

# **Gadar Lehar and Lala Har Dayal: Life, Activities & Ideology\***

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## **1. GADAR: A SIKH-CENTRIC MOVEMENT**

A Sikh led revolutionary movement, more popularly known and recognized by its vernacular name, Ghadr Lehar, rather than English translation, Gadadr Movement, has left its mark on the history of Sikhs in North America, especially on the West Coast of the United States and Canada. It was based on core Sikh values that all people should have the freedom to live their lives as they wish. Freedom of thought by an individual, society and nation is a principle that Sikhs throughout their short history have fought for and made sacrifices of unparalleled magnitude to defend. It is indeed a matter of pride for the young faith that it has made significant contributions to development of human civilization to further the cause of freedom of all people to profess and follow a faith of their own choice and practice it free from fear of oppression.

Gadar Lehar was originally a brain child of Sikhs living on the West Coast, mostly those concentrated in the California Central Valley and British Columbia. It was and still is completely natural and justified to claim this movement to be described as a Sikh-centric movement and the use of Sikh Gurduaras in Stockton, Abbotsford and Vancouver as its bases for gathering of its members as well as collect donations on its behalf also lends strong support to this argument.

Even though generally its beginning is contributed to the idea of freedom of India, yet there was an underlying frustration and disappointment with injustice system in American society against men of color that fueled the resentment among immigrants. This movement was a combination and result of these two factors that led to its acceptance not only by Sikhs but also non-Sikhs from South Asian region, mostly of Punjab origin, but also many non-Punjabis as well.

This movement was seen as a common ground for unity to fight for rights of individuals in their adopted land and at the same time provide a stage to raise voice against British imperialism in India. Many of the members who joined its rank and file were fighting the battle on two fronts, the front to free India and the struggle for justice and equal rights in America. Ghadr Lehar was seen as supportive organization for both of these ideas and thus it was an easily acceptable movement in its message to all South Asian immigrants.

There were immigrants from all segments of the society of Punjab, but Sikhs, who were generally from the rural communities of Punjab, were better suited and equipped to establish themselves in harsh and physically demanding agricultural and forest product based production environment of California central Valley and British Columbia. This was somewhat less true for the urban immigrants who preferred to work in traditional white collar environment. Due to prevalent racial discrimination many of these urban raised and educated

young men found it difficult to fully utilize their white collar skills to the fullest. This lent itself to further anger and resentment against system and ultimately the British were blamed for the unfriendly and unfair system in India which forced these educated elites to seek employment overseas.

Sikhs adapted well to hard and demanding but growing agricultural and lumbar based economy and were financially at stronger footing than other Punjabis. This contributed to the fact that this community collectively became the base of a freedom movement under the banner of Ghadr Lehar.

Funds collected for its operations were mostly from Sikhs working in the farms of California and donations given to Stockton Gurduara were also utilized for this purpose. Leading members and office bearers were mostly from Sikh families of Punjab, provides sufficient weight to the argument that Ghadr Lehar was a Sikh institution devoted to freedom of all people of India. This agenda of 'freedom for all' and not just Sikhs, made it acceptable to non-Sikhs as well and they also made contribution to help sustain this Lehar, at least in the beginning.

From the very beginning of this Lehar, its leadership was influenced by non-Sikhs who infiltrated its upper echelons. Its membership consisted of mostly Sikhs but other Punjabis, both Hindus and Muslims, also joined it for the fact that there was no other institution dedicated to the freedom of India and non-Sikhs were not organized in the manner that Sikhs had organized themselves under the Khalsa Diwan Society and the Ghadr Lehar. Even though its members came from all sections of Indian society, its major financial contributors remained Sikh farm workers, laborers and contractors of California Central Valley that stretched from Chico/Yuba City up in the north to as far as Fresno/Bakersfield in the south.

It was during its time of inception that some of the less than dedicated and opportunist individuals entered the ranks of the leadership of the Lehar. Many of these were accepted into its ranks of leadership by Sikhs either unknowingly, innocently or at the recommendations of other non-Sikhs. If not most, at least many Sikhs in the area were not well versed in language or the laws of the adopted land. It was the need of the Sikh community that allowed many unknown and unproven personalities to be trusted with highly responsible positions within the Lehar.

## **2. GUARDIANS OF THE GADAR: SIKH PIONEERS**

Sikh leadership of the Gadar from the beginning of this movement was not either fully prepared to accept a leadership from outside or trusted the non-Sikhs with leadership role without fully investigating the background of individuals. Since majority of the upper leadership was drawn from the Punjab region, these individuals either were known to each other or were familiar with background of the families and villages of each other. They found their personalities to be at par and compatible with each other during times of struggle. They understood the mental state of others who came from similar family, social and

financial backgrounds and found a common bond of unity to fight not only for the freedom of India but also to continue struggle for equality and justice in their newly acquired homeland. They were united at both fronts and were equally affected by the injustice served to them by American society and its unjust, unfair and discriminatory system.

It was their common struggle that created a strong bond among them and served to unify their approach and behavior in the face of difficulties and hardships. It was also this reason of unity that outsiders, especially non-Sikhs, found it difficult to infiltrate and take control of the Ghadr Lehar and this remained a solely Sikh movement, especially Sikhs belonging to Punjab region who shared a common background and bond of clanship.

Sikhs were also the guardians of the Ghadr Lehar as tradition of opposing oppression in any and all forms was a core value of Sikhism. They viewed British imperialism in India and white racial discrimination in US as discriminatory and aggressive segregation against down trodden. They viewed racial discrimination in American society as a form of oppression that must be resisted. It was this core value of opposing social aggression which played a major role in shaping thought process of Sikhs who actively sought to implement this philosophy of Sikhism through Ghadr Lehar.

Trust in fellow members is of utmost importance and pre-request to success of any organization and Ghadr Lehar was no exception. Many Sikhs settled on the west coast had served in the British army at one time or another and trusted fellow Sikh soldiers with their lives. This trust was transferred to the new land where many ex-soldiers were united in the new war of independence. Many were either probably known to each other or had known about others who were now 'soldiers of struggle' under the banner of Gadar.

