



BABA SOHAN SINGH BHAKNA

*Life of The Founder of
The Ghadar Party*

By SOHAN SINGH JOSHI

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Kripal Singh

BABA SOHAN SINGH BHAJNA

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Born: January 1870

Died: December 1968

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By

Sohan Singh Josh

Foreword by

G. Adhikari



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CORRECTION

Page 64, last line: read 1940 for 1942.

FOREWORD

Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna, an outstanding veteran stalwart from the ranks of the Ghadar revolutionaries, had nearly completed a century, when he passed away in December 1968. He was a distinguished member of our party and one of the foundation presidents of the All-India Kisan Sabha.

The most active part of his revolutionary career is inseparably connected with the Great Ghadar of 1914-17 which is sometimes described as the second round of India's revolutionary struggle for independence. Dr Bhupendranath Datta who thus characterised the unsuccessful revolutionary struggle of the period of the first world war said that the Great Rebellion of 1857-59 was India's first war of independence and the Quit India movement of 1942 with its aftermath of 1945-46 was the third round of India's revolutionary struggle for independence.

This rather one-sided characterisation of these phases of India's liberation struggle becomes meaningful only when it is taken into consideration that each of these rounds, especially the second and third, was preceded by a mass of a political movements and national struggles in which the masses were drawn in ever-increasing measure.

Thus, for instance, the round of revolutionary struggle of the period of the first world war was preceded by the swadesi and boycott movement of 1907-8 in which the trinity of Lall, Bal, Pal, who then represented the militant wing of the Indian National Congress played a great role, drawing the educated urban and rural middle classes in a big way into the movement.

Similarly the Quit India movement, and its 1945-46 aftermath,

was the culmination of the mass phase of the national independence movement, which emerged under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi in the context of the postworld war I crisis, with its two civil disobedience movements of 20s and 30s and the mass struggle of the workers and peasants under the leadership of communists and socialists.

The significant feature of the three rounds of revolutionary struggles was the disintegration of the British Indian Army—the main instrument with which the British imperialists maintained their system of exploitation and oppression and held India in bondage. The process reached its final culmination in the aftermath struggles of 1945-46 after which a British minister had to admit in effect that there was no alternative but to quit India, as the only other alternative was to reconquer India for which a new army will have to be built—a practical impossibility.

Our party is proud that Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna, who was a member of our party up to his last days, played such a prominent role in the second round of India's revolutionary struggle. This is not the case of an individual. The revolutionary party and the movement of which he was one of founders, namely the Ghadar Party and the Ghadar movement in the first world war years, turned as a whole to communism and to the Communist International and some of the pioneers and founders of our party in the Punjab came from its ranks in its second phase.

Sohan Singh Bhakna came from middle peasant stock and like many members of his class fell into poverty and want due to debt. Like many of compatriots from the Punjab he emigrated to America in search of labour and to earn money. That was in the years preceding the first world war.

About ten thousand Punjabis—mostly Sikhs—settled on the Pacific coast in California and Canada, were working mostly in the lumber industry. Most of them were nonpolitical in the beginning; but their own difficulties abroad, the refusal of the Canadian authorities to allow any further immigration, the refusal of permission to ships carrying Indian emigrants to land in Canadian ports, etc. soon brought them the realisation that these arose because India was a colony of the British imperialists and not an independent nation.

Under the influence of Indian revolutionaries like Hardayal, Kanshi Ram and others they organised themselves into the Pacific Coast Hindi Association. It published a paper called *Ghadar* (Revolution) and pamphlets like *Ghadar-di-Gunj*, *Ailan-i-Jung*, *Nayan Zamana* and *Balance-Sheet of British Rule*. All these publications emphasised the idea that independence can be won only through an armed uprising for which preparation has to be made by political mass agitation, forming of secret societies, collection of arms and work among the army for the purpose.

Sohan Singh Bhakna became the first president of the Association which later became known as the Ghadar Party. Kartar Singh Sarabha was his right-hand man and active assistant in California. Kartar Singh together with Vishnu Ganesh Pingle, who was also in California in these days (1913-15) and joined the Ghadar Party, played an active role in the attempted Ghadar rising of 1915, and both were among the 46 martyrs of the Lahore and other conspiracy cases of 1915-16.

The unsuccessful attempt at a "Ghadar Uprising" in 1915-16 with its aftermath in the succeeding war years took place at a time when the political mass movement was at a low ebb. In fact, the lack of coordination between the mass political national movement and the activities of the revolutionaries was one of the causes of its failure. In later war years when the political movement did begin picking up, the Indian revolutionaries did not get that support from it which they got in days of 1907-8.

At the same time, the coordination achieved by the Indian revolutionaries, in their activities in India itself especially in the two big provinces where they were most widespread, viz, in Bengal and Punjab, in linking up with the efforts of the Indian revolutionaries abroad in the USA, and in Germany and Turkey, was most remarkable. These latter had come to an understanding with the German and Turkish governments, who were then at war with Britain and had agreed to render financial assistance and arms and ammunition to the Indian revolutionaries in India, to overthrow the British rule.

It is interesting to note that the conditions put forward by the Indian revolutionaries in coming to an understanding with

the German government were remarkable. These were as follows:

“The financial assistance received from the German government would be treated by the Indian revolutionaries as a national loan which would be repaid when India became independent. German military forces will not be allowed to enter into India. The right and power to determine the destiny of independent India will rest in the hands of India alone. Germany will assist Indian revolutionary effort by giving financial assistance, arms and ammunition and by sending German military specialists to train Bengali revolutionaries.”¹

Dr Abinash Chandra Bhattacharya, who was closely associated with Virendranath Chattopadhyaya in the negotiations with the German government in Berlin in 1914, mentions two more conditions put forward on behalf of the Indian revolutionaries:

“If our Revolution succeeds, we would like to establish a socialist and democratic administration and the Austro-German powers should not in any way obstruct the same.

“In India there are many powerful princes. If some of them seek to establish, either in India or in their states, a monarchy, the Austro-German powers should not help them but should help us to establish a republic as desired by us.”²

Wide were the implications of this great revolutionary effort of 1915-16. Its main aim was to bring about an armed uprising at a time when Britain was engaged in a life and death struggle with Germany, when the British forces in India were reduced to a minimum and when there was some discontent in the army due to forcible methods of recruitment etc. The centre of the plan was to bring about disaffection in the Indian armed units and to get sections of them to revolt. Simultaneously strategic centres of rail and transport communications were to be attack-

¹ Quoted by Sukumar Roy in *Bharatbarsher Swadhinata Yuddher Itihas* (Bengali), p. 112-13.

² *Europe Bharatiya Biplaber Sadhana* (Bengali), p. 146.

ed so that railway system was paralysed throughout the eastern and northern part of the country so as to hamper the movement of troops. Bombs were manufactured on a large scale and arms collected for preliminary action to collect more arms. Decoities were conducted to collect funds for the operation.

The plan in India was coordinated with the activities of the Indian revolutionaries abroad. Financial help from the Germans was promised to the revolutionary centres in Bengal. German ships were to deliver large consignments of arms which were to be landed somewhere on the eastern coast and on the Bengal coast.

None of these German ships carrying arms ever reached Indian shores and even according to British police reports very few arms consignments reached the hands of Bengal revolutionaries from this source. Much of the financial aid from the German source fell into the police hands. Bengal revolutionaries who were the most organised force in India for such revolutionary action were happy that their comrades abroad had secured German aid and welcomed the possibility of big arms aid in the later phases of their action. In the meanwhile they began collecting resources and arms through revolutionary action without waiting for the German aid.

In fact, the central plan for an uprising in the period of the first world war originated with the Indian revolutionaries, both abroad and in India, and not with the Germans. This becomes clear from the conditions which the Indian revolutionaries put before the German government, which we have quoted and from the account given by Dr Abinash Bhattacharya.

Similarly, it is the Indian revolutionaries of the "Berlin Committee" in Turkey who in 1915 took the initiative to make propaganda in the Indian Army across the Suez Canal. M.P.B.T. Acharya and Virendranath Dasgupta swam across the Suez Canal for the purpose. Later, after the fall of Kut-el-Amara, when a number of Indian armymen were taken war-prisoners and brought to Turkey, it was the Indian revolutionaries, Khan Khoje and Daud Ali Dutt, who took the initiative to organise a liberation force with those Indian armymen and attempted

to march through Persia to India's North-west Frontier, to link up with the Indian revolutionaries based on Kabul and attack the British forces on that front. The attempt was unsuccessful.

But numerically the biggest forces of the Indian revolutionaries abroad were the members of the Ghadar Party in California and Canada, who were a few thousand strong. It must be said to the credit of the Ghadar revolutionaries that they took the decision to return to India in mass, leaving their moneyearning jobs to participate in India's revolutionary struggle even before the war started. As the author of the biography points out:

“Preparation for going to India and organising revolt to throw the British out started after 12 April 1914. Sohan Singh took an active part in these meetings.”

Though the Ghadar uprising was mainly in Bengal and Punjab, the main battle-front was the Punjab and north UP. The main fighting force was the returned Ghadar revolutionaries from California. The leadership and the organisation of bomb factories etc. was supplied by Bengal revolutionaries led by Rash Behari Bose. The main repressive blow struck against revolutionaries by the British was in the form of the first and second Lahore conspiracy cases and their offshoot in the Punjab in which 240 were tried, 46 were executed and some 160 were sentenced to transportations and lesser jail terms; and overwhelming majority of them were Ghadarites.

The Ghadar revolutionaries financed their return to India in several ships from the collections made from the members. They purchased arms for the returnees with the money earned by Ghadar Party members of the sweat of their brow. The author correctly underlines this trait of the Ghadar revolutionaries which Sohan Singh Bhakna was never tired of emphasising.

Sohan Singh Bhakna was most active in organising the return of the Ghadar Party members to India to light the flame of uprising in India. Sohan Singh, as the president of the Ghadar Party, was sent to contact the passengers of the *Komagata Maru* who were new emigrants to Canada but who were not allowed to land there by the Canadian authorities, the ship being turned back to India. It was Sohan Singh's job to explain to these

passengers the revolutionary message of the Ghadar Party and to supply them with a few hundred revolvers. The job was well done. The passengers of the *Komagata Maru* most of whom were not committed Ghadarites put up a militant fight against the harassment of the police and finally at Budge Budge made a stand and staged an armed engagement with the police.

Sohan Singh who returned to India by the ship *Namsang*, which followed the *Komagata Maru* reached Calcutta on October 1914. He was arrested immediately. The British Indian police who were keeping track of the activities of the Ghadar Party in California through their spies in USA became specially alert after the *Komagata Maru* incident. They probably came to know of the plan of the returning Ghadarites to organise an uprising, through intercepted letters and issues of the paper *Ghadar*. They instituted a special ordinance to restrict the activities of the emigrant returnees and to screen them. By March 1915 they had interned some 893 USA-returned Punjabi emigrants. Many more had returned and all of them could not be arrested and restrained.

Sohan Singh himself was unable to participate in any of the preparatory activities which began in the last quarter of 1914 and the first months 1915. But he was preceded by Vishnu Ganesh Pingle who had joined the Ghadar Party while in California and who was the first to come to India with the message about the plan and about the contact which the Ghadarites had established with the Germans. He contacted the Bengal revolutionaries' centre and Rash Behari Bose who was then operating in Banaras. They lost no time in setting up bomb factories in the Punjab and in contacting the returning emigrant Ghadarites, who had escaped internment. They organised through their help revolutionary groups in the Indian regiments stationed in Lahore, Ferozepur and Meerut, etc. Kartar Singh Sarabha, the right-hand man of Sohan Singh, had also preceded him and had managed to join Rash Behari and Pingle in this work.

In spite of the indomitable revolutionary zeal, organising and coordinating skill and superior self-sacrificing spirit of the hundreds of Ghadarites and Bengal revolutionaries and others, their plans were forestalled and foiled by the police with the help of

spies, planted in the organisation. Revolutionary groups in the regiments were exposed and arrested. Hundreds of them were court-martialled and executed—their exact number and names of the regiments and their location have yet to be revealed. Bomb factories and arms dumps were caught and widespread arrests took place in the Punjab, UP and Bengal. That is why when the D-Day fixed at the end of February 1915 arrived nothing much happened. The series of Lahore conspiracy cases started by March 1915.

Bengal revolutionaries continued their efforts in the later part of 1915 and afterwards. Jatindranath Mukherjee (Bagha Jatin) was in command of the Bengal centre. Young revolutionaries were sent as emissaries to Japan and Batavia (now Indonesia) to get news of the arms loading in German ships and to contact the Germans. Two of these who were to play a prominent part in the Indian communist movement in the early and late twenties were Abani Mukherjee and Naresh Bhattacharya alias 'Martin' (M. N. ROY).

Dates and places were fixed for the ships to arrive. Revolutionaries waited at these places and on these dates to unload the same. One such waiting place was exposed to the police. It was manned by Bagha Jatin and his heroic band of a handful of revolutionaries who dug themselves into a trench and held at bay for several hours a large fully armed police force. Bagha Jatin fell riddled with bullets and was overpowered but not before they had inflicted heavy casualties on the big police force and not without winning their astounded admiration and homage.

We have attempted to sketch in broad outlines the main features of India's second great attempt at armed uprising for independence. We have referred to the activities of Indian revolutionaries in Turkey, Germany and Kabul. They were in a miniature form a precursor of what took place under the leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose on India's north-eastern frontier but against the background of the "Quit India" upheaval of 1942-46. In 1915-16 there was also the formation of an Azad Hind Fauj and Azad Hind Provisional Government in Kabul and Baluchistan.

The failure of the great revolutionary effort of 1915-17 was due in the main to the incapacity of the leaders to back it up with building up broadbased political movement drawing in the masses, especially the peasantry and the working people, and taking up their anti-imperialist and antifeudal demands. All the same it must be stressed that thousands of the Ghadarites who participated in the movement had wide links with the masses of the middle peasantry of the Punjab from whom the bulk of the British-Indian Army was recruited. That is what terrified the British rulers and that is what explains the brutal and massive repression they launched against the Ghadarites in the Punjab as expressed in the severe sentences in the Lahore conspiracy cases and their offshoots, in the widespread mass arrests and detentions without trial and in torture of prisoners in jail.

The author substantiates this by quoting the illfamed Michael O'Dwyer (*India as I Know it*): This blood thirsty and lawless policy had two reasons: first that the Punjab "was the key to the military situation in India and the chief recruiting ground for the Indian Army" and second that the government was engaged in a life and death struggle against powerful enemies.

The author describes very vividly how Sohan Singh faced the sufferings and torture in jail firstly in the period when he was under trial, refusing to give any information to the police which could implicate his colleagues, secondly when he was sentenced to death and thirdly in the camp years in various jails in India after his sentence was commuted to transportation for life. He kept a lively contact with the series of his political co-prisoners belonging to different political parties as they came along through the march of years, as well as with the movement outside.

He came to know how the Ghadar Party in California reorganised itself in the early twenties under the leadership of his successor Bhai Santokh Singh and how he and Bhai Rattan Singh travelled to Moscow and attended the Fourth Congress of the Communist International in 1922. They established permanent contact between the Ghadar Party as a whole and the Communist International. In doing this the Ghadar Party in America was following in the footsteps of their colleagues

of the Indian Independence Committee (the Berlin Committee) in Europe, who after the victory of the October Socialist Revolution and the end of the first world war began contacting the leaders of the Soviet Union and the Bolshevik Party. It is well known that in the Spring of 1921, a strong delegation of Indian revolutionaries led by Virendranath Chattopadhyaya and Bhupendranath Datta was in Moscow negotiating with the Soviet and Comintern leaders. Among them were also M. Barkatullah; Virendranath Dasgupta, Daud Ali and Khan Khoje; M. N. Roy, Abani Mukherjee, M. P. B. T. Acharya who were already there and were connected with foundation of the Communist Party of India in Tashkent together with some of the muhajirun who had arrived there towards the end of 1920.

These facts were known to the Ghadarites in USA when they decided to establish contact with the Comintern. But the Ghadar revolutionaries were a well-knit party with a working peasant base and they decided not only to establish contact with the Socialist Soviet Union but to attempt to understand and assimilate its ideology with a view to strengthen our struggle for independence.

The author quotes an article by Sohan Singh Bhakna entitled "My Recollections" which substantiates this point:

"Our party is proud of the fact that its office in the USA was the first to establish contact with the Russian October Revolution. The party grasped the significance of the Soviet revolution and decided that as a first step responsible comrades could be sent to the Soviet Union, who should report back after making a study there and should clear the way for other comrades by securing permission from party's education department.

"The idea was that more and more comrades should have an understanding of the socialist theories propounded by Marx and Lenin."

This was true not only of the Ghadar Party in America in the early twenties but also of the Ghadarites who returned in thousands to participate in the revolutionary upheaval of 1915-17. The author again quotes from Babaji thus:

“The Ghadar Party comrades were interned in villages by thousands. They were steadfast in their aim and policy. We regarded every party as our own which was working against British imperialism honestly. We regarded all political movements as our own, which contributed to India's struggle for independence. We still believe in this and we try to unify these forces so that way could be opened for achievement of socialism... I strongly believe that unless socialism forms the aims of economic structure real independence would be just a dream.”

This is something like the “credo” of Sohan Singh Bhakna to which he remained loyal in word and deed throughout his life. In fact it was the credo of the Ghadar Party as a whole when it made its turn towards socialism and to the Comintern in the early twenties in common with many of the Indian revolutionaries in Europe. Some more facts about this turn may be stated.

A couple of years after the Ghadar revolt was suppressed the British government noticed that the Ghadar adherents were raising their head again. This was in 1918-1919 after the amnesty (1919) of some of the 1914-15 rebels. It appears that it was the British government which instigated the USA government to start the San Francisco case mainly to crush the Indian revolutionary and particularly Ghadarite activity in that country. Bhai Santokh Singh became the general secretary of the Ghadar Party in California and Surendra Nath Kar too joined the party and took charge of one department. In this period (1920) the Ghadar Party seems to have made contact with the Berlin Committee. Surendra Nath Kar came over from America to Berlin. In the beginning of 1921 he was in the delegation of Indian revolutionaries who visited Moscow at that time. Surendra Nath Kar thus seems to have cleared the way for Santokh Singh and Rattan Singh to visit Moscow, which they did in 1922 to attend the Fourth Congress of the CI as mentioned earlier.

From Moscow both went to Kabul and operated from there in 1923-24. The Government of India was aware of their activities from Kabul but was unable to prevent the same.

The secret report of the Intelligence records: There has been a steady increase of intercourse between "seditious" sections in India and Afghanistan (1924). *Desh Bhagat Quidi Pariwar Sahayak Committee* was formed about this time. Teja Singh Swatantar, who was sent from Kabul in 1924 to Constantinople to take a course in military training in the Turkish Military college, was helped by the Ghadar Party centre in Kabul. After his return from Turkey Swatantar organised secret communication service between India, America and Russia according to the same Government of India secret report (Political Home, File 235-1926, in National Archives). According to the same source Bhai Rattan Singh toured throughout India in 1924 for nearly a year and the British Indian police admit that they were never able to lay their hands upon him. It was after this preparatory work that Bhai Santokh Singh came and settled in Amritsar at the end of 1925 and started the *Kirti* magazine in February 1926. Gurdir Singh was declared as editor, Bhai Santokh Singh and Bhag Singh Canadian were joint managers and the author of the present book was the effective editor of the paper almost from the very beginning. *Kirti* (Punjabi, 1926), *Langal* (Bengali, December 1925) and *Kranti* (Marathi, 1927) were among the early journals of the Communist Party of India which followed the still earlier journals, viz. *Socialist* (Ed.—Dange, August 1922-24), *Inquilab* (Urdu, Lahore) and *Labour Kisan Gazette* (Singaravelu Chettiar, Madras, 1924).

