A Fateful Encounter? Sikh Interaction with the Hindu Elite on the Pacific Coast of North America

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Important interaction took place among the people of Indian origin on the Pacific Coast of North America in the first decade of the 20th century. This interaction is termed 'combustible mixture' of two streams of people of Indian origins which led to a major mobilization known as the Ghadar movement of 1913-14, when Sikhs returned *en masse* to Punjab to wage a war on British rule in India. Existing studies of this interaction emphasize the role of Har Dayal, a Punjabi Hindu intellectual who is said to have inspired Sikh workers through his writings and speeches for the rebellion. The paper argues that the Sikh reactions, strategies and their religious and cultural sensitivities must be taken into account while exploring their encounter.

Introduction

Most of the existing historical works foreground the 'genius inspiration' of Har Dayal - that mobilization of Sikhs to return and fight for India's freedom took place due to his intervention. The Sikhs in this exchange are taken to be silent conveyors of some Hindu intellectuals' inspiration, and especially of implementing Har Dayal's guidelines into practice. It is acknowledged that Har Dayal had been socialized in London and Paris by a virulent form of Hindu nationalism while Sikhs were largely a working class people and part of Empire's loyal auxiliaries, and their interaction is treated as a smooth transition towards a militant rebellion against British rule in India. However, Sikhs are nowhere given any agency or voice as to their own motives for mobilization or return to India.[1] This lack of voice, perhaps, may be due to lack of readily accessible literature regarding the Sikhs' response while we know much more about Har Dayal's ideas and lectures through his published writings and an excellent biography. Similarly, Tarak Nath Das who also had extensive contacts with the Sikhs in Vancouver and Washington has not left many details of such an interaction in his writings.

This meeting of two distinct groups of people from the Indian subcontinent in the Pacific Coast States raises some pertinent issues. Obviously, this interaction was a two-way process. Nevertheless, it is seldom elaborated from the side of the Sikhs or on specific ways the Sikhs reacted to the advice tendered by the educated elite. Two pertinent questions crop up in such a milieu of interaction. What was the Sikhs' specific response to such overtures in four or

five years of such interactions which led towards a radical transformation in their outlook? To begin with what was the understanding of two streams of people of Indian origin of their conditions in the Pacific Coast States as also their views on the British Empire in India?

The paper tries to highlight the Sikhs' viewpoint of the exchange that took place prior to their decision to return *en masse* to India. By elaborating on this exchange, the paper inquires the role of Har Dayal and other educated Indian elite in the kind of mobilization that took place. This elaboration also sheds light on the decision process of working class Sikhs to leave for India, in fact declaring war on British rule in India. It further problematizes the role of educated Hindus who are credited with imparting the message to 'malleable material' i.e. the Sikhs who proceeded to India were intoxicated with the spirit of 'patriotism'. The paper is divided into three parts: starting with the settlement of Sikhs in North America and their contact with the educated elite from India. Then, details of their interaction are seen through the impressions of some of the Sikhs and the Hindu elite. Finally, the question of 'inspiration' to return is taken up, especially of Har Dayal's influence and Sikhs' own considerations in undertaking such a risky path.

Meeting of Two Streams of Indian Immigrants on the Pacific Coast of North America

It is by now well documented how the British Empire managed the dispersal of people of India all over its newly conquered colonies. This process started with men from Southern provinces of India recruited as slaves and transported to Mauritius. By 1800, nearly 6,000 of them had worked over there. During the 18th century, a system of recruiting agencies to handle the export of labourers from southern provinces, Bihar and the United Provinces of India was gradually established. The destinations of labour export changed as the British Empire extended towards Southeast Asia especially the Malaya Peninsula, Singapore and Ceylon. Following the Abolition of Slavery Act (1833), another phase of emigration began, known as 'indentured labour' whereby men were recruited for plantations and extractive economies of Fiji, and the Caribbean sugar crops. By the middle of 19th century, labourers of Indian origin had spread across the Caribbean, Africa and South East Asia. In fact, these multiple migrations created immigrant communities of Indian origin in distant locations of the British Empire.[2] Some travelled back and forth across the world but the majority never returned to India. Another characteristic of these migrant communities was their little enthusiasm for questioning the Empire's ways - even when they faced severe conditions abroad – as they often did at least in the initial stage of settlement. This was, of course, partly due to the fact that they were taken away from their provinces before such consciousness against the British Empire germinated. Thus, there was little resistance to the British Empire among overseas Indian communities.

Of course, this began to change by the turn of the 20th century with the emergence of a newly educated Hindu elite - articulating a notion of *Bharat* and projecting a shared people-hood for all who lived in India. The year 1885 marked the birth of Indian National Congress in Bombay. Through the common language of English, British colonial power ushered in an intellectual revolution among India's emerging educated elite which was 'as dramatic as the political destruction of its kingdoms and rulers'. The Bengalis, in fact, were the first with such education. They began the process of appropriating Mazzini, Hegel and Comte which was described humorously as juggling between 'Kali and Kant'. Meanwhile, Har Dayal was incorporating Herbert Spencer into his worldview. C. A. Bayly describes this appropriation process succinctly as follows:

> The translations and interpretations of Western oriental scholars were appropriated and fed into India's reconstructed past… Western intellectuals and public moralists were used strategically as weapons to fight even more opprobrious ideological enemies….Sometimes European writers were cited merely as successors and pale imitators of the great tradition of Sanskrit sages that stretched from Manu to Sankara and so on into the middle ages of Indian history.[3]

Meanwhile, the new Indian elite, essentially consisting of select, educated Hindus, began discovering an ancient land of *Bharat* through European Oriental commentaries based on diverse concerns such as the relevance of Vedas, the Hindu kingdoms buried under the more recent Islamic invasions, great Sanskritic tradition, ancient Indus Civilization and a unique caste structure of India. They were engaged in reconstructing an India – giving rise to a new consciousness among Hindus as a nation humiliated by outsiders. This 'discovery of India' found multiple expressions in creative works, challenging oriental commentaries on sacred Hindu scriptures and forging a nascent form of people-hood engendered by the colonial experience and simultaneously challenging the legitimacy of British rule.

However, the Hindu elite was a small force as yet. Their enthusiasm was not a shared sentiment across all parts of the Indian subcontinent or among different communities that were part of the British Empire in India. Divergent groups of people from various provinces of India had their specific views of homelands which did not necessarily coincide with India's physical geography as a whole. Therefore, among the new Hindu elite, a few of them found themselves coming together in the cosmopolitan cities of London, Paris, and New York where they often debated vigorously the need for political sovereignty. Moreover, most of them, but not all, had already taken part in some of the subversive activities against British rule in India. Therefore, they had escaped to safe locations in Europe. Their individual efforts or working in small groups are now being chronicled uncovering rich details. What emerges as a whole is how isolated they remained in their heroic adventures in anti-colonialism.[4] Part of the reason

was their concentration in London and later in Paris or Berlin, where in fact, the number of people of Indian origin was quite small.

In fact, it was only on the Pacific Coast of North America that a few Hindu exiles could find a receptive audience in the form of large number of Sikh workers. However, the emigration history of Sikhs from the Punjab is somewhat different from other provinces of Indian subcontinent.[5] Although a definitive volume on the history of Sikh migration during the colonial era is yet unavailable, a reading of extant literature suggests that a significant proportion of the Sikhs were taken to the far corners of the Empire as policemen and soldiers - as 'Empire's auxiliaries.' Whatever independent migration took place from Punjab was related to this recruitment process – whereby the Sikhs had settled across the Far Eastern colonies, policing cities of Shanghai, Hong Kong and disciplining Malaya States in the late nineteenth century. From the Far Eastern locations, there began a further movement towards Australia, New Zealand and Fiji. This was *via* Hong Kong which served as the major shipping harbor. Newly retired policemen or military men sought to try their luck in California and British Columbia.

Thus, between 1900 and 1906, nearly 6,000 Sikhs had landed in Vancouver and a similar number had entered through Seattle and San Francisco. Almost all of them took up manual jobs. With little formal education and of rural background from Punjab, they were distinguished by their previous occupation; some had retired as soldiers in the Far East - or resigned after a few years' service there, while others were arriving directly from the Punjab. Of these, a majority was of military experience and accordingly their dress and turnout was smart. Moreover, their experience in the army also meant a keen sense of assertion of their rights as British subjects in Canada as they had developed ideas as British Empire's allies and protectors. Some of the Sikhs must have picked up some unease about the British government's treatment of the Punjabi peasantry when the Canal Colonies experienced agrarian disturbances at the beginning of the twentieth century. In this short lived agitation of 1907, two leaders Sardar Ajit Singh and Lajpat Rai were banished from Punjab.

A rough sketch of Sikhs' social and political consciousness in the first decade of 20th century can also be stated. In terms of political mapping, the Sikhs' loyalty towards the British Empire was underwritten by economic gains and employment opportunities through armed forces. For the pre-1947 period generally, but definitely prior to the First World War, the Sikhs had a range of associations, nomenclature, self-definitions, and more crucially there was no marked enthusiasm for starting a movement to free India. Moreover, the notion of being a Punjabi, or an Indian, carried no modern implications of homeland or citizenship. If their Punjabi or Sikh identity was weak or ambiguous, there was no notion of over-arching Indian identity either. In fact, the Sikh peasantry generally had no notion of India as 'nation' or of common Indian nationality. It was only in a very limited sense that they had some notion of being an Indian, only at administrative level with need for identity papers, passports etc. that pointed at their national status. Moreover, there were multiple Punjabi

expressions for 'people' and 'land' with words such as *qaum, watan, des* and *mulk*. The latter three words did not have the connotation of a country with firm boundaries or a political entity while the first word *Qaum* was used for Sikhs or Khalsa *Panth* as a whole. The idea of nation or nationality was yet to engage their sensibility. In fact, they knew something of the Sikhs' past especially of a sovereign Punjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh and a strong notion of fighting against foreign invaders. Although Punjab was dotted with historic Sikh shrines and it was the province where most of them lived, yet, Punjab had not acquired a sense of homeland. Their collective identity was not yet tied to the territoriality aspects of Punjab. Similarly, a larger region called India had no notion of a country worthy of devotion and sacrifices. Instead, the location of Sikhs' ex-homes imparted regional affiliations, and social hierarchy provided nomenclature to community's socio-economic differences. They could ally themselves as *Doabias*, *Malwais*, or *Majhails* - three sub regions of Punjab, and at its most liberal, as Punjabis. Being Indian would have exhausted their social imagination to an empty category. Thus, in the Far East, *gurdwara* committee members dominated from a particular area, eg from Malwa or Majha. In their daily life with very limited interaction beyond fellows Sikhs [or in some cases with Punjabi Muslims and Hindus], these relations were primarily organized around traditional social hierarchy of occupations and caste structure. Thus, they were *Jats*, *Ramgarhias*, *Chamars*, *Bhatras*, and others. However, they shared a religious tradition (of Sikhism) which transcended such social categories. In establishing a *gurdwara* or managing it, the distinction often shifted to *amritdharis* and *sahajdharis.* By early decades of the twentieth century, the Chief Khalsa Diwan and Singh Sabha activists were also influencing overseas Sikhs' behavior towards a broad category of 'Sikhs as a nation' in relation to other communities of the Hindus and the Muslims.