It was easy and natural for these ex-soldiers and comrades in arms to form a bond that was not possible with non-Sikhs. This accounted for another fact that these foot soldiers of the Gadar worked closely and confidentially with each other for the success of the Lehar. This further strengthen our argument that Ghadr Lehar was a purely Sikh organization that was lead and financed by Sikhs while non-Sikh participated in its activities only to a very limited degree.

Traveling to faraway places usually widens not only the sphere of one's knowledge but also helps develop broader approach to life in general. Sikhs were by far the most travelled men in India at the time of the Ghadr Lehar formation. There has been a long history of Sikhs travelling to all parts of the commonwealth to either protect English rule or to work in the new developed frontiers in Africa and other parts of the Asia. Returning soldiers would infuse a spirit of freedom in young males who grew up to expect this freedom for their own society. Many of the earlier immigrants to the West Coast had been themselves in the British army had served overseas in various capacities.

This exposure to world stage had instilled a sense of freedom in Sikhs but was not found to the same degree in non-Sikhs from India who had come to USA. For example, centuries

of belief of Hinduism that it is a sin to cross ocean had kept the Hindus from exploring other parts of the globe and learn about the equality and freedom enjoyed by inhabitants of other societies. This created a pacifist approach to life and hindered the acceptance of freedom struggle by many Hindus. Status Quo of subjugation was not acceptable to Sikhs and they were far ahead in their demand for a free and just society, not only in India but also in their newly adopted homelands.

Role played by non-Sikhs in the organization and its success has been greatly exaggerated by the fact that some internationally active non-Sikhs used Ghadr as a stepping stone to achieve their own narrow minded and lopsided goals. They appeared to have tried to gain control of the organization to further their own personal agenda rather than benefit the movement for liberation of India.

Either misinformed or ill-intentioned historians have attempted to re-write a fact less history of Ghadr to promote personalities that associated themselves with this Lehar either to gain acceptance by Sikh freedom fighters or to use this stage to move forward with their own plans. These were opportunists who used Ghadr financial and public base to develop their own agenda for themselves.

One such personality usually associated with Ghadr is Har Dayal even though his contribution was negligible at best. His weak and immaterial relationship with Ghadr Lehar from 1912 to 1914 was eventless and unproductive. He was mostly based in the urban areas of San Francisco while the Ghadr had its roots and support in the rural area of Central Valley, especially Sacramento/Stockton area.

Har Dayal took Sikhs into confidence to fight on behalf of the Indians for freedom from British rule. After his brief stopover on the East Coast, and meeting with Teja Singh, a young student at Harvard, he arrived in California in 1911. He was made aware of the existence of several ‘colonies’ of Sikhs in California, especially around the towns of Stockton and Sacramento.

Upon his arrival in Northern California, he immediately established contacts with leading personalities of the Sikh community. He worked with Sikhs who had already designed the infrastructure of contacts and supporters who would carry out the responsibilities of the movement. Har Dayal offered little in the form of encouragement or knowledge to an organization that has already been setup by Sikhs. As an experienced writer his offer to work with the “Ghadr” the official publication of the Ghadr Lehar was accepted by its founders and office holders of Khalsa Diwan Society.

Even while associated with Ghadr Lehar in California, he managed to visit Oregon and setup another organization under the name of “Hindi Association of Pacific Coast”. The funds collected by Ghadr Lehar were mostly likely put to use to develop this organization thus splitting up the movement for the freedom of India. This does not speak very highly of his contribution to or dedication for Ghadr Lehar. It clearly shows that he was looking for an

opportunity to develop his own agenda with his own organization fully in his control. This throws a monkey wrench into the argument that he was a dedicated soldier of the Ghadr. His dedication to the cause of Ghadr as argued by some historians is questionable given the fact that he was busy collecting and using funds for establishing another organization in Oregon while claiming to work with Sikhs in California under the banner of Ghadr Lehar and Khalsa Diwan Society.

Real guardians of the movement were Sikhs of California and British Columbia who had dedicated themselves to the cause of India's freedom, contributed financially for its success, suffered untold economic hardships for its success and paid far greater a price for this cause than any other community. A price they paid in lost lives and devastated families was far greater in proportion to their numbers in India and even more so for a small Sikh community on the west coast of North America.

“Har Dayal's Hindi Association of the Pacific Coast was an uneasy coalition between Hindu intellectuals and Sikh farmers, peasants, and lumber mill workers. This does mean that there were not both Muslims and Hindus of the lower classes who were members, but the Sikhs were in the majority and provided most of the financial support to the organization and its proposed program” (Brown, 1975, 140)

### **3. HAR DAYAL: TIME LINE AND CHILDHOOD INFLUENCES**

Har Dayal was born in the township of Cheera Khana in Chandni Chowk are of Old Delhi and now this township has been renamed as Har Dayal Katra. He belonged to an aristocratic Punjabi family of Mathur background. He was born on October 14, 1884, exactly 46 days before Bhai Ram Singh Kooka passed away in Prison in Rangoon, Myanmar, after spending 12 years in Jail as a freedom fighter.

His father, Gauri Dayal was a Reader in the District Court at Delhi. It was his father's status that helped Har Dayal establish contact with institutes of higher learning and with educated / affluent families of Delhi. These families must have established trust of the British authorities in order to maintain their upper class status. This influenced Har Dayal's loyalty and acceptance of British as masters. His childhood was spent with pro-British neighbors and family friends and helped him establish a thought pattern that was based, not only on accepting the English as masters, but also on considering Indians as the subject of British Masters.

It was pro-British thinking pattern that he grew up with as a child of the privileged and affluent family that had established itself by serving the British. It could not have been possible for the family to keep its status without loyalty to English rule and Har Dayal had watched and learned from his surroundings and developed a pro-English attitude at an early age. This influenced him as a child and left a permanent mark on his thinking and he continued to hold pro-establishment and pro-British feelings for rest of his life as this is apparent from his writings published later in life.