Such is the history of the Ghadar Party in its second phase, beginning with the early twenties when it turned to socialism and the Communist International and gradually became a part of the communist movement in India. Sohan Singh Bhakna was in touch with these developments through the long years of his jail life during which he not only remained steadfast to his ideals but developed politically.

Thus when he stepped out of prison in the middle thirties, after being more than sixteen years behind the bars, he immediately plunged into political activity: firstly, into campaign for the release of his Ghadar comrades and then into the kisan activities and into the work of the Communist Party. After the outbreak of the second world war, when the British imperialist government launched a general round-up of all the

revolutionaries, lefts, communists and socialists (beginning 1940), Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna was swept into jail along with them.

On the eve of his arrest he was elected to preside over the All-India Kisan Sabha session to be held some time later at Palsa in Andhra. Inside jail in the famous Deoli Camp, he fought indefatigably for the unity of the communists and other revolutionaries. After his release in 1943 and for the next 25 years till his death, he worked singlemindedly for the Kisan Sabha, for the unity and the strengthening of the Communist Party.

The author has done a great service to the young generation by presenting it with a well-studied biography of the great Ghadar revolutionary which is much more than just a biography. For the life of Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna is inseparably connected with one of the most stirring chapters of our national independence struggle. It reflects the evolution of a national revolutionary into a communist under the impact of the October Socialist Revolution and that of the rising tide of workers' and peasants' struggle in our own country. It is a life of a peasant of remarkable simplicity, of superb self-sacrifice and of steadfastness to the cause of revolution, the working people and the nation.

1 August 1970

G. ADHIKARI

INTRODUCTION

This is a brief life story of Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna. I have attempted to bring out all aspects of his life. I have pieced together whatever I have been able to find regarding his life in the National Archives of India as well as in his own writings. Babaji's life cannot be separated from the Ghadar Party, nor can it be studied in isolation from the political, economic and cultural movements of those days. He was an institution by himself not only in America but also here in India whether in jail or outside.

He used to complain that "Congress historians... have deliberately drawn a veil on that glorious chapter of history which the revolutionary patriots wrote with their own blood—for example, on the 250 martyrs hanged and many military men shot dead during 1914-15. Hundreds had to undergo life imprisonment and dragged out their days for years in the hell of Andaman jails. Properties of hundreds of Ghadarites were confiscated. In reality the work done by the Congress is no match for the fight and struggle put up by the Ghadar Party against the British raj" (*Dukh*, p. 18).

At the beginning of his pamphlet *Dukh* (Sorrow) he says:

"To cover up true history is a crime and an act of cowardice. Whatever I am writing is what is stored up in my mind, a historical treasure for the present and the coming generations. Truly it belongs to them, and I am giving it back to the nation and the country."

It is true that no objective historical assessment of the efforts, struggles and sacrifices of the Ghadar Party for national libe-

ration has yet been made. Babaji's complaint is correct—the government and other historians are distorting the history of the Ghadar Party and are not correctly interpreting these sentiments, demands and deep anticolonial emotions with which the Ghadar patriots came from America and laid down their lives for their motherland. The history of the self-sacrificing patriots of the Ghadar Party cannot be written by one who is prejudiced against the use of methods of violence. They had adopted the method of violence after weighing all pros and cons. Only after understanding the context can justice be done to the history of the Ghadar Party—and not by adopting the yardstick of peaceful satyagraha.

Till today only two books have been written in Punjabi on Ghadar history. One was written in 1956 by Shri Jagjit Singh Tarn Taran, viz *Ghadar Party Laihar*, and the other by Comrade Gurcharan Singh in 1960. Both have been written after great labour and research. In spite of some shortcomings, as first efforts, both are praiseworthy.

The reason why Gurcharan Singh's book is more acceptable and authoritative is that it has behind it the sanction of the Ghadarite patriots, which Shri Jagjit Singh does not enjoy. Nor had the latter the statements of Ghadar Babas which Gurcharan Singh had secured before writing his book. Gurcharan Singh also had the advantage of the experience of the political movement and he patiently did research on the subject in the National Archives of India. But it is a pity that he could not finish the second volume of this history.

A common shortcoming of both the books is that they have not clearly brought out the policy of British imperialism and results following therefrom. Michael O'Dwyer's book *India As I Know It* lays down this policy very clearly and specifically. Both scholars have read this book and have quoted from it, but have not given a clear exposition of British policy. Without doing this we cannot explain the oppression, persecution and injustice perpetrated by the British government on the brave youth of the Ghadar Party.

Jagjit Singh has accepted as authoritative "the judgement of these cases" (p. 148). There is no doubt that they are invaluable.

able source material. But in order to draw on these facts one must have a critical mind. It should not be forgotten that judges were there not to deal justice, they were there to serve British imperialism and give the enemies of the British raj heaviest punishments as death sentences and life imprisonments in the interests of the successful prosecution of the first world war. The statements of the prosecution witnesses on which these judgements are based were tutored and exaggerated. Therefore he has fallen a prey to British propaganda, that Sikhs were illiterate and unintelligent, easily excitable, and "there was no interval between their thought and action" (p. 45).

This "no interval between thought and action" theory was used as a weapon to defame Sikhs, to prevent them from taking part in any movement and to punish them heavily if they dared to do so. It was fully utilised against the Ghadar movement for imposition of the Rowlatt Act and the Seditious Meetings Act during the Akali movement. Bhai Jodh Singh had done service to British raj by calling Sikhs "dry powder". The myth of this propaganda was thoroughly exposed during the non-violent satyagraha at Guru ka Bagh as well as at Jaito Morcha, etc.

Not only this. Michael O'Dwyer wrote in his book (p. 208) that Ghadarite Sikhs in America and Canada were living in a false atmosphere. For him the atmosphere of freedom was false and the atmosphere of slavery was a healthy one. The dream of imperialists like O'Dwyer was to keep India in slavery for ever. They could never think that India was bound to wrest freedom one day. In the dictionary of British officers the word "patriot" meant a "bad character" and freedom fighters appeared in the rogue's gallery in every police station.

In some of the English books on history a few pages have been devoted to Ghadar history and a distorted picture is given therein. In Khushwant Singh's view Sikh peasants were more concerned with the war than with the revolution. The story of the heroic stand made by a battalian of the 14th Sikhs against an overwhelming Turkish forces at Gallipoli on 14 June 1915 fired the imagination of Sikh youth more than the stories of racial discrimination in Canada and the United States. And this is followed by a quotation from the butcher Michael

O'Dwyer: "After that the rush to the colours in the Sikh districts was extraordinary."

This is just underlining the slavish spirit of the Sikh soldiers in the army and extolling British imperialism. It is a clever way of putting cover over the patriotic sacrifices of the Ghadarites for the freedom of the country. It is in fact slandering the great heroes of India's second war for freedom.

American and British imperialists are taking keen interest in distorting our revolutionary history and they are lavishly spending money to this end. They are reviving the theory of "ma-bap sarkar" in respect of British imperialism, to cover up imperialist oppression and repression. The revolutionary parties should give up their attitude of indifference to their revolutionary historical heritage. This work should be entrusted to a small committee of scholars who take interest in history and they should be provided with all facilities to carry on this important work.

All the claims made by O'Dwyer to crush the Ghadar movement proved false. Its ghost haunted the British officers even in their sleep. They found these patriots in the Akali movement, they saw them as leaders in the Babar Akali movement. In their view Ghadarites had captured the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandhak Committee, Shiromani Akali Dal and the commission members of the Rowlatt Report were seeing their hand in the April 1919 incidents.

I owe thanks and gratitude to Com. Dr G. Adhikari who, on my request, has written a fine foreword to the book giving the historical background of the Ghadar movement, its development, causes of its failure and the political role it played in rousing the country. This foreword has, in my view, added much to the political and historical value of the book.

I am also thankful to Shri Prem Singh and his wife Dalbir Kaur for helping me to translate this book. But for their pains this English version of my Punjabi book, perhaps, would not have come out at all.

Delhi, 15 May 1970

SOHAN SINGH JOSHI

FIRST TWENTYFIVE YEARS

Sohan Singh was born in the beginning of January 1870 in the village of Khutrae Khurd—his mother's village—district Amritsar. He was the only son of the family like his father and grandfather. The ancestral land had therefore not been divided up, it continued in the form of a single unit. This was quite a rich peasant household in the village with 65 acres of land. Sohan Singh was hardly a year old when his father died.

His father, Karam Singh, was an honest, kind-hearted man. He sympathised with the poor. The land produced plenty and during a famine or scarcity he would distribute grain to the poor free of charge—while others would lend it at usurious rates of 25 to 50 per cent—and on the maghi festival he would give the poor rice and buckets of sugarcane juice to make them enjoy pudding. His mother loved all children without discrimination. They were devout Sikhs and had a good reputation among the people.

In those days there were schools for higher education only in the cities while in the villages there were not even primary schools. "Only six men out of hundred could read and write an ordinary letter but the men are ten times as learned as women."¹ Such was the condition of education at that time.

The government pursued the policy of keeping the people uneducated and ignorant. "If the rising Sikh generation is provided through proper teachers elementary education the result may be still more potential source of mischief if not of active danger."² Uneducated and ignorant people are easy to rule

1. M. S. Leigh, *The Punjab and the War*, 1922, 3.

2. Memorandum by D. Petrie, section 20, last para.

because they can easily be misled as they have no knowledge of the complex processes of exploitation by foreign imperialism. People desiring education had no other alternative than to send their children to superstitious and half-educated maulvis or granthis of mosques and gurdwaras.

Sohan Singh was sent to a gurdwara for education. The granthis in villages of those days were not much educated nor looked upon with any great reverence. They could only teach a few books about Sikh religion. Sohan Singh was an intelligent child. He quickly learnt what he was taught. As to writing, this was not properly known even to the granthi. That is why he never learnt to write the Punjabi language. His later life hardly showed any influence of the granthi on his character and manners.

Sohan Singh was eleven when fortunately an Urdu school up to the fifth class was opened in the village. His mother got him admitted to the school. She wished that the child should be properly educated so that he was brought up as an intelligent person. Sohan Singh was a sharp student. He secured good marks in the primary class. By then he had grown into a sturdy young man of nearly sixteen.

This was all the education that he received in these sixteen years. It is not as if he did not want to study further. Further education could only be had in the city, there was no middle or high school in the vicinity. This meant leaving his home and arranging for his stay in a boarding, or in some other, house. His mother could not stand this separation. Sohan Singh writes in a booklet *Jiwan Sangram* (Life-Struggle) regretfully: "My being the only son stood in the way of my pursuit of education and I was prevented from going in for higher studies. My education was only up to the fifth class (Urdu)."

Up to this time Sohan Singh had nothing to do with household affairs, cultivation or dealings of his family. After the death of his father these tasks had been taken over by his grandmother. He had a great regard and respect for his mother. Children of blacksmiths, carpenters and weavers would frequent his house. They would accompany their parents there. Sohan Singh's mother loved these children much. She would give them a lot of things to eat and on the Id festival, Muslim and

other children were specially invited and affectionately fed with puddings and other sweets. Solicitude for the poor, helping them to the maximum extent and no discrimination whatsoever on the basis of caste—this formed a part of the atmosphere in Sohan Singh's house. Children of scheduled caste families, of Muslims and Sikhs came to this house whose doors were always open for them.

Sohan Singh was now a grown-up young man. There was plenty of milk, curd or ghee in the house. He could have any food he liked. It was but natural that he developed an excellent physique and emerged stronger than his mates.

His grandmother had become very old. She called him one day and handed over the keys of the household to him. Sohan Singh writes in his *Jiwan Sangram*: "Despite a large piece of land my father had not saved much in cash because he was a devout Sikh and spent a lot on good causes. But after his death till my adulthood a lot of money had been saved."

In our rural society Sikhs are customarily addressed as "Sardarji". But a person having a large piece of land and some money is regarded as a big "Sardar". Sohan Singh was ignorant of the ways of the world and very much inexperienced. Clever sycophants gathered round him and started praising him to the skies, addressing him "Sardarji, Sardarji". Sardarji was caught in their net, he went all out with them. This was a gang of drunkards, Sohan Singh became their leader. He was a man of one-track mind and whatever he pursued he did with extreme onesidedness. This went on for eight or nine years.

These friends would say after getting drunk "Sardarji, life would be very enjoyable if we had good horses for riding and hounds for hunting, if we come back with big bag. Drinks mean something only if accompanied by meat. Without hot meat wine is a tasteless drink." Money was squandered like water. When the credit rose to three or four thousand the shopkeepers would grumble. Sohan Singh would then go to his mother and plead for more money. She would give him a bit of advice, urge on him to abandon the course of ruin he was following and gave examples of houses reduced to poverty as a result of drinking. But he would go on imploring until he got what he wanted.

His mother loved him dearly. She wanted Sohan Singh to leave the bad company he was in. But her advice fell on deaf ears and she was completely helpless. When he refused to listen to anything she would say: "Dear son! This money is after all yours. I will not take with me. If you use it carefully you will live in peace, otherwise the creditors would harass and insult you. I want to see my son living happily and not in misery."

Thus he extracted from his mother thousands of rupees. But it was not an endless treasure. The money saved earlier soon disappeared. Now he started mortgaging his land. Soon more than thirtytwo acres of this fertile land were under mortgage. His mother was very unhappy and silently suffered the agony. She had not learnt to reprimand her son and he was pursuing his self-willed activities and was now thoroughly unpopular with his people.

This is the story of his first twentyfive years. This is the story of his turbulent youth and of the consequent ruin. Nobody can say what would have happened if his attention had not been diverted. He himself writes in *Jiwan Sangram*: "I wasted ten precious years of my life, and money too, in bad company. I had completed twentyfive. In the twentysixth year my life took a new turn and there opened a new chapter."

A NEW STAGE OF LIFE

One evening when he was going out for a walk he passed by the gurdwara where a large gathering was assembled. Two musicians were singing slokas of Baba Farid in rich melodious tunes. Their voice had great charm and attraction. At that moment they were singing:

*O lord, don't make me dependent,
If you must, take the soul away from my body.*

He stopped and then went inside the gurdwara and listened to the hymns. These slokas had a profound impact on him.

He had heard that Baba Kesar Singh of village Muhawa (a few miles from his village) was a saint of noble character. He used to take his jatha to the villages, perform kirtan of hymns and preached rejection of bad habits, performing of noble deeds and living like brothers. Everywhere he was received with great respect. On this particular day he was in Bhakna.

Baba Kesar Singh was earlier connected with the Namdhari sect. But now he was free from rigid religious ceremonials. According to Sohan Singh, "He stood above the rituals and narrowness of sects... He was an embodiment of unity and he did not discriminate between a Hindu, Sikh, Muslim or Christian—he treated them all alike. He did not believe in untouchability. He loved everyone as a human being. He condemned idolatry and hypocrisy. He had given up religious rituals. The Namdharis particularly, and the people at large generally, respected him a great deal."

After the kirtan by musicians Baba Kesar said: "Religion is an individual's choice, it has no place for delusion or illusion. Man should rise above religious prejudices and should fraternise with all. The good of society lies in rejecting communalism and in uniting. In this also lies the country's good." These views of Baba Kesar appealed to the young Sohan Singh. As soon as the congregation was over Sohan Singh requested Babaji to be his guest that night. Babaji accepted the invitation.

After dinner there was another congregation at night at Sohan Singh's house. People were surprised. The whole village gathered in the vast compound of his house. This was the first congregation in the house since the death of Sohan Singh's father. But now to the surprise of all this boy, who was a drunkard and a leader of a gang, had arranged the congregation. Is he going to give up drinking? Baba Kesar everywhere condemned it. Will Sohan Singh now follow the path of reason? It will be a miracle indeed. It will be a great achievement of Baba Kesar. People were thinking something like this.

The sloka of Sheikh Farid which had the maximum impact now on Sohan Singh was the following: "If you have any trace of wisdom, do not do any black deed; look deep into your

inner self with humility." After the congregation was over, Sohan Singh's mother and some other people told Babaji: "If Sohan Singh takes the right course—then you can take it that the whole village will get reformed." Babaji consoled them and said: "This is not an impossibility. Where there is a will there is a way. There is hardly anything that man cannot achieve."

Next morning Sohan Singh went along to see off Baba Kesar. On the way Babaji said: "My dear! Don't think that I want to dissuade you from eating meat or drinking, or that I am going to tell you to give up certain habits. You may indulge in these things. But if in your mind you develop a hatred for these habits then I am sure you will renounce them." Before departing he asked Sohan Singh to keep in touch with him. Sohan Singh admits in his *Jiwan Sangram* that Baba Kesar's approach was a wonderful one. This made a profound impact on him. If he had directly suggested giving up drinking, it would not have made that much impact.

Sohan Singh was greatly benefited by the company of Baba Kesar. He started feeling of a certain revulsion against drinking etc. and he was increasingly attracted by Babaji. Some unusual comments of Babaji cast a spell on Sohan Singh's mind. We give here only one of these.

Babaji was going to his village Muhawa one day. Due to rain the direct route had been disrupted. Taking a roundabout route he reached near a tree and saw that an untouchable shepherd boy was lying unconscious with high fever. He lifted him up and took him to his home. This incident was bound to be talked about in the village. The news had already reached Babaji's house also. When he reached home, his people asked him: "Will you take bath?" Babaji asked in surprise: "Why? What is the matter?" He was told that they were suggesting a bath because he had carried an untouchable boy to his home. Babaji laughed and said that bath was not necessary: "I have brought a sick child home. I have been purified and not been made 'impure' by this act."

By now, Sohan Singh had made up his mind that he would have nothing to do in future with the group of drunkards. They were not prepared all at once to break their relations with him. They did not want to release him easily from their

clutches. He avoided them for some days. One day they caught up with him at home. They enquired what the matter was and why he was avoiding them. They had been able to meet him after great difficulty. They asked him why he was ignoring them. Sohan Singh did not give any reply. He just went inside his house and brought back half a bottle of wine which had been left over on some earlier occasion. He broke this bottle by dashing it against the ground in front of them, and said to them in a rude, angry and determined voice: "I have given up drinking henceforth and you should not in future call on me any more." The friendship of drinking thus came to an end.

The intoxication of wine was no more there now. This was a good thing. But another intoxication—that of the spell of views of Baba Kesar—had got hold of him. This was serving the sangats, i.e. visitors on religious festivals with rich food and sweets. At his village Bhakna hola festival was organised annually. To this would come not only Namdharis and Sikhs, but people belonging to all communities of the area. This used to become a common secular festival. Sohan Singh would meet all the expenses of the festival. These were the congregations for bringing social reform in village life. Baba Kesar used to preside over these functions.

Two to two and a half thousand rupees were spent annually on the festival. Expenses of rations etc. were extra. And since food was daily available for 4 or 5 days many beggars and travellers would also flock to the festival. This largescale expenditure went on for ten to eleven years. The house became nearly bankrupt. Only five acres of land was left and all the rest had been mortgaged. There was an outstanding debt of three thousand rupees. Nobody was prepared to give him credit. They were a poor family now.

One day he went to Baba Kesar's house where a few of the latter's disciples were already there. Selfless service of Sohan Singh and the hardships that he was facing came up in the course of the talk. One disciple of Baba Kesar was deeply impressed by the service and sacrifices of Sohan Singh. He said that if Sohan Singh was prepared to abjure all his service and noble work in his favour, he would pay all the expenses that he had incurred. Babaji asked Sohan Singh if he was prepared

for the bargain, and added there was no necessity of going to America, you can get money here rightaway.

Sohan Singh replied that he did not want to sell his dharma for a few coins. He requested that he should not be asked to go in for this bargain. Babaji then told him that if he did not want to sell his dharma he should go and do honest labour and eat.

Sohan Singh returned home. He purchased agricultural implements and cattle and started agriculture. But he had never done such a hard labour before. He was comfort-loving. So he got tired soon.

