THE SIKH JOURNEY IN AMERICA

Western Scholars Conference 2012
Sikh American Research Center
Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society

Hosted at University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA, USA
A Resolution by
PCKDS Gurdwara Sahib Stockton, CA, USA

Minutes Register, 1912-1929, Page 271, Resolution #4

The Executive Committee of the Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society in its Diwan (Communion) on April 23, 1926, on the occasion of The Birth of Khalsa (Vaisakhi Day), unanimously passed the following resolution:

That since the first day of the arrival of Sikhs in America and till the present day, whatever they have done for their motherland* and the Sikh Panth by utilizing their physical, intellectual, and financial resources, a detailed history of their deeds should be meticulously written and presented to the people.

[*A reference to pre-partition, undivided India.]

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A production of
Sikh American Research Center
Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society

Centennial Western Conference Committee
Dr. Jasbir Singh Mann, Dr. Amrik Singh, Manjit Singh Uppal, Bhajan Singh Bhinder, Patrick J. Nevers
“Sikh Journey in America”
Abstracts of 19 Scholarly Papers

on

THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

of

Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society
Gurdwara Sahib, Stockton, CA, USA

prepared for presentation on

September 22, 2012

at the

Sikh Journey in America Conference
University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA, USA

www.SikhCentury.us
Welcome From Gurdwara Sahib Stockton Leadership

September 22, 2012

Dearest Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are deeply honored to welcome you to the September 22, 2012 “Sikh Journey in America” conference hosted in joyous celebration of the centennial anniversary of Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society Gurdwara Sahib, Stockton, CA, USA, which was founded on October 24, 1912.

Through the enclosed works of the scholars, we discovered the history and culture of the first permanent Sikh American Settlement in Stockton. At this conference, established and emerging scholars of the highest caliber will present fresh perspectives on the Sikh-American community’s pioneer history and the possibilities for its future as Americans. We extend the greatest gratitude possible in our thanks of the following scholars for their contributions:

Dr. Bruce La Brack, Inder Singh, Dr. Nirmal Singh Mann, Dr. Karen Leonard, Dr. Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon, Dr. Gurmel Singh Sidhu, Dr. Sukhmander Singh, Dr. Tejwant Singh Gill, Prof. Gurcharan Singh Aulakh, Dr. Jaspal Singh, Dr. Paul Englesberg, Prof. Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich, Dr. Harold A. Gould, Dr. Jasbir Singh Mann, Dr. Hugh Johnston, Dr. Amrik Singh, and Dr. Jagtar Singh Grewal.

Gurdwara Sahib Stockton will, until the last days of the world, remain a place of vast meaning in the hearts of all Sikhs throughout the Earth. As the birthplace of the Sikh American community, as well as the source of the first organized and sustained campaign of resistance to the British Empire’s tyrannical occupation of the Indian subcontinent, it is of deep historical value to the continents of North America and Asia and to the story of our world.

Sikhs who settled around the first American gurdwara led struggles to defend the rights to immigration, citizenship, and private property. They were inspired by the American founding fathers, who opposed a colonial system of oppression. They paved the way for Asians to become Americans. There are heroes on every corner of the Gurdwara Sahib Stockton campus.

Very sincerely,

Harnek Singh Atwal
President

Manjit Singh Uppal
Chairman

Stockton Gurdwara Sahib Management Committee

Stockton Gurdwara Centennial Committee
A Letter from
Vice-Chancellor Dr. Jaspal Singh, Punjabi University, Patiala

MESSAGE

The uniqueness and multi-faceted nature of Sri Guru Granth Sahib lies in establishing the relevance of its humanitarian concerns to every era in history. Its contemporaneous significance has been established through various events from time to time. From this point of view the Gaddar movement is a landmark in history that helped in establishing the validity of this assertion. The universal norms that the contemporaries of the movement adopted also validate the truth of this notion. I welcome the efforts being made a hundred years later by the Organising/Administrative Committee of the Stockton Gurdwara in America to understand, clarify and propagate traditional ethics and behaviour. This will definitely help in creating a rapport between the heritage and inheritors and present the contemporaneous value of Sri Guru Granth Sahib to the world.

What is the significance of the institution of Gurdwara in the life of a Sikh? How it has influenced Sikhs in every era can be traced through history and the documentary evidence of this is to be seen in Gurbani itself. Given knowledge needs to be supplemented and revived because this creates occasions for the reformation of the truant child through citing examples of legendary figures (Babaniya kahaniya put sput karen). In the present context the heirs of the Gurmat tradition need to spread the divine message of the Guru Granth Sahib among the whole of mankind (Jagat jalanda rakh lai apni kirpa dhar). Along with this we need to initiate the coming generation into the Gurmat tradition. This will increase the possibility of reaching out towards people not just at a personal, but at a universal level. This (Stockton) occasion is a commendable step in this direction and those Gursikhs who are actively involved in this endeavour need to be congratulated.

(Dr. Jaspal Singh)
Vice-Chancellor
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1. Social and Political Lives of Early Sikh Settlers in California, 1897 to 1946
By Dr. Bruce La Brack (University of the Pacific)

This paper addresses the first half-century of Punjabi/Sikh presence in North America, concentrating on their economic, social and legal struggles in California. It outlines how their migration and adaptation were intertwined with, and impacted by, both conditions and political policies in the United States and British India, particularly regarding immigration and citizenship. Although this early period can be generally characterized as one of population decline and socioeconomic marginalization, it is also simultaneously a time of rising political consciousness, activism, and resistance to discriminatory government laws. The story of this relatively small community’s difficult transformation from struggling economic sojourners to acquiring full US citizenship remains one of the most remarkable in American history — and its locus for many decades was the Stockton gurdwara.

2. Dalip Singh Saund: From Stockton Gurdwara to the US Congress (and Beyond)
By Inder Singh

Congressman Dalip Singh Saund was the first Asian, Indian, and Sikh American to be elected to the US Congress. He was first elected in 1956 when there were not very many people from India in the United States. He was reelected twice, in 1958 and 1960 but in 1962, he suffered a debilitating stroke and became incapacitated. He set a precedent for many Asians to follow him in the U.S. Congress. He remains a beacon of hope and an example for many Indian Americans to succeed him.

Part I of this article includes Saund's Early Years and education in India, education in USA, employment and agricultural career, community involvement including serving Sikh Gurudwara as secretary, political activism, political victories, years in US Congress and his family life. Until 1965, the US immigration quota allowed only 100 Indians to migrate to the United States. In 1965, immigration laws were liberalized and Indian population in America started increasing rapidly. By the year 2000, the population was close to 2 million and these new Indian Americans knew very little about the pioneers and patriots of our community. Part II includes efforts by Indian community activists to get recognition to the first Indian/Sikh who served the US congress for six years and is a source of inspiration and a worthy role model to look up to, particularly by those who seek future political office in USA.

3. The Life and Times of Pakher Singh Gill
By Dr. Nirmal Singh Mann (University of California, Davis)

My book book traces the origin of Jutt Sikhs to Scythians of Central Asia. The Scythians were warlike people who defied Darius of Persia, the Egyptian Pharaoh, and even the Greeks. They were superb horsemen and rugged individualists. They did not accept any other superiority or authority. Some of these characteristics are seen in the present day Jutts of Punjab. Some of them settled around Bharatpur and defied the Marathaas, Rajputs, and Ahmed Shah Durran.

It is important to remember that Pakher Singh Gill (P. S. Gill) was a Jutt Sikh and descendent of Scythians. To put the life, thoughts, and actions of P. S. Gill in perspective, the author has summarized the history of the Sikhs. It seems that after every martyrdom, the Sikhs became progressively militarized. Guru Hargobind, after the martyrdom of Guru Arjan, started keeping a force of cavalry. The Tenth Guru, after the martyrdom of Tegh Bahadur, completely militarized the Sikhs. This later resulted in the establishment of Sikh Misls and the establishment of Sikh kingdom. After the Anglo-Sikh wars, Punjab was annexed to British India.

Sikhs played an important role in waging the struggle for India's independence. The formation of Ghadar Party in California in the early twentieth century is well known.

