In fact, I felt that my future life should be dedicated to public work. I believe that I had lived a patriotic life and did work wholeheartedly for public welfare. I was sent to jail again and again and imprisoned for a total period of eight and a half years. I started some movements which eradicated some social evils like the hereditary Devadasi prostitute system, compulsory widowhood, compulsory early marriage of girls, and ill-treatment of Harijans. Even to-day, whenever I hesitate to undertake a good deed and if Bhaiji comes to my mind I give up my hesitation and take up the burden of remedying the wrong, irrespective of the troubles.

I was taken to Delhi in 1917-18 with the idea of foisting a conspiracy case against me and others from all over India who could not be sentenced otherwise. After keeping me for a month or two at Delhi in the district jail, I was escorted back to Cannanore Central Jail. While I was in Delhi District Jail, I met Mr. Bipin Behari Ganguli, the famous Benagali Terrorist leader.

AFTER RELEASE

I was released in December 1919 (after the Amritsar congress). Then I lost contact with my Ghadar friends. I met Mr. Thakur Singh at the All-India National Congress session in 1936 or 1937, at Faizpur or Haripura. He told me lots of things about our comrades. I was anxious to know about our comrades. I was anxious to know about the wife and children of Bhaiji. He gave me a good report about them and also about Mr. Harnam Singh (Sonar), but he told me that Mr. Harcharan Das did not stand the test of a patriot and joined the police department.

I met Mr. J.N. Lahiri at some town near Calcutta, but has not been communicative, as usual with him. I believe that he was working for the country and that he was watched by the police. I also met Mr. B.N. Sarma, Mr. P.J. Venkayya and Mr. Ranjit Singh Jain (Professor at Benares University). They gave up public work long-long ago. I went to see Mr. Bhai Paramanand at Lahore in 1933-34 but he was not able to recognize me. He was very old. I met our famous Ghadar Babas at Bezwada in 1943-44 at the All-India Kisan Congress, but we failed to recognize one another. Mr. Pandyan retired on pension as district superintendent of police.

I am grateful to the Ghadar movement and to Messrs. Lala Har Dayal, Mr. J.N. Lahiri and Bhai Balwant Singh for making a man of me to live a life of usefulness to our motherland.



Mr. D.Dhenchiah from district Nellore (Andhra Pradesh) went to the United States of America in 1912 and joined University of California, Berkeley as a student of B.Sc. (Agriculture). There he came under the influence of Lala Har Dayal and got associated with the Ghadar Movement in 1913. He was sent to Burma in 1915 to organise revolt in the regiments of British Army stationed there. He was arrested along with his comrades before reaching there, taken to Singapore and tortured there for months together. He was then brought back to India and was sent to different prisons before being released in 1919. After his release he remained active in workers movement and also for eradicating various social evils. He wrote these reminiscences in 1956. After living a life of social and political activism with patriotic fervour he passed away on December 30, 1964.

Published by :

Desh Bhagat Yadgar Committee
Jalandhar