One day he was returning home with a load of fodder on his head. On the way he met his friend, a Christian priest. He threw the load and both of them sat under a tree. The weight had been heavy and for quite some time Sohan Singh could not straighten his neck. The priest said that he was pained to see him in such a plight. He replied that he had never lifted loads, but that he would gradually get used to it.

The priest said sympathetically, "What was the necessity after all for getting used to it. I will manage your debts and other expenses. You respect Christ already, you can regard yourself as a Christian with all your Sikh paraphernalia." These suggestive words hurt his self-respect and infuriated him. He said that if he were to depend upon the crumbs from the Christian mission, where was the necessity of wasting his own property? The priest apologised and the matter ended there.

He was soon fed up with the hard labour of agriculture and got down to making preparations for going to America. A friend from America had assured him full help and had written that one could earn a lot there and that he should not hesitate but leave at once.

POLITICAL CLIMATE IN THE PUNJAB

British imperialism had brutally suppressed the Kuka movement. At Bhaini Sahib (Ludhiana district) a police post had

been established and the leaders of the Kuka movement were under strict watch. Before 1905-6 there was no open political movement in Punjab against the British regime, but the Kuka movement had not been crushed. It was proceeding uninterrupted secretly and was keeping the fires of anger smouldering.

Baba Kesarji was well known as Kuka. His talk impressed, and inculcated in Sohan Singh ideas of patriotism and humanism. Many a man acted on his bidding. Such popular individuals were especially watched by the British government. There were possibly some police reports against him, because of which the deputy commissioner of Amritsar one day went to his village, Muhawa, to meet him.

Sohan Singh has written about this meeting in his *Jiwan Sangram*. This is how the talk took place:

Deputy Commissioner: "Babaji, how many disciples have you got?"

Kesar Singh: "None. (Pointing out to those sitting) These are my comrades and I myself am a disciple."

DC: "Babaji, if you agree I can give land to your sons."

Babaji: "Do not worry about my children. You should worry about those who do not have any land to till."

After sometime the deputy commissioner left with his staff. The fearless and selfless talk of Babaji left a deep impress on young Sohan Singh.

Officials always kept track of influential people and they did not want any political movement to come up. Sohan Singh kept himself in touch with the Kukas at the hola mohalla and other festivals. He had heard about the Malerkotla incident, where Kukas were executed by cannon fire. Kukas were the bitterest foe of the British regime. They did not buy foreign goods and did not use the government postal services. They lived a simple life and, as far as possible, pursued noncooperation in relation to British government. Sohan Singh had imbibed some of these ideas. This is also proved by the fact that he took interest and participated in the 1906-7 movement.

Before Sohan Singh had left for America, agitation against the Colony Bill had been started in Lyallpur and other places.

This agitation was led by Sardar Ajit Singh, Lala Lajpat Rai, Sufi Amba Prasad and other young men. This Bill sought to make peasants tenants of the landowners, take away the rights of inheritance, bind them for planting a specific number of trees on their land, nurturing these trees, keeping a certain level of cleanliness and building houses according to plan. At the same time the Bill sought to forbid the peasants from cutting trees even for making the wooden plough. Hindu, Muslim and Sikh cultivators were equally hit by the Bill. Chaudhri Shahab-ud-Din and some other Muslim advocates also joined the movement against the Bill. In 1906-7 this agitation gained momentum in a matter of days and spread like wild fire in the Punjab. Even the army men were influenced by this agitation.

Sohan Singh writes in *Jiwan Sangram*: "This Bill meant that the land was not owned by the colonisers, but by the government. The British intention was that they be weakened through the Bill and British landlords be imposed upon them and they should serve these landlords as tenants."

Opposition to the Colony Bill gathered such momentum that the workers of the Lyallpur railwayline struck work and the people helped them with donations. The people were so much agitated that at one or two places they dug up the lines. This struggle and unity caused such nervousness among the British officials that they unleashed indiscriminate repression and atrocities. Dozens of leaders were detained and interned at places far off from their homes. A few of the leaders were sent to Rangoon jails.

Since the days of 1857 and the Kuka incident this was the first popular agitation which was based on Hindu-Sikh-Muslim unity. The British regime was mortally afraid of this unity. Even an autocratic and criminal lieutenant-governor like O'Dwyer admits that the Bill "placed certain unjustified restrictions" and there were "some (just) reasons" for the agitation against it.³

This popular movement stood in the way of the Bill becoming a law, since its passage was fraught with the danger of intensification of the agitation. Lord Minto did not approve of it.

³ Sir Michael O'Dwyer, *India As I Know It*.

Although the leaders had to face imprisonment and repression, the people achieved victory in the agitation. This was the first victory of Hindu-Muslim-Sikh unity.

Sohan Singh was also influenced by this movement and he took some interest in it. He writes: "I undertook some work in the villages although this was not much. I read whatever literature was published, distributed it and read it out to others."

But the overall atmosphere of Punjab was that of loyalty and servitude to the British. There was no political activity among the Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs—whatever there was, it was suppressed. The Indian National Congress did not go beyond prayers and appeals. Chief Khalsa Dewan, which was dominant among Sikhs, was as completely loyal as the British officials. It had created among Sikhs slave mentality and stagnation. Their main aim was to dance attendance on the government, pass pious resolutions of prayers and secure some concessions first for themselves and then for Sikhs through petitions.

It is true that before going to America Sohan Singh had acquired some political understanding. This is quite evident from his writings. His association with Baba Kesar had enabled him to completely reject religious divisions, rituals and untouchability. He did not discriminate between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs but saw the Man in every community. He had according to his capacity taken some interest in the 1906-7 agitation. It will not be wrong to conclude that he had started taking interest in political and social affairs before he left for the United States of America.

IN AMERICA

But like other Punjabis Sohan Singh had not gone to America with any political purpose. He had gone to earn some money to pay his debts, to get the land released and to improve his own personal life. He did not even imagine, at that time, that he would sacrifice his personal interests for the sake of people

or that he would not desist from offering any sacrifice in the struggle for Indian freedom and democracy.

On 3 February 1909 he left home for America. He had then entered fortieth year of his life. On 4 April, he reached the port of Seattle. In those days there were no severe restrictions on entering America although such restrictions were there in Canada. This is evident from the type of questions which were asked at the time of his entry:

Officer: "Why did you come to America?"

Sohan Singh: "To work as a labourer."

Officer: "Was any letter sent to you asking you to come here?"

SS: "No."

Officer: "Are you in favour of two marriages?"

SS: "No."

Officer: "Is the custom of two marriages common in your villages, among your relatives or in your country?"

SS: "Yes, there is."

Officer: "Then how can you say that you are not in favour of two marriages?"

SS: "Everyone has the right to reject a particular tradition or custom which he does not like."

Officer: "If you fail to get a job what would you do?"

SS: (Showing five hundred rupees to him) "I shall live on this money."

Sohan Singh replied to every question correctly. His friend had told him everything beforehand. Baba Kesar was against marrying twice, so Sohan Singh's reply concerning this was very appropriate and befitting.

Next day Sohan Singh was allowed to land, after the authorities at the port had satisfied themselves. In addition to five hundred rupees he had also taken some beautiful presents from the Punjab. Those novel items impressed the people gathered around.

He started searching for a job. His friend Harnam Singh Kahri Sahri helped him great deal in this. It did not take him long to find a job. Oregon state and some other states were rapidly being developed in those days. New roads were being built and new railwaylines were being laid. Lumber factories

were coming up. Land was being cleared of trees and brought under the plough. The atmosphere hummed with activities of creation and construction. Except in the days of economic recession work was readily available.

Sohan Singh got a job in a mill named Monarch. Nearly two hundred Punjabis were already working in it. The daily wage was 2-2½ dollars (above five rupees) but the job was really very hard. Sohan Singh had to push a wheelbarrow up to a rooftop. It was a hard job for his comfort-loving nature to work for ten hours a day. So for some days he worked only half the day. Later his body got used to it and he became tough and started working the whole day (sometimes for twelve hours even).

Workers from many countries were at that time working in America. They had come mostly from China, Japan, India, Turkey, Russia, etc. These people had been forced to leave their homes because of difficult conditions of life. Without work they would have to go without food. That is why they would take up work even at low wages. Their standard of life and the level of their wages were very low as compared to the American workers. That is why the organised workers of America disliked them because when the former fought for raising their wages and reducing the working hours, the latter stood in their way—they would go back to work on lower wages and thus served as a weapon of the employers in strikebreaking.

In 1910 the Canadian government passed very strict orders to the effect that only that Indian would be able to land on Canadian shores who would fulfil the following conditions: (1) He should come straight from India on a single direct ticket; (2) he should be able to show two hundred dollars to the officials. Any passenger who did not fulfil these conditions was not to be allowed to enter Canada.

These restrictions were not applied to Chinese and Japanese. They needed only twentyfive dollars to qualify for entry into Canada. This was a punishment to Indians for their being loyal citizens of the British empire. These restrictions completely stopped the influx of Indians into Canada, since neither any ship sailed directly from India to Canada nor any direct ticket for any ship was available from anywhere.

Before Sohan Singh reached there nearly 3,775 Indians had already arrived there. Those people up to now had fought many a battle for removal of restrictions imposed on them. The United States had been liberated from the slavery of British imperialists. Canada was a dominion of the British. The actual conditions in these two countries differed vastly.

Sohan Singh realised that he was altogether in a new world. There was the fresh breeze of freedom. The atmosphere was charged with the new ideas of democracy. In a short time he realised that this world was different from India. Here there was freedom and a people were fervently engaged in the process of development and progress of their country. In India it was not only colonialism and exploitation but starvation, famine and disease also. Here the people could possess any weapon, even a rifle or pistol. In India, the carrying of even the religious symbol-kirpan (sword) was prohibited and if anybody possessed an axe he could be prosecuted and punished. Everyone had a right to vote here and had a right to elect anyone as his or her representative or even the president. One could contest for Parliament. In India there were no democratic or civic rights. There was the rule of the baton and the bullet. In America the police generally behaved politely with the people. In India even an ordinary policeman could play with the life of people in his area. There could be no remedy against this unlawful actions.

The more Sohan Singh compared this new world with that of colonial India, the more did he feel that slavery was a great curse. Nobody could live with honour without getting rid of this slavery.

In the beginning Punjabis were under the impression that since they were the citizens of the British empire and since Canada also was a part of it, they had the right to stay and settle there. This impression was created by those Sikh soldiers and policemen who had done their bit in the defence and consolidation of the British empire and who exhibited their medals of "meritorious services" on their uniforms. They were more than fifty per cent of Indians in Canada. They had great faith in the British government and its justice and they believed that they would be treated with equality and justice wherever

they went in the British empire since they had done a great deal to strengthen it.

But this impression was the result of their lack of understanding of the basis and character of British imperialism. They did not know that the Imperial Council had in 1897 opined: "Merely being the subjects of the British government does not give Indians the right to settle in British colonies. The white owners of these colonies have the right to permit or not to permit the Indians to settle."⁴

The racial and political discrimination of the Canadian government against Indians was similar to that of the British government in India towards Indian people. A large number of British officers and colonisers who had gone to Canada were those who had already served in India for a number of years. Firstly, they were active embodiment of racial hatred against Indians. Secondly, the government of Canada also wanted to keep the country as a colony of the whites. It was already trying to push out Indians who had already been there. Thus the struggle that Indians who had gone there had to wage for living proved very instructive for them. They started seeing through the crooked policies of British imperialism.

The government of Canada in no case wanted that the Indians should be able to firmly settle down in Canada. It wanted to throw the Indians out at the earliest. With this object in view the Canadian officials worked out a plan which aimed at banishing Indians to British Honduras. There they would in due course die of malaria and other diseases and Canada would be rid of them.

In order to implement this plan they took two Punjabis also with them to show them Honduras. The idea was that this would help in inducing Indians to settle there. They tried their level best to win over these Punjabis to their point of view. They offered them a huge bribe to sign a joint report, but the Punjabis refused to be hooked and on their return they exposed the bad climate and the malaria-infested condition of

⁴ Guru Charan Singh. *History of the Ghadar Party* (Punjabi), pp. 38-39.

Honduras before everyone. Indians, as a result, flatly refused to go there.

But the British colonialists and officers from India and the Canadian workers did not want the Indians to stay in Canada. The former practised racial hatred against them and the latter considered them as the enemies of the struggle for reducing working hours and increasing their wages. But the owners of the Canadian mills and factories wanted to retain Indian labourers there because they worked hard and for less wages than the British workers. The capitalists needed such workers who should be helpful in keeping the wages of the British workers down and who could be used in time of need to break their strikes.

Because of this contradiction in the Canadian situation the scheme could not succeed. The British government also at that time did not want to invite trouble because they were afraid of this new agitation after the 1906-7 agitation.

The governor of Honduras was Colonel Swaine who had been an army officer in India. He was appointed to inquire into the conditions of Indians living in Columbia and make a report. Many lies about Indians had been spread in Canada and the USA: Indians were very dirty, they would die of starvation if they did not get a job, they were suffering from many diseases, etc. The report that Colonel Swaine submitted after making an investigation was in favour of Indians but in the end it recommended that immigration into Canada be completely stopped.

In one paragraph of the report he had written: "Canadian government could not show me a single unemployed Indian. The millowners here are pleased to employ the Indian workers. The gurdwaras of Indians are in a way offices of the labour unions. If an Indian is jobless, then it is the gurdwara which manages rations for him and the government is not burdened. Gurdwara is a sort of employment office for the Indians where the unemployed Indians enquire about the job and then find it. Punjab is colder than Vancouver. Therefore the cold climate of Columbia cannot do them any harm. Talk about unemployment and about deaths due to cold is absolutely groundless. These Indians should be allowed to stay on. If they were sent to their country they would cause great harm to the British government.

There is no general feeling of hatred for them among the whites. They have launched schemes involving purchasing of lands and settling down. Although the white workers entertain a feeling of jealousy but this jealousy shall create difficulties for the imperial (imperialist) government.”

This report was a reply to all the slanders which the government of Canada wanted to use against Punjabis in order to push them on to Honduras. The unity of Punjabis prevented the success of this plan. The danger of repercussions in India and the opposition by the Canadian capitalists contributed a great deal towards this victory.

The struggle against banishment to Honduras and the success achieved during this struggle created among Indians a feeling for unity and organisation. They had also seen that their unity had saved them from the attacks of organised white workers and that when disunited they were beaten up and had to suffer great losses. The realities of life thus, on the one hand, created a feeling and a trend towards unity and organisation and, on the other, persuaded them to fraternise with the Chinese, Japanese, Russians, Turkish and other workers.

Conditions in America were different from those in Canada. American capitalists had an eye on the vast Indian market. They gave sympathetic encouragement to Indians and strongly criticised and condemned the colonialist policies of British imperialists. But the American workers hated them because Indians were not organised in trade unions and helped capitalists in breaking American workers' unions.

DEMANDS OF THE INDIANS

These were broadly the conditions when Sohan Singh took a job at the Monarch mill in the USA.

In a short time he acquainted himself with the conditions there from his co-workers. Racialism was more or less equally spread in America and Canada. In the theatre, haircutting

saloons and cinemas Indians were subjected to racial discrimination. Seats were set apart for them in these places. Indians could not use any other seats. This reminded them of India where there were separate rail compartments for Anglo-Indians and Englishmen and the hotels for Englishmen exhibited the notice: "Dogs and Indians are not allowed."

This curse of racialism was there in America too. Sohan Singh describes an incident: Professor Teja Singh Mastuana went to see him. He invited the professor to go round the city of Portland. At lunch time when they entered an American hotel, the manager rudely told them that there was no seat. They felt humiliated and they had to take their lunch at a Japanese hotel.

Indians in America and Canada were at the time facing many difficulties and they were fighting constantly to overcome them. In 1911 an imperial conference had been called in London which was to discuss problems of British colonies and other international problems. Indian representatives thought it fit to make use of the occasion and through a resolution they submitted a list of their demands to the conference. The question of the entry of Indians into other British colonies was also raised from many other sides. Canada's (British) friendship society also sent in a memorandum wherein a request to lift restrictions on Indians was made.

Indians had unitedly demanded through a resolution that: (1) Indians should be allowed to bring their families to America and Canada without any restriction; (2) Nearly three hundred Indians should be allowed to come to Canada annually; (3) There should be no restrictions whatsoever on the incoming and outgoing of traders, students and other businessmen; (4) There should be no restrictions on going from Canada to America or from America to Canada in connection with business or meeting friends and relatives. They should be treated at least on par with emigrants from China and Japan coming to Canada.

But the imperialist government of London did not bother about these representations—they threw the resolutions in the dustbin. Not only this, they proclaimed a policy of keeping Indians away from Canada and Australia and of not interfering

with the affairs of the American government. The British government regarded the present arrangement satisfactory.⁵

At the root of this decision lay racial superiority and colour bar. British imperialists knew that if these questions acquired racial colouring then even their loyal supporters in India would raise a hue and cry. But the government of Canada persisted in the policy it had been pursuing previously and did not make any modification in the condition laid down by it—stipulating a direct ticket on a ship by the incoming Indian passengers. The shipping companies had previously been instructed that no Indian should be issued a direct ticket from India to Canada.

In the beginning of 1911 Bhai Ram Singh had come to India and had returned along with his family. His wife and children were not allowed to disembark. A bail had to be furnished, and later they were permitted to stay after a legal suit which had to be fought out in the highest court. But even the court decision did not solve the problem of bringing more families. This small achievement encouraged the Indians and they decided that some other cases on the question of bringing families be fought collectively and a clear-cut decision should be sought from the court allowing every Indian who had stayed for three years in Canada to bring his wife and children.

For this purpose Bhai Bhag Singh Bhikhiwind (Lahore, now Amritsar) and Bhai Balwant Singh Khurdpur (Jullundur) were sent back to Punjab. Their families also were not allowed to disembark in Canada. A court case was filed and the entire Indian community took it as a question of prestige. There was a lot of agitation against the restriction on bringing families. The democratic Canadian masses also sided with the Indians. The government, seeing that their case was likely to be lost, allowed the families to stay. The court therefore could not give any clear verdict on the issue and the question remained unsolved.

This struggle united the Indians even more and they started strengthening their organisation for new struggles. A deputation met the government at Ottawa in connection with certain problems. The government of Canada did not pay any attention

⁵ For details see Gurucharan Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 46 ff.

and refused to concede to any of the demands. Embarrassed as they were, the members of the delegation returned and gave a report on whatever had happened. This angered Indians all the more. The question now was of the future course of action.

These demands were genuine and realistic. This was mildly accepted by the directors of the CID, who submitted reports about the minutest incidents connected with India's freedom movement. They wrote: "The restrictions placed on Indian immigration were really tortuous and there was a general feeling of dissatisfaction against the British government."⁶

In February 1913 a large representative meeting was called in Vancouver to consider the abovementioned problem. The meeting strongly condemned the anti-Indian attitude of the government of Canada. The only place now left for making representations was London, from where some justice could be expected. The resolution also emphasised on securing the sympathy and support of Indian leaders. It was resolved unanimously:

"Since the dominion government of Canada did not pay any attention towards our representations and agitations—in which we pleaded for permitting our families to enter Canada—we Indians of Canada, who have assembled in a large meeting, under the auspices of United India League, Khalsa Dewan Society (Vancouver), appoint Nand Singh Sehra, Balwant Singh and Narain Singh as a deputation that should meet the home government in London and secure the primary and essential condition of our family life in this country, get the grievances concerning immigration removed and in addition to that secure the cooperation of other public organisations like the Indian National Congress, All India Hindu Mahasabha, All India Muslim League, Chief Khalsa Dewan and the general public of India."⁷

This was a common battle. Money was immediately collected for sending the deputation. For common purposes the Indian settlers could collect money far in excess of the requirements.