P. S. Gill arrived in Seattle in 1913 via Calcutta, Hong Kong & Shanghai. He was 24 years old then. California in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century was a very bigoted society. The American Indians, blacks, Chinese, Japanese, and Punjabis were grossly maltreated and brutalized. They were not allowed to own land according to the Alien Land Law. Many farmed in the name of Anglo friends. Some married Mexican women for this purpose. Some of the Anglos cheated them & refused to give them their fair share of the agricultural profit. When P. S. Gill arrived
in California, the Ghadar Movement had already started. He took active part in this movement and was in communication with Ghadarites in India.

He worked hard and raised a profitable lettuce crop in partnership with J. B. Hager and V. R. Sterling. They not only refused to pay his share of the profit but heaped racially hateful insults on him. At this point, money became a secondary consideration for him. He realized that the only way Punjabis could gain respect was to strive for India’s independence. He murdered the two Anglos in 1925 and was sent to San Quentin prison for 14 years.

During his trial, the Punjabi community showed remarkable solidarity; Punjabi men and women in their native attire regularly attended the court proceedings. Funds were collected for him. While in prison he read newspapers regularly and kept in touch with the patriotic movements.

He came out of prison in 1940 after 14 years. He visited India in 1970 and England in 1971. His views about the modern tolerant American Society and the fact that America today is basically a meritocracy are worth reading in the book as also his emotional experiences while visiting India and England. After coming out of prison, he married a Mexican woman by the name of Alicia and had four sons, all of whom live in California and are doing well.

He was advancing in years. His health was deteriorating; he was diagnosed with Lymphoma. He died on Sept 9, 1973. Since there were no crematories in California then, he was cremated at Yuma, Arizona. The journey which started with a train ride from Ludhiana in 1908 ended 65 years later, halfway around the world, in the Arizona desert.

4. Punjabi-Mexican Americans: Why Did This Community Develop?”
By Dr. Karen Leonard (University of California, Irvine)

The paper looks carefully at the development of this unique hybrid community in the American southwest, examining the constraints and opportunities the pioneer Punjabis encountered as they worked in California in the early twentieth century. It sets out that era’s federal and state laws governing immigration and farming, and vividly portrays the life of the men, women, and children in the Punjabi-Mexican families.

5. Perspectives on the Ghadar Movement
By Dr. Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon (Punjab University)

Although the Ghadar Movement played a pioneering role in the freedom struggle of India, it has not found its due place in the contemporary historiography. Divergent views have been expressed regarding its character and affect on Indian history. Great injustice has been done to the sacred memory of the Ghadarites, who as champions of the rights of their people laid down their lives for freedom and honor of their country.

A historian must capture the passion, fervor and ideological motivation of the Sikh community which stood in the forefront of the movement. A revolutionary movement invariably requires a revolutionary response. Ghadrities differed from the other freedom fighters not only in their temperament and training but also in their principles and programs, their value system and worldview; their political convictions, agenda and outlook.

The story brings into the focus the pseudo-nationalism of the Congress and open opposition of the Indian political leadership to the activities of the revolutionaries. Despite the ideological commitment of the Congress to a secular ideal, it failed to emerge as a champion of national unity. It faltered and failed to represent Indian nationalism. It identified itself with the religion of the multitude and the sociopolitical interest of the Hindus.

After many centuries of subjugation, Hindus aspired to be the arbiters and masters of their own destiny. They dreamt of a Hindu Raj and emerged as a supreme power in the subcontinent. They tried to make a religious, cultural and linguistic homogeneity as a sign of India's nationhood. Their notion of nationalism stemmed from the deep insecurity of the urban Hindu middle-class and was sustained by their class interests as a counterweight to the imbalance of their position in the Punjab.

In its emphasis on Hindu interest, Punjab was far ahead of other states in the country. Resurgent Hinduism under the leadership of the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha, especially in Punjab, stood in the way of united political action against the British. The Ghadar Movement which originated in a foreign land with the bold initiative of Punjab immigrants, mostly Sikh farmers and laborers, could not rise to the desired dimensions due to lack of adequate support and cooperation from their own country.
The parochial outlook and policies of the Congress and narrow sectarian ends of the Hindus presented a sharp contrast to the worldview and ideology of the Sikh revolutionaries, who stood for universal causes and secular nationalism in independent India. Their liberal social ethos and the tradition of martyrdom embedded in the psyche as enshrined in Guru Granth sahib Ji (“Jab Tan Prem Khetan ka Chao sar Dhar Gali Meri Aao” ...: Salok 20th Guru Nanak, p. 1412) gave them enough moral strength to prove their patriotism to their motherland through selfless sacrifices. The story of the Ghadar Movement deserves to be written on an epic scale.

6. Ghadar Movement: Media and Literature
By Dr. Gurmel Singh Sidhu (California State University, Fresno)

Regardless of the nature of activities, the survival and success of a movement is dependent on its aims and objects and their dissemination through media and literature. The Ghadar Movement launched against the British rule for the independence of India relied heavily on journalism and literature. A social and political movement of this scope and nature needs mass media attention to disseminate its message and achievements.

Realizing the importance of media and press, the Ghadar Movement published about 22 newspapers (seven before 1913) in Punjabi, Urdu, Gujarati, and English from America and Canada. They established effective centers for conducting activities in these countries and produced a number of newspapers and pamphlets. Among these was The Ghadar newspaper, which played a significant role in preaching and nurturing the message of the mutiny. Its title page always contained the heading, “The exposure of the British Government” and followed with fourteen counts of injustices meted by the British Government towards the Indian nation. One was, “56 years have elapsed since the last mutiny of 1857, and another one is due.” The language of the paper was bitter, pungent, and vitriolic.

Whereas social and political media played a pivotal role in focusing the cause and response of the movement, poetry was an integral part of Ghadar Movement and played a frontal role in conveying the message of the revolt. Its message was vehemently preached through popular versification employing images and motifs relating to heroes and martyrs of the movement. Its dominant theme was exposure of exploitation of natural resources of lands under the colonial rule, and oppression and suppression of the people with the force of guns and threat of gallows. The profoundly patriotic nature of Ghadar poetry became a crucial source of inspiration for extreme sacrifices. This corpus in verse held out a great appeal to activists of the movement and the public. Its patriotic theme inspired a dream of a democratic Indian Republic based on liberty, equality and fraternity; free from corruption and discrimination of any caste, creed, and religion.

7. Life and Times of Sant Teja Singh: 1906-1912
By Dr. Sukhmander Singh (Santa Clara University)

Much has been written about the life of Sant Teja Singh who was born in 1877 and passed away in 1965 at the age of 88 years. Throughout his life, he made outstanding contributions for the cause of spreading the glorious teachings of Guru Nanak all across the world.

This paper restricts itself to presentation of his works from 1906 through 1912. Teja Singh was only 29 years of age in 1906. This period was full of intense activities for young Teja Singh as he was in England, Canada and America. A young, brilliant, and dedicated Sikh, he pioneered education of Americans and Canadians about Sikhism and established Gurdwaras in Victoria (Canada) and Stockton (California.)

This paper describes the state of affairs in that era and explains why a combination of scholarly, young minds and a spiritually enlightened souls like Baba Vaisakha Singh, Baba Sohan Singh Bakhana, and Jawala Singh will make an everlasting imprint on the pages of history of Sikhs in America.

The paper attempts to show how a neglect of the above lesson regarding cooperation between educated Sikh youths and elderly persons managing the Gurdwaras has bogged down progress of the Sikh image in modern times in Western countries. Certain examples and suggestions are made in the context of current pursuit of scholarship.

8. Native and Foreign Elites and Institutions vs. Ghadar Movement:
By Dr. Tejwant Singh Gill (Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar)

My paper combines two topics: 1) British Propaganda Machine: World War and the Sikh Pioneers and 2) Collaboration of Indian Elites and the Tyranny of British India against Freedom Fighters. Merged into one, they impel me to take “Native and Foreign Elites and Institutions versus Ghadar Movement.”
In 1914, the Ghadarites, from the soil of America, took up the cause of Indian independence much before any institution, organization and party had an inkling of it. As a result, the colonial administration was dead set against the Ghadarites. The British rulers ensconced in London, on the score of intelligence reports and propaganda in the press, sought to revile them as agents of the German government, then at war with England and ipso facto with India, then a colony of the empire over which the sun did not set any time during day and night. In India, right from the Viceroy of India to the Governor of Punjab, the judiciary and the civil-cum police administration were on their toes to put them behind bars. Not stopping at that, they were eager either to send them to the gallows or award them life-sentence to suffer in notorious British Indian jails.