In 1901, at the age of 17 he was married Sunder Rani, daughter of Lala Gopal Chand, a Sessions Judge (Nazim) in Patiala State. Sunder's Grandfather was Chief Minister (Divaan) in Patiala State and this aristocrat family belonged originally to Barnala (30.378602, 75.546506). They had one daughter from this marriage, Shanti Devi, who was born in 1908. Even after his marriage he continued his studies and in 1904 he graduated from Government College Lahore with a Master degree. Har Dayal left India on August 2, 1908 and Shanti was born on August 8, only 6 days after his escape and he never saw his daughter and only learned about her birth after he left India and was in Colombo. He never had a chance to see his daughter during his life.

In 1905 Har Dayal joined Oxford University in England but in 1907 he resigned his state scholarship at Oxford. It was possible for him to be accepted to a British university only because of family's tested and trusted pro-British attitude. He travelled to Switzerland and took over as editor of a new publication called *Bande Mataram* in 1909.

Originally *Bande Mataram* was published from Calcutta but had ceased publication in 1908. First edition of the new *Bande Mataram* appeared from Paris, France on September 10, 1909 and Har Dayal praised Madan Lal Dhingra in its editorial for killing Sir William Curzon Wylie on July 1, 1909. Dhingra was hanged on August 17, 1909 in London and Har Dayal's statement read "Dhingra has behaved at each stage of his trial like a hero of ancient times, he has reminded us of the history of medieval Rajputs and Sikhs who loved death like a bride. England thinks she killed Dhingra, in reality he lives forever, and has given the deathblow to English sovereignty in India".

In 1911 he arrived in Cambridge Massachusetts. While in Cambridge he came in contact with (Sant) Teja Singh at Harvard University who gave him details of Sikh pioneers in Northern and Central California.

In 1911, after getting details about Sikhs living in California, he arrived in San Francisco. On April 28, 1911 he published an article which provides clues to his mental state during his arrival in California. In this write up he explains that he is currently trying to find a suitable place for meditation that would be similar to the Hindu holy city of Hardwar in its peaceful and worry free environment. This clearly indicates that he may have been an intellectual in his thoughts but was certainly not a revolutionary fighting to end colonialism in India.

In February 1912 he was appointed a Lecturer on Indian Philosophy at Stanford University. He was forced to resign his position in September 1912 due to his views expressed in several articles published in San Francisco. In order to be accepted by the leaders and members, he took oath at Yugantar Ashram in San Francisco in 1913 with a vow to fight for freedom of India as part of the Ghadr Lehar.

On October 13, 1912 he set up a communist ideology based organization in San Francisco. He named it "The Fraternity of the Red Flag" and invited all and anyone who was willing to "renounce all wealth, promises not to earn money or be a parent at any time,

repudiates all other social ties and obligations, and lives a life of simplicity and hardships”. This clearly indicates that Har Dayal did not believe in family life. He asked others not to “be a parent at any time” while he was himself a father of one daughter.

In December 1912 issue of Modern Review he stressed his earlier ideology that ‘study of Hindu philosophy, or any philosophy, for that matter, was a waste of time.’ He continued with similar theme of his ideas while writing in 1913 in Modern Review, he recommends that ‘Pilgrimages should be made to European capitals rather than to time-honored religious sites in India, such as Hardwar and Puri’. This indicates that while he is claimed to be working with Sikhs of California in setting up of Ghadr Party, he is also advocating that Indian’s are in some ways inferior and must lean on the Europeans for survival of the Indian society.

In May 1913 he visited Saint John’s, Astoria and other cities in Oregon to meet with other Indians working in the lumber industry. He not only explained his ideology but also solicited financial contributions to fund his plans.

However he was arrested on March 16, 1914 and released on bail. He was arrested for speaking against the King Czar of Russia as at it was allied with US against German. Another reason for his arrest appears to be his setting up of communist ideology based organization called “The Fraternity of the Red Flag”. His arrest did not seem to be based on his opposition to British Rule in India as he wrote very little against it and never appear to be stressing in his lectures he delivered to gatherings outside of the Indian community.

As documented in the Deportation files of Har Dayal dated May 26, 1914, Bureau of Immigration filed charges against Har Dayal and was ordered to be arrested “on charges of being a member of excluded classes, and anarchist or advocating the overthrow of the United States government by force”. There was no mention of his activity against the British rule in India or the freedom movement working for its overthrow. In fact it directly accuses him of belonging to an ‘excluded class’ indicating his involvement with the communist ideological based organization that seeks anarchy as its goal. He was taken into custody while actually attending a meeting which was described by local media as a “Socialist” gathering.

After his arrest he was interrogated by the immigration authorities and he was asked about his speech delivered on October 31, 1913. This speech was described and discussed the Russian revolution in which he has made comments that Indians should learn from the revolution. He commented that all revolutionaries should take the Russian revolution seriously “because of many lessons we can derive from it and because of its tremendous importance for the future of the race”.

He escaped to Europe but only after a long and revealing interrogation by the Immigration Authorities of the United States. During this interrogation, he strongly criticized freedom fighters like Madan Lal Dhingra and others as social terrorists. The true personality of Har Dayal was exposed during this interrogation. He made derogatory

remarks not only against individuals involved in the freedom struggle, but also distant himself from the movement entirely.

For about a decade from 1915 to 1925, he wandered around Europe either establishing contacts with nationalist Indians or the German sympathizers of free India. Either he did not receive a positive response or was mistrusted by both nationalists and the Germans. He decided to settle in a more peaceful environment of Sweden, far removed from active Indian communities of Europe. Lived a life of recluse and remained focused on his study of Buddhism which he pursued further after going to England.

In 1931 he married Agda Erikson in Sweden (both wives never knew about existence of each other during his life time). He died on March 4, 1939 in Philadelphia during his visit to US and a rumor was circulated by no other than Gobind Bihari Lal, his brother-in-law, that Har Dayal was poisoned to death by Sikhs.