They did not look to India's past - much less of a Hindu past, which in Sikh common culture and common understanding was nothing to be proud of. The Sikhs' popular history was of martyrs dying for their faith - and this was distinctly anti-Muslim - who were generally propagators of repression. In popular rural Punjabi culture, the Hindus were equated with moneylenders or pretty traders - generally stereotyped as clever, timid and scheming. More orthodox Sikhs viewed Hindu religion as consisting of hundreds of deities and anachronistic modes of worship, superstitions and spiraling castes - it was not surprising India was enslaved for centuries till the Khalsa Panth provided resistance - an exaggerated notion of Sikhs as protectors of India etc. At a practical level, they shared Punjabi language with the Hindus and the Muslims and got on well with all of them. Moreover, in Canadian and American settings, they were not secure enough to develop their factional differences as more urgent issues required their solidarity. Thus, a contrast with their Far Eastern pattern developed; the Khalsa Diwan Society of Vancouver was a composite body, its three leading functionaries were Mit Singh - a Malwai Sikh, Bhag Singh - a Majhail Sikh and Balwant Singh from the Doaba region. Moreover, the *gurdwara* was consciously open to non-Sikhs - at one time the United Indian

League - comprising mainly of Punjabi Hindus was given a room to operate within its premises.

However, in overseas locations generally, migrant Sikhs did not integrate with indigenous people. In Canada and the United States, their work and life styles meant little interaction with mainstream society. They came in contact with immigration officials or city administrators - usually in situations of confrontation or enforcing regulations. Much of their social lives revolved around small commune style groups sharing cooking and accommodation.[6] In California, they went around farmlands of the Sacramento, San Joaquin and Imperial Valleys as itinerant or seasonal workers. In Oregon, Washington and across the border in British Columbia they were usually employed in lumber industries and had minimum contacts with white labourers or neighbours. They lived in groups, sharing cooking, lodging and displayed highly communitarian spirit supporting anyone unemployed. Nevertheless, they were also prone to petty factionalism. In 1909, room and board cost around $2 per week in Vancouver while a typical worker earned $9 for a week's work - hence savings were considerable. During 1909, when almost 1000 Sikh workers were out of work, a few applied for public relief as the government permitted. From manual work, many took on lumber and shingle mills and those working on railroads felt upgraded from land clearance to track and yard work. Often, mill work suited them with its all-year employment and they could work together getting along without having to know the English language.

The Sikhs' first inclination away from Punjab, was to build a *gurdwara* - in Vancouver this was soon established in 1907, while in earlier years a make-shift room in the Mill Side Factory was to function as a *Gurdwara*. In Stockton, California, a similar arrangement had worked while a Sikh Temple was formally established in 1912 and the following year another *Gurdwara* was established up in Victoria, B.C. These *gurdwaras* were venues for getting together to discuss community issues. With immigration laws tightening every year, talks within *gurdwaras* always turned to such community issues. The management committees of these *gurdwaras* had much prestige and were soon named as Khalsa Diwan Society of a particular location - and affiliated to the Chief Khalsa Diwan of Amritsar. This was the initiative of Teja Singh, an educated Sikh enrolled at Columbia University in New York, who was invited by the Vancouver *Gurdwara* Committee to guide them in their petitions over immigration matters. The Sikhs' limited command of English meant that they had to depend upon non-Sikhs' and these intermediaries were mostly Punjabi Hindus who could advise and draft their letters in the English language. They could also act as interpreters. However, there was also some distrust of clever *banias'* ways - a carry-over sentiment from the Punjab. This was one reason to call over Teja Singh and pay all his expenses - a fellow educated Sikh who could be a more reliable and trustworthy mediator.

In fact, both the US and Canada tightened their laws; Canada passed the new Orders in Council in March 1908 which in the next two years reduced Punjabi immigration to single figures. The United States immigration officers found

other ways to reduce the flow of Punjabis into San Francisco Port using arbitrary powers. However, incoming Sikhs were trying to settle in a racist and hostile social environment of these Pacific Coast States. Knowing arbitrary rules of immigration officers at two major ports of San Francisco and Vancouver, and seeing daily resentment of the white workers within factories was a shared experience of the Sikhs. This led to further developments - some Sikhs in California and others in Oregon mills formed associations to consider responding to such insults. Moreover, in British Columbia, their bitterness turned against immigration officers at Vancouver Port. In particular, the role of William Hopkinson and his hired henchmen within the Sikh community and Sikhs' own reactions were gradually evolving towards a confrontation while seeking redress through deputations and petitions. In suggesting various ways out of such miserable conditions, the role of Hindu intellectuals was also decisive.

Meeting of the Two Streams: A Combustible Material?

Altogether several hundred Sikhs interacted with a tiny number of other Indians from different regions of India, yet among the educated elite, Bengalis were most numerous, a few Punjabi Hindus and even fewer from other provinces. The first serious encounter of the Hindu elite with Sikh labourers can be dated around 1907 when Tarak Nath Das, a Bengali rebel was assigned to the US Immigration Service Office in Vancouver, BC. As a part of the job, he started living in Vancouver. Second and the most important of Hindu intellectuals was Har Dayal. Both Har Dayal and Tarak Nath Das developed more intimate connections with the Sikh migrants. Both deserve a short sketch of their lives prior to their interaction with the Sikhs.

Tarak Nath Das [1884-1958] was born in a village Majhipara thirty miles north of Calcutta. From his student days, he became part of *Anusilan Samiti* established in 1902. This *Samiti* began as an *Akhara* where Bengali students received training in drill, wrestling, sword and *lathi* playing.[7] The British portrayed the Bengalis with highly exaggerated stereotypes such as weak, deceitful, effeminate and cowardly. So many of the Bengalis had responded by taking up sporting and martial courses.[8] Tarak Nath Das was part of the new emerging elite who spoke for this devotion to India as mother as he wrote to a friend, "I am an instrument in the hand of Divine Mother."[9] Under surveillance of police, Tarak Nath Das first fled to Tokyo and then onwards to the United States *via* San Francesco in 1907. He enrolled himself at the University of California, Berkeley for a while but dropped out to do the US Civil Service Examination for interpreters. He was posted in Vancouver. Thus began his introduction to Sikh labourers in British Columbia, Canada.

Lala Har Dayal [1884-1939] was born in Delhi in a middle class Hindu household. His father Gauri Dayal Mathur was employed in the Patiala State. He studied at St. Stephen's College, Delhi. He gained fluency in Persian and Urdu as was the custom in those days among Hindu households. Then he got

enrolled at Punjab University, Lahore where he won a prestigious Oxford Scholarship to study Sanskrit and History. In Britain, he joined the circle of Shyamji Krishnavarma, the former Arya Samaj preacher, Sanskritist and ideologue of Indian independence at India House in London. Har Dayal discussed India's future with the likes of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the future ideologist of Hindu *volkisch* nationalism and who had inspired Madan Lal Dhingra to assassinate an imperial official Sir William Curzon Wylie. He also met V. Chattopadhyaya, his future colleague in the Hindu-German Plot during the First World War. Influenced by his colleagues at India House, Har Dayal resigned his scholarship in 1907 in his third year suddenly. He returned to India briefly in 1907. He abducted his own wife taking her to Oxford and sent her back impregnated in 1908 never to see his wife or daughter ever again.

However, his 'dramatic indignation' through resignation soon saw Har Dayal becoming a 'convinced indigenist' as Zachariah terms it.[10] Discarding Western dress in favour of an authentic dress of a Hindu *dhoti* and *kurta*, he denounced everything foreign. Holding such extreme views as 'cow is the flag of the Hindu nation' and to boycott Muslims, he started preaching strict dietary and bodily discipline including celibacy in the service of the nation, much before Gandhi was on the scene. Besides decrying the Congress leaders for accepting English patronage, he deliberated on the reasons of Hindu degeneration thus:

> 'The decay of the moral caliber of a nation paves the way for foreign domination which, in turn accelerates the process of decline by its very existence' …. The leaders and thinkers of a fallen race … sooner or later the un-subdued heart and mind of the sturdy race will seek its outward sign and symbol; it is embodiment in the world of fact, viz, a national state. The great duty of a subject people consists in guarding the Promethean spark of national pride and self-respect…lest it should be extinguished by the demoralizing influences that emanate from foreign rule'.

Har Dayal shifted from London to Paris thus becoming part of network of Madame Bhikhaji Cama, another Indian exile and political agitator. He edited his short lived journal *Bande Mataram.*[11] Soon, he left for Algiers and then to Martinique where Bhai Parmanand, an old acquaintance from Lahore and Arya Samajist preacher found him subsiding on boiled rice and potatoes, sleeping on floors and spending long hours on meditation. Hearing of his new scheme for a religion of Buddhist model, Bhai Parmanand persuaded him to visit the USA, where he swiftly acquainted himself with all sort of fads and philosophies and eventually met that 'malleable material' of Sikh workers - to inspire and mobilize them. Theirs was a lonely voice until a small Hindu elite met hundreds of Sikh subalterns on the Pacific Coast of North America, leading to the first revolutionary movement in the form of Ghadar Rebellion of 1914-15.

On Tarak Nath Das's Interaction with the Sikhs

Tarak Nath Das took up residence in Vancouver. He also mixed with the Punjabis and quickly grasped their background: ex-soldiers and single men working in lumber mills around the city. This coincided with the expulsion of Sikh workers from the Bellingham mills in early 1907 amidst much anger and insecurity, with most Punjabis forced to move from the State of Washington back to Vancouver. Being Bengali, Tarak Nath Das, with little fluency in Punjabi tried to mingle with some English knowing Sikhs and Punjabi Hindus, including among them Harnam Singh Sahri, Ram Nath Puri and G.D. Kumar. Das was already familiar with Ram Nath Puri - a Hindu from Lahore district who acted as an interpreter to the Sikhs arriving in California. Ram Nath Puri had started an India Association in San Francisco in early 1907, with branches in Vancouver and Astoria. He also started a lithographed Urdu paper *Circular-i-Azadi* first from San Francisco and then from Oakland but it ceased publication in 1908. He preached boycott of government laws and services in India linking them to immigration and racist policies abroad. As *Circular-i-Azadi* ceased publication, Tarak Nath Das started his *Free Hindusthan* in 1908, taking keen interest in local Sikh politics and soon learning of their background as soldiers. In the September 1909 issue of *Free Hindusthan*, he highlighted the first sign of discontent among these ex-soldiers. Under the heading 'The Awakening of the Sikhs', the paper reported:

> The Sikh soldiery is known as the backbone of the British Empire in India. It is gratifying to know that the Sikhs are awakening to the sense that they are nothing better than slaves, and are serving the British Government to put our mother country in perpetual slavery. On October 3rd 1909, a very interesting incident took place in the Sikh Temple of Vancouver, B.C. Canada. One Sardar Natha Singh stood up before the assembly and humbly pleaded for the deplorable condition of our countrymen in India and other parts of the world, especially in the British colonies. In conclusion, he presented a resolution to the following effect: 'Resolved that no member of the Executive Committee of the Sikh Temple should wear any kind of medals, buttons, uniforms or insignia which may signify that the position of the party wearing the article is nothing but a slave to the British supremacy'.