In India itself, there was no organization, institution and political party to empathize with the Ghadarites, who sacrificed their all and took up with singular audacity and determination. Most were Punjabi youth, more so Sikhs by faith, village-born, and come to America to earn a livelihood, not only for themselves but also for their families back at home. One-third of India was ruled by the native rulers, who always aspired to remain in the good books of the colonial administration. In the hundreds of states disparately spread over India, no voice worth the name could rise even to utter a word of sympathy for them. In the rest of the country, except terrorists in Bengal, there was none who could side with them. The Congress Party talked only of Home Rule and was always eager to guard the British administration from any embarrassment of the sort.

In Punjab, the feudal lords in the Muslim and Sikh societies dominated to the extent that the masses only reciprocated their vital interests. Their opposition to the Ghadarites was a foregone conclusion. Likewise opposed to them were the custodians of the Gurdwaras, who had begun to wield ownership of these religious places, meant for the spiritual and ethical amelioration of the Sikh masses. In this insidious attempt, they had the overt or covert support of the colonial government. Without any help or support from the landlords, who had the economic means and the religious places which could provide them shelter, the Ghadarites were rendered homeless in their own country and homeland. Thus, organizations, institutions, parties, and communities turned their back upon them, little realizing that they were the first to take up the cause of Indian independence and wage war. Due to no fault on their part, this first attempt proved futile, but in the long run it has added a glorious chapter to the histories of India and Punjab.

9. Ghadarite’s Dreams in Babbar Akali Movement and Reality of the Independence Movement
By Prof. Gurcharan Singh Aulakh

That India’s independence from colonial grasp was nonviolent is a perception founded on principles inscribed by historians unwilling to explore the fact of armed resistance by those many organizations and movements that ultimately pressured the British into surrendering power. It would be a travesty if the reality of India’s armed struggle for independence is deemed unfounded and the world community fails to recognize the comradeship of patriotic men and their associations and unjustifiably acknowledges a story bound into books – a narration that merely depicts it to be: India: The Transfer of Power. The Ghadar organization and its members, according to O’Dwyer, “was by far the most serious attempt to subvert British rule in India.”

Ghadarites were Indians from the region of Punjab who migrated to Canada and the United States of America seeking employment after the portentous celebrations of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee on June 20, 1897. They had hoped to enjoy the boons of freedom, affluence and prosperity in these countries. To their dismay, they found themselves treated as second-class citizens and often discriminated against by Caucasian laborers. Their disappointment was compounded when governments of Great Britain, Canada, and India utterly disregarded their claims.

Indian immigrants faced disdain from both foreign and home authorities. They were sour, dissatisfied, and displeased at federal restrictions restricting them from their families, while such provisions also existed for other migrants from China and Japan. Challenged by matters, they joined in groups and sometimes faced bias with physical force. Pressured by suppression and a discriminatory environment, on April 21, 1913, they formed the “Hindustani Association of Pacific Coast” in Astoria with Sohan Singh Bhakna as president, G. D. Kumar as secretary, and Pandit Kanshi Ram as treasurer. Later, however, due to illness Kumar ceded his position to Lala Har Dayal as secretary. In May 1913, members of the association branched into the Ghadar Party with a decision to publish a Ghadar weekly.
The outbreak of the First World War on July 28, 1914, the Komagata Maru tragedy, and patriotic editorials in the Ghadar weekly motivated many migrants to return to India and spur a revolt against the British. Many Indian immigrants around the world rallied round the idea of freedom for India.

They left their adopted regions, including California and other places in the Americas, and traveled to India on any available ship, intending to infiltrate the army to instigate rebellion. Indian government nabbed approximately 8,000 emigrants. Many were let go, but approximately 400 were sentenced with various terms of imprisonment and sent to jail.

In India, the climate was not suitable for uprising and the government dealt a heavy hand. A police informer named Kirpal Singh drove their hopes to the ground by duping Kartar Singh Sarabha and his comrades, who tried to get support of Indians in the army. Subsequently, native soldiers and some of their units in the cantonments of Mian Mir, Ferozepur, Sialkot, and Rawalpindi were disarmed and disbanded. Many Ghadarites were arrested, 24 of whom, including Kartar Singh Sarabha (1896 – 1915), were sentenced to death.

Consequently, the dream of Ghadarites to free India remained unfulfilled. Yet they did not lose heart and joined Akalis in their struggle to free Sikh Gurudwaras from the Mahants. For many Sikhs, the importance of the struggle for liberation of Gurudwaras paralleled the independence movement. Congress leadership seized the opportunity and encouraged the Akalis. The Akalis were undeterred by the dashing Mahants, but collusion of the British government with Mahants was the straw that broke the camel's back.

Many ex-soldiers and ex-Ghadarites were incensed at the holocaust of Nankana Sahib, which claimed the innocent lives of 130 peace-loving Sikhs. Furthermore, the brutality of S. G. M. Beaty, DSP Amritsar, at Guru ka Bagh, where 5,605 nonviolent Sikhs were arrested and beaten with iron-tipped rods, drove the Babbar Akalis (immortal lions), who had links with Ghadar Movement, under the leadership of Jathedar Kishen Singh Gargaj and Karam Singh Daulatpur, to take up the recourse of armed resistance. They assassinated toadies (Sycophants) and government informers. They prepared a list of such black sheep and eliminated many of them. From 1922 to 1923, they attained the height of their glory and operations. The British Parliament was alarmed and members Sir Charles Yates, Lt. Colonel Howard, and Hope Simpson tabled the motion in the House of the Commons and even requested the merger of two districts of Doaba with a native State.

India's British government launched a vengeful offensive against the Babbars and many were arrested. Bloody encounters took place at Babeli (August 31, 1923), Munder (December 12, 1923), and Mannanhana (25 October, 1923), leading to the death of prominent Babbar leaders. In the Babbar conspiracy case, 91 Babbars were arrested and tried. Three died during the trial, while six were sent to gallows on February 27, 1926 and six were sentenced to death on February 27, 1927. Even though the Babbar Akali movement was a spent force, it lingered on till 1944.

The dream of Ghadarites through could not be realized through the Babbar Akali Movement. Their efforts and sacrifices were not in vain, however, since they brought the goal of India's freedom into clearer focus. Their sovereign armed resistance and rebellious attitude laid a foundation for the independence of India, a dream without which it could not have become a reality.

10. Revisioning of Sikh Consciousness and the Formation of Ghadar Lehar in North America

By Dr. Jaspal Singh (Punjab University, Chandigarh)

The Sikhs from Punjab started migrating to North America (Canada and the USA) in the beginning of the twentieth century. After the Great Rebellion of 1857 (variously called “The First War of Indian Independence or “The Sepoy Mutiny”), the British Colonial rulers of India had started pampering the Sikhs for their support in the suppression of the Rebellion. Yet such measures adopted by the Colonialists mostly helped the rich farmers or the feudal elements among the Sikhs. The condition of the middle and poor farmers became more miserable due to the revenue and tax system adopted by the British.

Consequently an overwhelming majority of the farming class fell into a vicious debt-trap leading to its utter impoverishment. To get out of this miserable condition, the Sikhs could either join the British Colonial Army to fight their global wars or could migrate to the alien greener pastures to earn a decent living and hence save money to liberate their families from the clutches of the usurers. They also aspired to add new assets to the family whereabouts. Thus the farmers who were mostly Sikhs exercised both the choices. A few thousand of them preferred migration to military service and to reach their dreamlands of Canada and the USA, they initially went to different cities such as Malaya, Hong Kong, Shanghai, etc. Some of them migrated to Australia, New Zealand and
East Africa. From Malaya, Hong Kong, Singapore and Shanghai these migrants sailed to distant Canada and the USA across the sprawling Pacific.