#### **4. ACTIVITIES FOR SELF PROMOTION**

Har Dayal' early life during his education was basically an un-eventful life that was devoid of involvement in any nationalist or freedom movement. There is no documentation of his serious involvement in politics or nationalist movement during those days. This fact along with his father being in the service of the English contributed to his being accepted at Oxford which would not have been possible if had had shown in nationalistic ideology in his behavior or writings. Even while a student at Oxford in UK, he showed absolutely no inclination towards Indian community or the country's freedom struggle. He did not join any student or community based organization that worked for the Indian community or raised voice for a free India. He lived a life of isolation and absorbed in his education.

His stay in UK was a quiet period as he focused on his studies and kept himself isolated from the community and its activities. This was either due to the fact that he was busy with finishing his studies or most likely due to his upbringing as a loyal British subject not to question its ways and authority. This loyalty ingrained from childhood, finally showed up in his writings at final stage of his life when he published his works praising British Empire and denounced nationalists fighting for India's freedom.

He neither arrived in US directly from UK nor did he go there with any plan to work for the freedom of India. He left UK and arrived in Paris, France, looking for a peaceful environment away from the struggles of a hectic life in England. Disillusioned with life in Paris, he left for Algeria at the end of September 1910. He was equally dissatisfied with life in Algeria and decided to live on an island, surrounded by water and away from metropolitan centers. He was still trying to locate a hideout that would provide him with suitable environment for meditation. Unable to find inner peace he was looking for, he returned to France and then arrived in Martinique Island in the West Indies. He met another active Indian, Bhai Parma Nand and told him that like the Mahatama Buddh, he wants to bring into light another peaceful religion like the Buddhism.



While in Martinique, he earned his living by teaching English to mostly French speaking population. He continued to meditate in the hills during his free time and proclaimed that his ideal man was Buddha whom he held in great esteem. He tried to follow Buddha's teaching by living as an ascetic by renouncing the world and living in isolation. This behavior clearly indicates that he did not hold any revolutionary ideology in his heart and would be a misfit in any revolutionary movement.

While in Martinique, Har Dayal held long discourses with Parmanand about religious beliefs and Har Dayal's plan to lay foundation of a new religion. He also disclosed to Parmanand that his religion was to be based on atheism and moral law. Even though he did not go into details about his 'moral laws', yet his writings later in life, especially during his brief stay at Stanford University provide clue to his 'moral laws'. He believed in 'moral freedom' rather than 'moral restrains' to ensure peace and tranquility in life. The fact that he had a change of mind from living a life of recluse and isolation to a life at Harvard in an intellectually challenging environment indicates that he had not yet settled himself emotionally and was still looking for a purpose in life.

At the insistence of Parmanand, from Martinique he arrived in Harvard University to study Buddhism. Even though he had come to US to study, he did not enroll at Harvard but simply used its library to continue his study. At Harvard, he met Sant Teja Singh and decided to move to California where there was a large Sikh community. Even after arriving in California, he had no plans to initiate any political action or launch any freedom movement. In fact after staying for a short while in California, he went to Honolulu, again looking for a peaceful place for meditation. He arrived back in San Francisco from Honolulu, completely disappointed and unable to find the inner peace he sought. According to his friend Parmanand, who had been keeping touch with him throughout Har Dayal's journeys, described him at this stage as "moody, needy and unfriendly".

Har Dayal lived in a cave like environment near Waikiki beach. He continued his study of Buddhism but also concentrated on Karl Marx works. But found his life full of disillusionment and decided to return to California. His focusing on both Buddha on one extreme and Marx on the other end of the spectrum shows his inability to focus on a set of values that he can pursue for a life time of study and make his goal in life.

In the magazine Modern Review dated April 28, 1911, he published a lengthy article from Berkeley that outlined his search for a peaceful heavenly place on earth where he could find space for what he called "Self Development". He also wrote and felt that southern California might offer such tranquility where he could meditate.

He accepted a teaching position with Stanford University in 1912. He wrote several papers during his stay at Stanford that were mostly philosophical in their contents. One such article published from San Francisco in a local paper he advocated the theory of "free love". He wrote that he supported those who defy customs and normal conventional ways and enter

into a contract of 'free love'. He wrote that he was 'a consistent and convinced opponent of the entire fabric of slavery and hypocrisy that is called the marriage system'. This was a cause of his termination of contract with Stanford University. It is evident that he did not support the civilized society where marriage and family life was the backbone of the society.

His relationship with one of his students, Ms. Frieda Hauswirth of Switzerland also became public following publication of the 'free love' theory. She had spent many long days and nights with him while working on her papers. Their letters written to each other shed light to a relationship that was more than just a teacher-pupil communication.

It is evident that Har Dayal was never a politically active or had any militant ideology prior to coming into contact with politically active Sikhs in California and only then he appears to have taken, hesitatingly, any interest in freedom struggle. His minor political involvements were limited to Europe and North America. His activities can be divided into roughly four phases of his politically active life that had a beginning in Stockton California

#### **PHASE 1:**

His association with Sikhs in California was a short lived and virtually uneventful association with Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society and the Ghadr Lehar. This included his contribution to the official publication 'Ghadr'. Few of his writings, mostly mild in tone, appeared in this publication.

In April 1911, he published an article titled "India in America" in the magazine 'Modern Review' in which he describes Sikhs as "timid, shabby, and ignorant" who are being "transformed" by America. This article appeared while he was actively pursuing his contacts with Sikhs to further his idea of war of independence for India and needed Sikhs' help to achieve it. With this kind of mind set of opinions about Sikhs, he set out to work with Sikhs in Stockton to set up Guru Gobind Singh Scholarship with himself as one of the selection committee members. The only Sikh on this committee was Sant Teja Singh. This was also the year when Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society (Khalsa Diwan) was formed.

Under Guru Gobind Singh Scholarship, one of the 6 selected, from over 600 candidates, was Har Dayal's brother-in-law, Gobind Bihari Lal a cousin of his wife in India, Sundar. Was this a coincidence or did Har Dayal influence the decision making, – we will never know. Also as a reminder, it was same Gobind Bihari Lal, who spread the false rumors that Har Dayal has been poisoned to death by Sikhs in 1939.