In January 1910, Tarak Nath Das joined hands with G. D. Kumar whom he knew from his Calcutta days. Kumar had arrived in Vancouver in October 1907 and opened a grocery store. Kumar launched a Punjabi paper *Swadesh Sewak* from Vancouver in 1910 and opened *Swadesh Sewak Home* at 1632, 2nd Avenue West, Fairview, Vancouver - where Das started English classes for Sikh workers. However, the Government banned the paper in March 1911, noting how its appeal in 'Sikhs' own language' could be picked up by Sikh soldiers and hence

was more dangerous than Das's English paper. By 1912, Tarak Nath Das had relocated himself to Washington and then toured around California.

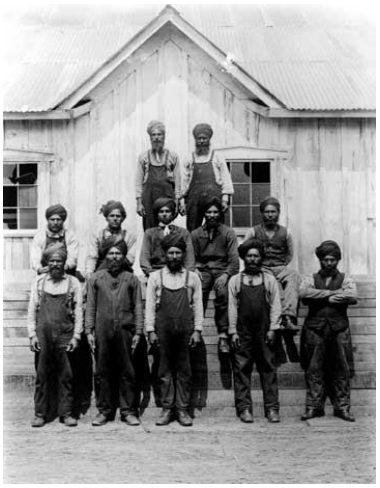
The Sikh farm workers in California lived more isolated lives. They had only occasional contacts with the educated Indian elite. As an example of such interaction, Charan Singh Sandhu, a typical Sikh farm worker who went around all over California in search of work has left an interesting memoir. He noted how Das turned up one day in Fresno in early 1913 as they were working in Oxnard to grow sugar-beet for a nearby sugar mill.[12] 'This *babu* was employed as a bilingual by the mill manager - to deal with the US workers. As he distributed wages, one day - there was a dollar short and without hesitation, he put in on his own - this won our confidence and we praised him.' Sandhu tells of an amusing tale of how some Pathan and Muslim farmworkers picked up their *hookas* and walked into town. One day, some Americans smashed their *hookas* and tore down their turbans. Tarak Nath Das went into the town and standing on a platform he spoke to the White people, we heard with surprise that a few of them applauded him. Das would often mingle with us, 'tie a turban as if he was an illiterate Punjabi.' 'He also tried to speak Punjabi even in our accent and on some days he would lecture us. By the end of 1913, Tarak Nath Das had departed as we were working around Bakersfield'.[13]

Other Mediators

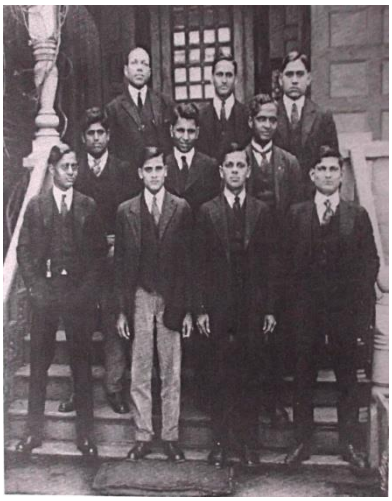
By the beginning of 1914, Sandhu recalls there were more regular contacts with such speakers who talked of 'India's slavery' and how our woes are due to that. He further writes, 'In March, some people came from San Francisco for funds. We had saved money from asparagus and melon crops; fifteen of us, each contributed five dollars each. Here Ram Chandra Brahmin came to lecture us.' Then we left for Fresno for grape-picking, where Sohan Lal Pathak joined us - he must be less than 90 pounds, a lean man but proved quick in grape-picking. Rate of picking was 2.5 cents for 25 pounds of Muscat grapes; 100 trays meant 2.5 dollars. Ram Chandra Brahman informed us that the war has begun. During our free time, we all talked of the War. As the *Ghadar* weekly would arrive, we all listened to it being read by someone fluent and often stop him with queries. Sandhu also tells of a meeting in Stockton which reveal the nature of attitudes and sensitivity among Sikh workers towards the educated elite:

> 'We all went there keenly. There people questioned Ram Chandra about the funds and how he had used them. He would hesitate but had some Muslims as supporters around, Sundar Singh and Godha Ram too. Gobind Behrai Lal spoke in high temper. Kesar Singh Kirtiwal thrashed him right outside the hall. As the meeting formally started, Lal gave his account of how someone had misbehaved with him. On hearing this story, Bishan Singh stood up saying, 'O what are you complaining? I was lashed with a burning stick by Atma Singh Bhadana, and you are complaining of gentle slaps! On hearing

this, the whole audience erupted into laughter, while Ram Chandra and Lal felt ashamed. Soon after the meeting Pundit rushed out, obviously in angry mood, with his entourage.[14]



Sikh Mill Workers at the Northern Pacific Lumber Company, Barnet, British Columbia, 1905, Vancouver Public Library, VPL#7641.



Sikh students at UC Berkley, Berkeley, California 1912-13?

A few educated Sikhs like Kartar Singh and Sundar Singh also tried their hands at journalism - publishing *Pardeshi Khalsa* in 1910, the *Aryan* in 1911 and *Sansar* in 1912. Although their tone was different from those of Tarak Nath Das and G.D. Kumar but in reprinting some of Vancouver press' disparaging remarks on the Sikhs highlighted white men's prejudices effectively. The

government report noted this example in March-April issue of *Aryan* which reproduced the stereotyped image of the Sikhs from an English newspaper of Vancouver as:

> The smoke coloured Hindu, exotic, unmixable, picturesque, a languid worker and a refuge for fleas, we will always have with us, but we won't want any more of him. …These Sikhs are far too obtrusive…. .

Like Hong Kong and Shanghai, Sikh migrants' traditional leadership was vested in a newly acquired Sikh temple, Vancouver at 2nd Avenue and its proceedings illustrate the domination of ex-army men. Bhag Singh as its President, Balwant Singh as a granthi of the *Gurdwara* were both ex-army men for whom a client-patron relationship with their English officers was natural one. Ordinary Sikhs would bring their issues to the *Gurdwara* and that meant writing to the officials, or asking someone to be an interpreter. In writing such petitions in English, they had to depend on Punjabi Hindus - whom they half-trusted from habit and customary inclinations. In 1908, on hearing that an educated Sikh is in New York, they sent a message to Teja Singh who was enrolled at Columbia University. Teja Singh soon reached Vancouver and immediately impressed them with his qualifications and religious zeal. Exceptionally, he was accompanied by his wife and a child and soon started playing a major role in Sikh affairs. Being educated and sophisticated as the best among the Hindu elite, Teja Singh was, however, inclined towards a different trajectory for Sikh grievances.[15] He did not speak of an imagined Indian nation but talked directly to fellow Sikhs in their own language, sharing the same vocabulary of common religious scriptures, history and traditions. His interaction was far deeper than the outsiders' advice. He was guided by Singh Sabha ideology which stressed the community's predominant role as soldiers of the Empire to gain state patronage and concessions. Competing with the two dominant communities of Punjab, the Muslims and the Hindus, the Sikh elite in Punjab had adopted the pragmatic strategy of assuring loyalty in exchange for British administration's promise of protection of Sikh interests.

As a first act of his arrival, Teja Singh formally incorporated the management of the Sikh Temple as Khalsa Diwan Society. He then rejected the Honduras proposal raised by the Canadian Government to resettle Sikhs there. With his vision of an independent and self-supporting community, he registered Guru Nanak Mining and Trust Company with its office in the Sikh Temple. Often on tour to Sikh residence camps in Washington, Oregon and California he was accompanied by Balwant Singh. They impressed upon clean shaven Sikhs to become *amritdhari*. He was instrumental in establishing the Stockton *Gurdwara* by persuading Jawala Singh, Vasakha Singh and others to contribute land towards it and help with construction. He also met Har Dayal several times. Both were involved in the selection process of the Guru Gobind Singh Scholarships Scheme floated by Jawala Singh. As meeting of different minds, Teja Singh and Har Dayal had differences. Jawala Singh mentions a dispute

between them over the scholarship fund as also on the functioning of the guest house for students in Berkeley which was funded by the Stockton Sikh Temple. In addition, Teja Singh and Tara Singh - *granthi* (Sikh priest) of Stockton *gurdwara* differed over the idea of religious education for students - while Jawala Singh mediated between them.

Teja Singh organized public lectures and challenged the Canadian media in brandishing the Sikhs as a burden on the state. While Tarak Nath Das asked the Sikhs to shed their pro-British attitudes, and declare their defiance openly, Teja Singh resented Tarak Nath Das's meddling in Sikh affairs. Both Tarak Nath Das and Rahim Hussain were baffled by what newspapers called the 'mystic power' of Teja Singh on the Sikhs. However, there remained tension between the two respective approaches. Unlike Tarak Nath Das, who would create 'paper' associations wherever he went by asking one or two Americans to be its patrons, Teja Singh was building 'real' institutions. The United India League dominated by Punjabi Hindus viewed Teja Singh and orthodox Sikhs as 'fanatic' as the latter emphasized religious tradition as an important factor for building community solidarity, and showed little enthusiasm for some Hindus blaming British rule for all their ills abroad.

However, the Khalsa Diwan Society and United India League were drawn together as Canada imposed more stringent immigration rules. From 1910 onwards until the arrival of Komagata Maru, there were spectacular battles with immigration authorities which often saw Bhag Singh and Rahim Hussain together on common platforms. Not only was a continuous journey clause with a $200 requirement was imposed, it became standard practice on the part of immigration officials in Vancouver not to readmit those who went back to visit their families. Therefore, a major fear gripped the community leaders as it was felt that those who had returned to see or bring their wives and children may not be re-admitted. This created much panic within the community. On 24 September 1911, a mass meeting was held at the Sikh Temple to raise money for a delegation to Ottawa. Sunder Singh, Teja Singh, Raja Singh and Revd. L. W. Hall met Robert Roger, the new Conservative Minister of the Interior in Ottawa. Teja Singh on return from the meeting reported how the minister heard their plea but did not give any promise for admission of families of legal residents. The mission was, obviously, unsuccessful.