The sociopolitical environment in those lands was not as congenial as they had initially imagined. Their life conditions in those alien lands were extremely harsh. Rabid racial discrimination, humiliation with comparatively low wages, nostalgia for their homes and their utter helplessness in the face of such odds plagued their existence that led to a sense of revolt against the British Colonialists who were held responsible for this predicament since they thought that this condition was the result of being the citizens of a slave country. The Sikh consciousness was shaped by such feelings and ideas which served as the basis for the rise of the Ghadar Movement that aimed at the forcible expulsion of the British Colonialists from the Indian soil.

The tale of the early Sikh immigrants to Canada and the USA makes a grand narrative of aspiration and disillusionment; absurdity and rationalization; engagement and anguish; alienation and integration; finitude and transcendence and ultimately of bondage and freedom. In the following few pages an exploratory attempt is made to understand the existential situation of this enterprising community settled in those countries at that particular juncture of history.

11. The 1907 Bellingham Riot and Anti-Asian Hostilities in the Pacific Northwest
By Dr. Paul Englesberg, Ed.D. (Walden University)

On September 4, 1907, in Bellingham, Washington, a mob attacked and drove out over 200 immigrant South Asian laborers, most of whom were Sikhs from Punjab but referred to commonly as “Hindus.” The goal of the rioters was to force these workers from the mills and the city by using beatings and the threat of force to round up the men from their beds and mills.

Several days after the riot in Bellingham, a larger race riot broke out in Vancouver, BC in which a mob attacked Chinese, Japanese and East Indian residents that seemed to have been triggered by the Bellingham events and agitation by the Asiatic Exclusion League. In months following the riots in Bellingham and Vancouver, anti-Punjabi hostilities occurred in other locations in the Puget Sound region of Washington State including Everett and Aberdeen, causing many more South Asian immigrants to flee the region.

Beginning in the 1980s, Sikh families began to settle in the region, and a Sikh temple opened in 2000. There are presently more than 400 Sikh families in Whatcom County. In 2007, upon the hundredth anniversary of the riot, the Sikh community and other concerned citizens organized a day of remembrance and healing and several community events in the county. This paper addresses the early Sikh immigration and conflicts in the Pacific Northwest region and concludes with tracing the development of the Sikh community in recent decades.

12. War against King: Sikh Ghadar, 1914-1915
By Prof. Malwinderjit Singh

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

Challo challiye desh nun yudd karan, Eho bachan te farman bo gae.
(Humiliated back home, no solace abroad, For us aliens no refuge around.)
(Let us go to our country to fight, This is our ultimate compact and command.)”

In the form of “Ailan-e-Jang,” a “Bugle Of War” is sounded signaling revolt against slavery by thousands of Indians, mostly Sikhs, settled in Canada and the USA. Two documents of independent origin, dated 1910, articulate the line of thinking which was emerging around that time.

A.) KHALSA PAMPHLET, posted at Highgate, London, September 17, 1910:

Vande Matram

Khalsa
“He whose soul no slavery fills.
He who rides the fiery steed.
And to righteous battle speeds,
Saves the weak, oppressor kills,
He is of the Khalsa,
He alone, and none but he.”
- Guru Govind Singh.

“The insatiable Goddess of Duty,” said he, “demands a bloody sacrifice. Is there any one amongst you who will tear his heart and pour forth his blood instantaneously to propitiate this hungry Goddess?” At this the surging multitude sank into dumb silence!

It was in the year 1699 A.D. that one of those historical moments, which make or unmake an epoch, dawned its eventful lights on the scenes of Anandpur. Great was Plato when he wrote his ideal “Republic,” great was Geurgus when he translated his military ideal into gigantic fact of a Spartan State, but greater by far is the Republic of this great Indian: “This Khalsa of Guru Govind Singh.” A great commonwealth, so beautifully balanced in its philosophic and practical aspects that philanthropy ceases to be weak and becomes as sharp as a sword.

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

“My disciples,” O, Guru, where are those “My disciples”? To be your disciple, to be your true Sikhs is to be a lion — a Singh, is to tolerate no oppression, is to be a lifelong warrior — not to prostitute the sword in the furtherance of the wrong, but to consecrate it by the propagation of virtue. When, Oh, when shall we find “My Sikhs” to the number of five, for there our Guru will be present amongst us, good God! Then the woes and degradation, and the downfall of our race and soil are gone for ever! Indeed such five men as he breathed into life on that first day of Baisakh are sufficient to ennoble whole nation.

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

Patna, the very birthplace of the Guru is a weeping slave and Anandpur, the city of Joy is buried under the heap of treachery and shame. The Guru told the Brahmins that to repeat the prayer is no Dharma, but to act the prayer is real Dharma. Will he not hurl the same lance at us, when he sees us repeating his prayers like parrots — unconcerned amidst the wailings and weepings of three hundred millions — as if that was a music and keeping engaged ourselves in repeating our Japji and Shabads? The sword, which he gave to protect Dharm and Desh, has not that very sword traded on treachery?

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

But this cannot last long. The Guru will not leave us. Even as he said, the sparrows shall kill the hawks. The trumpet call of duty is sounded and it is never too late to mend.

Therefore.
Awake, Oh, Khalsa,
Arise, Oh, Khalsa,
And never again shall we be fallen.
Liberate BHARAT MATA from Clutches of MALECHCH FRANGIS.

SAT SRI AKAL

B.) RULES AND REGULATIONS OF HINDUSTANI ASSOCIATION OF VANCOUVER (CANADA)
Issued under the signature of SUNDER SINGH, the Secretary on October 23, 1910:

Some excerpts from these historic documents are reproduced from the original, which sounded an alarm at the highest echelons of the British Empire, i.e., India Office at London, of Pacific Coast in March 1913 at Portland, USA.” Sunder Singh and important members were G. D. Kumar and Harnam Singh Lehri, but they were pushed out of Vancouver by Hopkinson in beginning of 1911. The nomenclature Hindustani Association, and the framework delineated in this document, emerged as the prototype of “Ghadar Party” which indeed was formalized as ‘Hindu Association of Pacific Coast in March 1913 at Portland, USA.’

NAME: This association shall be called Hindustani Association. OBJECT: To establish LIBERTY, EQUALITY AND FRATERNITY of the Hindustani nation in their relations with the rest of the nations of the world.
MEMBERS: Every Hindustani by his birthright is eligible to become a member of this Association, and on the following conditions:
(1) That he must sign an application that he will carry out the objects of the Association to the last of his ability.
(2) That he will eliminate prejudice of caste, color and creed for himself.
MANAGING COMMITTEE AND OFFICERS: Managing Committee will be chosen by a ballot or vote in general meeting. The Committee will then choose other officers.

13. It Takes a Massacre: The Sikhs are Really Americans Now
By Dr. Harold A. Gould (University of Virginia, Charlottesville)

When the news came out that “an unidentified gunman” had murdered five members of the Sikh faith within the confines of their temple in a Milwaukee suburb, most Americans, and even most members of the press, had no accurate idea of who and what the Sikhs are. Media reporters couldn’t pronounce the community’s name properly — calling them ‘Siks’ rather than ‘Sikhs’ (pronounced ‘seeks.’) Because Sikh men traditionally wear turbans and beards, and their women traditionally wear saris or other native garments (like the ‘salwar kameez’), most ordinary Americans assumed that Sikhs are “some kind of Muslims” which means they had not the slightest clue as to what their customs and religious beliefs actually are. At most they probably knew that Sikhs are originally from some part of India, who came to this country, “god knows how and when, as immigrants of some kind.” Presidential candidate Mitt Romney called them “sheiks” (a Muslim term) instead of “Sikhs” (the name of their non-Muslim cultural community).

However, now that Sikhs have died at the hands of a psychopathic racist bigot displaying a Nazi Swastika and using a gun, which the NRA and the Gun Lobby are implicitly responsible for putting in his hand, the American press and general public now can finally pronounce their name correctly and are learning that Sikhs, like so many other immigrant communities, are in actuality a national treasure who are respectable, industrious, educated contributors to the American Dream, who practice a religion which, albeit originated in India, promotes peace, tolerance, integrity and love; and under normal circumstances there isn’t an ounce of fanaticism or extremism in their doctrinal bones.