One year after Khalsa Diwan was formed, In May 1913, he visits Portland Oregon and sets up another organization and names it "Hindi Association of Pacific Coast" this is despite the fact that he was based in and working with Sikhs in California under the banner of Khalsa Diwan. Also important to note is that there were hardly any Hindus in Oregon and most Indians were in fact Sikhs. Sikhs were made officers of this organization, including Sohan Singh Bhakna as President.

Funds collected by Sikhs to launch a newspaper by Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society might have been used to start Hindi association in Oregon as first issue of Ghadr did not come out until November 1913. If he was seriously involved in the affairs of the Ghadr Lehar, he would not have worked to initiate formation of yet another organization that he claimed was fighting for the cause of India's freedom. This conflicting interest clearly indicates that his involvement with Ghadr Lehar and its mother organization, Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society, was only superficial at best and non-involvement at worst.

On March 25, 1914 he was arrested in San Francisco and released on bail the same day. During interview with immigration authorities, he makes very derogatory and damaging comments on the activities of those involved in the freedom movement of India. As documented in his interrogation report no 12016 dated 3/26/1914, he criticizes Indian freedom fighters and commented on the activities of Madan Lal Dhingra; "I will give you my estimate and you can take it for what it is worth. He was a morbid, melancholy and indolent man; very susceptible to personal influence and very unbalanced; very vain; and unwilling to exert himself for a successful career. This is my idea of him" This was his change of state of mind since he had described Dhingra as hero in July 1909 editorial in Bande Matram.

His criticism of India's freedom movement and those involved in it is a clear indication that he was not a whole hearted supporter of it. He may have originally sought to join the ranks of the movement either to get financial benefit or to use it to further his own agenda through its offices and supporters.

While trying to work for his freedom and fight deportation, he received communication from his female friend, Frieda Hauswirth who was looking for help with her flight from Switzerland to US in the case of her divorce. Har Dayal made arrangements to send her \$200 to help her make arrangements for her fare to US.

This happened during the days while he was facing deportation and he was living on financial assistance provided from funds collected for the Ghadr Lehar. It is evident that he was using money received from community funds for a cover up and assist Ms. Frieda Hauswirth, with whom he had developed an unexplainable relationship even while still legally married to Sundar Rani of Barnala and had a daughter named Shanti Devi born in 1908.

## **PHASE 2:**

In April 1914 he left United States and begins a new phase of life that mostly consisted of his failures and inability to work with other nationalists based in Europe. He arrived in Sweden and was provided German passport. While visiting Turkey, he connects with other revolutionaries fighting for India's freedom. In late 1914 he breaks away with Indian National Committee in Berlin and criticizes its work for freedom of India. INC was set up to get help from the Germans for the revolutionary freedom fighters.

From 1915 to 1918, he stays in Germany but criticizes not only INC but also the Germans for not being dedicated to a free India. His correspondence critical of German intentions is intercepted by the authorities and he lived practically in a house arrest.

Meanwhile Ghadr uprising planned for February 19, 1915, that was supposed to be the beginning of a revolution in India ended with disaster and all leaders of the movement in India were either killed, detained or went into hiding. This ended the dream of a revolution as envisioned by the leaders of Ghadr.

Har Dayal moved around from Switzerland, Germany, Turkey and finally settling in Sweden in October 1918. He met his future wife Agda, in 1926 and for practical purposes, remained inactive in all community affairs. His only superficial and limited involvement was confined to an occasional letter addressed to either fellow Indians or British diplomats. The decade in Sweden appears to be the time of his soul searching and coming to terms with the reality of the situation that he was a defeated man who turned to the study of Buddhism to find inner peace from the world torn apart around him.

In 1918 he publishes an article in San Francisco and criticizes Germans and Nationalist Indian who were involved in freedom movement, including members of the Ghadr Movement. This was his attempt to distant himself from the Ghadr party as conspiracy trial began in San Francisco on November 20, 1917 for 34 people including 17 members of the Ghadr party and rest of them Germans or German Americans. As he had been associated with Ghadr Party, he sought to distant himself to avoid his name from being included as a defendant in the trial.

In March 1919, just a month before the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh, his letter under the heading of “Mr Har Dayal’s Confession of Faith” was published by a journal based in London named “India”. In this he publically avowed his “conversion to the principle of Imperial unity and progressive self-government for all civilized nations”, but advocated that “they remain within the Empire”.

June 8, 1919 edition of New York Times headline read that he no longer believes in freedom for India but seeks autonomy within the British Empire because he sees “the Indolent Oriental Unable to stand alone at present”.

While writing in the New Statesman of London he wrote “I now believe that the consolidation of the British Empire in the East is necessary in the best interests of the people of India, Burma, Egypt, and Mesopotamia.” While describing the people and history of India, he further writes “Their history is indeed noble and interesting, but it is rather moldy with age and lack the inspiring power of recent achievement.” He believed that “it is foolish for Southern races to imagine that they can, in the long run, hold their own against the Northerners if it comes to a trial of strength between them.”

He announces his support for the British Empire publically in a book published in 1920 from London. In this book, he exhorts all Indians to support British rule as this is the only way to save India as a nation. He writes “England has much to give us besides protection and organisation.” He further asks Indians to help expand the ideal humanistic rule, the English Empire and predicts “If we help to realize this ideal, generations yet unborn will bless our names. The future keeps its secret but we must do our duty in this spirit, looking forward to the advent of the time.”

In 1925 He published his “Political Statement” in the ‘Partap’, a prominent newspaper from Lahore. This was also carried by widely distributed daily “Times of India”. In the introduction of his statement he wrote, “...in the future this testament will be embodied in school texts for the boys and girls of free India and free Punjab.” Interestingly enough he considers “Free India” and “Free Punjab” as separate identities.

In the statement he writes, “I declare the future of Hindu race of Hindustan and Punjab rests on 4 pillars”. Then describes these four pillars in details. Again it is interesting to note that he considers “Hindustan” and “Punjab” separate and distinct from each other.

His four pillars of saving “Hindu race of Hindustan and Punjab” consisted of (1) Hindu Sangathan – a united Hindu community with solidarity among its various branches and casts. (2) Hindu Raj – establishment of an Empire with Hindus as the ruling class to further the cause of Hinduism. (3) Shuddhi of Moslems – Purification of Moslems - bringing all Moslems back to Hinduism since originally they were all Hindus. (4) Conquest and Shuddhi of Afghanistan and Frontiers – He considers all people of Afghanistan to have been converted by force.