Almost all prominent leaders had faced deportation orders; Hussain Rahim had won the right to stay on a writ of *Habeas Corpus*. Sundar Singh, in August 1911 and Hira Singh, who had brought his wife and child, were admitted through such a grace after a vigorous campaign and the same had happened with Uday Ram's wife. This meant several petitions were sent to Lord Crewe, the then Secretary of the State for India. Besides these petitions, there were local protests or approaches to the Governor General and the Minister of the Interior. Bhag Singh and Balwant Singh, both prominent members of the community, were refused tickets in Calcutta. They had to sail to Hong Kong instead and tried to buy tickets there. Even as Canadian residents they could not obtain tickets for Vancouver and felt stranded with their families along with another party of 18

men returning from Hong Kong. In desperation, they bought ticket for San Francisco but on arrival they were refused admission. They had to return to Hong Kong. On January 12, 1912, when Bhag Singh and Balwant Singh finally arrived in Vancouver across *Monteagle*, their wives and children were immediately held with the purpose of deportation. The threat posed by this deportation at once rallied the community and put them in a militant mood. Balwant Singh and Bhag Singh were grass-root leaders who commanded great respect among the Sikhs and who had served in the British Indian army with distinction. The Sunday congregation at the Temple witnessed emotional outbursts with many ordinary Sikhs calling for the heads of immigration officers. The spy network of Hopkinson gauged this temperature and persuaded even H. H. Stevens, the local M.P. and a rabid hater of South Asians, to approach the Minister of Interior and to allow entry to their families 'without making it a precedent'. A four month long campaign, however, from January to 23 May 1912, to allow wives and children to be admitted, meant the issue was discussed at all places, Punjab, India, London and Ottawa.

These immigration issues lurked large among Sikh grievances for which Teja Singh could offer no remedy. In this turmoil, Teja Singh seemed to have quickly lost his standing within the community, as later cases proved to be government gestures based empty promises. By 1912, opinion of the moderate Sikh leadership and the Punjabi community at large began to change towards a radical direction - shedding all faith in the goodwill of the British rulers' concern for Sikhs. Teja Singh himself felt let down by both sides, by the rashness among Sikhs and the non-responsive stance adopted by British and Canadian government officials. He himself was under surveillance - Hopkinson's methods were too crude to distinguish the fine shades of opinion among the East Indians. Thus, several Sikh were on the edge of becoming militants not because the Hindu elite, as represented by Tarak Nath Das, Ram Nath Puri and G. D. Kumar et al., was making arguments for militancy but because of a storm of continuous embarrassments they were suffering from. By mid-1912, Teja Singh decided to leave Vancouver *via* London where he also managed to persuade a small community of Sikhs, as also the Maharajah of Patiala, to establish a *gurdwara*.[16]

The changed temper within the community was exhibited by a formal boycott of His Royal Highness the Governor-General of Canada's visit to Vancouver on 18th September 1912. The mayor of Vancouver had invited the Khalsa Diwan Society to attend and also for ex-Sikh soldiers to participate in a public parade. However, Bhag Singh, as president of the Society, declined saying; 'on many reasonable grounds which are already known to the city officials and Immigration Department the retired soldiers will not attend the review.' As the news and publicity spread of Governor General's arrival many Sikhs did indeed mingle in the crowd wearing their medals, but none participated in the formal parade. Instead, at New Westminster, a loyal address was presented to His Royal Highness by local Sikhs - in association with some Sikhs from Vancouver. Thus the split within the community was all apparent

and out in public. Moreover, even at this stage, government reports still attributed Sikhs' rising resentment to outsiders' influence;

> 'The Sikhs were evidently not generally disaffected but strenuous efforts were now being made to turn their natural resentment against the Canadian immigration laws into active hostility to the British Government'.

A further episode added to this volatile scene as Bhai Bhagwan Singh arrived in Vancouver in June 1913. His passage to Vancouver through devious means has invited little elaboration and is worthy of investigation. It was Bela Singh, Hopkinson's paid Sikh informer, who brought him over purposely to use Bhagwan Singh's reputation to carve out a new leadership of the Khalsa Diwan Society.[17] But Bhagwan Singh could not be directed and he instead tried to grab the community newspaper, leading to a bitter acrimony amongst the Sikhs. He further isolated some moderate Sikhs who had acquired an office for *Sansar* monthly. Perhaps on Bhagwan Singh's instigation, this office was set on fire. An embarrassed Hopkinson soon recommended his deportation and got him arrested for illegally entering Canada under a false name - something Hopkinson's office had obviously overlooked earlier. The case of Bhagwan Singh and some other 39 Sikhs detained for deportation raised bitter talk within the *gurdwara*. As usual, the KDS hired legal advisors to obtain courts' assistance. With a view to hold a protest, some 800 men gathered in the Dominion Hall of Vancouver to condemn this move by the immigration department. The community-paid lawyers tried to get them released on *hebeas corpus* but Bhagwan Singh was forcibly deported even as a writ of *hebeas corpus* was secured from the British Columbia Court. Soon a pamphlet in Punjabi language, 'Tyranny, Tyranny' attacking the deportation of Bhagwan Singh was circulating along the Pacific Coast Sikh community. Bhagwan Singh himself wrote a melodramatic poem saying farewell to Vancouver's Indian community only to jump ship in Japan. He soon resurfaced back in San Francisco heading for the Ghadar office. By then, the Ghadar newspaper was in circulation and started carrying regular poems from Bhagwan Singh. Notably, it was Bhagwan Singh alone who portrayed India as a crying mother in shackles - while the subject of most other contributions by Sikh workers were broadly to appeal to Sikhs' bravery, martyrdom tradition and mobilization against the scheming British who have divided and betrayed us.'[18]

With the more radical elements in ascendancy, but with lingering faith in deputations, the KDS suggested another delegation, this time direct to London and India. Balwant Singh, Nand Singh Sihra and Narain Singh sailed bypassing Ottawa to appeal directly to the British Government in London and Delhi. In London, the Secretary of State simply refused to grant an interview to the delegates saying that the Canadian restrictions were a Canadian matter - 'despite the fact that British interests in limiting the growth of Indian communities in western countries was served by them'.[19] Sir John Anderson, Under Secretary of State for the Colonies granted an informal interview only to emphasize how

the matter was outside British jurisdiction. The delegation went on to Punjab, holding meetings at Lahore. It met some Congress leaders to impress upon them this as an Indian issue. They also met the Punjab Governor and the Governor-General Lord Hardinge and briefed the Punjabi press regarding their plight in Canada.[20]

The final straw which ended their hope in petitions and led them, or some of them to act, was the fate of the *Komagata Maru* passengers. Gurdit Singh, a Majhail Sikh proclaiming an immense faith in the British sense of justice and what he also felt was a 'special place of Sikhism in the Empire' given Sikhs were deployed in various British colonies and defending their outposts, chartered a ship named *Komagata Maru* to take 376 Punjabi passengers from Hong Kong to Vancouver. He was greeted with unbelievable hostility when the ship arrived on the Vancouver harbour; all usual procedures for a ship charterer were kept in abeyance by immigration officials and his passengers humiliated in all sort of petty ways for over two months. With several parleys and delayed tactics, including a bid to starve the passengers, Canada's highest court endorsed the state's ad hoc rules to deny entry to passengers. The Government sent out a navy ship and just stopped short of shooting the passengers for fear of its repercussions in India. Handing over the *Komagata Maru* to British authorities on the sea, it was directed to anchor at Budge Budge near Calcutta where on 28 September 1914 the final showdown meant shooting 20 passengers dead by the security forces. As the *Komagata Maru* was turning back, hundreds of Sikh workers in British Columbia made up their minds to return and booked their passages back. Soon several Vancouver Sikhs acquired arms and took on government spies. They murdered two associates of Bela Singh - and finally Mewa Singh killed Hopkinson during the trial of his paid agent Bela Singh. Though Canada has offered 'regret and reconciliation' over this episode, and it might please contemporary Canadian Sikhs but for their forefathers, the choices were stark; stay put and work, make a trip to Punjab but there was no guarantee you will be re-admitted much less bring your family along.

On Har Dyal's Interaction with the Sikhs

In parallel to the intense drama in Vancouver, British Columbia, Sikh workers of California and Oregon also joined in the exodus to Punjab. They were sailing voluntarily from San Francisco blaring out a rebellion through the *Ghadar* newspaper. Here the call for return and offer to fight against the mighty British Empire had come from a small number of the Hindu elite and among them Har Dayal was a major ideologue of this strategy. Several Sikhs have left an account of their impressions of Har Dayal's intermingling with them. First we turn to Jawala Singh's sketches.

Jawala Singh had floated the idea of Guru Gobind Singh Scholarships with Har Dayal and Teja Singh who negotiated with the University of California's President Bernard. The latter appointed Dr. Arthur Pope as Chairman of the Selection Committee. Six students were selected: Chenchiah from Madras,

Nand Singh Sihra from Bombay, U. R. Kokut Noor from Poona, Gian Gingh Sindhi from Sind, Mul Singh from Lahore Medical College and sixth was Govind Behari Lal from Delhi.[21] In addition, Dr. Pope announced a scholarship for another student, Mr. Pandey or Pandia (or Pandion as named in official files) –a Christian from Madras. Gian Singh and Mul Singh could not come. Students had arrived in summer of 1912. Jawala Singh tells of Har Dayal's handling of scholarship money in his account:

> I gave $600 to Har Dayal along with ration worth of $200 for scholars who arrived in Berkeley. I felt I need not worry for a year now. Condition of scholarship had stipulated that eight monthly payments were to be paid. During four month holidays students were to work on a farm, mine or elsewhere. But Har Dayal had other ideas with money; he bought brand new furniture, 11 beds along with furnishings. This was for accommodation of Mukandi Lal, Shivdev Singh, Kedar Nath, Pandia and Shanti Lal alongside four scholars. Har Dayal also started living there so his was 10th bed and a spare bed was for any guest. Har Dayal spent this money rather lavishly and sooner.

He had already formed a S*abha*, or an association in February 1912 with five of his friends.[22] In late 1912, as Jawala Singh's income from farm fell due to slump in potato prices, he undertook a tour of Sikh camps taking with him Nand Singh Sihra, a student he had sponsored at Berkeley. They came down to Oregon and met Kartar Singh Sarabha, Kesar Singh Thatgarh working there and met Sohan Singh Bhakna working at the next mill. They then crossed the border to Vancouver for raising funds without much success. There he advised the KDS about a delegation which planned to visit London and India. Parallel to Canadian developments, similar deliberations were taking place in California and Oregon.