Yes, it took a massacre to make it clear that the Sikhs are one of us. This is something that has happened repeatedly among the ethnic communities who have come to our shores and been gradually woven into the fabric of American life. Think of the violence that was inflicted upon African Americans, the Irish, the Italians, the Chinese, the Japanese, etc., etc., before they took their place in the mainstream of society. Because in the end the cruelty and violence perpetrated by the ignorant bigots in our midst eventually produced a public backlash which resulted in the victims receiving the welcome, respect, understanding and social justice that our Constitution guarantees and inspires.
In short, it seems that ultimately it took a massacre or two to awaken the mainstream public to the fact that an injustice had been done here; that one more immigrant group had been knocking at our cultural door for a long time and deserved admission to the main event — access to the American Dream...

This has now happened in the case of the Sikh community who have languished in comparative anonymity for more than a century; quietly enduring the prejudice and indignities that go with ignorance-driven minority status.

The longevity of their wait is actually being commemorated in Stockton, California, on September 22nd, 2012, even as we speak. This is when the Sikh community gathers under the auspices of the Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society and the University of the Pacific to commemorate the 100th anniversary of this society and, of course, the migration and assimilation of Sikhs as well as other South Asians into North American society.

This was a process which began at the turn of the century after a smattering of the Sikhs who were serving throughout East Asia in the British imperial armed forces ‘discovered’ Canada and the United States. The smattering of demobilized soldiers who formed the vanguard came mainly from farming backgrounds in the region of India known as the Punjab; they saw the opportunities which the fertile land and the bustling economies of the Pacific coast offered, and soon their numbers grew; and with this, of course, came the racism, as resistance to their presence emanating from the already established White communities intensified. Confrontations mounted, such as the 1907 riots in Bellingham, Washington, the ‘Komagata Maru incident’ (the refusal to allow a shipload of Sikhs to disembark in Vancouver in 1913–14), the founding of the Ghadr Party in the U.S. in 1913, the San Francisco conspiracy trial in 1917 which sent Taraknath Das to prison), until in the end the combined mobilizational efforts of South Asian Indians in the U.S. led to immigration and citizenship rights by 1946.

But despite these achievements, Sikhs have never been recognized fully as equals in the American civil community. That is why Wisconsin happened. Their lot has been compounded by the terrorism frenzies which have flowed from 9/11 and the backlash from the Afghan war and the myriad manifestation of Islamic extremism emanating from the Middle East. But the race prejudice has always been there, as has been true of other ethnic communities. According to an article in the Palm Beach Post by Toni-Ann Miller, “The New York–based Sikh Coalition has reported more than 700 hate crimes on the United States” since Sept. 11th, “plus thousands of complaints from Sikhs about workplace discrimination and racial profiling.” My point, however, is that the Wisconsin massacre will, indeed has already, injected a higher measure of public consciousness and contemplation into the presence and nature of the Sikh community in this country. The murder of innocents on a significant scale is different than an individual killing, much as the latter is in its fundamentals no less tragic and heartbreaking than the former. Put another way, it takes a massacre, i.e., collective suffering, to focus the mind, and this is the case for the American Sikh community now. The public is now conscious of them as never before, aware of their majesty, their magnanimity, their civility, and their worthiness to be an accepted and honored part of mainstream American society. The public will know them more and better because they have suffered and sacrificed more.

Indeed, sad to say, it takes a massacre! Henceforth, as one Sikh has put it, “We want this opportunity to pretty much educate everyone around us... We are not al–Qaida or Taliban because some of us wear turbans... We are other Americans just like you.”

14. Reevaluating the Origin and Inspiration of Sikh Ghadar: 1907-1918
By Dr. Jasbir Singh Mann, MD

Punjab was annexed in 1849. Sikhs in Punjab were exposed to the British for few years when Queen Victoria proclaimed in 1858: “We hold ourselves bound to the natives of our Indian territories by the same obligations of duty which bind us to all our other subjects, and those obligations, by the blessings of Almighty God, we shall faithfully and conscientiously fulfill.... We do strictly charge and enjoin all those who may be in authority under us that they abstain from all interference with the religious belief or worship of any of our subjects on pain of our highest displeasure.”

In two world wars, a total of 169,700 Indians died out of which 83,005 were turbaned Sikhs. The growing sense of their public humiliation, nagging immigration restrictions, and their ultimate exclusion compelled them to reimagine their status in light of the Queen’s proclamation of 1958. They realized that the British were taking advantage of their military and other services, and promising better treatment as a ploy to cheat them. They stood up for the same treatment which was given to other citizens. The feeling of being abandoned made them rebel against the unjust British Raj and initiation of constitutional efforts and planning for armed struggle from 1907.
Such activities were noted by British viceroys in India from 1907 onwards. Plans were made by Britishers for exclusion of Sikhs from North America and they were targeted by many defense Acts in India. The secret British Ghadar Directory list of revolutionaries in outside countries and India, first published in 1917 and then updated in 1934, has a total of 616 persons of which breakdown community-wise is Sikhs, 527, Hindus, 54, and Moslems, 35. Lala Hardyal and Veer Sarvakar were alive, but their name is missing in this list why?

The revolution was started in India by Sikh peasants and Sikh military persons on extreme dissatisfaction against the new Colonization Act and the Doab Bari Act (1906-1907). Lajpat Rai and Congress failed to support them. Ajit Singh started his Anti-British protests, fought against these bills and Sikh soldiers and peasants followed him. In North America, Sikhs affirmed their fight by all means and avowed to stay back by building Gurudwaras in 1908 in Vancouver and 1912 in Stockton, Victoria, and Abottsford as the center of their religious, social and political activities. From 1907 to 1914, they made democratic appeals. Professor Teja Singh, Sunder Singh, and others in Canada and Dr. Bishen Singh, Dr. Bose, and Tishi Butia in USA. Sent deputation to England and India. But all constitutional means failed.

Finally, in 1914, with the help of German money who were looking to start a colonial and world war against their British enemy with an eye on India’s industrial and mineral wealth. The position of Indians and Sikhs became critical. Sikhs returned to India to start an armed fight but received no money or any arms or any institutional help as promised by leaders. Their leaders themselves later surrendered to the British and abandoned their compatriots who were hanged, sent to rigorous imprisonment for life, and lost their earned and ancestral property.

Evidence shows Indians pioneers (majority Sikhs) fought by peaceful constitutional means, formed many Hindustani societies, and made armed rebellion and explosive plans from 1907 to 1914 on the West Coast. Six newspapers supporting Indian freedom were in circulation before November 1913. Twenty-nine Sikh religious preachers (also known as Granthis) and 25 Gurudwaras around the globe including in India and Punjab participated in this movement. No Vedantic center participated in this movement although New York, Chicago and San Francisco centers existed then. On the Contrary Swami Trigunatita in San Francisco sided with Hopkinson. Author agrees with Dr. Ganda Singh (1969: Sikhs Sepoy Mutiny 1857) based on evidence of historians like Dr. Surendra Nath Sen, Majumdar, Dr. Romesh C. Majumda, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, and S. Acharya Kriplani that “it would be a travesty of truth to describe the revolt of 1857 as a national war of independence.”

Martyrdom is a fundamental concept in Sikhism and represents an important institution of Sikh Faith is noted in this case. Colonial terrorism of fear for respect was shattered through inspiration of Guru Granth Sahib as noted in the 1914 final statement of Canadian Shahid (Martyr) Mewa Singh. Movement started from India and North America in 1907. Sikh Peasants and Sikh military persons with extreme agitation against the new Colonization Act and the Doab Bari Act 1907. Vancouver, Canada, March 27th, 1907, as they lost voting rights and Bellingham Riots, September 4th, 1907. Many historians misrepresent the movement intentionally and ignore the evidence of constitutional struggles between 1907 to 1913 and label the start from April 1913 only. Based on evidence, this paper argues that this movement was in fact an International Anglo Sikh War that started in 1907. It was the first declared Indian freedom war fought by majority international Sikhs also known Sikh Ghadar. Communist influence Late phenomenon after 1922 to 1927. From 1905 to 1913 in Europe Shyamaji Krishna Varma, Arya Smaj thought, Veer Savarkar, Abhinava Bharat thought and Bhikaji Cama and Sardarsingh Rana, Social Democratic thought could not produce any international mass movement in Europe. Evidence confirms the teachings of Sikh Gurus what strongly motivated the consciousness of these Gadrites along with racial discrimination in employment, finance, civic matters. A sense of their public humiliation, nagging immigration restrictions, and their ultimate exclusion, which compelled them to reimagine their status in light of the Queen’s proclamation of 1858, were the reasons for this international mass movement.