The deputation did not take long to approach the home government for placing their difficulties and problems before them.

⁶ Isemonger and Slattery, *Ghadar Conspiracy Report*, section 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, section 3, para 4.

No sooner did they reach England that they requested for an interview with the colonial secretary, Mr Lewis Harcourt. But he refused to see the deputation.⁸ Thus the last remaining hope of securing justice vanished.

Refusal to grant an interview was a clear insult to the Indian settlers in Canada which the London government had deliberately hurled. This was an expression of a conceited and arrogant policy of British imperialism towards Indians and their demands. It meant that the government did not care in the least about their difficulties, that it was not concerned about the fact that they were citizens of the British empire. You may exhibit the medals won during the wars but you are only slaves of the British!

The refusal to meet the deputation in a way supported the Canadian government and justified its policy of banishing Indians, putting restrictions on immigration and keeping Canada a purely white country. It was apparent that home government in London supported the dominion of Canada in its efforts to throw out Indians.

The viceroys and the governors who appeared dreadful giants in India actually took their cue from London. This refusal had the effect of a diktat for them.

The members of the deputation held a meeting in the Caxton Hall, London, and explained the hardships faced by the Indian settlers in Canada. They appealed to the democratic minded English people for help and cooperation, met some members of Parliament and trade union leaders. On 6 July 1913 they returned to Lahore via Madras and Bombay. They came to their motherland empty handed. Their effort had failed.

They held public meetings in Punjab where they condemned the government of Canada for not allowing Indian settlers to take their wives along with them and for placing severer restrictions on Indian immigrants than those on the Japanese and Chinese. They appealed to the Punjabi people to raise their voice against this discrimination, and to appeal to the governments at the centre and the Punjab, for getting permis-

⁸ Jagjit Singh, *Ghadar Party*, Lahore, p. 137.

sion for the Indian settlers to take their families along with them.

Nand Singh, Narain Singh and Balwant Singh had during these meetings seen that the Hindu, Sikh and Muslim organisations of Punjab had no life in them, some of these even opposed holding of the public meetings and placing the real conditions before the people.⁹ Some individuals like Chaudhri Ram Bhai Datt, Lala Lajpat Rai, Maulana Zafar Ali, Sardar Harchand Singh Lyallpur, etc. being anti-imperialists supported them openly. The others were repeating one and the same thing—meet the Indian viceroy, meet the lieutenant-governor of the Punjab.

The members decided to place their grievances first before the people. Sympathetic Punjabis supported this move. Their meetings were presided over at some places by wellknown Punjabis and at others by loyalists. Attendance was more than expected. They went to almost all the big towns of Punjab and explained the unbearable conditions of Indians living in Canada with a deep feeling. Their speeches created some ripples in the quiet political waters of the Punjab.

But how could the Punjab government like this political activity? Its blood-thirsty lieutenant-governor was not prepared to tolerate even the most reasonable criticism of the immigration laws of the government of Canada. Perhaps in this criticism of the government of Canada he saw a criticism of the Punjab government. He writes in his book:

“Their ostensible object was to rouse public opinion in India to the hardships of the Canadian immigration laws. They held meetings throughout the province, some of which were attended by many men of undoubted loyalty. But after a time the tone of these meetings changed. Instead of reasonable criticism of the immigration laws, the speeches became menacing and inflammatory. At this stage I sent a warning to the delegates that if this continued, I would be compelled to take serious action, for the province was then in a state of high tension as the result of the Delhi and Lahore outrages and the increasing communal tension.

“The delegates on this asked for an interview with me. I

⁹ Isemonger and Slattery, op. cit., section 7, para 5.

had a long talk with them, and repeated my warning. Two of them were silly and specious, the manner of the third (Balwant Singh) seemed to be that of a dangerous revolutionary. They wished to see the viceroy, and in sending them on to him, I particularly warned him about this man. They returned to Canada about the beginning of 1914.”¹⁰

It is quite evident that the top imperialist rulers of the Punjab and those of India were not at all bothered as to what hardships the Indian settlers were facing in Canada. They were more concerned about sharp criticism of the government of Canada. The refusal of Harcourt to meet the delegates could only result in such a situation. The British bureaucrats in India were cogs in the wheel of British imperialist machine; to expect sympathy or support from them was like living in a fool's paradise.

This was the fate that met the delegation which had come to the motherland to seek help and support for exercising the rights of the citizens of the British empire. But what they got was only rebukes and warnings. Both the governments, of the Punjab and India, insulted and humiliated the members and they met with failure and returned. No wonder the newspaper *Ghadar* wrote: “We are insulted in our own country. And we are given no quarters in other lands. We are foreigners having no country.”

Back in Canada and America the delegation made a report on the hostile attitude of the governments in India. They also explained in detail the loyalist activities of the organisations like the Hindu Mahasabha, the Chief Khalsa Dewan and the Muslim League. Some leaders in India are honest and freedom loving and the people are on the move. But truth is not allowed to reach them. They are therefore easily misled. The communal leaders have degenerated and they quarrel among themselves over religious questions. Loyalism and sycophancy have gained upperhand in the Punjab at the moment.

Bhai Balwant Singh was so angry with the loyalist and cringing policy of the Chief Khalsa Dewan that as soon as he reached Vancouver he wrote to Sardar Harchand Singh Lyallpur:

¹⁰ Sir Michael O'Dwyer, op. cit., p. 191.

The British government should be opposed in a determined way and the prestige of Chief Khalsa Dewan should be shattered. He suggested that a Sikh society be formed at Lahore to fight against these people.¹¹

This report must have influenced the Indians of the Pacific coast. This is not difficult to assess. They were already upset by the injustice of the government of Canada and now they were further infuriated at the insult meted out to them in India. They were pained to know that the communal organisations were not aware of gnawing slavery nor of the struggle to get rid of it. Except for individuals here and there nobody was paying any attention to rouse the country and conduct the struggle for independence. Their national feelings thus were aroused. They were filled with anger against British imperialism. They made up their mind that it was better to die than to live this life of insult and slavery. The letter and spirit of the Bombay resolution of "Do or Die" was accepted by them much earlier.

Petitions, memorandums and deputations had amply exposed the hypocrisy of British imperialism. The racial hatred of the governments of Canada and America and discrimination against Indians as against others in the matter of immigration created a feeling among the Indian settlers that there was only one solution to these insults and miseries and that was independence of India. The reformist methods should therefore be given up and attention should be focused on an active struggle for country's independence.

There existed two trends at that time among the Indian settlers—one a reformist and the other revolutionary. The reformists said that Indian youth should be brought for education in American universities so that they could conduct struggle for country's independence when they went back after finishing their education. This trend was advocated by Bhai Parmanand (and in the beginning by Lala Hardayal also). G. D. Kumar went only to the extent of advocating social reform, temperance, etc. Some Indians, among whom Punjabis were in an overwhelming majority, rejected this trend. They opted for the revolutionary

¹¹ Isemonger and Slattery, *op. cit.*, section 7, para 6.

trend and pledged to make all sacrifices needed.

Babaji writes in *Jiwan Sangram* (p. 39) that till then there had not come up any movement and there was no organisation. The old patriots like Krishna Verma, Madame Cama, Lala Hardayal, Sardar Ajit Singh had not been able to forge a movement. A majority of the settlers agreed that India could not be independent on the basis of any reformist programme.

It was in the beginning of 1912 that a special meeting to form an organisation of Indian settlers was called in Portland. Indian workers in the factories around joined this meeting. G. D. Kumar and Baba Harnam Singh, Kahri Sahri, after discussion, agreed with the view of the Portland settlers. It was decided to set up a revolutionary society which should be named "Indian Association of Pacific Coast", and that its office should be opened up at Portland and a paper named *Hindustan* should be brought out under its management. This paper should advocate a policy of liberating India through armed revolution. Sohan Singh was elected president, G. D. Kumar, chief secretary, and Pandit Kanshi Ram, cashier.¹²

In order to implement these decisions three meetings were held. The preparations for launching a paper were nearing completion. But G. D. Kumar fell ill and these decisions could not take a practical shape.

Sohan Singh and Udham Singh Kasel meanwhile shifted to Astoria mill and worked there for many days. Nearly 120 Indians worked in Astoria. Sohan Singh organised their meetings and opened a branch of the Indian Association of Pacific Coast there. Kesar Singh Thatgarh, Munshi Karim Baksh and Munshi Ram were elected president, chief secretary and cashier respectively. Just in those days Kartar Singh Sarabha had come to Bhai Rulia Singh who belonged to his village and was staying there already.

Since then meetings were held every Sunday. In one of the meetings Lala Thakar Dass Dhuri suggested that Lala Hardayal was delivering lectures in San Francisco and that he should be requested to come. He further said that Lala

¹² To the executive committee were elected Harnam Singh Tundilat, Udham Singh Kasel, Ram Rakha and two others (*Jiwan Sangram*).

Hardayal held revolutionary views and that he would certainly come; the running of the office and the newspaper should be entrusted to him. He would be able to discharge this responsibility very well.

A party meeting was called to consider the question. It was resolved unanimously that Pandit Kanshi Ram should write to Lala Hardayal and request him to come. A few days later Lala Hardayal wrote back that he would come in the last week of December. But he did not turn up on the date fixed. He only reached in March 1913, accompanied by Bhai Parmanand.

Next Sunday a meeting was held at St. John. Pandit Kanshi Ram telephoned to all those working in the neighbourhood and made an urgent plea for attending the meeting. The meeting was largely attended. Bhai Parmanand repeated his old suggestion that Indian students be asked to come and join American universities for education. Then these students should be sent back to the country to work for its independence. But the large body of comrades rejected this suggestion because they already knew the results of this experiment. The students who had gone back after receiving their education from American universities had not worked for India's independence but had taken up jobs for personal ends. The general consensus was that Indians living in America should themselves do something for India's independence.

The views of Lala Hardayal roused feelings of patriotism. He said that Indians in America were in duty bound to make every sacrifice for India's independence. Independence must be achieved, whatever the method. No country could achieve independence without sacrifices. He was in favour of an armed revolution to liberate India and these views were accepted by the settlers in America.

The meeting at St. John opened a new chapter in the lives of Indians in America and Canada. The meeting took decisions having important and farreaching consequences. The name of the Indian Association of Pacific Coast was slightly changed to "Hindi Association of Pacific coast". To liberate India from the British through armed revolution and to establish a people's government (republic) on the basis of independence and equality were accepted as the objectives of the party. It was

decided that a weekly paper of the party named *Ghadar*, in memory of the 1857 War of Independence, in Indian languages, should be brought out and that party's office be set up at San Francisco.

In this historic meeting an organisation was set up—which later came to be wellknown as the Ghadar Party—and a constitution was adopted. This constitution was more or less based on the principles of democratic centralism. Representatives of branches elected the executive committee,¹³ which selected from among itself a three-member “secret commission” which was along with other things responsible for the secret jobs of the party. Sohan Singh Bhakna was elected not only the president of Hindi Association but also a member of the secret commission. The other two members of the commission were Lala Hardayal and Pandit Kanshi Ram.

Meetings for getting its decisions endorsed were held only in those mills whose representatives were not present at the original meeting. The last meeting was held in Astoria on 21 April 1913 in which members from all the factories were present. In this meeting decisions taken at St. John were endorsed and the members contributed liberally for launching the paper. Ten thousand dollars were collected on the spot and a large piece of land was donated to the party by Pandit Kanshi Ram.

Although the initiative to form the party was taken by Indians in America, this organisation was not meant only for America. Its very name suggested that it was meant for all Indians living in America and Canada and it represented the demands and aspirations of all Indians living on the Pacific coast.

Although very important and historic decisions had been taken, their implementation was being postponed from day to

¹³ President: Sohan Singh Bhakna; vicepresident: Kesar Singh Thathgarh; general secretary: Lala Hardayal; joint secretary: Thakar Dass; cashier: Pandit Kanshi Ram; Members: Bhai Kesar Singh Thathgarh, Munshi Karim Baksh, Munshi Ram (from Astoria); Udham Singh Kasel, Ishar Singh Marhana, Sohan Singh Bhakna (from Monarch Mill); Harnam Singh Tundilat, Amar Singh Kotla, Nandh Singh (from Brydonwel); Pt. Kanshi Ram and Thakar Dass (from St. John); Kishen Singh (Vienna mill); one member from Lincoln and Amar Singh from Portland.

day because Lala Hardayal went away to California. The paper could not be brought out without him. Members had been waiting for the paper. When it did not come out for one or two weeks they raised a hue and cry and started sending complaints to members.

The president wrote to Lala Hardayal that if the work was not started at once the people would resent it and would say that we had been talking about revolution but were doing no work. This had a good impact. Lala Hardayal came. "Yugantar Ashram" was established at San Francisco and preparations for starting the weekly *Ghadar* were undertaken in right earnest.

THE JOURNAL GHADAR

The first issue of *Ghadar* came out on 1 November 1913 in Urdu. Its articles evoked intense love and sacrifice for independence and hatred against slavery. This was a paper of its own type which kindled the flames of independence in the hearts of the Indian immigrants and which changed them altogether in a matter of a few weeks. They got ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of independence. In the very first issue of *Ghadar* the policy of the party was explained in the following words:

"Today in a foreign country but in the language of our own country we start a war against British raj. What is our name? Ghadar. What is our work? Ghadar. Where will Ghadar break out? In India. The time will soon come when rifles and blood will take the place of pen and ink."¹⁴

In a few months' time the *Ghadar* purged the Indian minds of whatever dirt of loyalty and obedience was there. It rallied all Indians under the flag of the Ghadar Party. And not only were they united, they were also enthused to sacrifice everything for the country and to reach the country at the earliest

¹⁴ *Studies in Asian History*, History Congress, 1961, p. 424. Kushwant Singh's article.

opportunity for the sake of independence. The spell of the *Ghadar* articles was so powerful on Indians, that they became fearless fighters for independence in the duration of a few months.

The paper was for some time brought out on the hand machine. The printing was entrusted to Kartar Singh Sarabha and Raghbir Dayal (of UP). The demand soon increased to such an extent that it was impossible to meet it with the hand machine. So a bigger machine working on electricity was installed. In addition to Urdu, after some time, the *Ghadar* was brought out in Punjabi, Hindi and Gujarati languages as well.

Sohan Singh greatly appreciated Kartar Singh Sarabha's devotion to work. It was he who kept the Yugantar Ashram going because of his drive. He was an untiring fighter and was the righthand man of Sohan Singh. He worked day and night and never knew any rest. He translated Lala Hardayal's Urdu articles into Punjabi. His ceaseless and persistent work inspired and encouraged everybody.

The first impact of the Ghadar movement on Indians was that they gave up drinking. Hitherto they used to be pre-occupied with personal quarrels and would get other persons' well-paid job even by offering bribe. But now if any Indian was wrongly thrown out of a job, all would help him unitedly to get his job back and in case of unemployment would make arrangements for his rations etc. till he got a job at another place. This sympathy was not confined to Indians only and their attitude towards workers of other countries became also that of brotherhood and comradeship.

Another impact of the *Ghadar* weekly was a cultural upsurge among the Punjabis. Many Punjabis became poets and began to write for the paper. The paper evoked in them patriotic feelings and they wrote powerfully inspiring, noncommunal and secular poems. These poems were also published in *Ghadar Gunj* and *Ghadar Sandesh*; strong sentiments of revolution, of non-communalism, secularism, unity, independence and equality were expressed in those poems. For example:

Let us go back to the country to wage war;

this is the last vow and the order.

Start rebellion quickly in the country

*Look, people are also now changing their mode of thinking.
The whole fraud of the British stands exposed,
Germans are going to win against them.
The whole country of France has been taken over
And Russia has also been defeated.*

These extracts, in English translation, occur on pages 26 and 27 of the judgement of the Lahore Conspiracy Case. In this judgement translation of dozen of pieces from the paper *Ghadar*, *Ghadar Gunj* and *Ghadar Sandesh* are given. The message of revolution and rebellion contained therein created a powerful impact. Symbolic and ornamental language has been avoided. The call has been given in a direct and commonly used language: "Rise up, get hold of whatever you can, a sword or a gun, throw out the British from the country and achieve independence."

The poems were mostly in popular metres, in "Baints", "Korra Chhand" or "Kabit" form of Punjabi poetry. These were highly inspiring and gave a call for action. These poems drew a correct picture of the country's slavery, famine and poverty and of the mass-scale deaths that were then taking place.

The Ghadar heroes quite correctly estimated that British imperialism would be at war with Germany soon, and while the passengers coming to India from America and Canada were yet on board the ship actual war started. They firmly believed that Germany would win the war. Time proved that this belief of theirs was wrong.

We give here some specimens of the poetry so that the real sentiments of Indian emigrants are evaluated correctly and so that it could be exactly judged how far their views were advanced as compared to those of the Indian people at that time.

*We do not care for caste.
We do not distinguish between a sweeper and a cobbler.
All Indians are brothers.
We must not continue the tradition of the hypocrites.*

* * *

*Hindus, Sikhs, Pathans and Muslims,
Pay attention ye all people in the army.
Our country has been plundered by the British,*

*We have to wage a war against them.
 We shall throw away the British monkeys,
 And all illumine India like a torch.
 We have great tasks to perform,
 We shall not hesitate to fight the British.
 We have to free our country of plague and famine.*

* * *

*Like a lion we should roar in the field and should
 take out the sharp-edged sword.
 The terror of the tyrants should be shaken off.
 They are doing evil things and evildoers should be thrown
 out.
 Ask Umra blacksmith to get ready a red-hot iron bar so that
 it can be applied to the hips of the cruel Britishers.
 We shall form into an army and shall fight the battle in the
 field and shall liberate the great country, India.*

* * *

*These sinners would not leave India without waging a war
 and nothing else can liberate us.
 Countries never get freedom by begging, you can have a
 search made for an example in world history.
 Our leaders cannot rise to the occasion. They are not fully
 aware of our deplorable conditions.*

* * *

*We do not need pandits and qazis, we do not want
 to get our ship sunk.
 The time of worship is over now, it is time to take
 up the sword.*

* * *

*Your temples and mosques are being demolished,
 Where is your faith?
 What is the basis of your pride,
 You have been deprived of your knife and sword.
 You swear by cow and the pig
 While the Britishers eat them daily.
 Hindus and Muslims, give up your quarrels
 And know your country and your nation.*

The paper Ghadar was a standardbearer of unity, democracy

and equality. This was a call to war to throw the British out of India. This paper was an enemy of communalism, casteism and disruption. It called on everybody: "Let us go to India, revolt to throw the British enemy out of the country, collect weapons, prepare the armies for revolt. Break the jails and free the patriots, attack the police stations and collect weapons. Loot the government treasury, the way to martyrdom is open. Make a firm resolve and attain martyrdom. Your slogan is independence or death."

HUMILIATION AND INSULT

In his *Jiwan Sangram* Sohan Singh has written about a conversation with an American factory manager, which shows what type of ideas the employers had about Indian slaves. The mill in which Sohan Singh was working was closed down. He and one of his friends went to another factory in search of a job. The manager of the mill offered them chairs respectfully.

When they asked about a job he replied: "There is enough work but not for you."

"Why not for us?" they asked meekly.

"You ask for work. I want that both of you should be shot", the factory manager said excitedly.

"Why? What have we done?"

"How large is your population?"

"Three hundred million."

"Three hundred million men or sheep?"

"Men."

"Men? Had you been men you could not have been slaves uptil now?" he said contemptuously and added "Go, I shall give you a gun each. First liberate your country. When you would come as liberated people to America, I would be in the forefront to welcome you."¹⁵

Both of them returned home with a deep feeling of shame and depression.

¹⁵ Isemonger and Slattery, op. cit., section 12, para last.

Almost a similar story was narrated by Nawab Khan, prosecution witness in the Lahore Conspiracy Case trial.