He writes that unless these four tasks are accomplished without delay, future generations of Hindus will be in danger. He believed that it will be impossible to save Hinduism and provide for its safety unless an action plan is devised to implement his ideology.

It is amply clear that someone so devoted to the cause of Hinduism cannot expected to be whole heartedly devoted to a secular movement like Ghadr Lehar. His sole goal, as he has documented himself, was to further the cause of Hinduism and not that of the nation of India and all its people.

In 1926 he marries Agda in Sweden and is given a temporary British passport for travel to UK only. His wives in UK and India did not know each other’s existence but in his will he left his house to Indian wife while actually, his wife in UK wife took care of him for rest of his life, right up to his last days. He married Agda while still legally married to Sunder Rani and never divorced her but abandoned her and their daughter Shanti Devi.

### **PHASE 3:**

In February 1919, he initiated communication with India Office in London regarding possibility of amnesty for him and given an opportunity to travel and live in UK. His initial

request was denied. Again in March 1924 he applied for amnesty and requested to be provided with UK passport. His request was again denied.

After publishing several papers and a book about his ideology of denouncement of revolution and superiority of English society, he applied for an amnesty to India Office in London in March 1927. He requested an amnesty for himself and a British passport to travel to UK and permission to live in UK as a resident.

In 1927 British government granted a blanket amnesty to all the political refugees and Har Dayal was able to return to England. In England he lived in Edgware in a small house with his wife Agda. On December 30, 1935 once again he requested amnesty from British Government on the ground that he has lived in UK for almost a decade and had received his Ph.D. and published his book titled *Hints*, which he describes as his *tour de force*.

His stay in England to complete his studies appears to have transformed his ideological leanings from a protagonist of free India to a disgruntled nationalist who saw struggle for freedom as a lost battle. He concentrated on his studies and turned introvert to matters spiritual. He exhorted to public opposition to freedom movement and criticized all those waging the struggle, including Ghadr Lehar.

#### **PHASE 4:**

He publically advocated the necessity of a strong British Empire. He went to the extent of not only accepting British as the future of India but also urging all Indians to support and ensure survival and success of the Empire. He saw the Empire as the only viable solution to India's ill wills based upon caste ridden society divided amongst itself.

This change in attitude, or at least public expression of it, helped him stay in England completely undisturbed and unchallenged. This also helped him in completing his education and he was awarded Degree of Doctor oh Philosophy by the University of London in 1932. His thesis for the doctorate "The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature" was published in book form. This helped in getting accepted for various lecture tours in England and United States.

It was during one of these tours that took him to various cities of the US, that he suffered a heart attack after delivering a speech in Philadelphia. It was reported to the media by his brother-in-law, Gobind Bihari Lal, that Har Dayal was poisoned to death by Sikhs. This was unfounded as Sikhs had no contact with him and he did not contact any of his old friends and coworkers from the Ghadr Lehar. No one in the Sikh community or old Ghadr party workers was aware of his presence in the country.

If fact Har Dayal made no contacts with Sikhs in California or any other non-Sikhs related to the Ghadr Lehar clearly indicates that he had no desire to connect with his own past or the movement he once is said to have associated with. This once again provide

weight to our argument that he was never a devoted soldier of the Ghadr Lehar and only joined it as an opportunist to help advance his own agenda of self promotion.

He died on March 4, 1939 at the age of 54. Shunned by Indians, whom he betrayed, forgotten by family he left in India, and mistrusted by British who saw him as a confused and defeated enemy. He lived his life as wanderer and was cremated in Philadelphia not by his family or friends but by the members of the Philadelphia Ethical Society.

## **5. IDEOLOGY – IN HIS OWN WORDS**

Looking briefly at his ideology in his own words reveals an unbalanced personality that was confused and torn apart by ideological conflicts and spiritual starvation. On the one hand he wanders around the world looking for a quiet and serene place for meditation, on the other hand he claims to be leading a revolutionary movement. On one hand he preaches inner peace and spiritualism while on the other hand abandons his family and establishes relationships that would meet the definition of immorality.

He had delivered many lectures during his post-Ghadr life but many of these remain unpublished and are lost. Much that is known about his unbalanced mental state and ideological confusion is based on his own writings that he had published either in newspapers in Europe, America or Punjab or had published in book forms from Europe.

From what was written by him and survived the wrath of time, his personality as a confused and defeated soldier becomes clear? He himself has on several occasions throughout his writings admitted that he is a changed man who has finally come to terms with reality of the world and does not support his earlier views on revolution and freedom movement, in fact he went out of his way to declare that he does not associate with any revolutionary movement fighting for freedom of India.

His important ideological statements/write ups provide insight into his mind as a staunch Hindu who was obsessed with creation of Hinduism based state that would ensure supremacy of Hinduism, protect cow as a sacred animal, bring back those inhabitants of Afghanistan who are supposed to have been converted forcefully and would absorb all faiths of South Asia back into Hindu fold since they are all seen by Har Dayal as offshoots and branches of Hinduism.

He appears to be following the teachings of Hinduism even when he has questioned the Hindu's community's inability to gain freedom it lost due to century old ideas that are irrelevant in the modern scientific age. He even went to a great length and outlined his plan to preserve cows of Punjab, from an unknown threat. He documented his plan and published it in newspaper intentionally for a wider audience than in a book that would be limited to only few readers.

In 1908 his essay on sacredness of cow appeared in Lahore newspapers. He recommended that each city in Punjab should implement a 4 point program to save

sacredness of cows. 1) Start a monthly magazine called Gau Raksha (Cow protection), 2) create a center for training of preachers who would spread the gospel of sacredness and protection of cows, 3) establishment of cow shelters to take care of abandoned cows, and 4) teach Sadhus (holy men) to accept no compensation for inspection of cow shelters.