15. A Fresh Look at the Role of Lala Har Dayal Mathur, Veer Savarkar Vinayak Damodar, and Ram Chandra Bhardwaj: Sikh Community Perspective.

By Dr. Jasbir Singh Mann, MD

The entire Sikh Ghadar Movement of 1907 to 1918 cannot be discussed outside of the Sikh paradigm. All leaders of the movement — initially Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs — appealed to Sikh archetype of a soldier while fighting and embracing martyrdom. Everyone was appealing to this archetype but all had different goals. The British
wanted to reduce German and German-American influence and sought to induce the US into World War I. Leaders of Arya Samaj background had larger goals of securing the Indian subcontinent for themselves.

Ghadarites’ real value lay in creating danger for the British and increasing their bargaining power with the British. Most Sikhs who jumped in the Ghadar movement were primarily inspired by socialistic and human ideals of Sikhism as enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib compiled in 1604 and sanctified as final living guru by Guru Gobind Singh Ji from 1708 onwards and creation of Khalsa 1699 AD. This paper presents, from the Sikh perspective, a fresh look at three important personalities who played significant roles in the century-old movement.

1. Lala Hardial. (Harish K. Puri 2011) found Hardial a radical intellectual, calling him an “inspirational genius.” But (Emily Brown 1975), who did most extensive study on this man, found him “heroic, incisive, imaginative, exciting, and provocative; I have also found him selfish, devious, petty, and pedestrian.”

After 44 months in Germany, he surrendered to the British and condemned Germany and Turkey. In 1918, he filed for British amnesty and abandoned all his comrades. He got a British passport in 1927, moved to London, and obtained his Ph.D. degree from London in 1930. 1927 onwards, he lived in England. In 1938, he received permission to go to India, but died suddenly in USA in March 1939. Sikh revolutionaries who fought alongside him wanted to achieve secular Indian nationalism like in the USA, but Har Dayal declared in fall of 1925 in a political statement that he wants to prove a guide to the young Hindu man and woman, writing: “In future this testament will be embodied in school text for the boys and girls of free India and free Punjab.... I declare the future of Hindu race of Hindustan and Punjab rest on 4 pillars. (1) Hindu Sangathan, (2) Hindu Raj, (3) Shuddhi of Moslems, (4) Conquest and Shuddhi of Afghanistan and the frontiers. So long as the Hindu nation does not accomplish these 4 things the safety of our children and great grandchildren will be ever in danger and the safety of the Hindu race will be impossible.”

Thus fall of 1925 was the end of Har Dayal for the Sikh community. He was a god-gifted prolific writer but never wrote even a single line in remembering his compatriots when the plan created by him failed on February 19th, 1915.

2. VINAYAK DAMODAR SAVARKAR. (Harish K. Puri.2011 Introduction Page XII) “The major source of Gadhar movement’s inspiration was V. D. Savarkar’s exciting history of the 1857 rebellion entitled, “The Indian War of Independence.” Excerpts and chapters from that book were published in various issues of The Gadhar. But this book is actually very strongly anti-Sikh as it completely suppresses the glorious 18th century period of Sikh history. He blames the Sikhs for supporting the British in 1857 Mutiny which had as its goal to bring back the Mughal raj who massacred the Sikhs in eighteenth century. Although he blames the Sikhs for their role to help the British in 1857, in his own political life he surrendered to the British himself from 1911 onwards. He came to England in 1906. He was caught by the British and sent to India in July 1910 and then to Andaman Jail. But evidence shows Savarkar appealed for clemency, first in 1911 and again in 1913, the latter during the visit of Sir Reginald Craddock.

In a letter dated November 14, 1913, Savarkar (convict no. 32778) wrote to the Home Minister of the Government of India: “I hereby acknowledge that I had a fair trial and just sentence. I heartily abhor methods of violence resorted to in days gone by and I feel myself duty bound to uphold law and constitution [British] to the best of my powers and am willing to make a success in so far as I may be allowed to do so in future.” We read again: “If the government in their manifold beneficence and mercy release me, I for one cannot but be the staunchest advocate of constitutional progress and loyalty to the English government which is the foremost condition of that progress [...] Moreover, my conversion to the constitutional line would bring back all those misled young men in India and abroad who were once looking up to me as their guide [...] The Mighty alone can afford to be merciful and therefore where else can the prodigal son return but to the parental doors of the government”. [Sarvakar’s Apologies. pp. 140-147. Sarvakar &Hindutva by AG Noorani, Leftward Books, 2002.]

From 1923 onwards, he wrote and started the propagation of the Hindutva concept (which means Hindustan is only for Hindus) and started Shhudi movement from Andaman Jail. He became president of Hindu Mahan Sabha from 1937 to 1942 and records his support of the British during World War II and against the Quit India movement in 1942. His concept that Sikhs, Bodhi and Jainism are part of Hinduism ultimately was enshrined in Article 25 of Indian constitution. This was the end of Sarvakar for the Sikh community.

3. Ram Chandra Bharadwaj. Ram Chandra Bharadwaj, also known as Pandit Ram Chandra, was in charge of the Ghadar Party from August 1914 onwards when all Gadhrites left for India. As a member of the Ghadar Party, Ram Chandra was also one of the founding editors of the Hindustan Ghadar, a very good writer, and a key leader of the
party in its role in the Indo-German Conspiracy. He promised the Ghadarites in August 1914 that on their arrival in India they would receive arms and money.

Hari Singh Usman (who was in charge on the Maverick, a ship carrying arms to India from the USA on April 23rd, 1915), reports in his diary that Pandit Ram Chandra became a British agent and divulged all secrets plans to the British Council about him (Hari Singh) being the leader of the arms shipment on the Maverick. Then British Ambassador Spring-Rice wrote to Bryan of the US State department on May 12, 1915, to investigate this shipment just in three weeks. Hari Singh Usman wrote that orders were given to blow up the ship, but the German consulate informed the Usman party about the double role of Ram Chandra. Therefore they changed the route of Maverick to travel through New Guinea.

The sad part of the story is that, when Ghadarites started going to India in August 1914, Ram Chandra promised them that they would get arms and money when they reached India. Germans approved money in October 1914 but no arms or ammunition was sent to Punjab in 1914. In Punjab, the Ghadar collapsed on February 19th, 1915, but the Maverick started from USA on April 23rd, 1915. Was this delay intentional? What kind of planning was this that a revolutionary leader would plan to send arms after revolution is over? Was there no coordination or it was intentional? This was the end of Ram Chandra for the Sikh community.

Money for Indian freedom was embezzled. Dr. CK Chkarvarty bought two apartments in New York with $60,000 from money to be used for Indian freedom. More than $15,000 in cash was reportedly deposited in banks in the name of Pandit's wife. Properties were also purchased in the name of Pandit's personal friends. Two plots on Wood Street, San Francisco, CA were put in the name of Mr. Reed. Harish Chandra took $8,000 out of party funds and absconded. Ram Chandra was shot on April 24, 1918, on the last day of the Hindu German Conspiracy Trial by Ram Singh, who was himself a big donor for Ghadar Party and a fellow defendant who in turn was shot by the US marshal on duty.

Ajit Singh, who started the anti-British movement from 1906-1907 against the Anti-Sikh Doab Bari Act and Colonization Act, wrote that British government took several other measures to crush the movement: “The old policy of ‘divide and rule’ was used. Hindus were encouraged and cajoled to leave the party. Similarly Dr. Syed Hussain and Shaukat Ali toured the State and started a Moslem league to wean away the Mohammedans. Some prominent Sikh members were also deceived inheading a dissident movement.” Secular/republican nationalism was the overriding commitment of Ghadarites, but resulting intense communal frenzy and widespread bloodshed gave Ajit Singh a rude shock. Perhaps it was this which took his life at 3:30am on Aug 15, 1947, the day of deliverance (Independence Day.) As Sikhs, Bodhis and Jains — who are independent and unique religions of India — were legally assimilated into the Hindu fold by Article 25 of the Indian Constitution. The constitution, unsigned by Sikhs, was against the secular and nonsectarian struggle envisioned by Gadhrites since 1907 in their dreams for independence of India.