“An American stood up at the conclusion of the lecture and asked Hardayal about the population of India. ‘The government census reports say 30 crores’, said Hardayal. ‘How many Englishmen are there?’ asked the American. ‘About one lakh and a half’, replied Hardayal. The American then remarked that this small number of Englishmen could be driven out of the country with stones without difficulty. Hardayal admitted this fact and added that Indians were gradually becoming conscious of their power.”

Ordinary Indian settlers were asked another question.

“Which is your flag?”

“Union Jack”, some ill-informed would reply.

“That is the British flag. Have you got any national flag of your own or not?” There was no reply to this.¹⁶

In this way, at every step Indians were reminded: you are slaves, you are slaves. That is why you were being insulted everywhere. The lesson hammered home was: Fight for your independence.

The conditions had deteriorated to such an extent that American children, on seeing Indians, would start shouting: “Indian slaves, O Indian slaves.” Some Americans would even say: “Are you men or bearded women? Had you been men, you would have achieved independence upto now.”¹⁷

This was the picture on the one hand. On the other, there were the vast civil and democratic liberties, cultural and industrial development and the improvement in living standards of independent America which were influencing Indians. They were powerfully influenced by Woodrow Wilson’s presidential election (1913). He had contested the election on the basis of deceptive slogans of expanding liberties: new independence, defence of human rights, democracy, equality and independence to the smaller nations. He had made statements saying that America would not interfere in other countries.

These conditions, in the last analysis, created among Indians

¹⁶ Gurcharan Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

¹⁷ Isemonger and Slattery, *op. cit.*, section 16, para 5.

love and a spirit of sacrifice for independence and a strong sentiment and impact to struggle for its achievement.

On the other hand the insults and humiliation that Indians had to face in Canada were similar to that faced by Indians at home. Here racial discrimination was even more than in America.

In Canada voices were being raised for resisting the rising tide of turbans,¹⁸ for throwing Indians out of Canada. That was the reason why Indian settlers were attacked and laws were framed which aimed at uprooting Indians settled there and preventing fresh Indians from coming in. The result was the amendment to the law of 1910. "This time the door to Canada was firmly shut and bolted with notice in invisible ink reading: 'Only Indians not allowed' printed on the outside."¹⁹

But Japanese and Chinese were free to enter. This discrimination sharply focused the independence of Japanese and slavery of Indians. If any injustice was done to Japanese workers, the independent government of Japan would at once extend help, but Indians faced injustice after injustice, their families were thrown in prison, but the British government of India never went to their rescue. On the contrary they instigated and encouraged the policy of racial discrimination and of discrimination against Indians which was being pursued by the government of Canada.

Not only that, Indians pleaded with the British councillor in Canada, sent a deputation to Ottawa in order to get their grievances redressed. He did not give a favourable reply to any of the problems raised by the Indian settlers. He rather procrastinated in talks. They sent deputations to the governments in London, India and Punjab and pleaded with them but they could not secure justice from any quarter. They were humiliated everywhere.

So a sentiment started growing among the Indian settlers: "To hell with this loyalty to British rule, to hell with these decorations and the citizenship of British empire, only when

¹⁸ *Studies in Asian History*, p. 422.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

we shake off the bondage of slavery would this humiliation and degradation end!"

Lala Hardayal managed to run the paper very well. His method of exposing British imperialism was excellent. On the basis of facts and figures he proved that British rule had given India only famine, plague, influenza and death. It has prevented the further progress of the country and has mercilessly exploited the wealth and production of India. Unless British rule is uprooted India cannot make any progress.

Lalaji was an effective speaker too. After finishing his work on the paper he would go to deliver lectures among the Indian settlers at various places. He would convincingly plead for Indian independence with American audiences. Indian settlers were extremely fond of him. Sohan Singh has movingly praised his ability to work.

Naturally, British imperialism did not like these activities for independence undertaken by Indians. British authorities were of the view that the main culprit responsible for sowing disaffection against British rule was only Hardayal. They thought of removing him somehow or other from the scene by involving him in some case. They thought, since it was only Hardayal's guidance which was responsible for misleading the otherwise simple people, and for provoking them into resistance, his removal from the scene would automatically put an end to this anti-British movement.

With this aim in view, Hopkinson, an imperialist agent, took advantage of an old speech of Lalaji and arrested him on 25 March 1914, on the basis of a warrant issued by the Canadian government. The party furnished a thousand-dollar bail at once and got him released.

The news of Lalaji's arrest spread like wild fire. The leaders of the party gathered as soon as they learnt of the news. After mutual consultations, several very important decisions were taken. One was that the president, Sohan Singh, should give up the job and immediately shift to the Yugantar Ashram; and second, that in place of Lalaji the job of secretaryship be taken over by Bhai Santokh Singh; and third, that an editorial board be set up for running the newspaper and the political significance of Lalaji's arrest should be watched.

Sohan Singh gave up the job at the factory and started handling the jobs at the office. The new division of jobs greatly improved the work of the paper as well as the party. The fear that any difficulties would be encountered in running the party or the paper was eliminated. The British imperialists' hopes that Lalaji's removal would put an end to all propaganda against British rule and the work of the Ghadar Party and the paper would be stopped proved of no avail.

The arrest of Lala Hardayal was widely commented upon by the newspapers. American newspapers criticised their government for surrendering to the government of Canada and for wanting to hand over Lalaji. The general belief was that in case Lalaji was handed over to British imperialists anything could happen to him. British imperialism even could be expected to execute him. In these circumstances the party under the guidance of Sohan Singh decided that Lalaji should be sent outside America and beyond the reach of the British and his security be allowed to be forfeited.

Now the entire work was being looked after by Sohan Singh personally. The work proceeded as usual even if there was no improvement. Altogether Lalaji worked for five and a half months with the Ghadar Party and on the *Ghadar*. His hard work created so much consciousness among Indians that they themselves became capable enough to run and handle their work. Sohan Singh has greatly admired the intelligence, consciousness and capability of Lalaji.

Presidentship placed enormous responsibilities on Sohan Singh. He devoted his entire time and attention towards organising the party. He would sometimes go to Indian settlements on foot, explain to them the programme of the Ghadar Party, enrol new members and raise funds for the party paper. While going out he would always keep two or three party members with him. As a result of the work of the party and the paper, Indians were so much enthusiastic that they would not only give the contributions demanded, but even considered themselves to be entirely at the disposal of the party.

“Every member undertook work as a duty because members had become fully aware of their responsibility. The discipline in the party was not imposed but it was based on consciousness”

(*Jiwan Sangram*). Members would send their subscriptions according to rules. Sohan Singh writes proudly that under his presidentship the party did not take a penny from Germany or any other power because they could collect money in excess of their requirements.

The sphere of work was expanding daily. Wherever the paper *Ghadar* or *Ghadar Gunj* reached, the people would become sympathetic to the party and would hold a meeting or invite some leader from outside and set up a unit of the party. The people got fed up with the dirty tricks of the British government. Life was teaching them to revolt. *Ghadar* was not only an agitator it also played the role of a mobiliser and organiser.

Baba Harnam Singh played an important role in organising and awakening Canadian comrades. Indian settlers in Canada were oppressed more than those in America and therefore the former organised themselves quickly.

In Japan, Professor Barkatullah Bhopali was a wellknown personality and he was a prominent leader and worker of the party. The Japanese base helped Indians to mobilise and organise Indians at a number of other places.

Bhai Nidhan Singh Chugha and Mathra Singh Chima knew the Indians of Hong-Kong and Shanghai very well. Mathra Singh had even participated in the Chinese revolution. Through letters he persuaded the Indians to read the paper *Ghadar* and organise themselves. Party branches, big and small, were opened in these places. Gujjar Singh Bhakna and some other comrades established a party unit among the police of Shanghai. Bhai Bhagwan Singh had been a granthi in Hong-Kong. Master Udham Singh had resigned from the artillery of Hong-Kong. They persuaded their friends through letters to become sympathisers.

Through the help rendered by Sohan Lal Pathak the *Ghadar* started reaching Penang, Burma and Siam. Wherever the *Ghadar* went it aroused political awakening and prepared the ground for revolution. In short, talk of revolution in India started in the South East, China, America and Canada. Wherever there were Indians abroad this movement spread. The members of the Ghadar Party were there in every country from Mexico to Japan. Some idea of the vastness of the movement can be

had from the various conspiracy cases which were instituted in India (in Punjab) and in some other countries abroad.

PREPARATIONS FOR GOING TO INDIA

Preparations for going to India and organising revolt to throw the British out started after 12 April 1914. Sohan Singh took an active part in these meetings. On 10 May, meetings for this purpose were held at Fresno, Upland, Oxford and Los Angeles. Weekly meetings took place at Claremore wherein appeals were made to offer sacrifices and to go to the country to turn the Britishers out. On 7 June a meeting was held at Astoria wherein Sohan Singh and Barkatullah advised the people that the time to return to India had come. Now all other work should be given up and we should proceed to our country for organising the revolution.

In meetings held on 8 and 9 June, Indians pledged that they would go to India to organise a revolt and would lay down their lives for the country's freedom. Similarly meetings were organised at Vyna, Washington (Oregon), Amberdin and Seattle wherein a return to India and organisation of revolt were advocated. A special meeting was held at Portland wherein the question of preventing the ship *Komagata Maru* reaching harbour was considered.²⁰ In every meeting the government of India was condemned for its heartlessness, indifference and lack of any help. These meetings continued. In the speeches of Sohan Singh and Barkatullah a special mention was made of the demolition of the mosque of Kanpur, of pulling down the wall of Gurdwara Rikab Ganj, government occupation of Khalsa College, Hindu-Muslim unity, the injustice done to the passengers of the *Komagata Maru* and appeals were made asking Indians to return to the country and take part in the fight for liberation once for all.

The passengers of the *Komagata Maru* were stranded at sea.

²⁰ Isemonger and Slattery, op. cit., para 35.

A case was being fought for bringing the ship to the shore and for getting the passengers to disembark. Despite the fact that the conditions required by the Canadian law of immigration had been fulfilled the ship was still quarantined. As the days of quarantine were increasing Indians, and specially the Punjabis, were becoming restless and infuriated. They were getting ready to engage in a life and death battle. In many meetings at Vancouver the talk of setting fire to the city was also heard. Attempts were also made to send back the ship by force. After waiting for a long time the case was decided against the Indian passengers setting foot on the shore. Chief Justice McDonald wrote in his judgement: "Canada has the inalienable right to place restrictions on the entry of citizens of other countries."²¹

This ship had been hired out by Baba Gurdit Singh (village Sarhali, district Amritsar) and taken to Canada. Babaji was a respectable and energetic contractor at Singapore. He had planned this project on the advice of friends. The *Komagata Maru* was hired at a huge amount from a Japanese firm so that both the conditions of the Canadian government for taking a direct ship and purchasing direct tickets could be fulfilled. This ship was to sail from Hong-Kong on 27 March 1914. But British imperialism had already planned a conspiracy with the government of Canada to stop Indians from reaching Canada. So the officers illegally arrested Babaji on 25 March.²² The purpose of the arrest was that this scheme should not be allowed to succeed and the would-be passengers should be overwhelmed and terrorised to an extent that they were prevented from going to Canada. The result was that only 165 passengers purchased the tickets while there was accommodation for 533 passengers in the ship. Babaji was released on 27 March, the day the ship was to sail. Babaji did not lose courage and was again busy with the preparations. Ultimately the ship left Hong-Kong on 4 April 1914 for Canada and reached Vancouver on 22 May. A great struggle was conducted to take the ship up to the shore but it was not allowed. Nor was the ship allowed to be taken to Brazil.

²¹ C. Kandapi, *Indians Overseas*, p. 246.

²² File No. 430-1924, Home-Political.

On 23 July 1914 the *Komagata Maru* was forcibly returned to India. The Ghadar Party in Canada had played a prominent part in providing every facility to the passengers and had put up great deal of struggle to get them landed on the shore. The Ghadar Party in America rendered them every monetary assistance. Special numbers of the *Ghadar* were published and the full passage of the ship was paid from contributions of comrades. The passengers in the ship were regularly provided with the *Ghadar*, *Ghadar Gunj* and *Ghadar Sandesh*.

The Ghadar Party decided that Sohan Singh should follow the *Komagata Maru* and at Yokohama (Japan) he should contact the passengers of the ship, explain to them the revolutionary policy of the party so that they propagate this policy in India and also find out what work had been done by those who had already been sent to India. It was also decided that the passengers of the ship be provided with 200 revolvers and 2000 rounds of ammunition. This was entrusted to Bhai Bhagwan Singh and Kartar Singh Sarabha. They reserved one cabin in a ship bound for Japan and got boxes of this material transferred to that cabin. Sohan Singh left the Yugantar Ashram, changed a car on the way and got into that cabin fifteen minutes before the departure of the ship and sent back Kartar Singh. This ship had not yet reached Japan when the first world war started.

Professor Barkatullah had been informed about the date of arrival of Sohan Singh at Yokohama. Party members had come to receive him. He handed over the boxes to them and himself accompanied by one of them in a car went to a hotel. There he was waiting for the arrival of the *Komagata Maru*. As soon as the ship arrived the passengers received the message from Sohan Singh. Bhai Harnam Singh Gujjarwal and Bhai Rai Singh (alias Daljit Singh), secretary, *Komagata Maru* Ship Committee, met him in the hotel. Sohan Singh explained to them all necessary aspects of the party's programme and time was fixed for delivering the boxes on the ship and talking to passengers the next day. Comrades fulfilled all the tasks efficiently (*Jiwan Sangram*).

Soon after the war started the German submarine *Emden* sank many British ships. It was necessary to save the *Komagata Maru* from this submarine. Sohan Singh with the assistance of

a Japanese servant and in disguise met for this purpose the German counsellor secretly and decided upon a code so that the *Emden* did not create any difficulty in the *Komagata Maru* reaching India safely.

Sohan Singh was at Yokohama yet when Kartar Singh Sarabha and another comrade met him in his hotel. They informed him that Indian comrades, after taking into consideration all the circumstances, had proclaimed Ghadar in India. Sohan Singh left Yokohama and reached Shanghai. He met Dr Mathra Singh and Bhai Gujjar Singh Bhakna and others. There was a strong branch of the party at Shanghai. The upsurge was so much that thirty members gave up their jobs at once to go to India. All these passengers left Shanghai and reached Hong-Kong.

British secret agents were working everywhere. They were there in America and Canada and also in Shanghai. One or two of them had been exposed in Canada. Their real identity could be established during the Lahore Conspiracy Case and other conspiracy cases later. There was a whole lot of them in Hong-Kong. Here the police noted down the names and addresses of all the passengers and only then the tickets were issued. In this way the government of India could come to know of persons reaching India beforehand.

Nearly a hundred revolutionaries wanting to come to India were on board the ship *Namsang*. Sohan Singh was also a passenger on that ship. This ship stayed for a day at Singapore and then reached Penang. It was stopped here. The reason as was told was that a day earlier the Indian police and army had shot the passengers of *Komagata Maru* at Budge Budge Ghat (Calcutta). In this incident 20 Sikhs were killed and 22 more were injured. Besides 211 passengers were arrested and 28 escaped and went underground including Sardar Gurdit Singh. In the scuffle, two Europeans, two Punjabi police officers and two more Indian officers were killed.²³

A week later the *Namsang* reached Calcutta from Penang. CID officers and British soldiers used rope-ladders and entered the ship. They placed pickets everywhere. The ship was searched. The captain complained that the person who created

²³ 1915—Home-Political-Proceedings, No. 211-14, Part B.

maximum trouble in the ship was Sohan Singh.

Sohan Singh was arrested on the ship itself. Along with two other Punjabi passengers from Canada he was put in the prison-vans under military escort and brought to Calcutta Kotwali police station where they were confined. Two days later police brought them to Ludhiana. Ludhiana (Punjab) jail had been used for interrogation of the revolutionaries coming from outside the Punjab. The other two comrades were released after preliminary investigation and orders for transfer of Sohan Singh to Multan were passed. When he was going to Ludhiana railway station under police escort in a tonga, Kartar Singh Sarabha came on a cycle. He was always to be seen in the frontlines wherever there was a danger and would fearlessly go to army units and propagate his revolutionary views to the armymen without caring for the risk involved. His daring would have a powerful impact and wherever he went he got response. Sohan Singh told him that he was being transferred to Multan jail.

IN MULTAN JAIL

After preliminaries the superintendent of jail placed him in a condemned cell. The condemned cell is horrifying in itself, giving a message of death. Some people get terror-struck as soon as they are lodged in such a cell. Sohan Singh started taking pride in the fact that he had been confined there. The gallows were just in front of this cell. He saw two criminals charged for murder being hanged there. In just five minutes each one of the two had died. He writes: "Seeing these executions I became more fearless and bold. Execution was dreaded so much but to me it seemed a very ordinary matter" (*Jiwan Sangram*, p. 56).

None of those who had been arrested knew anything about his secret work. Those who had betrayed the party and turned approvers had no idea of the underground work. Only three members of the commission had any knowledge of it. One of

them was Pandit Kanshi Ram, second Bhai Santokh Singh and third he himself. Pandit Kanshi Ram had been executed, Bhai Santokh Singh was not in India. That is why the CID was very anxious to find out everything about party's underground work and to fill in the gaps in the conspiracy story. None other than Sohan Singh could tell about this. So pressure was mounted on every side with the purpose of enlisting him as a prosecution witness.

The jail gates are always open for the CID officials. Even at an odd hour they had the privilege to visit the jail, wake up the superintendent and carry on interrogation, etc. They came to Sohan Singh in the Multan jail one day. They were Sukha Singh, DSP (CID), and a Maulvi who was an inspector. They talked sympathetically and deceptively. The content of their persuasion was something like this: "Please see, you are an intelligent person. How did you get involved in all this? Your mother and wife are crying bitterly and nobody can stand that. There is still time, you can save yourself. We have come with full powers from the government. We can get you released. If you want we can get you money and land. Only tell us who was working with you in the Ghadar Party. Were you president of the Ghadar Party?"

Sohan Singh laughed heartily. In a satirical tone he said: "I had heard that Indian police had little intelligence as compared to the police of other countries. I am having a real experience of this today. I had left my home in order to earn a living. I have been working in timber factories, fields and gardens. I have come back because the world war had started. You ask me about the Ghadar Party, the name of its president and names of others who worked for it. I know nothing about these things."

They went away annoyed at this response. They could not sit idle. They talked about his possible execution to his mother and wife, that there was just the time to save him and that they could do that if he gave a confessional statement.

A few days later they returned to the Multan jail again with a friend of Sohan Singh and his mother. They left them alone with Sohan Singh for half an hour. Sohan Singh asked this friend: "Why did you come with them?" He replied that the

police had been troubling them almost daily and asking them to persuade him. He further said that he had found an excuse to meet him.

Sohan Singh replied, "Very well. But do not discuss with me anything concerning the case. I am not going to make a statement under any circumstances."

Then Sohan Singh asked his mother, "Why have you come with them"?

She replied, "They told me you would be executed and that I should come and save you."

Sohan Singh said, "I, a son of a mother, your son, can save myself by making a statement. But my statement would result in the execution of many sons of dozens of mothers. Will your motherly love consider it justified? This is betrayal of the country, of your comrades, and mother, I shall never do it. I would like to be hanged rather than betray the country and my comrades. I shall never do it, mother."

"I do not want that you should be saved and sons of other mothers should be executed", mother replied boldly.

Sohan Singh bowed down at his mother's feet and said: "Mother, give me your blessings that I should remain firm."

His mother patted him affectionately.

The CID officials came. They enquired "Did anything enter his head?" Sohan Singh's friend replied, "He was wiser than us earlier and he is wiser than us now. You may talk to him yourself."