His writings also highlight his concern about growing Christian influence on Hindu mind. He was suspicious of Christian missionaries and their inroad into the land of Hindus and blamed these missionaries for all ills and deteriorations facing Hindu thought and people of India. Rather than acknowledging the morally deteriorated condition of Hinduism, he blames Christianity for the decay of Hindu philosophy

In 1909 after he moved to Paris, he published article about his political views in *Modern Review* in Calcutta. He attacked Christianity and blamed it on decaying state of Hinduism. He wrote that Christians are busy “not only in destroying Hinduism from the outside by Christian missionary activities, but trying to control it from inside in the guise of sympathy for the religion.”

Even though his philosophical outlook on life drastically differed from Sikhs, he could not but praise Sikhs after spending some time with the Sikh community on the west coast of the US. He admired their patriotism and interest in public affairs. He also observed and documented their willing to donate large sum of money to the community’s cause.

In 1911 in the July issue of *The Modern Review* he wrote a lengthy article describing his opinions about Indians in the United States. He titled it “India in America” and he praised Sikhs with high regards. This is somewhat surprising as he had considered Sikhs “timid, shabby, and ignorant” prior to living among them. He has completely changed his opinion about Sikhs following his close encounter with them while living in California. He was of the opinion now that Sikhs have a “keen sense of patriotism, which manifests itself in deeds of kindly service to their fellow countrymen here, in quickened interest in public affairs, in the revival of religious consciousness, in preference for an independent career on their return to India, and in constant readiness to subscribe large sums of money for the corporate welfare.”

It is evident from his writings that he did not believe in the institution of marriage and family life. He was forced to resign from his teaching position at Stanford after he published his theory of “Free Love” and had developed an unexplainable relationship with his student, Frieda Hauswirth. He defended this relationship by advocating the “Free Love” ideology and maintained contact with Frieda even after leaving the US.

In 1912 he wrote an article in one of the San Francisco newspapers he advocated his theory of “Free Love” after his friend entered into a “Free Love” contract prior to marriage. He considered the bride of this contract as pioneer of the women’s freedom. He whole heartedly supported the couple’s courage to oppose the conventional marriage custom. He wrote that he himself has been “consistent and convinced opponent of the entire fabric of



slavery and hypocrisy that is called the marriage system.” He considers the decision of the couple to enter into the free love contract as a Noble idea of life and hoped that others would follow the example of this couple.

In 1919, June 8 edition of New York Times appeared a lengthy write up on Har Dayal. Paper provides an insight into his ideological and mental state by extensively quoting from his earlier writings and paint a picture of a man who has lost all sense of direction in life and accepted his defeat and the fate of his people as the subject of the British. He believed that all people of the South are unable to stand up the aggression of the North and “it is foolish for Southern races to imagine that they can, in the long run, hold their own against the Northerners if it comes to a trial of strength between them”.

He has surrendered to the circumstances and advices Indians not to fight the “iron imperialism” and recommends that “It is part of wisdom for us not to tempt fate, but to stay under the protection of the British fleet and army in our quiet, sunny home of Hindustan, and make the best of our position in the Empire. We are not equipped for the deadly rivalries and fierce struggles of this age of iron imperialism.” He considers Indian unable to rule and as poor administrators thus recommends that “The majority of the higher officials of the Police Department, and all officers and generals in the army should be English-men or Europeans.”

In 1920 he published his most ideologically comprehensive work titled “*Forty-four Months in Germany and Turkey: February 1915 to October 1918 – a Record of Personal Impressions*”. It was published in London and dealt with all aspect of his thinking on matters of politics and international relations as well as Social fabric of East and West.

In this work he defended British Empire, its existence and its right to rule India and other Asian nations. He declares “We must now learn that England has a moral and historical mission in Asia.” He considers Empire more stable now than before the WWI and finds that “the stability of the British Empire is a salient fact that emerges from the dust and smoke of the war” and for this reason he predicts the eternity of the Empire as and declares that “The British Empire is an institution that has come to stay”.

He supports that India be ruled by British since Indians “cannot establish or maintain free national States in this era of armed imperialism. They must live and die as friends and protégés of the great Powers.” He does however admit that “English and French imperialism is a thousand times preferable to German or Japanese imperialism.” He believes that Asians and African “feeble people should work with the great nations which have already organized the vast empires in Asia and Africa.” He warns Indians that they would be worst off with self-rule and that struggle for freedom is bound to fail and that British rule should be disturbed as “Disruption can only expose them to much greater evils than those from which

they suffer under the present system. The policy of separation and intrigue is futile and fallacious.”

In 1925 he published his “Political Statement” in a prominent newspaper from Lahore and other major newspapers of India. He introduced to his fellow Indians his testament for the future and feels that “...in the future this testament will be embodied in school texts for the boys and girls of free India and free Punjab.” In this testament he declares that “the future of Hindu race of Hindustan and Punjab rests on 4 pillars”. He describes four pillars as “Hindu Sangathan, Hindu Raj, Shuddhi of Moslems and Conquest and Shuddhi of Afghanistan and Frontiers.” He promises that “so long as the Hindu nation does not accomplish these four things, the safety of our children and great-grandchildren will be ever in danger. And the safety of the Hindu race will be impossible.”

He believed that humans are fundamentally pacifist and peaceful by nature and he called this human trait as “universal law”. Since Ghadr party consisted basically of Sikhs and by nature Sikhs believe in the principal of Dynamic Optimism (Chardi Kala) as envisioned and expounded by Sikh Gurus, even while being publically executed, it is difficult to expect that Sikhs would have accepted a leader with such a negative and pacifist outlook on life.