Har Dayal's California life was a radical change from the depressing scenario of London and Paris where after a while he had found the quarrelsome company of other Indian elite members rather stifling. Here shutting between Stanford, San Francisco and Berkeley, he mingled with an assemblage of Russians, Poles and other Socialists who drilled lessons about printing, publishing and distributing secret revolutionary literature and instructed in the method of recruiting, training and organizing youth. Busy among progressive intellectual gatherings and labour organizations, such outfits as monthly William Morris Circle where "burning themes of the changing human relationships and ideologies of the first decade of the 20th century were tossed about". There the topics under discussion ranged from those advocating "free love, equality of women, of labour, the desirability of political bombings and assassinations and so on".[23] He became prominent in the International Radical Club, where he became founder and secretary for the Oakland Branch, [also known as International Radical Communist Anarchist Club] under surveillance by US intelligence.[24] Meeting monthly for dinner often at one of San Francisco's

many excellent Italian restaurants, according to Govind Lal, they discussed a variety of different subjects led by distinguished experts on topics in the natural or social sciences. Har Dayal produced each week some notable speaker [such a John Reed on one occasion] followed by discussions - an ideal platform for dissenters to work off steam or vent feelings.

However, he wrote much but also spent a lot of time taking up sorts of fads and philosophies prevalent in campuses of Stanford and Berkeley. Chenchiah is a good guide to Har Dayal's life style and company "among the numerous revolutionary societies which were then functioning in … San Francisco."[25] They mixed with Russian, Irish, Japanese, Turkish, and Chinese groups - whose leading figures regarded Har Dayal as a 'great friend, philosopher and guide' and sought him out as a 'political revolutionary who worked for the liberation of many countries from the clutches of feudalism and imperialism'.[26] Quickly declaring himself as an atheist, also lauding Hindu philosophical systems while praising 'western' civilizations, he became an advocate of 'free love' and of anarchism. For a while, he also acquired a position of Professor at Stanford University as instructor in Sanskrit and Eastern philosophy. He resigned the post in October 1912 to launch a further enterprise of the Fraternity of the Red Flag inviting all 'Radical Comrades to join it under its eight rules spelled out in detail'.[27] Moreover, he found time to publish an essay on Marx[28] and then developed an association with Industrial Workers of the World [IWW] known as Wobblies.

In the meantime, students at Berkeley campus were divided into two camps - a small number called the Loyalists thought of inaugurating the Young Indian Association. Inviting a Professor Henry Morse Stephens for the occasion, the meeting dissolved in a shouting match as Har Dayal and his followers protested. A week later another meeting was organized to answer Stephens' points under the banner of Hindu National Association - where Tarak Nath Das, Behari Lal refuted Stephens' arguments with Har Dayal, summing the debate as, 'Empires are relics of barbarism and must disappear in the course of social evolution'.[29] What brought him back to Indian students and eventually Sikh workers was, however, the sudden news in December 1912 from Delhi where a bomb was thrown at Lord Hardinge during a procession. Bihari Lal calls it a day of reckoning as 'Har Dayal turned around so excited as to speak eloquent Urdu reciting a couplet for Mir and then dashed off a pamphlet under the title '*Yugantar*.'[30] Soon, further news brought up the name of Har Dayal's close friends, including among them Amir Chand, connected with the 'bomb conspiracy.' Bihari Lal captures the impact of this news upon Har Dayal saying henceforth 'he could never return to India and must do everything from abroad.'[31]

Thus, in a sudden turnaround, Har Dayal remembered Sikh labourers whom he had never taken on board seriously despite their high regard for him and even after the agreement over the scholarship scheme funded by Jawala Singh in early 1912. Since then, he had only sporadic parleys with them - occasional contacts along with Teja Singh at Stockton or nearby Holtville. Through his contact with

Kanshi Ram, he made several visits to Sikh camps. By the year 1912, issues confronting Canadian Sikhs, along with the special difficulties they faced in the US, were keenly discussed through frequent exchanges of visitors across the border. At a meeting in Portland in early 1913, the Hindustani Association of Pacific Coast was formed with Sohan Singh Bhakna as President, G. D. Kumar Secretary and Kanshi Ram as Treasurer. Another branch was established at Astoria where the Monark Mill had closed for the winter season. Then a meeting was held at Wana in Washington State where Har Dayal was present. With such enthusiasm shown around by mill workers, it was agreed to call a major meeting at Astoria on April 21 1913 with representatives from Astoria, Portland, John Day, St. Johns, Bridal Veil, Winans, and Linnton. It was in this meeting that Har Dayal was selected Secretary of the new Hindustani Association of the Pacific Coast.[32]

Furthermore, Sohan Singh Bhakna fills some gaps of Har Dayal's interaction with the Sikhs in 1913. 'From April to October of 1913, Har Dayal remained dormant' despite initial promise at his Astoria talk. When reminded through a letter, Har Dayal replied, 'my health is not good enough to start a paper. And you could ask someone else to do this job.' When Bhakna beckoned him saying 'you were first to complain of complacency regarding workers' patriotism, now are you afraid of working for the country?' Har Dayal in his next letter asked for money - as a proof of workers' commitment. As the amount was duly sent, Har Dayal made arrangements to launch a paper in San Francisco. This means that from mid-1913, he must have devoted considerable amount of time to it, thinking about the paper, the press machine etc., and getting somebody's help in leasing the building at 436 Hill Street, San Francisco as home of the paper. The first issue of the *Ghadar* appeared on 1st November 1913 in Urdu and soon a Gurmukhi version was launched. From November 1913 to March 1914, Har Dayal must have devoted considerable time for the *Ghadar* newspaper giving it a crucial direction and putting it in a standard format. In these five months, he seemed to have written much of it or chose material and went over all of its columns. Of its four handwritten pages, the first page mast declared it to be enemy of the British raj, a column carried statistics of ruins inflicted by the British rule in India. Soon a serial publication of Savarkar's 1857 mutiny appeared as a regular feature on the last page. The middle pages carried commentary upon news on Indian events, a denunciation of various Congress leaders, and of course an inspiring poem written by 'our Sikh workers'. At the first anniversary of the bomb, in December 1913 issue on *kesari* coloured paper he printed a special article *Shabash* exhorting;

> 'Don't sit there, death hovers near, kill or be killed. Do a great deed, before you pass on.' Why not die for a cause, since one dies anyhow. Blessed is the death of the man who suffers martyrdom for the sake of freedom' [33]

Praising violence Har Dayal cited the role of Russian anarchists, and elaborated on how undemocratic regimes understand the language of violence. India with

its 'bold, glorious and manly virtues' was treated like a cowardice nation by the British. Only violence can goad the powerful into concession, reform or amelioration and drew parallels with China where under Sun Yat Sen's command they overthrew an empire from a diasporic location only a year back, and Mexico was experiencing a similar revolutionary violence.

Mixing with workers at the Ghadar office, everyone was duly impressed by Har Dayal's simple life style, 'when he was given 15 dollars besides clothes and food, he would spend only 5 dollars out of it returning the rest for Ghadar funds.' In March 1914, Har Dayal was faced with a police warrant - with charges of anarchism under the US law of deportation, which still applied within 3 years of entry and to anyone 'belonging to any revolutionary society.' 'Flanked by 200 highly demonstrative Indians' as *San Francisco Chronicle* reported, Har Dayal was taken to Angel Island Immigration Center. Although his solicitor thought otherwise, the police pushed for his deportation. Har Dayal jumped bail of 500 dollars raised by the Ghadar office. He sailed for Switzerland and from there to Turkey and Germany, in the process becoming disillusioned with the revolutionary strategy he had propagated in the *Ghadar*. While making painful efforts to return to India, his later life was more or less devoted to writing. It seems strange that he never reflected on his Californian interaction with the Sikhs. Surely, he had heard of the failed Ghadar venture as well as of their suffering through executions and long jail sentences. But the Sikhs had not forgotten him and made various judgments.[34] Among those was Sohan Singh Bhakna, President of the Party and who had worked closely with him. Bhakna writes, while 'his intellect and dedication was beyond doubt, but the same was not true of his resolve'. Bhakna also reinforces the image of a detached elite when he describes him as 'all talk, no action' kind of fellow. He recounts how a pistol was bought for Har Dayal's passage to New York, but he could not load it. He made a joke about it: "you talk of revolution round the globe, and you scarcely know how to shoot!" Har Dayal joined the laughter but handed back the pistol.[35] Bhakna indicts Har Dayal and presumably other Hindu intellectuals for their prejudice against Muslims, which meant Muslim workers were generally wary and only 'a small number supported us financially or participated.' He further traces this to discriminatory practices over scholarship money. For instance when a Muslim student Mahmood from Madras State was refused scholarship he states:

> 'Although I am not sure whether it was Har Dayal's decision in refusing that scholarship, but I can certainly say this; a boy from Delhi was given scholarship at the recommendation of Har Dayal - it was far worse choice. To award scholarship for that fellow was to throw valuable money down the drain as he never took any interest in patriotic duties. He was a selfish fellow. I felt sorry at the choice of Har Dayal…'[36]

Coming to a more serious assessment, Bhakna rebuts those who have put the onus on Har Dayal to be the chief architect of the Party. He observes:

> Those who thought Ghadar Party will wither with the departure of Har Dayal were surprised. *Ghadar* which was published in Urdu and Punjabi…now started publishing in Gujarati and Hindi too. They did not know that Har Dayal was just editor and he was incapable of anything else. In place of Har Dayal, Ram Chandra became editor, while Khem Chander carried on as Gujarati language editor.[37]

Bhakna sums up the caliber of Har Dayal in the following words;

> I worked with him and turned to assess his ability and intellect and in my view he was simply incapable of doing any practical work and lacked directing others for such work. He was just a philosopher, implementing that philosophy was beyond him.[38]

How far di Har Dayal's essays or commentary in the *Ghadar* weekly inspire them? And what was his role as a prominent leader of the Ghadar party? Bhakna takes up this question squarely and answers as follows:[39]

> The second question is who was the principal instructor for Indians in America for liberation of India? People rely on hearing the well-known tale how the freedom movement was all inspired by Lala Har Dayal. But this is wrong. Reality is known to people who were close to the party…. to say Har Dayal was the founder of Ghadar Party is plain ignorance. … I have already talked of how Har Dayal alienated Muslims and Sikhs and how they regarded him as such. … Sure his essays which appeared in Ghadar inspired readers, but organization is more than *josh* [emotions]. In addition to this, Har Dayal did nothing for the party, he never took part in any organizational matter, nor he knew how to. In my opinion, he simply could not do this sort of work.

