

## **A Limited Revolution: An Inquiry into the Failure of Ghadar**

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The Ghadar Movement generated patriotic fervour among the Punjabis in particular and Indian revolutionaries in general. It exposed the vulnerability of the colonial government during the World War I. The Punjab was turned into a recruiting ground that led to consequential benefits. In the process, three subjects are interwoven in this relationship and its impact on *Ghadar*, the military, colonialism and nationalism. The Ghadar revolutionaries attempted the destruction of the imperial state at an inopportune moment. The Indian National Congress openly professed support for the government. The paper investigates why the revolutionaries did not succeed in the goal of a militant overturn of the British Government.

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### **Introduction**

According to Ramnath:

Ghadar is most often portrayed as a nationalist movement, pure and simple. Its members were indubitably patriotic, and their goal of a homecoming to liberate territory from foreign occupation is easily intelligible to a nationalist logic. Yet in both geographical and ideological terms they overspilled the purview of mainstream nationalism. Their indictment of tyranny and oppression was on principle globally applicable, even while generated by a historically specific situation and inflected in culturally specific terms; moreover, they increasingly envisioned a comprehensive social and economic restructuring for postcolonial India rather than a mere handover of the existing governmental institutions.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, in spite of the patriotic fervour of the revolutionaries and the potential mass appeal of their goals, the Ghadar failed to foment a general revolution across the Punjab. The attempted overthrow of British rule by Ghadar activists took place during the First World War, at a time the colonial government was particularly vulnerable. By that time, the Punjab had become the most important recruiting area for the British Indian Army: a serious rebellion in the province could harm not only the war efforts but also endanger colonial rule across India. This article investigates why the revolutionaries did not succeed in their goals of a militant overthrow of the British government and a subsequently radical reconstruction of society. It concludes that critically important communities in Punjab

sympathised neither with the envisioned revolution nor with its brave perpetrators. Ultimately, influential segments of Punjabis remained loyal to the British and actively participated in undermining Ghadar activities. As G. S. Deol concluded, 'Indeed, the problem was not one of lack of public support. On the contrary, it was a case of considerable elements among the public working actually against the Ghadarites.'<sup>2</sup>

### **The Punjab as a Nursery of Recruitment in the British Army**

How had this state of affairs come about? What made significant sections of Punjab society remain loyal to the British rather than support an exceptional revolutionary movement for independence? A significant part of the answer lies in the emergence of Punjab as the nursery of recruitment for the British Indian Army, and the consequent benefits that recruited Punjabis derived from military service. Three subjects are interwoven in this relationship and its impact on Ghadar: the military, colonialism and nationalism.

The paradox that colonial power was maintained through a 'native' army forced the imperial state to ensure that the regiments remained loyal. Therefore, paternalistic and benevolent policy initiatives were taken by the British Government to reinforce and sustain the loyalty of its soldiers. Furthermore, mass agitation by recruited groups and/or in highly recruited areas was handled with unexpected alacrity, concern and tact. On occasions, the extant government policy on issues causing grievance was altered, sometimes reversed.<sup>3</sup> It was this special treatment to recruited Punjabis that ensured that these communities preferred to remain loyal to the British rather than support a movement to overthrow their perceived benefactors.

The military and military personnel influence society and politics despite being specifically excluded from the 'civilian' sphere. Soldiers are conscious of their special position as members of a critical institution of the state. They realise many advantages of soldiering and are aware that these can be withdrawn easily. Therefore, they respond to specific issues in terms of their affiliation to a corporate body, too, and not just as individuals. Military men, thus, form an important *political* group in highly recruited regions. This is the reason why Punjab's Lieutenant Governor and divisional and district commissioners sought out and directly appealed to leaders of recruited communities for support during the Ghadar.

Needless to say, the British Indian Army was the most vital instrument of imperial authority. Yet, at the same time, it was one of the largest available avenues for employment. Therefore, while the army helped conquer, subjugate and control the British Indian Empire, it simultaneously provided a regular source of significant income to its soldiers. The impact of colonialism through the benefits of military service on those recruited was arguably less exploitative than on the rest of Indian society. Punjab's recruited peasantry profited from military service in social and economic terms.<sup>4</sup> The real and tangible benefits of a career in the British Indian Army was a critical reason for their support of the British government during the Ghadar.

The advantages of military service and the perception that the government was benevolent to soldiers affected their attitude towards their imperial rulers. The nature of nationalism and the course of national movements in the Punjab were both affected by the 'Punjabisation' of the Indian army.<sup>5</sup> The loyalism of the recruited peasantry and the influence of military groups in rural areas across the province limited the influence of anti-colonial movements. A 'subaltern' group - military men and their families - collaborated with the imperial state to result in a uniquely loyalist political history under colonialism, best reflected in the electoral dominance of the Punjab Unionist Party until the 1946 elections.<sup>6</sup> The broader ramifications of the British Indian Army included the political, and affected both colonialism and nationalism in British Punjab.