In December 1938 he published an article in *New History* entitled “The Inevitability of Pacifism”. His inner self speaks loudly through it and his belief in Pacifism is outlined in details. He wrote that “Biology clearly demonstrates that human nature is radically and fundamentally pacifist.” He goes on to write that “Pacifism is broad-based and solidly grounded on this biological and psychological verity: Human nature is peaceful.” This contradicts with Sikh belief of *Dynamic Optimism* and such pacifist ideology would not have been acceptable to Sikhs, especially in a leader.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

1. In most writings in India or by Indian, he is often referred to as a freedom fighter who devoted his life for Freedom of India. However, facts paint a picture of an opportunist who betrayed not only a revolutionary movement but entire community and country – for self-interest. Special interest historians like to put him in the category of ‘freedom fighters’ while British did not even list him as a member of Gadar Movement in secret British Gadar Directory either in the 1917 or 1934 editions (despite the fact that he was still alive at the time of publication of these editions). During hearing of the special tribunal that began on April 26, 1915, several of the leading figures of the Gadar were tried. A total of 291 persons were tried and many of them in absentia as these leaders were either in hiding in Punjab countryside or out of the country. Har Dayal was not one of those tried during these hearings. His name did not figure in the list as he was considered neither a leading soldier nor an officer of the Gadar Lehar.

2. “Har Dayal decisively rejected his earlier revolutionary viewpoint. He abandoned his Anglophobia, advocated the mixed British and Indian administration of his country, and became a firm admirer of Western culture and values.” This is how Encyclopedia Britannica describes Har Dayal. “Har Dayal was arrested on the pretext of a speech delivered by him three years earlier. The party got him out on bail and managed to send him away to Switzerland. Thereafter he took no part in the Gadar movement”. This is how Encyclopedia of Sikhism describes Har Dayal’s arrest as being not for being involved in Ghadr but for a speech he made prior to setting up of the Gadar Party. It also supports our opinion that he did not take any part in the activities of the Gadar Lehar.
3. Har Dayal was not a revolutionary, either in thoughts or actions. His writings do not reflect any revolutionary ideology. He either misunderstood global revolutionary movements or did not subscribe to the ideology of ‘freedom for all’. His interests lay in starting a new religion rather than starting a revolution. He moved from one place to another in search for a peaceful environment for meditation and lived a life of isolation from community in general and specifically out of touch with the Indian community settled abroad. His interest lay more in protection of Sacred Cows and Hindu superiority rather than freedom of the country and its people.
4. “He asks his countrymen to act up to his advice and not to follow his example, which shows that he knows absolutely nothing of human nature. It is a gross mistake on his part to prohibit Indians from going to England”, this is how Hindustan newspapers commented in 1908 after his articles appeared in several newspapers asking young men of India not to go to England and “not to pollute themselves in that country of *malechhas* (foreigners)”. This clearly shows his confused mental state as he is having problem in understanding the benefit that an education will bring to his countrymen.
5. Gadar party was formally launched on June 2, 1913 and Har Dayal associated with it from November 1913 after he had set up the Hindi Association of America and when first edition of the organization’s newspaper “Gadar” was issued. He left US in March 1914. This shows his association with Gadar Lehar was less than 6 months. Clearly it was not a sufficiently long enough association to influence an organization, develop a strategy or establish strong footings for future actions.
6. Before leaving the US he handpicked and appointed Ram Chandra, a Brahmin from Peshawar, as head of the Gadar Party. This was a wrong choice as Ram Chandra was a corrupt man who misappropriated funds collected by party workers. Ram Chandra was shot dead by Bhai Ram Singh, a Sikh member of the Gadar Party on April 23, 1918. He was killed at the end of the trial that began on November 20, 1917 and during the trial it became a public knowledge that Ram Chandra had taken possession of the building that housed the head quarters of the Gadar, the newspaper and all the accounts of the Ghadr Party. Har Dayal should have left the appointment of Gadar

- leadership up to the working members of the party rather than impose a leadership on them with his own personal choice.
7. He left Turkey in October 1914 without informing anyone of his associates. Many members of the Indian National Committee were taken by his surprise move out of Turkey and his criticism of Germany that has financed his stay in Europe and supported INC. He not only betrayed German but also INC. His decision to leave Turkey and the revolutionary movement was seen by many as an action that suggested an acceptance of defeat by Har Dayal. He never took active part in any nationalist or revolutionary movement after this.
  8. After leaving the freedom movement, he did not just lie down quietly; he in fact actively defended the British rule and urged Indians to help maintain it at all costs. He broke not only from his family, but also the community he was supposedly fighting for. He lived in isolation while in Europe and even upon his return to England. He applied for amnesty to British, not once but four separate times, it shows that he lived his life as a defeated soul, unlike the Gadari Babas who continued to fight against odds, all their lives. He had given up his struggle and accepted his defeat and intended to live his life as close to normal subject of British Empire as he could. He had no revolutionary spirit that could keep him fighting any longer.
  9. His concern was protecting and expanding Hinduism and not freedom for Hindustan, thus he cannot be placed in the same category of fighters as the members of the Ghadr Lehar. It was not an agenda of the Lehar to protect and project any one community but to free India from British rule. All communities that reside in India were seen as equally deserving freedom and equal rights.
  10. Betrayal of those around him were hallmark of his personality and right up to the end he lived by this trait. Even after his death, the news was circulated that he was poisoned by Sikhs because of the animosity he earned by disowning the ideal of the Ghadr Movement. It was proved beyond doubt that he died due to heart attack but the idea that rumor was circulated about his animosity with Sikhs simple proves that he was not held in high esteem by the members of the Ghadr Lehar.
  11. During his tour of the United States in 1939 he made no attempt to contact any members of the Ghadr Lehar. This was despite the fact that many original members of the Gadar and his fellow workers involved with the original organization were still alive and had established families in California. His total neglect of the remaining members of the original organization indicates he was not dedicated to the organization and its goal.
  12. It was betrayal by men like Har Dayal that despite high degree of devotion for the cause and willingness for ultimate sacrifice, the Gadar Movement could not achieve

success as envisioned by faithful foot soldiers that returned to India to fight for India's freedom and paid the ultimate price with their lives.

- 13.** He was not a Gadari, but a Safari (wanderer), who just wandered in and out of the Gadar Lehar, as a mute spectator and left no mark on the history of the movement and played absolutely no role in its development and its actions. He sought meditation rather than revolution as the sole goal of his life. He never possessed a Revolutionary spirit to head a revolutionary movement.

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\*Paper read at University of Pacific, Stockton. California USA during 'Sikh Centennial conference held on September 30th 2012'. Organized by Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society Stockton.CA.