Sikh Community salutes and prays for many Hindus and Muslims who also sacrificed as they got appealed to the Sikh archetype of a soldier for fighting and embracing martyrdom which includes Kanshi Ram, Vishnu Ganesh Pingle, Khankhoje Pandurav; Sohan lal Pathak, Jatindranath Mukherjee, Mangu Ram, Taraknath Das, Maulvi Barktulla, Jagat Ram, Guran Ditta Kumar, Ram Rahim, Jatinder Lahiri, Munsir Ram, Babu Ram, Hafiz Abdul, Chet Ram, Challia Ram, Kirparam, Ram Rakha, Ali Ahmed Sidiqui, Lal Chand Falak PiyarLal, and others. All of them followed Gadhri Slogan Shabad

Jo Tan Praem Khelaan Kaa Chao
Sir Dhbar Thalee Galee Maeree Aao
Eith Maarag Pair Dhhareejai
Sir Dheejai Kaan N Keejai

(If you desire to play this game of love with me)
(Then step onto my path with your head in palm of your hand)
(When you place your feet on this path)
(Give your head, and do not blame any one)

Sikh Community also prays for Pandit Ram Chandra (shot dead), Lala Hardyal, and Veer Damodar Savarkar (who surrendered to British), and the approximately 100 Sikhs who became approvers in all Conspiracy cases and were unable follow the slogan: “Eith Maarag Pair Dhhareejai Sir Dheejai Kaan N Keejai.”
16. The Komagata Maru Episode and the Ghadar Party
By Dr. Hugh Johnston (Simon Fraser University)

This paper examines the relationship between the immigrant ship, the Komagata Maru, whose Punjabi passengers sought admission to Canada in the summer of 1914, and the Ghadar Revolutionary Party, formed in California in 1913, with active support from Punjabi Sikhs and other South Asians in British Columbia. Two large themes are involved — the struggle for Indian independence in which the Ghadar Party played a notable role, and the campaign among Sikhs in Canada and in India for free entry to Canada and an end to barriers to immigration from India. These themes are reflections of the state of the British Empire which then appeared to be at its summit but whose days were actually numbered.

The community leaders who encouraged the Komagata Maru and its passengers to test Canada’s immigration laws, and those who spoke and organized against British rule in India have been vindicated by what has since happened. The freedoms and equality that they sought have come to be respected. At the time, however, neither the demand for the right to live in a British country (Canada) or the demand that British rule should end in India, was accepted, understood, or entertained by a majority of Canadians. And the suggestion by Canadian officials that the Ghadar Party was involved with the Komagata Maru strengthened the unsympathetic reactions of most Canadians. And there is evidence to support this claim. There were personal links between the Ghadar Party leadership and the organizers of the Komagata Maru. Ghadar literature found its way onto the ship. And men who had been on board later became active Ghadarites. But this evidence alone does not tell us that the Ghadar Party was anything more than incidentally involved.

A close look shows that, while the passengers and their leaders had pride of nationality and sympathized with the leadership of the independence movement, they were first and foremost economic emigrants seeking to get ahead in North America. Yet this is still a living issue and the role of the passengers is still being defined. India’s High Court has recently recognized them as Freedom Fighters; and four years ago Canada’s Prime Minister apologized for the treatment they received as intending immigrants. Their story remains current.

17. Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society, 1912-2012
By Dr. Amrik Singh (California State University, Sacramento)

Migration of Sikhs started right when Punjab was experiencing a great turmoil. Maharaja Dalip Singh’s death in 1893 after many efforts to enter Punjab and create a rebellion among Sikh soldiers had created a great stir. The British were afraid of total transformation of India on principles of equality, liberty and fraternity. Ironically, in an effort to stop it, the British promoted “alternative Indian Nationalism.” Punjab became a center for the British Great Game, Christian missionaries, Hindu sects, Sikh heretics, and secret lodges of freemasons and theosophical societies. The object of all these societies was to create imaginary profiles of Sikhs for the consumption of the general Indian public and to a large extent of the western world.

Sikhs started coming to the Pacific Coast in 1890s; and it is very important to understand their minds, their work habits, their social attitudes, and their search for common patterns of life. They were mostly turban-wearing Sikhs, accompanied by some other Punjabis of Hindu and Muslim origin. They learned core values of life: hard work, remaining always grateful, and sharing with others without any prejudice. They didn’t learn tricks of their time and very least understood the “Cloak and Dagger” of the British, the jugglery of Mahatma Tricksters, the spiritual sham of theosophists, and the military manipulation of the supremacists. They didn’t need much of this information in their daily lives, because their conviction to succeed with their sweat and blood was more pronounced than the temptation to act as sweet-tongued conmen for illicit goals.

After Sikh pioneers settled, they set up their social, religious, and political institutions. Gurdwaras became sites of Indian freedom mainly because Gurus’ philosophy urged human dignity and freedom of spirit in all walks of life. Prof. Teja Singh’s role, a Harvard alumnus, in organizing the community remained unrecognized and unappreciated. He prepared them to face extreme discrimination and live their lives as true Sikhs. As the very principle of race (Aryan) was antithetical to Gurus’ teaching, the ideal of Indian Nationalism and the dream of Ghadris, too, were compromised. After Sant Teja Singh left, highly patriotic Sikhs of North America got in the trap of “race diplomats,” who used them for continuous financial support for a cause that was evidently pro-Aryan and anti-Sikh. Race diplomats in subtle hands of the British became “reciprocal rebels, or freedom fighters.”
My paper will trace the role of Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society from 1912 to 2012 in influencing India’s battles for freedom and establishment of a pluralistic society based on universal brotherhood. In 100 years of its history, it encountered several upheavals and pogroms, and each time its response was to provide logistic support to preserve human dignity and freedom of spirit both in the country of Sikhs’ birth, and the country of their adoption. Continuing the tradition of Sikh martyrdom, they recorded their names among true freedom fighters and inspired others like Vishnu Pingley, Kanshi Ram, Sohan Lal Pathak, Rehmat Ali to die for their country.

18. Relevance of Sikh Ideology for the Ghadar Movement (An Exploratory Note)
By Dr. Jagtar Singh Grewal (Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar)

A large volume of literature has been produced on the Ghadar Movement since independence. It is well-known that the Punjabis represented an overwhelming majority of the Ghadarites, and an over-whelming proportion of the Ghadarites were Sikhs. Therefore the ideological moorings of the Sikh leaders of the Ghadar Movement become important issue. Indeed, scholars have taken different views on this subject. We may take notice of a few to illustrate the point.

In his Ghadar Party Lehar (1955), Jagjit Singh underlined that the Singh Sabha movement served as a kind a renaissance among the peasants of the Central Punjab. For the first time under colonial rule, the tradition of sacrifice and martyrdom in Sikh history was made popular among the Sikh masses. It had created a social consciousness among the peasants who emigrated to North America and other countries and participated in the Ghadar Movement. Though there was hardly any political consciousness among the Sikh peasantry in the early twentieth century, there was an awareness of new ideas regarding social reform. This background had a great potentiality for inducing them to adopt a revolutionary path. (1)

Harish K. Puri completed his doctoral thesis on the Ghadar Movement in the 1970s. It was published as the Ghadar Movement: Ideology, Organisation and Strategy (1983). In his introduction, he talks of “the relevance or irrelevance of religion in political violence” as an important issue, and in his discussion of the “background” he notices that the Singh Sabha Movement had its followers in Canada. They were described in an intelligence report. As a section of “clannish Sikhs”; their “jealously and bigotry” kept alive the ill-feeling between the clean shaven and the other Sikhs. Teja Singh was referred to as “something of a religious fanatic,” though he was concerned with “making life easier for the peasant” as well as with religious conversion. (2) This appears to suggest that the Singh Sabha ideology had no bearing on the Ghadar.