They repeated the same old mutton ad nauseam: "Save your life. If you miss this opportunity you will lose your head. You know mercilessly Namdharis were shot dead at Malerkotla by tying them to cannon? You have to choose between two things. Either life or death by execution, there is no other way open to you."

Sohan Singh replied sharply: "I accept execution", and angrily added: "Please do not take the trouble of coming to me again. I shall not make any statement."

Police officials went back depressed. Sohan Singh's firm will and determination had put them on the defensive.

Sohan Singh knew many secrets. The actions undertaken in Canada and America were carried out on the orders of the

commission. Nobody's personal desires had anything to do with these actions. Hopkinson was assassinated by the martyr Meva Singh not on the basis of any personal enmity. This was done to prevent spying, to facilitate the bringing of families and to pave the way for passengers to come to Canada. It is another matter that without the success of the popular movement results in such matters do not come up to expectations.

THE FATWA OF TREACHERY

Just when the Ghadar heroes were offering the supreme sacrifice to liberate the country, the enemies of country's freedom and corrupt priests in gurdwaras were issuing fatwas and passing resolutions that those who were organising Ghadar and unrest were not Sikhs. They have no relation with the Sikh Panth and they are being expelled from the panth. This was the extreme limit of degradation to which the leaders of the Chief Khalsa Dewan and the corrupt priests could go and to which they had brought Sikhs through sycophancy of British imperialism.

The massacre of Budge Budge Ghat took place, "many Sikhs were shot dead and the Akal Takht expelled these Sikhs from the panth".²⁴ Sikhs returning from America and Canada were being executed and thrown into jails for being political dacoits. And the Akal Takht (the seat of Sikh religion) was issuing fatwas that these people did not deserve to remain in the Sikh ranks and were being expelled from Sikhism.²⁵ In Amritsar and at other centres where Chief Khalsa Dewan had influence these patriots were denounced as dacoits, badmashes and goondas. The feudal landlords belonging to the Chief Khalsa Dewan, the zaildars and lambardars who acted as government stooges and agents were assuring British officials that they would give the latter all assistance in the matter of tracing and handing over to

²⁴ Jagjit Singh, *Akali Lehar*, p. 9.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

the authorities all these heroes and would themselves give the best proof of their loyalty and obedience. Not one of these cowards picked up sufficient courage to say that in order to deal with these people all pretence to justice should not be given up. In actual fact people like Gajjan Singh Ludhiana and other toadies of British raj were advising British officers that these people should be soon got rid of. The delay in conducting the case may not, as they put it, adversely affect the people.

On 16 July 1915 a deputation of leading Sikhs met the deputy commissioner of Amritsar. "The purpose of this meeting was to find a way out of atoning for the bad name that the returning passengers had brought to their nation".²⁶ The leading men of the Sikh Panth had not gone to restore the fair name of the "nation". They had gone there to express their loyalty to British rule and to pledge to maintain it, thus blackening their own faces.

THE TRIAL

Sohan Singh was transferred from Multan jail to central jail, Lahore, by train. He had been kept as a detainee so far. Now he was brought to Lahore as an accused person in the Lahore Conspiracy Case. He came to Lahore central jail in high spirits and met his old friends from America and Canada, embracing them with joy. The case had been prepared thoroughly from every aspect leaving no loopholes. The CID had succeeded in putting up eight persons as prosecution witnesses from amongst them. The police and CID had created conditions in which it was not easy for any accused Ghadarite to get off scot-free. They were trying their best to make use of the legal cover of conspiracy so that every one of the accused is executed. The CID had beaten up some of the accused to turn them into approvers. Some were promised release, some were promised amnesty, still only eight persons could be enrolled as prosecu-

²⁶ Rowlatt Report, p. 157.

tion witnesses. All arrangements were made to magnify the extent and nature of the conspiracy and it was held out that the British government had barely escaped from being overthrown. The prosecution case was complete from every so-called legal aspect.

Cunning and blood-thirsty O'Dwyer was the governor of Punjab in those days. He took keen interest in getting the case completed. In his own view the Ghadar movement was "by far the most serious attempt to subvert the British government in India".²⁷ He wanted that the accused should be punished so severely and in such an unprecedented manner that the whole of Punjab should be terrified and that nobody in future should be able to raise his voice against British rule.

He himself writes that "It was, however, not enough to reward promptly every loyal supporter. It was even more necessary to inflict stern and prompt punishment on those who were proved guilty of the outrages."²⁸

In order to accomplish this design O'Dwyer took advantage of the conditions of war and suspended the normal judicial process.

The case was filed under the Defence of India Act. O'Dwyer was very happy and he wrote. "It gave me all the powers I needed and I returned to the Punjab confident that with these powers and the support of a loyal people, the administration soon be able to restore order. Within a fortnight I was able to report a marked improvement."²⁹

When O'Dwyer came all the legal processes were given up. Under the provisions of the law the right to appeal was dropped. A tribunal of three judges was set up and nobody had the authority to challenge its decisions. Nor could any legal adviser, however eminent, challenge this decision either with regard to law or facts. This decision was final and nothing could upset it.

The decision to set up a three-judge tribunal was prompted by O'Dwyer himself. He writes:

²⁷ O'Dwyer, op. cit., p. 189.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 199.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 201.

“In December 1914, I represented to the government of India that it is most undesirable at the present time to allow trials of these revolutionaries, or other sedition-mongers, to be protracted by the ingenuity of counsel and drawn out to inordinate lengths by the committal and appeal procedure which the criminal law provides. At the same time I submitted the draft of an ordinance for speeding up the procedure...”³⁰ The meaning of the ordinance was that if a prima-facie case was established by the police, the case could be sent directly before the tribunal of three judges whose decision and sentence would be final and there would be no further judicial appeal against them.

In this way O’Dwyer took away all those legal rights which the imperialist law had given to the accused and took into his own hands the powers of life and death of the accused.

O’Dwyer adds: “I was fortunate in being throughout on the most friendly terms with the honourable judges, and in being able to secure their cooperation and advice in the many emergencies that arose during the war and the conspiracy trials.”³¹

The judges of the chief court agreed with his proposal that normal processes of law should be dispensed with and the conspiracy cases, after police investigation being over, should be directly given over to the tribunal. In this way the executive machinery and the judicial machinery were working in unison right from the beginning of the trial.

The accused were left with only one right and that was of petition for clemency to the viceroy or the governor. Even this was a big fraud. The petition for clemency to a person, who arrogantly asserts that, “In six years I had to deal with some 700 cases of capital punishment—a figure which appalled a former home secretary to whom I mentioned it... But I doubt if I interfered with more than 5 per cent of the death sentences.”³² Kartar Singh Sarabha fully understood this fraud of clemency. After death sentence had been passed on him when the jailor asked him for filing a petition of clemency, he

³⁰ Ibid., p. 197.

³¹ Ibid., p. 254.

³² Ibid., p. 238.

gave a very bold and satirical reply: "I submit a clemency petition that I should be hanged at the earliest."

British imperialist justice came into operation. The public was deprived of the right to attend court proceedings, which were held behind closed doors inside the central jail. Press was not allowed to enter. Whatever was given out to the press was only through the CID department of the government.³³ The rules under the Defence of India Act were so stringent that it was impossible to send any news outside the jail. Outside the jail double guard was posted—one of jail warders and the other of British soldiers. Therefore whatever was sent outside jail concerning this case was the government version. All possible avenues through which the news of the accused could leak out to the outside world had been tightly closed.

"The vernacular papers: In January 1915 a system of voluntary precensorship was adopted and loyally adhered to by all."³⁴ This was the submissive period of Indian journalism. War had swallowed up whatever nominal democratic or civil rights there were.

This dictatorial step had a political purpose. The governor did not want that any account of their fearless conduct should go out and arouse sympathy with the accused. If the people had been allowed, they would have inevitably taken interest in the case and as far as possible they would certainly have extended a helping hand. The accused had given everything for achieving the goal of independence. They could arrange for their defence only if they had appealed to the people for funds. But all avenues of approaching people had been sealed by the government already.

The government engaged top lawyers in order to make the case a success. A question arose whether the accused will offer defence or not. Bhai Parmanand and a few others arranged for defence lawyers but the other accused could not. In order to deceive the people the government offered them legal assistance to the extent of engaging two or three rather unknown

³³ Isemonger and Slattery, op. cit., section 71, para 1.

³⁴ *The Punjab and the War*, p. 25.

and third-rate pleaders. But all intelligent people knew that British imperial laws were capable of diverse interpretations, which clever lawyers could use to the advantage of the government.

O'Dwyer was responsible for illegal excesses committed against the accused in this case. He adopted illegal procedures because his policy from the beginning was to hang them. This attitude was not confined to those who had been held responsible for violent activities. It extended even to those people who had been arrested as soon as they landed. "The methods proposed were admittedly exceptional to meet a temporary emergency."³⁵ But he tells a lie. He had written these words in order to deceive the British and Indian experts in law because history stands witness to the fact that the entire period of his tenure was known for suppression of civil liberties and was a period of perpetual emergency. His was an autocratic personal rule. "Up to 1920 the Lt.-governor of the Punjab, subject to higher authority, was in sole control of the administration. He had no colleagues, no executive council with whom to share responsibility."³⁶ That is why he very often resorted to ruthlessness and arbitrariness. O'Dwyer was a Hitler for Punjab before whom all earlier lieutenant-governors pale into insignificance. Jallianwala Bagh is the proof.

He had used these illegal methods to unleash terror in the Punjab. He was bent upon getting the accused hanged, failing which he wanted them to be at least sentenced to life imprisonment. He had made up his mind as to this and with the "co-operation" and "help" of the judges by getting them promoted from chief court judges to high court judgeships.

JUDGEMENT

Sohan Singh was a detainee right from the beginning. Like other detainee comrades he had not taken any part in violent

³⁵ O'Dwyer, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

³⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 232-33.

activities. It is another matter that if he were free he must have taken part in these activities. The prosecution witnesses had given sufficient evidence which shed a lot of light on his activities in the United States and while he was on the way home and which, because of the unjust laws, could easily get him a death sentence. But the CID was not satisfied with these witnesses. They also produced another prosecution witness in the person of the jailer of Multan jail. It appears that the CID had not spared him even in jail. The officers had asked the jailer to ascertain the mind of Sohan Singh and the jailer had, during the talks, asked him many questions. These very questions now formed part of jailer's evidence in the court.

The pleaders submitted many a legal point in connection with this evidence, but who was going to listen to these technicalities? The judges opined that jailer's story could not be wrong. Even if CID was present there it did not matter according to them. This statement was given by Sohan Singh when he was a detainee and not an accused yet, and it can be used as evidence in the conspiracy. They therefore did use it "as a statement of a conspirator"³⁷ concerning this conspiracy.

The case was a huge fraud. Such important cases were not decided upon in the courts but in British clubs. Not only Sohan Singh but his other colleagues also knew that they would be given the same death sentence. And Sohan Singh was not only the president of the Ghadar Party but also the president of that committee which had been authorised to collect funds and to use them for revolutionary purposes. Although the judges had written in their judgement that "the fact that the accused could not offer defence witnesses from United states and nor has he offered any other defence witness has been taken into consideration", acutally no weight was given to them. Out of the Ghadarite accused the judges paid special attention to Sohan Singh and it went without saying that he was the one among those to be hanged.

The prosecution witnesses gave long statements against Sohan Singh. Mula Singh (prosecution witness) had met the accused in Sinton saw mill at the end of November 1913. The accused

³⁷ Judgement, pp. 7-8.

was the president of the revolutionary party in Oregon state. He had given the witness the first Urdu copy of the paper *Ghadar* and had told him that it was published in San Francisco and its editor was the general secretary of the seditious party Mr Hardayal. The accused had inspired him with revolutionary ideas. The accused had attended the meeting at Astoria in March 1914 and he had been deputed to set up revolutionary societies in Stockton, California and other places. The accused had delivered a speech at Astoria on 21 June 1914, and had sent a letter from San Francisco saying that he was going to Japan to see the passengers of *Komagata Maru* and would thence go to Hong-Kong and other places to set up revolutionary societies there and would then go to India to prepare the ground for the revolution.

The abovequoted activities of Sohan Singh were corroborated by the prosecution witness Nawab Khan. He also told the court that the accused had given to Gurdit Singh in Japan 100 revolvers and many cartridges. He had met the witness at Upland and had attempted to take the witness back into the Ghadar Party. The judges wrote that the statement of assistant jailer, Multan, shed light on the ideas and objectives of the accused and that the accused had attempted even to draw the jailer to his ideas.

Sohan Singh refused to accept many of the accusations of the prosecution witnesses but he accepted the charge that he was the president of the Hindi Association of Portland (which had a revolutionary character) and he also accepted that Hardayal had been invited to Portland. Judges were of the opinion that even during his detention the accused had maintained his "perverted ideas". The accused also accepts that in June 1913 Hardayal had lectured on subjects connected with socialism. According to his confession the arrangement for training of the youth was to be made in America and Germany.

Sohan Singh writes in *Jiwan Sangram*:

"The commission paid attention to the practical preparation of the revolution and felt the importance of the air force in the period to come, and at the same time worked out a programme for military training. Two generals—Kartar Singh Sarabha and Master Udham Singh—were selected. Kartar Singh Sarabha was sent to a German company for training in flying through the

German counsellor of San Francisco. This was the first meeting with the German counsellor which was arranged through Bhai Santokh Singh. Master Udham Singh had served in the artillery at Hong-Kong and he was an expert in shooting and other aspects of military training. The group of people chosen to undergo military training was handed over to him and they started learning the job on the farms of Bhai Santokh Singh and Bhai Jawala Singh. An Irish patriot had taken the responsibility of training for the preparation of the explosives (dynamite) needed to make bombs and blow up the bridges. The hand of Bhai Harnam Singh Tundilat is testimony to that. It had been blown up while preparing a bomb. The day this incident took place I was there and had torn a piece of my turban to tie on the wounded hand as a bandage."

Sohan Singh writes: "False witnesses were used to implicate us." He narrates the story of an identification parade. The witness moved about the parade. He scrutinised the faces of the accused but the accused had concealed the scar on the forehead under the turban. When the judge asked him whether he could identify the accused, the witness replied: "I was told that the accused had a scar on the forehead." This caused a lot of laughter.

But the judges write quite shamelessly: "There is hardly any example wherein the police has not been principled in its honesty."

They knew that out of the eight prosecution witnesses, some were forced after severe beating and torture in the jail.

In one of the identification parades the witness could not identify the accused and said that the accused had tied their turbans differently. Bhai Jawala Singh Thathian said, "Only turbans have been changed but faces have not changed." He was given 30 strokes of the cane only because of this statement. This gives an indication of the attitude of the judges towards the accused.

The judges wrote in the final judgement:

"The activities undertaken up to July-August 1914 are understood by us as a conspiracy of war (against the king). The activities after this, when the war had broken out, are under-

stood by us as those designed to take that war forward and help it."

Judges pronounced their judgement on Sohan Singh: "After considering the evidence against him we convict him under sections 121 (helping in waging a war), 121-A and punish him to be hanged till he is dead." "We order that all his property which can be confiscated should be done so."

Twentyfour Ghadarites were sentenced to death. None of them was shocked. This was expected of the accused even before the judgement. They were rather happy. Bhai Nidhan Singh Chugha addressed the judges loudly: "Was it the maximum that you could do?"³⁸ Bhai Jawala Singh said: "Why life imprisonment for me? Do not separate me from my colleagues. Hang me also." Bhai Kartar Singh said, "I shall never conceal the deeds performed to overthrow this government. I do not want to save my skin." They ridiculed the judgement saying: "We thank you, judges."

CONDEMNED CELLS

All the 24 patriots were placed in the 24 cells of barrack No. 121 of the central jail, Lahore. They were allowed half an hour stroll in the compound in the evening. Sohan Singh one day looked into Kartar Singh's cell. He had written with a charcoal piece on the wall in front of him: "The blood of the martyrs does not go in vain. Ultimately it brings fruit." Sohan Singh read it and addressing him said jovially: "Here even the bones are burnt in the jail, Kartar Singh! So that no news should go outside. How shall the blood of the martyrs go out?" He replied: "Mr President, the blood will be out eventually—today or tomorrow or the day after and it will bear fruit."

The next day was the day of execution. That night Sohan Singh could never forget during his whole life. The patriots

³⁸ Gurcharan Singh, op. cit., pp. 202-3.

spent that entire night dancing, laughing and singing. One of them would start reciting a couplet from the *Ghadar di Gunj* and another would sing a second couplet. One of them would address the countrymen thus: "We have done our duty by the motherland, it is now for you to do the rest."

The day dawned. The patriots were waiting for water in order to take bath and later to proceed to kiss the gallows. The deputy jailer got the cell doors opened a little later than usual and said: "Nobody will be hanged today. Last night orders had been received that executions should be held up for the time being."

The dignity with which the Ghadarite patriots had received their death sentence reflects fully their hatred against British rule, their pride in the struggles they had conducted and their desire to sacrifice their lives for achieving independence. Only people as brave as the Ghadar heroes could set such an example. This pride rightly belongs to them and nobody can deprive them of that. Their fearless behaviour was a slap on the face of loyalty and sycophancy of the British. Not for nothing had the following been written in the *Ghadar*: "If you intend to play the game for independence, then come forward getting ready to lay down your life."

WHY EXECUTION FOR SUCH A LARGE NUMBER

Why was such severe punishment given to them? To know this it is necessary to have an idea of the entire policy of the Punjab government. The government did not want that any form of political awakening, agitation or disturbance should occur in the Punjab particularly in the villages. The policy of repression was not a new one. It had started right from the day Punjab lost its independence. Lt.-governor Ibbeston had acted upon this policy when he banished and interned Ajit Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai. Acting on this policy first against the Ghadarites and then at the Jallianwala Bagh, O'Dwyer had made it clear that the real place of leaders fighting for inde-

pendence was jail, condemned cells and the gallows and that they had no right to rise against slavery.

This blood-thirsty and lawless policy had two aims: First, that the Punjab "*was the key to the military situation in India and the chief recruiting ground for the Indian army*".³⁹ Therefore it should be shut out to all politics. And second, that the "*government was engaged in a life and death struggle against powerful enemies*".⁴⁰ The war should be won by all means, fair or foul. O'Dwyer considered it necessary from the point of view of this policy "to crush as promptly as possible" the various "subversive" and revolutionary movements! Not only that. It was essential for this policy to discourage the spread of political agitation, which, though ostensibly constitutional, might be used by some of its promoters for seditious purposes, or at least as a means of raising difficulties for a government engaged in a death struggle against powerful enemies.⁴¹

If these aims of this policy are kept in view then the talk about justice and law becomes ridiculous and the judgement becomes a joke. This policy means that law and justice are subordinated to government policy and serve as an instrument of that policy. These categories were not separate from or above that policy. If in such a situation British justice comes to appear as a monster with blood dripping from its teeth and claws there should be no surprise.

But these judges and their justice got exposed soon. The news of the judgement to hang 24 Ghadarite convicts raised a storm in the world of law and consciousness. It was common talk among the lawyers of Calcutta that in the name of justice a "massacre" had been planned in Punjab. Under this law, under which the 24 Ghadarites were being sentenced to death, only six or seven could be given this extreme punishment and not the others. As soon as the days for appeal for mercy were over, there were discussions in Calcutta and other places concerning an agitation against this decision of the tribunal.

The lawyers of the accused had seen the violations of the law with their own eyes. They were also not sitting idle either.

³⁹ O'Dwyer, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Lala Raghunath Sahai and some other patriotic lawyers formed a committee and they collected the entire material concerning the case and sent it to Shri Motilal Nehru for advice. After examining the papers Panditji said that out of 24 sentenced to death, 17 were such who had not even landed on Indian soil. They had been arrested from the ships. They could not be executed.