Here Harnam Singh Tundilaat also testifies to Har Dayal's role and his experience of working with him. He remembers how it felt when discussing that Har Dayal might be the target of kidnap or an assassination attempt and should be provided security. Tundilaat was asked to be his guard - this was stated by Bhakna in a special letter in October 1913. On 1st November, Tundilaat reached San Francisco and undertook this job and stayed most of the time with Har Dayal, at least until 25 March when he was given notice of arrest as he entered the Union Hall for a lecture. Harnam Singh Tundilaat endorses Bhakna's view regarding the role of Har Dayal in the organization of the party. He says;

> The British government had imagined that the root cause of the rebellious party was Har Dayal, once he is removed it will fall into pieces, but this was a serious miscalculation. In the US, the establishment of the Ghadar party, Ghadar press,

> Ghadar newspaper, Yugantar Ashram, this was all due to Indians, in particular of Punjabis. If they had not become ready to fight against the injustice and repression of the British government, not even dozen leaders like Har Dayal could make this up. However, it does not mean Har Dyal had no role. Among Indians living in the U.S., who had become aware of the value of freedom and their slavery in Hindustan, the credit to guide their indignation into the right channel does belong to Lala Har Dayal.

Sohan Singh Bhakna also addresses the question how workers were inspired to undertake this task. Here were several hundred Sikhs sailing from the West Coast of North America with an open declaration to wage a violent struggle. So, the issue is why they collectively felt such an acute need for return, apart from such coaxing by Har Dayal and others through the weekly newspaper? If it was not the inspiration of Har Dayal - what was it that brought them back to their homes in Punjab? This is an issue neither Bhakna nor historians of the Ghadar movement address properly. Bhakna does point out the source of this inspiration was Ghadar *poetry* - which he attributes to fellow Punjabi workers in the following:

> Then the part which inspired readers was that section of *Ghadar* where poems appeared. These were published *Ghadar di Goonj* [Echoes of Freedom]. These poems had nothing to do with Har Dayal, these were either sent in by workers at large or composed by Harnam Singh Laat, who worked in the Ghadar Ashram. So we cannot take that the party owed its origin to just one person.

Tundilaat wrote such poetry extensively particularly in the early months of the paper as he lived in the Yugantar Ashram. He was writing even after he was admitted to hospital after his hand was nearly blown off while experimenting with bomb ingredients. This would be late July when Sikh workers' enthusiasm for revolution had expanded to taking on such experiments. He stayed two months in Stockton hospital under a false name during August-September 1914. Recuperating, he made time to compose his poetry and sent it for publication in the *Ghadar* weekly. As he exhorted in his poems, 'let us not lose the opportunity and return to create Ghadar'. As soon as he came out of hospital, he decided to sail back. Even when others thought he could be more useful in the Ghadar office, he felt 'it pinched my conscience that asking others to return, here I seemed to save my skin by staying behind - I decided to leave'.

The above discussion points towards a new consciousness among West Coast Sikhs and as such this was a new departure in their collective identification with India. Coupled with their aim of organizing a diasporic challenge to the mighty British Empire, the Ghadar poetry and prose can be best read as a Sikh manifesto - a proposition which is elaborated in Tatla (2013). It

is indeed crucial to see the impact of folklore, history and culture and as some commentators rightly suggest, Ghadar poetry became a vehicle for mobilization. However, these commentators have not paid close attention to the contents of such poems or poets' skillful use of familiar phraseology from the Sikh past.[40] This poetry embodied workers' yearnings and hopes as also their frustrations abroad and requires a detailed analysis as to its impact upon their minds. During the collective reading of *Ghadar* weekly, while working on remote farms or in lunch breaks at lumber mills lands, they would discuss news and ask the reader to recite the poem appearing in that issue.

Rejecting the British administrators who they thought were their allies in redressing their grievances, it made sense to them to cooperate with people of other regions of India, the Bengalis and Punjabi Hindus who were living among them and shared their problems and issues. Thus, a strong sense of humiliation also meant opening themselves up to a wider struggle - stressing a larger community of Hindustanis. It was the British Empire which defined a new Hindustani nationality and geographical identity - all people of the Indian subcontinent were under one ruler - and they were being treated badly, indeed in one angry version of it, 'as slaves.' Thus being Sikhs under the British Empire might have had a different connotation and understanding at another place or time, on the West Coast of America, however, they shared the same sense of humiliation as other people of India. The new face of British rule, in a sense, demanded on them to forsake their religious identity in favour of a larger Hindustani *qaumic* identity. They had seen how emphasis upon the Sikh *qaum* in seeking concessions from British rulers was becoming progressively meaningless. It was time to look beyond Punjab - especially towards Bengal and then to forge alliance with other regions and their peoples. Surprisingly, this included all of Muslims and Pathans - with whom the community had a long history and memory of attrition and hostilities. The above discussion points towards a new consciousness among West Coast Sikhs. This was a new departure in their collective identification with India. Coupled with their aim of organizing a diasporic challenge to the mighty British Empire, Ghadar poetry and prose can be read as a new process of subject people's understanding of their masters.

On the Pacific Coast of North America, Sikhs' social situation played a crucial part. They had hoped to settle, buy land, and eventually bring their families. What they faced, instead, were more stringent measures being adopted by immigration authorities in both the countries. Having fought through petitions and appeals to the British authorities, they had the difficult option to return. Bhakna, for example, goes in some detail about Sikhs' history abroad. As they reached the US, they confronted the issue in stark reality where, for the first time, they felt the glow of freedom as well the stigma of slavery in equal measure. Having lived among Americans, they also learnt to value freedom loving it. As workers, they were insulted and kicked around by other white workers. While seeking the assistance of the British consuls to address their grievances, they came to realize that it was of no use. Indeed, it was the British

rule that was the root cause of their humiliation abroad.[41] Having understood this, Indians set aside differences based upon caste and religion. Everyone, be they believers or not, Sikh, Hindu, Muslim or Christian, all were to unite for a common purpose. In an open panel, they debated these issues and agreed to unite for 'freedom and equality.'[42] Bhakna also contrasts the impact of foreign rule upon workers and educated Indians. 'Those of our leaders who go to England hardly know the kind of treatment others get in different countries. The reality of English policy is seen by Indians of new colonies where the British hardly assist them in case they need help and they come face to face with duplicity of the British rulers.'

To return with some dignity meant a collective decision – a decision which events and circumstances combined to produce in the summer of 1914. As the First World War was declared between Germany and Britain - leaders of the community supported by the Indian elite undertook the challenge - history and tradition of the community meant a confrontation irrespective of consequences. Once the leaders declared to return and fight the mighty empire, all who thought brave enough sailed back. So the exodus to India began. Men's emotions informed by their history and tradition was at odds with the reality for any rational calculation. The so-called 'rational minds' of the educated elite with Har Dayal as their Head, exhorted them into this path. Among those returning to India by the end of 1915, there were nearly 3200 Sikhs who came from US and Canada. Undoubtedly there would have been some, perhaps even a majority, who returned because they wanted to see their families after so many years and they quietly slipped back into their villages, leaving only the committed to organize the fighting. The brave among them tried their best to offer a challenge - with desperate measures under severe limitations. They faced a doomed scenario when the promised arms from Ram Chandra's misdirected squads did not arrive, nor was the expected support from Punjabi population forthcoming. So, one can pay a tribute to the brave and the spirited men, given that they managed to disturb the Government's inertia and indifference to such a degree.

The returning rebels paid a heavy price for their exalted but a miscalculated mission of challenging the colonial state and based on mobilizing their fellow Sikhs and other Punjabis who had the same cultural attributes to fight for their cause although coming from distant lands. In a sense, it was a meeting of two streams of Sikhs - returning rebels informed by a world free of colonial domination and the outgoing Sikh soldiers circumscribed by their economic conditions seeking opportunities within the empire - their aims incompatible.[43] The lesson and message brought by rebels was beyond the grasp of ordinary Sikhs of the Punjab and their response was accordingly dismal, one of incomprehension or openly hostile. In an overall assessment, one can endorse Singh and Singh's observations which concluded:

> There was a wide gap between the outlook of the politically conscious Ghadarites, who organized the abortive revolt, and the general masses. The latter still had a lingering faith in the British sense of justice and fair play, and in their economic

> and political might. The revolt was therefore neither a popular uprising nor a mutiny of the disaffected soldiery. It was the revolt of the brave influenced by the life of the independent people abroad.[44]

The question worth asking of this encounter is this: did Har Dayal see Sikh workers as dumb and deaf sacrificial lambs? Did he ever look back at his own role in exciting what he recalled 'our misguided and impulsive young patriots?' Writing in his *Forty Four Months in Germany and Turkey* pamphlet, Har Dayal has the following retrospective words of regret but stops short of any personal responsibility or liability.

> In plain words, the Germans betrayed their Indian colleagues! The American government must be praised for the leniency with which our countrymen have been treated by the liberal-minded judges of that great Republic, for they had put themselves in a very dangerous predicament by intriguing with the Germans. ….*It is hoped that these young Indian enthusiasts will also give up the fruitless revolutionary methods which have made them the dupes of cunning German imperialists during the war*.[45]

There are no names he could bear to remember of his close colleagues at the Ghadar press, nor any mention of the several who were executed while scores were banished to notorious Andaman jails. It is interesting to see how prominent historians of the Ghadar movement have assessed Har Dayal's career without seeing the reaction of Sikhs. Emily Brown provides some details of Har Dayal's views of the Sikhs - but voices of the Sikhs are missing. Har Dayal's relatives had speculated that he was perhaps murdered by a hit-man sent by the frustrated Sikhs who had termed him a traitor. But the matter has long been buried under an assessment which now focuses on the Ghadar movement as an early example of an anticolonial diasporic mobilization. Both Maia Ramnath and Benjamin Zachariah judge Har Dayal's life in the larger context of diasporic revolutionary pockets created by the colonial era. Ramanth offers an epitaph of *karma yogi* for Har Dayal's life who 'virtually encompassed within himself the whole discourse of rationalism and romanticism combined with anti-colonialism'. In San Francisco, Har Dayal took on the 'language of ferment progressive ideas of the day and he lived them daily.'[46] Here Ramnath rather skirts the issue of responsibility of an intellectual who obviously led his troops to the War with a despairing and desperate strategy on any rational criterion. She further sums up Har Dayal's ideas as 'personal development and revolution in social institutions - a combination of anarcho-syndicalism, rationalist secularism, and contemporary fads'.[47] Emily Brown argues that his aims meant 'the establishment of the complete economic, moral, intellectual, and sexual freedom of woman and the abolition of prostitution, marriage and other institutions based on the enslavement of woman.'[48] Bringing some order to his ideas and practices

that Har Dayal indulged in California, Zachariah sums up his early interactions as 'strange' and suspends further judgment and only pointing out it was his 'radical ideal of life,' to be realized through 'personal and moral development through love, self-discipline, education and self-culture, hygiene and eugenics'.[49] Shruti Kapila is more charitable to the vicissitudes of Har Dayal's life calling his career as a whole; 'as a biography of disruption.'[50] Two Punjabi intellectuals offer a contrasting assessment. Tejwant Singh Gill provides a curious assessment in terms of Har Dayal's personality going into psychological analysis:

> As an idol deserving pity and wonder, Har Dayal is receding into mist of the past, from where he deserves to be retrieved for the brilliance he showed at a very crucial historical juncture. His retreat deserves to be taken with understanding, along with the consideration, his two books deserve for their lucidity.[51]

Harjot Oberoi sees the transformation mainly through Har Dayal's interaction which was in turn mainly swayed by the Russian school of anarchist philosophy.[52] Perhaps the final word should be left to Tarak Nath Das who was in direct competition with Har Dayal in wooing the Sikh workers of British Columbia and California towards the nationalist cause. As Har Dayal quickly denounced his revolutionary politics and started praising Britain's colonial rule as being far more preferable than the German hegemony, Das in his letter to Smedley offered a devastating admonition of Har Dayal's character:

> I hope you are not hopelessly discouraged by the note regarding Har Dayal in Young India. …. May I take the liberty to tell you and others that it was not Har Dayal who took the banner of Indian independence in the forefront? The banner was fueled by others long before the time he was a British scholar in England. Har Dayal gets the glory of the Ghadar movement. Men who made Har Dayal and used him were not of his type and their names will never be known to the public. I am glad that Har Dayal has come out as he has, because if he could not have come out now then he would have done more harm than good to those who believed in his sincerity.[53]

Concluding Remarks

An extraordinary development took place among migrants of Indian origin on the West Coast of North America in the first decade of the 20th century. Two different classes of Indians met there, resulting in a political development - known as the Ghadar party. Although this encounter between the Sikh subalterns and elite Indians has been explored in various ways by scholars of the Ghadar party - the voices of Sikhs are almost always silent from such descriptions. This paper argues we need to take into account Sikhs' reactions, strategies and their religious

and cultural sensitivities while exploring this encounter. As we examine Sikh viewpoints, they raises a new set of questions regarding this peculiar exchange. Instead of reading about the exaggerated and overemphasized contribution of the educated elite on the development of a new consciousness among the Sikh workers, as is so evident in most studies of the Ghadar movement, the focus will then shift to a more critical examination of approaches adopted by Sikh workers as part of their understanding of impact of the British Empire. The roles of Taraknath Das and Har Dayal, the two most radical activists among the Sikh workers in Canada and US respectively, need a fresh examination - the elitist guiding the workers must be situated within a framework which gives each group's own preoccupations and backgrounds.

The mobilization of Sikhs that is routinely attributed to Har Dayal by the Ghadar historians becomes more problematic than a simple formulation. Voices of Jawala Singh, Sohan Singh Bhakna and Teja Singh limit Har Dayal's influence upon the Sikh workers. First, it becomes questionable whether Har Dayal, when experimenting with his philosophical fads, could actually see the practical implications of his formulations? In particular, his call for Sikhs to return, which was reinforced even more vigorously by his successor Ram Chandra, seems an irresponsible call on the part of an intellectual given the fact that Sikhs were being asked for an impossible task and his experiment was surely likely to fail? At that time, not only were Sikhs in Punjab being mobilized for the War, the Government was also taking a very serious view of any disruption to this policy and had instituted severe measures for those indulging in 'seditious activities'. Was Har Dayal then serious in such a calling - which meant a grave risk with little gain for those taking his advice? Perhaps he just wanted a violent drama, to highlight the need for freedom just as he perceived the attack on Lord Hardinge in Delhi and hailed it through proclamations. But his call was not just for a few conspirators to explode a bomb or carry out an assassination of an English official in India. It seems for Har Dayal, the Sikh workers provided material for his experiments in nationalist strategy derived mainly from a combination of anarchists' strategy of bombings, assassinations and creating havoc for the authority. The question remains of course why Sikh workers would return *en masse* if the influence of Har Dayal and others was not as widespread as is made out in the literature? The answer is to be found in various events immediately preceding 1914, especially from the period during 1911-1913 that had made such an option as extremely likely for Sikh workers both in Canada and the US - to challenge the power which had let them down in their hour of need abroad. From individual hardships of being without families and with their hopes collapsing of ever being in a position to bring them over, to collective sense of humiliation at the hands of British authorities as experienced though numerous unsuccessful petitions, advocating an open revolt against the British rule in India meant an *honourable* way to return to their homes. Having decided to return, these small bands of Sikhs were now buoyed by their history and cultural heritage - giving a fight to the mighty irrespective of consequences.

This paper thus limits the role of the educated elite in generating mobilization, and in particular of Har Dayal who is usually portrayed both in official documents

as well scholarly discourses as the chief architect of this mobilization. In fact, the paper calls for re-examination of Har Dayal's role in terms of an elite's responsibility in considering risks while devising a strategy. Har Dayal's call for return to India of Sikhs workers, whom he described as 'a malleable material' on its own would tend to confirm it was an irresponsible act. Further, for someone who in later life displayed such belief in 'rational' and 'ethical' life, it was a highly 'unethical experiment' on a vulnerable immigrant community. Har Dayal, of course, went on to join the famous 'German-India Committee' and then denounced Germany's role. His later life testifies to shifts in his ideological thinking, coupled with many pleas to return to India. It seems strange that in his numerous writings in later life he did not mention even once the fate of Sikhs whom he had once guided. Surely, it was a meeting of strange minds - an eclectic and volatile encounter. The paper contends that a detailed analysis is required of this interaction, if only to examine the role of Sikh cultural mores and their self-understanding of its own community's history to explain why they decided to return to Punjab. A better model for explaining Sikh mobilization would be to situate Hindu intellectuals' inspiration within the setting of Sikh workers social and economic circumstances and their socio-psychological orientations. The paper also points towards a more critical examination of Har Dayal's exhortations, especially from the point of view of an intellectual's responsibility. Thus a more nuanced, comprehensive and realistic model of Sikh mobilization in a foreign land against British rule in India is still waiting to be formulated.

Notes

[1] In addition to difficulties of available testimonies, there may be another reason for this silence. Ghadar activists have been portrayed as Indian patriots *par excellence* and exploring them as Sikh persons has been decried in much of the vernacular literature. Harish K. Puri for example finds these Punjabis or Indians 'as ready for conversion' and who were 'a malleable material for intellectuals' to experiment upon for their theories of Indian nationalism. Throughout his study Puri hesitates to call them Sikhs, and emphasizes their zeal as 'patriotic Indians', never treating the term 'Indian nationalism' as problematic. Keen to see Sikhs as Indians before even seeing them as Punjabis or Sikhs, Puri deplores any effort to recognize them as being different from such a label. For example, he questions Khushwant Singh's description of this interaction as of educated Hindu/Bengali *babus* and Sikh/Punjabi peasants and deplores it 'as befitting into a highly stereotyped portrait.' See Harish K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement: Ideology, Organisation & Strategy*, (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University Press, 1993, 2nd edition).

[2] Hugh Tinker's trilogy brings together history of Indian emigration in admirable detail starting with the system of slavery under which several

hundred Indian from Southern provinces were sent to Mauritius; Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery the Export of Indian Labour Overseas* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974); Hugh Tinker, *Separate and Unequal: India and the Indians in the British Commonwealth* (London: Hurst, 1976); Hugh Tinker, *The Banyan Tree: Overseas Emigrants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977).

3 C.A. Bayly, 'Afterward' in Shruti Kapila (Ed), *An Intellectual History For India* (Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 152-53.

4 For the biographies of Krishnavarma, see Herald Fisher Tine, *Shyamji Krishnavarma: Sanskrit, Sociology and anti-Imperialism,* (Delhi: Routledge, 2014); For Chattopadhyaya see N.K. Barooch, *Chatto: The Life and Times of an Indian Anti-imperialist in Europe,* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014); For Tarak Nath Das, see Tapan K. Mukherjee, *Taraknath Das: Life and Letters of a Revolutionary in Exile,* (Calcutta: National Council of Education, Jadavpur University, Bengal, 1997); For Khankhoje, see Savitri Sawhney, *I shall never ask for Pardon: A Memoir of Pandurang Khankhoje,* (Delhi: Penguin Books, 2008); For Hardayal see, Emily Brown, *Har Dayal: Hindu Revolutionary and Rationalist,* (Delhi: Manohar, 1975).

5 Darshan Singh Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora: The Search For Statehood* (London: Routledge, 1999).

6 Buchignani et al quotes an anonymous pioneer's evidence of early lifestyles of Sikh workers as, 'No one thought of living alone. After a while it worked pretty well. We ate well, saved a lot of money and generally got along with each other. If men lost their jobs, well, what did it cost to carry them along? If it got so that people couldn't stand living with each other there was always some place to stay'. See Norman Buchignani and Doreen M Indra, *Continuous Journey: A Social History of South Asian in Canada,* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), p. 34.

7 Swami Vivekananda [1863-1902] was another important influence on young Bengalis. He advocated manliness - much like YMCA Christianity, "Be strong my young friend" he urged young Bengali students. You will be nearer to heaven through football than through the study of the Gita… you will understand the Gita better through your biceps, your muscles." Quoted in Leonard Gordon, *Bengal: The Nationalist Movement 1876-1940* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 79.

8 Tarak Nath Das' anti-British and pro-German stance was off putting to many leaders of the Indian National Congress who had a muted and

equivocal anti-British sentiment, for example Dadabhai Naoroji and R C Dutt and the other towering figures of early nationalism could lambast economic policies but they also acknowledged the political stability and unity of imperial rule and could toast to health of the Queen. See Tapan K. Mukherjee, *Taraknath Das: Life and Letters of a Revolutionary in Exile*, pp. 135-146.

9 Leonard Gordon, *Bengal: The Nationalist Movement 1876-1940*, pp. 135-145.

10 See Zachariah for an interesting trajectory and analysis of Har Dayal's transformation; among them how he rejected people like Annie Besant, theosophist and founder of the Central Hindu Collage of Benares as in his view this reinforced Hindu nation's slavery. In 1909, he published an article in the *Modern Review* of Calcutta 'Social Consequence of the Hindu Race' wherein he expounded his reasons for regeneration of Hindu society calling it insistently a nation, See Benjamin Zachariah, "A Long, Strange Trip: the Lives in Exile of Hardayal", *South Asian History and Culture*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 2013, pp. 574-92.

11 This was also the name of a similar journal by B. C. Pal in 1905 later edited by Aurobindo Ghosh.

12 Kesar Singh (Ed.), *Ghadari Baba: Charan Singh Sandhu* (Amritsar: Khalsa Brothers, 1987), p. 30.

13 We worked during summer picking melons, earning 2 dollars for ten hours labor a day. Then we went down to Holtville where we met Vasakha Singh, Jawala Singh, Santokh Singh, Naudh Singh Patanke and Baaz Singh etc., Jawala Singh's farm had nearly 400 workers - all Punjabis. Teja Singh stayed at his ranch - we heard he had several degrees, and used to cut through White men's talks, even big white men would not argue with him…. Teja Singh and Jawala Singh built Stockton *gurdwara* - I remember one day as we were bringing scaffold material for the *gurdwara* building some white men forced their way into our rail compartment. Eventually, Jawala Singh took out on them and forced their retreat. Often White men would not give space in the trains as potatoes had to be loaded - this led to frequent fights, See Kesar Singh (Ed), *Ghadari Baba: Charan Singh Sandhu*, p. 30.