Indeed, an article published by Harish K. Puri in 1983 makes it clear that in his well considered view the Singh Sabha and the Ghadar Movements were two “divergent patterns of psychological orientations and structures of belief, values and attitudes towards political objects.” The initiators of the Singh Sabha Movement were “landed aristocrats, mahants, pujaris and priests.” Among them were also the Sehajdharis. The mahants and pujaris “condemned the Ghadarites as patit Sikhs and enemies of the panth.” General Dyer was “honoured” and “initiated as a Sikh” at the initiative of the Chief Khalsa Diwan. The Nirankaris and the Namdharis had aimed at restoring “the pristine purity of Khalsa norms,” with particular emphasis on “the observance of the five Ks” so that the Sikhs did not get “assimilated among the Hindus.” Under the leadership of Baba Ram Singh, the Namdhari movement became “more radical and militant.” The Singh Sabha Movement was “an alternative” to the Namdhari movement. (3) What Harish Puri had in mind was the militancy of the Namdharis and the loyalty of the Singh Sabhas. It may also be added that the Nirankaris did not assign any importance to the Khalsa initiation and the 5Ks.

According to Harish Puri, the British wanted to strengthen “the loyalty of the Sikh soldier.” They believed strongly that religious orthodoxy of the Sikh soldier in the army was “crucial for his loyalty to the empire.” Therefore they decided to enlist “only Keshadharis into regiments.” Simultaneously, the control of Gurdwaras through government appointed sarbhaps was sought to be strengthened through priests and mahants for promoting “the desired hegemonic influence.” In this set of conditions, the Singh Sabha Movement was launched. Among its leaders were educated urban Sikhs and trading classes. Their conflict with the Arya Samaj strengthened the urge to assert that the Sikhs were a distinct community. “In the process, it developed among the community, largely in the urban areas, a distinct political orientation based on separate community interests.” The other two communities in the province were seen as “threats to the Sikh community.” (4)

The Ghadar Movement, on the other hand, developed “just the contrary structure of political orientations.” The Ghadarite interpretation of the community’s heritage was “very different from, almost contrary” to the one argued by the Singh Sabhas and the Chief Khalsa Diwan and “what some near to that articulated by the Kakas.”
The Ghadarites sought inspiration from the teachings of Guru Gobind Singh for armed struggle in a righteous cause and from the brave Sikh crusaders like Banda Singh Bahadur, Dip Singh, Mahtab Singh, Hari Singh, and Phula Singh. For the Ghadarites the Guru’s “Singh” was distinguished not by “a ritualistic adherence to external forms, as the Singh Sabha advocated,” but by “the bravery and self-sacrificing spirit to fight the enemy.” The Ghadar poets referred to the Khalsa or the Panth as a force created for the defence of the country and for ending oppression of “Bharat Mata.” “The Panth therefore was to be judged by its service in the cause of the country’s freedom.” The stress of the Ghadarites was on “the primacy of politics and rejection of preoccupation with matters of religion.” At best, religion could be accepted as “a private affair.” “Casteism” was completely rejected by the Ghadarites and in their social relations they never cared much for keeping long hair and beards or eating jhatka or halal. “This orientation naturally aroused the wrath of the orthodox against the Ghadarites.” In Harish Puri’s view, the Sikh Sabha and the Ghadar Movements. (5)

We have outlined Harish Puri’s well considered view of the irrelevance of the Singh Sabha movement for the Ghadar partly because he has modified his view only slightly by now, but largely because, his view does not appear to find support from the available evidence on the Singh Sabha Movement.

In The Sikhs of the Punjab (1990) my view of the relevance of the Singh Sabha Movement for the Ghadar was different from that of Harish Puri. I pointed out that some of the Sikh leaders of the Ghadar Movement recalled later that they had been inspired to live or die heroically by the novels of Bhai Vir Singh and the Panth Prakash of Giani Gian Singh. They acquired a genuinely “national” outlook, but their source of inspiration remained “almost exclusively Sikh.” They evoked the memory of Sikh heroes and martyrs, and referred to the Sikh past as a struggle for liberation. Not indifference to faith but a secular interpretation of the heritage distinguished them from the Singh Sabha reformers of the Punjab. (6)

In his Ghadar Movement: A Short History (2011), Harish Puri states at the outset that Lala Har Dyal was the “inspirational genius” of the Ghadar. However, it was mainly a movement of the Punjabi Sikh patriots of India. Their political ideas were shaped by their experience in Canada, USA and other countries of the world. Harish Puri has outlined the historical, social and political context of the Punjab at the time when Punjabis started migrating to North America. “The leading figures appeared to have carried with them some of the reformist ideas to the foreign lands.” They kept the outward symbols of conduct associated with Guru Gobind Singh, which inspired respect for them among their brethren. “But they did not approve of orthodoxy in such matters.” (7) This assessment of the situation seems to suggest that even the leading figures among the Sikh emigrants were content with observing the outward symbols of the Khalsa and they had no ideological moorings relevant for the Ghadar Movement.

The socio-religious reform movements mentioned by Haris Puri in this publication are the Brahmo Samaj and its offshoot the Dev Samaj, the Arya Samaj, and the Singh Sabha Movement. Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna was “a follower of the Namdhari Guru Baba Ram Singh.” However the influence of the Singh Sabha ideas or attitude is not visible in the case of any Sikh leader. The leader of the Amritsar Singh Sabha were Sanatan Sikhs who looked upon Sikhism as an offshoot of Hinduism. The leaders of the Lahore Singh Sabha devoted their energy to the assertion of a distinct identity of the Sikhs and their boundary demarcation from the Hindus. “Sikhism in danger” was a major part of their rhetoric. The British military officials were keen to promote separate identity and religious orthodoxy among the Sikhs for their own reasons. (8)

It must be added, however, that in the Ghadar Movement Harish Puri noticed in the Sikh Ghadarites “a romance of shaheedi (shahadat; martyrdom) imbibed perhaps from the Sikh tradition.” (9) The qualifying “perhaps” indicates that the author is not exactly aware of the Singh Sabha emphasis on martyrdom as an essential feature of the Sikh tradition. Dedication of “tan, man and dhan (body, mind and money)” comes from the Sikh Scripture. The legendary bravery of the Sikh warriors in the Sikh wars against the British was invoked by Kartar Singh Sarabha and Harnam Singh. There are other such examples, but there is no need to list them. The essential point is that the empirical evidence used by Harish Puri himself bears witness to the relevance of Sikh ideology for the Sikh leaders even though this relevance is denied in his formulation by Harish Puri.

More recently, Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna’s Meri Ram Kahani has been published in a book form. It was originally serialized in 1930-31 in the Akali Te Pardesi, started by Master Tara Singh in the 1920s. Master Tara Singh had earned the displeasure of the British done official for helping the deputation of Canadian Sikhs in 1913. He organized large meetings in Lyallpur and the Rawalpindi area at which resolutions were passed in support of the Sikhs in Canada. In any case, Meri Ram Kahani presents fascinating evidence on the relevance of the Sikh faith and
Sikh ideology for Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna. He was not indifferent to religion. For him, religion and politics were two ways of serving mankind. His observations on religion, and the Sikh Panth, and his understanding of Baba Ram Singh’s position, call for serious attention. (10)

Finally, there is the issue of “methodology.” The quantum and the nature of evidence, and the question of its interpretation are of obvious importance. For a meaningful interpretation of evidence on the Ghadar Movement it is essential to study the Sikh movements of the colonial period in some depth, and that too considering the pre-colonial Sikh Movement. Impressions formed on the basis of “secondary” works can be misleading, and remain more or less inadequate.

NOTES:
4. Ibid., pp. 47-50.
5. Ibid., pp. 50-9.
8. Ibid., pp. 11-13.
9. Ibid., p. xvi.

19. A Position Statement: Sikhs and India’s First War of Independence, 1907-1918
By Dr. Jasbir Singh Mann, MD and Dr. Amrik Singh

The Sikh American Research Center of Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society has produced a position statement on the Ghadar Movement and its relation to Gurdwara Sahib Stockton and to the Sikh American community. The position statement is available in its entirety at:

www.SikhCentury.us
With thanks to and warm regards for assistance and cooperation from the Gurdwara Sahib Stockton Management Committee 2012-14

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