A deputation of these lawyers met the members of the viceroy's council—Sir Harnam Singh Kapurthala, Shri Madan Mohan Malaviya and Sir Imam Ali. They explained to them the facts of the entire case. They were convinced that the Ghadarites who had been interned right from the beginning could not be sentenced to death. This deputation also met the viceroy and explained to him the entire legal position.

Lord Hardinge had come to know the real position. He himself went to Lahore and met O'Dwyer. He told O'Dwyer categorically: "I totally refuse to allow a massacre of the accused in this case, wherein only six have been proved guilty of murder and dacoity."⁴²

O'Dwyer recommended that in the case of six of the accused the sentence may be reduced to life imprisonment. Other eighteen should be executed. Lord Hardinge reduced the sentences of these six and sent the files concerning the other eighteen to the law member. The law member finally got convinced that the particular clause of law under which they were sentenced to death permitted execution of the six accused.⁴³ The same opinion was given by the viceroy's council. Lord Hardinge upheld the execution of those six Ghadarites who had been accused of actual murder and dacoity. In the case of other eighteen the death sentences were commuted to that of life imprisonment. In this way the determination of lawyers and moving into action of conscientious people bore fruit and the massacre was averted at the last moment. Sohan Singh along with seventeen others, instead of being executed, were sentenced to life imprisonment. But these sentences of life imprisonment were also a travesty of law since some of them

⁴² Lord Hardinge, *My Indian Years* 1910-16, p. 130.

⁴³ Actually seven were executed whose names we have given in the next chapter. Seventeen were sentenced to life imprisonment.

had been arrested while getting down from the ships and others from their homes.

GHADARITES IN ANDAMANS AND OTHER JAILS

Sohan Singh could not forget 16 November 1915. This was the day when seven brave colleagues of his were executed. They were Sardar Kartar Singh Sarabha (Ludhiana), Shri Vishnu Ganesh Pingle (Poona), Bhai Bakhshish Singh Gilwali (Amritsar), Bhai Surain Singh s/o Bir Singh Gilwali (Amritsar), Bhai Surian Singh s/o Isher Singh Gilwali (Amritsar), Bhai Jagat Singh Sur Singh (Amritsar) and Harnam Singh Bhatti Goraya (Sialkot). These heroes themselves put the hangman's noose around their necks smilingly. Standing on the gallows they addressed the following message to the motherland: "O, Mother India! We could not remove your shackles of slavery. Even if one of us—Ghadarites—remains alive he will continue to fight for the motherland and for liberation of the people. He will fight every form of slavery whether economic or political or social and will try to uproot it from the country and from human society."

And it is a reality that every Ghadarite fulfilled this pledge with complete sincerity. Sohan Singh and other colleagues who had been sentenced to life imprisonment were later sent to cellular jail in the Andamans. Here a new form of struggle ensued. He writes in his autobiography: "For a real revolutionary the struggle never ends, whether he is in jail or outside. His struggle is against slavery and injustice" (*Jiwan Sangram*, p. 65).

The Ghadarite patriots maintained their organisation even in jail. Whatever step they took, they decided about it collectively. What to talk of handcuffs and shackles, they did not mind even death itself. They had to pass through many hair-raising trials. They were prepared to lay down their lives but they were not ready to give up their struggle.

The jailer as well as the British superintendent were both

heartless and ruthless. They treated the prisoners, whether political or nonpolitical, as animals. The purpose of sending them to Andamans was to crush the human spirit of prisoners and turn them into broken creatures. These stooges of British imperialists therefore maltreated the prisoners on the slightest pretext. They gave them unbearably hard labour. They put them behind iron cages and used to cut their already insufficient rations and starve the prisoners. Under the pretext of doing less labour and violating the jail discipline they used to order flogging of the prisoners and this was almost a routine.

The Ghadar patriots soon understood the inhuman character of these officials. They could accept death but they were not prepared to stand indignities. They decided on two rules of behaviour: (i) Hard labour should not be refused but only that much should be done as was possible physically; (ii) No official of the jail should be deliberately insulted but if any patriot is insulted, then insult should be answered with an insult.

The jailer came to know about these decisions. He did not assign them the hard labour of "kohlu", the grinding and extraction mill, but gave them instead that of crushing dry copra fibre (chhilka). This was a job which could not be done except with the help of water. Water was, however, not provided. Parmanand (Jhansi) could not complete the labour and he was therefore called in by the jailer who abused him and raised his mailed fist to strike. Parmanand gave a kick on the protruding belly of the jailer. He fell on his chair. The news spread in the jail that a bomb case prisoner had kicked the jailer. The prisoners had been fed up with him. They were very pleased to hear this news. Parmanand was flogged. He underwent the punishment with great fortitude.

The story of struggles in the jail is a long and tragic one. There hardly was a patriot who was not given punishments like fetters, bar-fetters, handcuffs, "kohlu" and solitary confinement in a cage. Sohan Singh had to undergo all these punishments in turn. Due to these tortures two of the patriots, young Bhai Bhan Singh Sunet and Bhai Rulia Singh Sarabha fell martyrs in the jail.

Whenever a comrade or any other political prisoner in the jail was subjected to repression, Sohan Singh was among the

foremost to protest. Along with his comrades he went on hungerstrikes again and again and was saved only when he was actually nearer death.

The struggles were fought to win more rights for the prisoners, for getting them good clothes and good food and for human treatment. As a result of these struggles and sacrifices the government was forced to concede to many demands and to undertake some reform in the jail conditions.

In the middle of 1921 the political prisoners were transferred to Indian jails. Sohan Singh and his comrades were sent to separate jails in Madras. In these jails no significant dispute arose because arrangements for their clothing and food were made according to the Punjabi style. Even turbans and underwear were also given. In Coimbatore jail therefore no dispute arose.

Sohan Singh was in the Coimbatore jail when the Moplah prisoners were brought there. Moplah movement was actually a peasant movement which had become a part of the Khilafat and the Congress movement. Congress, Khilafat, Moplah and Akali movements were the result of the upsurge that followed the first world war and the October revolution. Babaji wrote that the Moplah prisoners had to face most unbearable sufferings and indignities. The "black hole" incident of Calcutta had been published by the British the world over. Incidentally none had actually seen and confirmed the tragedy. But the "black hole" enacted by the British during the Moplah movement was witnessed by all. 120 Moplah prisoners were locked in a wagon of a goods train to be brought from Patnur to Coimbatore jail. There was no opening for fresh air. When the police opened the wagon at Coimbatore railway station nearly all of them were found dead as a result of suffocation. The 17 who survived were unconscious. When they were brought to jail two more died. Only 15 remained alive and 105 perished! There hardly passed a day when five or six Moplah revolutionaries were not hanged. They bravely shouted "Ali, Ali" when going to be hanged. It was not a jail but a slaughter house (*Jiwan Sangram*, pp. 75-76).

The Ghadarite prisoners had to see prisons in many of the states. Babaji and many of his colleagues were transferred from Coimbatore jail to Yaravada jail (Maharashtra). The jail officials

here were wooden-headed and rude. They forcibly removed the turbans and underwear of these prisoners and started to compel them to put on caps. Babaji and his colleagues had to resort to a hungerstrike against this persecution.

The hungerstrike was the direct result of the stupidity and ignorance of the jail officials. In Punjab jails the Ghadarites had secured the right to wear turban and underwear as a result of bitter struggles. In the jails of Madras they had secured this right without any struggle. But the jail officials of Maharashtra tried to put into practice their own rules and regulations, as a result of which Sohan Singh and his colleagues were forced to go on hungerstrike. This hungerstrike was joined in by Parmanand (Jhansi) and Hirde Ram Mandi. Despite persuasion from some quarters that the hungerstrike was directed at achieving demands with which they had nothing to do, they persisted in joining their comrades—which speaks volumes about the readiness of Ghadar Party members to share the difficulties of their colleagues and about the regard and the spirit of oneness which they had towards one another.

During the same period Mahatma Gandhi, Jairam Dass Sindhi and Professor Bansali Lal and others were also there in the Yaravada jail. Their cells were adjacent to those of the Ghadarites. There was only one wall in between. While other Congress leaders sent messages of encouragement, Mahatma Gandhi was keeping quiet. He did not utter a word of sympathy for them. Perhaps he did not want to be associated with those who believed in the use of the sword.

This hungerstrike was a trying one. For one month the jail officials did not move. The brave fighters on the other hand were determined to win the battle. The huge strike would have prolonged very much but for the intervention by the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandhak Committee who got the government machinery to move into action. The jail officials had to relent and the demands of the prisoners were conceded.

In 1928 Sohan Singh and Bhai Kesar Singh were transferred to central jail, Lahore. The first thing they did was to offer their respect at the place where their colleagues had been executed. They met Bhagat Singh and his comrades who were being tried for conspiracy in the Lahore central jail at that time.

On one particular day Sohan Singh addressed Bhagat Singh jovially saying: "Bhagat Singh, you are young, educated. It was time for you to eat, drink and be merry. How did you get involved in all this?"

He laughed heartily and said: "Babaji, this is not my fault, it is all yours and that of your colleagues."

When Sohan Singh asked how he could say that, Bhagat Singh replied: "If your colleagues like Kartar Singh Sarabha, Vishnu Ganesh Pingle and many more had not faced death so bravely I perhaps could not have taken the present course. You have yourself paved the way and now you ask me how we joined in?"

It is true that the sacrifices of the Ghadarite patriots had completely wiped out any feeling of loyalty and sycophancy among the youth for British rule and had inspired them to undertake maximum sacrifices in the cause of Indian struggle for freedom. The history of the Akali movement, Babar Akali movement, National Congress and of the Communist Party are proof of this truth. They contributed a great deal to every progressive movement in the country.

Sohan Singh had great love and respect for Shahid Bhagat Singh. Whenever he met him, he would remember Kartar Singh Sarabha. Both had similar qualities, characteristics and proclivities for action. During one of these conversations Sohan Singh asked him as to why they had killed the deputy police superintendent Mr Saunders. He replied that the aim of his party was not to create terror but to win country's independence. Just as the Ghadar Party took up the banner of independence similarly their party also had the same aim in view. The exploding of bomb in the central legislative council and the murder of Saunders had only the aim of proclaiming:

"Listen, O Ye deaf British rulers. Beware, the youth of India can no longer tolerate their slavery. They can make every sacrifice for their motherland to attain its independence and will reply violence by violence!"

In the central jail, Lahore, Sohan Singh had established contact with us outside. Bhai Achhar Singh was in those days the head priest of Gurdwara Dera Sahib. He used to get every information about the jail happenings from the warders. The

news was passed on to the Communist Party outside through Comrade Arjun Singh Gergaj.

The Ghadar patriots dedicated their whole life to the cause of independence and when they came out of the jails they were already old. That is why they were respectfully called as "Babas" or "Ghadari Babas" by the people.

Life imprisonment is usually fourteen years. But the British government was not prepared to release them even after sixteen years. It was apparent that British officials wanted to see them die in jails. Sohan Singh saw through the government's game. He went on a fast unto death against this criminal attitude and refused to take food. In a few weeks his condition deteriorated. The Punjab papers took the matter and wrote that the government was bent upon killing him in jail and was not prepared to release him even after he had undergone the full term of imprisonment. Sohan Singh's condition became still worse. Under the mounting pressure of public opinion, in which the Communist Party took a leading part, the government was forced to get him admitted to Mayo hospital. He was lodged in the same room in which Bhai Kesar Singh was undergoing treatment for skin disease.

Sohan Singh continued the hungerstrike even in hospital. The doctors fed him forcibly through a pipe and he resisted it so fiercely that his life was in danger. On the report of doctors the government decided to release him with some restrictions. The main restriction was that he would daily inform the village lambardar that he was present in the village. But Sohan Singh refused to accept any such condition. This fast unto death lasted 90 days. The government had to yield ultimately and released him without any conditions.

When he came out he was given a hero's welcome. Every political party paid him respect and praised him for his sacrifice, determination and selflessness. But the CID even now was following him. First one, then three or four persons were deputed to follow every single movement of Sohan Singh. The government secret report said that his Ghadarite colleagues met him secretly.

After his release he did not sit idle at home. As soon as his health improved a bit he resumed active work. He said that

the battle for independence was not yet over. Till the independence which we had as our aim is not achieved our battle against British government and against any other government would continue.

The first job that Babaji took upon himself was the agitation for the release of his colleagues. The Ghadar heroes had completed their life terms but British authorities were still not prepared to release them. Babaji set up a committee for running a campaign in this connection which elected him as its chairman. This committee conducted a great deal of agitation for the release of Ghadar heroes and strongly condemning the British authorities for keeping them in jail after the life-imprisonment period was over. The government wanted to humiliate them by forcing them to accept certain conditions. But these heroes refused point blank to accept any conditions and they had to be released at long last unconditionally.

Babaji did not take long to understand conditions prevailing in the country outside. The struggle for revolution was now a mission and a part of his life. Even in jail he had been discussing and commenting upon the policies adopted by the Indian political leaders. He had been reading newspapers or books according to vagaries of circumstance. During the long years of imprisonment he had the occasion to stay with a large number of revolutionaries from Savarkar to the Bengal terrorists. It did not take him long to become a leader in the political life outside jail.

KISAN SABHA WORK

He was deeply interested in organising peasants and tenants. He used to walk into distant villages, speak on peasant problems and enrol members for the kisan sabha. The young people working with him were wonder-struck by his energy and impressed by his devotion and active life.

For some time he was the president of All India Kisan Sabha. In 1942 Shri Rahul Sankrityayana, the famous scholar, was elect-

ed the president of the kisan conference at Palsa (Andhra). He was arrested before the conference. Babaji was considered the fittest person to preside over the conference in the absence of Rahulji. During the second world war Babaji was arrested from the office of the newspaper *Chingari* in Banaras. He had gone there to address public meetings of the kisan sabha. During the course of those general arrests not only the kisan leaders like Swami Sahjanand, Indulal Yagnik and Babaji were arrested but even some other Ghadarites, communist and socialist leaders were also arrested and detained in Deoli Camp (then in Rajputana state).

The kisan sabha honoured Baba Sohan Singh by deciding to hold its conference at his village Bhakna Kalan during the time of his detention. This conference was held on 2 to 4 April 1943. The youth of the Punjab and the kisan leaders worked day and night to make it a success and set a target of gathering one lakh people. Those who have seen this conference remember it till today.

A new township had come up at Bhakna. There were rows and rows of tents and shamianas. The Indo-Soviet Cultural Society had organised an exhibition on the great progress made by the Soviet Union. The pandal had been decorated with the mottos depicting demands and slogans of kisan sabha. The conference gate was named after Baba Jawala Singh, and was decorated with a high wooden hammer and sickle. The only thing lacking was that Baba Sohan Singh and other peasant and communist leaders were still in jails.

The flag-hoisting ceremony was to take place on 2 April. On 1 April, it was rumoured that Babaji and nine other communist kisan leaders had been released. The rumour turned out to be true. People started dancing and singing. The despondency due to the absence of Babaji had disappeared.

At the Khasa railway station people thronged to receive Babaji. The train did not stop at the station. People were disappointed and came back to the village Bhakna.

Babaji and his other colleagues who had been released reached the venue of the conference some time after sunset. The people received them with great show of discipline. On their arrival the whole atmosphere of the conference, of the village

and the area changed. Delegates from every state paid glowing tributes to Babaji and wished him long life. Babaji paid two thousand rupees towards meeting the expenditure of the conference.

In every kisan morcha that was launched in the Punjab, Babaji had taken a leading part. In the Chhina mogha (water outlet) morcha he violated the law and got arrested. He was a leader of the demonstration, against Sikander Hayat ministry, which was lathicharged at the Amritsar bridge. He was in the forefront of every struggle launched in the interest of the peasantry.

Babaji was also elected president of the Punjab kisan sabha, his colleague Baba Jawala Singh had to face many hardships in organising tenants working under feudal landlords of the Montgomery district (now in West Pakistan). Babaji drew other Ghadarites also in the kisan organisation. In his determination to work for the interests of peasant masses he was more than a match to any young worker. In many kisan conferences he had the proud privilege of hoisting the kisan flag.

Babaji had taken part in the Lahore kisan morcha also. It was launched to get the increased revenue withdrawn. Nearly 5000 kisans and about 50 women were arrested in this morcha. Baba Kesar Singh Thathgarh and Baba Sohan Singh were both arrested. It was due to the result of their sacrifices for the Ghadar Party and for the kisan sabha that the 1914-15 Ghadar Babas were respected not only in the Punjab but throughout India. The Ghadar heroes occupy a very high position among those who sowed the anti-imperialist seeds of freedom in the Punjab.

For some time Babaji had been a member of the Punjab Congress also and he was elected a member of PCC. But he soon severed his connection with the Congress whose leaders did not look favourably upon Babaji's work in the kisan sabha. He was twice in jail for a six-month term as a Congressman. He said that the "task of bringing the Congress from towns to the countryside was in reality performed by the patriots of 1915" (*Jiwan Sangram*, p. 91). His reasons for resigning from the Congress were the antikisan attitude of the Congress leaders.

DEOLI CAMP

The detained leaders in the Deoli camp were connected with communist, socialist and some other progressive parties. Majority among the detenus belonged to the Communist Party. The number of Babas and Punjab communists was overwhelming. Here also there was a hungerstrike for some demands wherein the Babas showed such steadfastness that the young people were surprised at their sense of discipline. The trade union leader N. M. Joshi had played a leading role in getting the strike ended. Some of the demands of the detenus were conceded. S. A. Dange, B. T. Ranadive, Dr Z. A. Ahmed, Rahul Sankrityayana, T. P. Narayana, S. V. Ghate, Sohan Singh Josh, Prof Mahmud-uz-Zafar, Baba Wasakha Singh and Baba Bhag Singh Canadian were among the communist and other leaders lodged at Deoli at the time. The British government suspected that these people would undertake political sabotage during the war.

The communists in the Punjab at that time were divided. The Ghadar Babas were unhappy with this disruption. They wanted to see this party united. Comrade S. V. Ghate on behalf of the Communist Party of India initiated talks with the Babas to unify the party. The Babas welcomed these attempts at unity. As a result of efforts of Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna, Baba Wasakha Singh, Bhag Singh Canadian and others the division in the party was overcome. Only Ram Singh Dutt was opposed to this unity. Baba Sohan Singh and Baba Gurmukh Singh had attempted later that the Lal Communist Party should not be formed. But they failed. They were greatly pained at the split in the party (*Jiwan Sangram*, pp. 97-98).

“Till the last days of his life he stood for unity in the communist ranks. He was an embodiment of great determination.”⁴⁴

After achievement of freedom the Babas and communists were detained in Yole camp jail (district Kangra, now in Himachal Pradesh) again. The determination, seriousness and sagacity of

⁴⁴ Statement of Comrade Teja Singh Swatantra, *Nawan Zamana*, 28 December 1968.

Baba Sohan Singh impressed everybody. The promonopoly policy of the Nehru government was exposed soon. The independence for which Babaji and the Ghadar Party had struggled was not the one which had been achieved. He writes in his autobiography:

“In a country where, except a few individuals, the workers and the peasants and their children starve and do not have clothes to wear and house to live in, where lakhs of people spend their nights in the open and on pavements in winter and in summer and where, at the same time, even the dogs of the rich do not easily accept meat and other luxuries, where there is no law protecting the earnings of the poor people from being seized and exploited by the rich, where the dogma of ‘might is right’ prevails—can any genuine patriot remain unconcerned in such situation? Can you call such independence as a real one? No, never; whichever government, whether national or foreign, supports such a system should be thrown out. This is the right cause. One who accepts such a slavery is a coward” (*Jivan Sangram*, p. 106).

Babaji was a selfless, principled patriot and an embodiment of sacrifice. He did not accept the principle of “My country, right or wrong”. The principle of his party was that wherever there was a struggle for independence members of the party should take part in that. He used to say that if our country wages a war to subjugate another country, “we would not keep quiet but would fight against our own country”. He was a supporter and propagandist of internationalism.