14 Kesar Singh (Ed.), *Ghadari Baba Charan Singh Sandhu*, p. 31. Although he does not give the date of this meeting, it suggests immediately after the first exodus of Sikh workers to India. He also tells of Hari Singh who used to farm in Holtville and Imperial Valley jointly with others and as decided to leave California, he told Maheshwari to be 'careful of Brahmin (Ram Chand) who is no good.' Maheshwari had already doubts about Ram Chand and in turn Ram

Chand expelled him from the Ghadar headquarter and told him to work in the fields. Two other press workers were also expelled by him. 'We still did not mind and paid our monthly dues and responded to appeal for funds': Kesar Singh (Ed), *Ghadari Baba: Charan Singh Sandhu*, p. 31.

15 For a short biography of Teja Singh, See Darshan Singh Tatla, *Sant Teja Singh: A Short Biography* (Jalandhar: Punjab Centre for Migration Studies, 2004).

16 Unfortunately, Teja Singh in his memoir does not provide any details of circumstances in which he decided to leave Vancouver's Sikh community - for which he had done so much and was for several years its acknowledged spokesman.

17 Bhai Bhagwan Singh presents himself as a pioneer Indian nationalist - an account that needs careful scrutiny. He was born in a Brahmin Sikh family of Amritsar district. Educated in traditional Sikh scriptures as was the custom among *sanatan* priestly class who served at historic Sikh *gurdwaras*. He started his career as a *granthi* in Hong Kong and Shanghai *gurdwara* causing controversy at both places. His post-1918 abandonment of Ghadar movement in favour of organizing meditational courses attended largely by middle class American ladies seems a pale mimicry of Har Dayal's discourses on rational life to select gatherings in London and elsewhere, See Gurdev Singh Sidhu and Surinder Pal Singh (Eds.), *Ghadari Baba: Bhai Bhagwan Singh Pritam* (Chandigarh: Unistar, 2013).

18 Among all the Ghadar poetry written by Sikh workers, Bhai Bhagwan Singh stands out as special - which depicts India as a 'mother' calling for protection by its valiant sons - something no other Sikh worker alludes in their compositions, For details see Bhagwan Singh, *Ghadari Goojan* (Ludhiana: Lahore Book Shop, 2002), p. 38.

19 Norman Buchignani and Doreen M. Indra, *Continuous Journey: A Social History of South Asians in Canada,* p. 43.

20 The Punjab Governor noted Balwant Singh as a fiery and dangerous revolutionary and of course had no compunction in seeing him sentenced to death in the Burma Conspiracy on flimsy charges. See *The Tribune* reports and editorial on the delegation's visit to the Punjab.

21 The list in Emily Brown's account is different from one given by Jawala Singh. She lists R Sharma from Madras instead of Chenchiah, while adding Pandian as part of them.

22 With Vasakha Singh Dadehar, Santokh Singh Dhardeo, Darbara Singh Jalupur, Ishar Singh Chananke and Jawala Singh became its members

and sent the news to *Khalsa Samachar*. As the news was picked up by Darbara Singh's family in Punjab, they sent a letter to him to desist from such activities, which were presumed to be political. As advised, Darbara Singh resigned and so did Ishar Singh.

23 Emily C. Brown, *Har Dayal: Hindu Revolutionary and Rationalist*, pp. 112-14; T.R. Sareen, *The Ghadar Movement: Some Select Documents* (Delhi: Mounto Publishing House, 1994), p. 38.

24 Emily C. Brown, *Har Dayal: Hindu Revolutionary and Rationalist*, pp.113-114.

25 Darisi Chenchiah, *History of the Freedom Movement.*

26 Har Dayal named it Bakunin Institute and envisaged it as a monastery. It was mentioned in the *San Francisco Chronicle* of May 12, 1912 as a 'socialist affair'. A woman donated six acres of farmland near Oakland but this cause was also lost with Har Dayal's sudden departure to Europe: Emily C. Brown, *Har Dayal: Hindu Revolutionary and Rationalist*, pp. 116-17.

27 Emily C. Brown, *Har Dayal: Hindu Revolutionary and Rationalist*, pp.114-115.

28 Zachariah highlights some twists in Har Dayal's life during his stay in California and this follows his observations, See Benjamin Zachariah, "A Long, Strange Trip: The Lives in Exile of Har Dayal" *South Asian History and Culture*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 2013, pp. 574-92.

29 Emily C. Brown, *Har Dayal: Hindu Revolutionary and Rationalist*, p. 135.

30 The couplet from Mir, *Pagri apni sambliye jara… aur basti nahin, dilli hai yeh!*

31 Emily C. Brown, *Har Dayal: Hindu Revolutionary and Rationalist*, p. 129.

32 The official report puts the date of Astoria meeting on June 2, 1913.

33 See, *Shabash* pamphlet.

34 Sohan Singh Bhakna as the president of the Ghadar party left many bits and pieces about Har Dayal. They are connected together here to evaluate Har Dayal's role and interaction and ultimately the question of his influence. Jawala Singh's short encounter adds to it

35 Before leaving Har Dayal took Bhakna aside telling him 'Be careful about Ram Chandra who is not selfless person.'

[36] This is about Gobind Behari Lal - a relative of Har Dayal who was chosen at Har Dayal's recommendation. Lal has left a recorded narrative of his long career as a distinguished scientific journalist in California. His version of the formation of the Ghadar Party is quite different. Bhakna adds in his characteristic Punjabi; "As I watched this fellow's selfishness, I too regretted Har Dayal's choice – translated by author). For details see Emily C. Brown, *HarDayal: Hindu Revolutionary and Rationalist.*

[37] Regarding his successor, Ram Chandra who took over the *Ghadar* weekly, Bhakna dismisses him through a Punjabi phrase, 'ruler of a deserted kingdom or purveyor of deserted villages – translated by author'. This could be interpreted as someone who assumed authority when all major figures had departed from California to India, praising his command over English - but someone greedy. This might be a retrospective reflection of Bhakna as Harish K. Puri [1993] implies, but his argument seems convincing enough in terms of interaction between the educated and Punjabi workers. Bhakna also tells of his organizing effort from February 1913 as he came down to live at Ghadar office in San Francisco. He made several trips to see California's Punjabi workers, organized branches and sought funds. What distinguished Oregon was that Punjabi workers were concentrated in a small number of lumber mills who could be easily contacted and they had much cohesion among themselves. Initial money for the Ghadar paper was donated by mill workers in Oregon State. For California, one needed a different strategy in terms of winning confidence as several educated and clever people had already taken advantage of these simple-minded workers - and duped them. Bhakna says he fitted the bill as someone they could trust and he was willing to undertake this arduous task and follow them in many locations of California. See *Meri Ram Kahani: Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna* (Rajwinder Singh Rahi (Ed) (Samana: Sangam Publications, 2012), pp. 98-100.

[38] *Meri Ram Kahani: Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna* (Rajwinder Singh Rahi (Ed), p. 99.

[39] *Meri Ram Kahani: Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna* (Rajwinder Singh Rahi (ed), pp.116-117.

[40] For more detail see, Darshan Singh Tatla, "A Sikh Manifesto? A Reading of the Ghadar Literature", *The Panjab Past and Present*, Punjabi University, Patiala, November 2013.

[41] For a poetic rendering of this in original Punjabi: *Meri Ram Kahani: Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna* (Rajwinder Singh Rahi (Ed), p. 118.

42 The decision to bring out a paper was through consensus and to appoint Har Dayal as its editor was also endorsed by all. Yes, the name of office and title of the newspaper was proposed by Har Dayal and accepted; otherwise all decisions were of the party: *Meri Ram Kahani: Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna* (Rajwinder Singh Rahi (Ed), p. 118.

43 Similar outlook is arrived by Rajit K. Mazumder in his book *The Indian Army and the Making of Punjab* wherein he concludes 'The Ghadar failed primarily because the special relationship between a paternal colonial state and its privileged, recruited peasantry was strong enough to withstand an assault by 'outsiders'. Traditional ties, such as big landlords and priests, gave the expected support, but the rest of rural society was equally unstinting in its active loyalty. This manifested not only in villagers chasing and capturing fugitives but also in the extraordinary Sikh recruitment during World War I. The interest of the community was seen to be common with those of the government. No political movement could succeed until this perception altered'. See Rajit K. Majumder, *The Indian Army and the Making of Punjab* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003), pp. 237-38.

44 Khushwant Singh and Satindra Singh, *Ghadar 1915: India's First Armed Revolution,* (Delhi: R &K Publishing House, 1966), pp. 55-56.

45 Har Dayal, *Forty Four Months in Germany and Turkey February 1915 to October 1918* (London: P.S. Kings & Son, Westminster, 1920), pp. 94-5 (emphasis added).

46 Maia Ramnath, *Declonizing Anarchism: An Antiauthoritarian History of India's Liberation Struggle* (Oakland: Institute of Anarchist Studies, 2011), pp. 108-09.

47 Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire*, (Berkeley: University of California, 2011).

48 Emily C. Brown, *Har Dayal: Hindu Revolutionary and Rationalist,* pp. 114-15.

49 Benjamin Zachariah, "A Long, Strange Trip: The Lives in Exile of Har Dayal", *South Asian History and Culture*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 2013, pp. 574-592.

50 Shruti Kapila writes: 'His intellectual biography represents a transnational life that intersected and engaged with the dramatic moments of the early 20th century. He began his career as a radical nationalist. By the end of the First world War, he had become an international socialist and on the eve of his death and the Second World War, he had focused on ideas and practices of what he called 'self-

culture' as an essential form of radical politics, For details see Shruti Kapila, "Self, Spencer and Swaraj: Nationalist Thought and Critique of Liberalism 1890-1920", Shruti Kapila (Ed), *An Intellectual History of India*, (Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 109-13.

51 Tejwant Singh Gill, "Lala Har Dayal: Intellectual and Philosophical Leader of the Ghadar Movement", in P. R. Kalia (Ed.) *The Ghadar Movement and India's Anti-Imperialist Struggle,* (Edmonton: Progressive Peoples' Foundation, 2013), p. 233.

52 Harjot Oberoi, "Ghadar Movement and Its Anarchist Genealogy', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLIV, No. 50, December 12, 2009, pp.40-46.

53 Letter from Das to Smedley, May 12-13, 1919: Tapan K. Mukherjee, *Taraknath Das: Life and Letters of a Revolutionary in Exile*, pp. 247-48.