In the article entitled “My Recollections”, he writes:

“Our party is proud of the fact that its office in the USA was the first to establish contact with the Russian October Revolution. The party grasped the significance of the Soviet revolution and decided that as a first step responsible comrades should be sent to the Soviet Union, who should report back after making a study there and should clear the way for other comrades by securing permission from party’s education department. The idea was that more and more comrades should have an understanding of the socialist theories propounded by Marx and Lenin.”

Despite great sacrifices the Ghadar Party could not achieve

independence; it persisted in the struggle. In order to be better acquainted with the strategy and tactics of the Soviet revolution, this party established contacts with the Third International and sent dozens of youngmen from America and Canada to Russia for revolutionary education who came back and contributed their share in building the communist movement in India. Two representatives of the Ghadar Party, Bhai Santokh Singh and Bhai Rattan Singh, attended the Fourth Congress of the Communist International. They learnt there that the struggle for independence of every country was a part of the struggle of the Communist International.

Babaji writes about the principledness of his colleagues:

“The Ghadar Party comrades were interned in villages by thousands. They were steadfast in their aim and policy. We regarded every party as our own which was working against the British imperialism honestly. We regarded all political movements as our own which contributed to India’s struggle for independence. We still believe in this and we try to unify these forces so the way could be opened for achievement of socialism. . . I strongly believe that unless socialism forms the aims of economic structure, real independence would be just a dream.”

This author had many an occasion to have talks with Babaji. He always insisted that the first precondition for creating a socialist society is that the means of production should be taken away from private hands.

The principledness, steadfastness and devotion of the Ghadar Party has been praised best by D. Petrie, director of intelligence bureau, which acted as an arm of defence of the British empire. He wrote:

The movement was suppressed during the war, but has never been stamped out and there are still in the Punjab many returned Sikhs whose bitter hatred of our rule predisposes them to join with eagerness in any conspiracy aimed at the subversion of our authority.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ D. Petrie, *Communism in India*, pp. 149-50.

VIEWS OF BABAJI

Perhaps there is no presentday problem on which Babaji has not expressed his views. He had a healthy and scientific mind. He did not believe in obsolete theories of the past. It was his firm conviction that in the struggle between the theories of the new era and the old, victory of the new era is sure. "Science had destroyed the basis of the old era." Today science is paving the way to the moon and stars. Today science is fighting religious illusions and society is rapidly advancing towards a new era. Today it is very necessary that the masses should be given a knowledge of science and scientific methods of development.

For the progress of society Babaji attached great importance to child education. To open a girls' school, he donated his big home. Not only this. To open a high school, in cooperation with the villagers, he not only donated necessary land, but also helped with money in a big way. Due to his tireless efforts a high school is successfully running in the village. He correctly used to say that our social slavery will not be ended by any god from above or by any other country from outside, it will have to be abolished with our own efforts.

In his teachings Babaji extensively expressed himself about the women and youth. He was of the view that it was high time, when the women should stand on their own feet. They have been in chains through long centuries. Now the time for them has come to be awake and shatter their chains forever. They should fight for their equal rights keeping in step with the times. Success always goes to them who fight and make sacrifices persistently. Success never blesses the talkative do-nothings.

He had very heart-warming hopes on the youth. He thought that youth would be able to do what his generation had dreamt to accomplish for uplifting India but could not. He said: Today the country needs selfless and self-sacrificing youngmen, who will always keep in their mind the ideals set and the trail blazed by the martyrs and will not hesitate to plunge headlong to face any hardships, difficulties and sacrifices for the sake of taking the country forward to socialism. He was confident that present-

day dubious policies could not be combated without selflessness and true duty. People have begun to see that the ills of hunger, privation, illiteracy and ignorance can be ended by adopting the path of socialism and humanism, and that path of capitalism is no cure for these evils.

Babaji was ardently against the exploiting capitalist society, and to break the stranglehold of monopolies he wholeheartedly participated in struggles. He was of the firm opinion that every type of evil and corruption is born out of monopolies. If you are to develop the country, if you are to make the people prosperous, first of all end the monopolies. The Congress leaders, who till yesterday were poor like us today roll in lakhs and crores. Babaji Said: "It must be investigated what his financial position was when a person entered political life and what it is now. True patriotism can ruin one financially, but it cannot help one to build palaces and establish farms. Neither can one become shareholder and director in companies. The persons who have grabbed money putting on the cloak of patriotism are not worthy of becoming members of any party. Neither have they the right to elections" (*Dukh*, p. 21).

Babaji writes in *Dukh*: "Neither the government nor any political party can deny the fact that in recent years the poor have become poorer and the rich richer", and this situation has clearly resulted in the country becoming more poor and weak. "National morality has not risen, but fallen. Corruption, nepotism and favouritism prevail in every department" (p. 23).

Babaji was confident that the epoch of capitalists and capitalism is rapidly ending. Its end is inevitable. It cannot be said how its end will come. But we cannot be successful by taking any one method as absolute. He was of the view that the war of liberation in India had been fought in two ways—armed revolution and satyagraha. Satyagraha prepares the people and makes them feel the rigours of slavery and armed revolution has proved its worth everywhere in completely liberating the country and the people. Evolution and revolution—these two major ways operate in the world.

Babaji writes: "The foreign exploiter has gone but the indigenous exploiter is not less treacherous. Wearing khadi caps, raising patriotic slogans in meetings of the Congress Party, he

has succeeded in wearing the badge of patriotism...and he has managed to occupy big posts in the government."

Babaji was an ardent enemy of communalism. He thought it to be a mortal enemy of the country and one of the main hurdles in the path of progress. He stressed upon the youth over and over again that they should be aware of this fatal poison of communalism.

He had to pass through many difficulties during the Congress regime, even to go to jail many times. When he saw that some of those very persons who had been instrumental in getting the patriots prosecuted by giving false evidence, getting them hanged and their properties confiscated becoming part of the ruling class he felt very disturbed. Not only this, he said that the Congress government is coming down to the British level of ruling methods. To hide the police cruelties, it trots out an excuse that people were violent. Congress itself is responsible for blackmarketing, profiteering and goondaism.

His hunchback was the stamp of Congress rule. He himself writes: "In 1948, I was arrested along with Comrade Sohan Singh Josh and seven or eight other comrades. There was no solid reason. Administration in the Yole jail was worse than the British times. We had to resort to hungerstrike. That hungerstrike in old age was most difficult. Illegal confinement and hungerstrike in Yole camp deformed my backbone. Now whenever one asks me, I reply that this is the stamp of national government of my back."

SELFLESSNESS

Regarding the selflessness of party members Sohan Singh writes: "Once a revolutionary of Ireland came to see our office and printing press. When he was told that our kitchen costs only two dollars daily, he was astonished. We bought only bread; vegetables and onions we got from a comrade's farm. Listening to the details he said: 'What? Such wonderful selflessness! Now India's freedom cannot be far away.'"

But this was not an unusual thing for Punjabi revolutionaries. They were ready not only to sacrifice property, wealth and farms, but even their lives. They were so much gripped by the ideal of freedom, that they were ready to sacrifice their all. Hence they never felt any shortage of money despite free distribution of the paper *Ghadar*. Members gave not only the membership fee, but felt it as their duty to fulfil each and every revolutionary demand of the organisers. And organisers and workers considered it a crime to misuse these funds.

With regard to the use of money for revolutionary purposes, Lala Lajpat Rai praised very much the Punjabi revolutionaries. He writes:

“On the whole Sikhs proved to be more honest, more selfless and disciplined.”

“I have not met even a single Sikh revolutionary up to now, whom I may have considered as guilty of misuse of funds. On the contrary, most of them always passed a life of selflessness and put themselves continuously in dangerous positions. I have come in contact with many educated Punjabis (students and workers). They were lukewarm in their patriotism; but I have not met a single person, who may have misused even a penny of revolutionary money.”⁴⁶

REVOLUTIONARY UP TO THE END

Babaji was an ardent patriot. The older he grew the greater became his faith in the revolution. And he fought for the revolutionary transformation of society till his end. Savarkar, Lajpat Rai, Bhai Parmanand and Hardayal moved away from revolution as they grew older. Parmanand and Hardayal completely submitted to British imperialism. The other two became champions of the “cause of the Hindus”. Babaji unshakably and consistently followed the path of revolution.

In 1929 when Shahid Bhagat Singh and his comrades resorted

⁴⁶ Lala Lajpat Rai, *Autobiographical Writings*, p. 203.

to the famous long-drawn-out hungerstrike, Babaji also stopped taking food. Bhagat Singh and his comrades made requests, saying: "You have already suffered too much in jails, now in this old age you should not bear more hardships; you should not join the hungerstrike." But Babaji replied with determination: "What if the body looks old, the revolutionary in me is not old." This spirit of his remained until his death!

DEATH

16 November 1915 was the day, when Kartar Singh Sarabha became a martyr. Babaji always spoke very highly of his sacrifice, fearlessness and ability. Getting an invitation for the celebration of this day in his village Sarabha (Ludhiana district) in 1968 he went to pay his homage. He did not care about his failing health. On return he fell ill with pneumonia. First he ignored it, but when friends felt concerned, he was admitted to civil hospital, Amritsar. The doctors tried their best to save him, comrades and friends remained by his bedside day and night. Sometimes it was hoped that he would get well, but pneumonia was becoming more complicated and dangerous.

Comrade Satya Pal Dang met the Punjab governor and told him about the sacrifices, patriotism and illness of Babaji. The governor telegraphically instructed the hospital authorities that Babaji should be kept in a special ward at government expense. But Babaji refused to be in special ward and said: "I will get treatment in the same ward where my people are getting it." This was his love for the people, for the high principles and his approach towards the masses.

The author met him in the hospital on behalf of the Communist Party of India and told him that the party will provide all expenses for his treatment, etc. But he said: "I need nothing."

Health was failing him every day. He was not coming round.

Babaji left us on the night of 20 December 1968. 24 days before his death some comrades went to meet him. It was on

27 November. He asked them to write his "last statement". It seems he was sensing that his end was coming near.

LAST MESSAGE

"I am thankful to my country, nation and mankind. Whole of my life has passed in their service. In the beginning, imbued with national sentiment, I concentrated my efforts on freedom movement. Namdhari movement and Indian 'National Congress had greatly inspired me for this cause. When I was sentenced to life imprisonment, I came to know about the Russian revolution in jail. Soviet revolution made a great impact upon me and transformed my views radically. Under the influence of Russian revolution I completely adopted internationalist outlook. Besides, I am very thankful to those comrades who gave me a knowledge of Marxism through study circles and discussions and armed me with this ideology. I am diametrically opposed to Gandhism, as it has failed to solve the problems facing the country.

"In all this task I got very great help from the Communist Party and I have always respected it. I am pained that now there are differences in international communist movement. I wish that these differences should come to an end, so that the death of capitalism may be brought nearer. International differences of communist movement have prolonged the life of capitalism to some extent.

"The courage with which the Vietnamese people are defeating America has greatly enhanced my respect and love for them. This defeat of America is a clear step forward, towards the inevitable end of capitalism.

"In the end I want to thank those comrades who participated in the movement along with me and are participating even now, so that capitalism should be abolished also here." ⁴⁷

⁴⁷ *Nawan Zamana*, 27 November 1968.

This is his last message, which he addressed to his countrymen specially the youth. Sacrifices made by the Ghadar Party did not go in vain. They particularly awakened the people of the Punjab and the people of India generally. In the Akali movement, Congress and socialist movement, Naujawan Bharat Sabha and worker-peasant upsurge, everywhere the banner of their sacrifices and anti-imperialism was aloft. Their sacrifices transformed the Punjab. The Chief Khalsa Dewan, which accused the Ghadar Party as a betrayer, was itself isolated by the people as the betrayer. Due to their sacrifices imperialist loyalty suffered almost a mortal blow. Loyalism became a word of abuse in the Punjab.

Baba Sohan Singh was a great personality. He was an embodiment of self-sacrifice, selflessness and principledness. His teaching is that consistent struggle should be waged for abolishing capitalism, keeping high the banner of principles and no sacrifice should be thought too big for the sake of bringing socialism. To accomplish this task, left unfinished behind by him, we must strive in an organised way and move forward for bringing about real economic, social and political freedom in the country.

Sohan Singh Bhakna was the pride of the nation. His life was that of a true and unblemished patriot. It behoves us that we should organise libraries and reading rooms and establish literary associations in the memory of this great personage, that streets and settlements be named after him, and, at least in Amritsar and in his birth place, his statue be erected, that his anniversary be celebrated throughout Punjab every year, so that his mission may be propagated.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Ghadar patriots whose death sentences were commuted to life-imprisonment and properties confiscated.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Fathers' Name</i>	<i>Village</i>	<i>District</i>
1. Balwant Singh	Mir Singh	Sathiala	Amritsar
2. Harnam Singh (Tundilat)	Gurdit Singh	Kotla Naudh Singh	Hoshiarpur
3. Hirde Ram	Gajjan Singh	Mandi	Mandi State
4. Jagat Ram	Ditto Mal	Haryana	Hoshiarpur
5. Kala Singh	Gulab Singh	Amritsar	Amritsar
6. Kesar Singh	Bhoop Singh	Thathgarh	Amritsar
7. Khushal Singh	Suchet Singh	Padhari	Amritsar
8. Nand Singh	Ram Singh	Kalla	Ludhiana
9. Nidhan Singh Chugha	Sundar Singh	Chugha	Ferozepur
10. Bhai Parmanand—1	Tarachand	Karial	Jhelum
11. Parmanand—2	Gaya Prasad	Sukhrada Kharka	Hamirpur (UP)
12. Prithwi Singh	Shadi Ram	Lalru	Patiala State
13. Ram Saran Das	Sant Ram	Kapurthala	Kapurthala State
14. Rulia Singh	Jagat Singh	Sarabha	Ludhiana
15. Sawan Singh	Khushal Singh	Chabba	Amritsar
16. Sohan Singh	Karam Singh	Bhakna Kalan	Amritsar
17. Wasawa Singh	Mihan Singh	Gilwali	Amritsar

Ghadar heroes who were directly sentenced to life-imprisonment and the confiscation of property.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Father's Name</i>	<i>Village</i>	<i>District</i>
1. Bhan Singh	Sawan Singh	Sunet	Ludhiana
2. Bishan Singh-1	Jawala Singh	Dudher	Amritsar
3. Bishan Singh-2	Kesar Singh	Dudher	Amritsar
4. Choohar Singh	Boota Singh	Lihlan	Ludhiana
5. Gurmukh Singh	Hushnak Singh	Lalton	Ludhiana
6. Gurdit Singh	Gurmukh Singh	Sur Singh	Amritsar
7. Hazara Singh	Bela Singh	Dudher	Amritsar
8. Inder Singh Granthi	Ala Singh	Malla	Ludhiana
9. Inder Singh Bhasin	Ganda Singh	Bhasin	Lahore
10. Inder Singh	Moola Singh	Sur Singh	Amritsar
11. Jawand Singh	Uttam Singh	Sur Singh	Amritsar
12. Jawala Singh	Ghanya Singh	Thathian	Amritsar
13. Kala Singh	Ghasita Singh	Sur Singh	Amritsar
14. Kehar Singh	Nihal Singh	Mahrana	Amritsar
15. Kharak Singh	Ganda Singh	Bhupa Rai	Ludhiana
16. Kripal Singh	Narain Singh	Bhupa Rai	Ludhiana
17. Lal Singh	Mehar Singh	Bhoore	Amritsar
18. Madan Singh Gagga	Mal Singh	Gagga	Lahore
19. Mangal Singh	Sarmukh Singh	Lal Pura	Amritsar
20. Piara Singh	Lakha Singh	Langeri	Hoshiarpur
21. Puran Singh	Hoshiar Singh	Isawal	Ludhiana
22. Roda Singh	Wasawa Singh	Rode	Ferozepur
23. Shiv Singh	Munshi	Kotla	Hoshiarpur

24. Sher Singh	Kesar Singh	Wein Pooin	Amritsar
25. Udam Singh	Mewa Singh	Kasel	Amritsar
26. Wasakha Singh	Dial Singh	Dudher	Amritsar
27. Roor Singh	Attar Singh	Choohar chak	Ferozepur

APPENDIX III

Those who were sentenced to less imprisonment

1. Harihar Singh (10 years)	Gurmukh Singh	Nathana	Ferozepur
2. Dalip Singh (7 years)	Kesar Singh	Ghanauri	Patiala
3. Dewa Singh (4 years)	Sahib Singh	Sahnewal	Ludhiana
4. Jamna Das (3 years)	Hari Ram	Baragaon	Barabanki (UP)
5. Baj Singh (2 years)	Chatar Singh	Raya	Amritsar

APPENDIX IV

Those who were freed

1. Kishan Das Sadh (the court rise)	Khazan Singh	Babarpur	Ludhiana
2. Gujjar Singh	Sham Singh	Bhakna	Amritsar
3. Hardit Singh	Bhoop Singh	Kala Ghannupur	Amritsar
4. Kidar Nath Sehgal	Bhag Mal	Lahore	Lahore
5. Naurang Singh	Chanda Singh	Amritsar	Amritsar

APPENDIX V

Government witnesses, who betrayed their comrades and bore the badge of shame by submitting false evidences.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Father's Name</i>	<i>Village</i>	<i>District</i>
1. Amar Singh	Uttam Singh	Nawan Sehar	Jullundur
2. Moola Singh	Jawala Singh	Miran Kot	Amritsar
3. Jawala Singh	Roda Singh	Gurusar	Ferozepur
4. Nawab Khan	Gauskhan	Halwara	Ludhiana
5. Udham Singh	Sohan Singh	Padhari	Amritsar
6. Ichhar Singh	Behal Singh	Lohat Badi	Nabha State
7. Narain Singh	Bakhshish Singh	Lohat Badi	Nabha State
8. Sucha Singh	Rulia Singh	Jhabewal	Ludhiana
9. Umrao Singh	Rulia Singh	Bholapur	Ludhiana
10. Dalip Singh	Hazara Singh	Bholapur	Ludhiana

Note: First five were arrested after doing some work on reaching Punjab, and last five were detained immediately after landing from the ships.

APPENDIX VI

Two British and an Indian Judges of the tribunal, who were anxious to hang the patriots and whose justice thirsted for death.

1. A. A. Irwain	Presiding judge of the Tribunal
2. T. P. Ellis	Special Member
3. Sheo Narain	Special Member

Death and other sentences were decided on 13 September 1915.

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B-1360



The author of the book, SOHAN SINGH JOSH, was born on 12 November 1898. He was a teacher for some time, but gave up the job to join the noncooperation movement in 1920. Was sentenced to one year and three months' rigorous imprisonment under Seditious Meetings Act. Convicted for the second time for three years under Akali Leaders' Conspiracy Case and, had to suffer for 5 years in jail. Was detained in Deoli Camp (Rajputana) during second world war. After independence the Congress government also did not let him live in peace. Kept in Yole

jail (Kangra) for two years (1948-50). Detained in Gurgaon jail after the Chinese attack though he wrote articles in the *Nayan Zamana* supporting the CPI majority line.

Sohan Singh Josh was always in the forefront of kisan and democratic movement: president of Naujawan Bharat Sabha in 1928; general secretary of Workers' and Peasants' Party in 1927-29; presided over the first All-India Workers' and Peasants' Conference at Calcutta in December 1928; general secretary of the Punjab Congress Committee in 1937-39. He was the secretary of the Punjab unit of the CPI for many years and the first communist MLA in 1937.

He is a well-known writer and journalist—editor of monthly *Kirti* from 1926; editor of different party papers in the Punjab in subsequent periods. He wrote many books and pamphlets such as on Punjabi language, journey inside Soviet Union, a book of poems in Punjabi, etc.