### **The Ghadarites Enter into Punjab**

No national political party made a concerted effort to influence Punjab's rural districts until the 1920s. The uneasy calm at the end of the 1907 agitations continued until the World War I.<sup>7</sup> This situation was rudely disturbed in the second decade of the twentieth century, not by residents of Punjab, but by returning emigrants, mainly farm workers from North America. Organised in North America by Har Dayal, Sohan Singh Bhakna, Kanshi Ram, and Kartar Singh Sarabha, among others, they had begun the newspaper *Ghadar*, encouraged revolution against imperialism in North America, and attempted to export their propaganda to instigate the Punjab countryside to armed rebellion and assassination of British officers.<sup>8</sup>

The first delegation of Ghadarites arrived in Punjab in the summer of 1913 to tour the major Sikh districts. The three members met with Michael O'Dwyer, the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, ostensibly to put forward their grievances against the Canadian government. The colonial authorities kept them under close surveillance, even though they did not at first suspect the delegation to be 'advance-agents' of the Ghadar party.<sup>9</sup> The Punjab Government was aware that although the Sikhs had remained loyal during the agitations in 1907, the returning emigrants had less fealty for the British.<sup>10</sup> It was anticipated that thousands would return to India from North America and the Far East as World War I began. The British intelligence warned that, '*prima facie*, every Indian returning from America or Canada...must be regarded with the greatest suspicion as a probable active revolutionary, or at any rate as a sympathiser with the revolutionary party.'<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the Ingress into India Ordinance was passed in September 1914, to prevent the entry of 'suspicious' characters.<sup>12</sup> The Government was forced to go further: in March 1915 the Defence of India (Criminal Law Amendment) Act was passed. By its provisions, the Viceroy was given authority 'to empower any civil or military authority to prohibit the entry or residence in any area of a person suspected to be acting in a manner prejudicial to the public safety...'<sup>13</sup> The situation was serious enough for Michael O'Dwyer to worryingly record that in the early months of 1915 'many of the Sikhs had been sullen and dejected during the Ghadr campaign'.<sup>14</sup>

They had good reason to be so. Earlier, in May 1914, authorities in Vancouver had denied entry to 376 Punjabis who had travelled to Canada on the Japanese merchant ship *Komagata Maru*, hired by one Gurdit Singh through a German agent in Hong Kong. The passengers included 355 Sikhs, 'nearly all veterans of the British Army's famous Sikh regiments'. After a tense standoff of nearly two months, the ship was turned back, denied permission to dock even in Hong Kong and Singapore, and returned to India. The First World War had broken out by the time the *Komagata Maru* finally arrived near Calcutta in September 1914. The governments of India and Punjab had decided not to allow the passengers free movement on the basis of the Ingress Ordinance. A special contingent of Punjab Police had been sent to check their antecedents and to escort them to Punjab on a special train. However, only 6 passengers boarded the train, more than 300 refused. An altercation led to a shootout in Budge Budge in which eighteen Sikhs were killed by the police; 202 were jailed and some escaped.<sup>15</sup>

The disgruntled passengers on the *Komagata Maru* were not revolutionaries, though they had been exposed to their propaganda. The incident was taken by the British as proving the need for strict supervision and stern action. On 28th October 1914, the *Tosa Maru* arrived in Calcutta carrying emigrants from America and the Far East. All its passengers were arrested and only 73 were released after 'investigation'. It was established that Ghadarites on this ship had been allocated specific circles in Sikh districts for propaganda. Of the 73 released passengers, six were hanged 'for participation in the subsequent Ghadr activities'.<sup>16</sup>

### Difficulties for the Ghadarites

With the Government involved in the war effort, the revolutionaries had a good opportunity to influence Sikh districts.<sup>17</sup> However, they failed.<sup>18</sup> An early history of the movement matter-of-factly states that, 'The Ghadarites soon discovered to their chagrin that the political climate in India was far from conducive to revolution.'<sup>19</sup> Rural Punjab continued to be loyal and actively helped the government's war efforts.<sup>20</sup> The revolution aimed at gaining influence by armed robberies of government treasuries, by raiding armouries and police stations, and by inciting army units and the Sikh peasantry through revolutionary ideology.<sup>21</sup> None of this carried far among rural Sikhs who not only did not see much in common with the conspirators, but also actively helped the authorities in foiling these attempts and in arresting the 'outsiders'. In fact, 'as soon as they started to operate they were treated as common bandits and villagers readily helped the police to hunt them down'.<sup>22</sup>

On 27 November 1914, a gang of fifteen Ghadarites attempted to raid the Moga arsenal and shot dead a Muslim sub-inspector of police and the Sikh *zaildar*<sup>23</sup> who had challenged them. They then ran towards the jungle pursued by the irate Sikh villagers who set fire to the rebels' hiding place. Two Ghadarites were killed and the others arrested. This incident resulted in the authorities becoming fully aware of plans of the revolutionaries.<sup>24</sup> The

Government was quick to reward its loyal subjects: it provided grants of 'special pensions' and allotted land in the canal colonies to the heirs of the murdered sub-inspector and *zaildar*, while the other villagers were rewarded with 'a substantial reduction in land-tax'. Such prompt generosity by the colonial state, in 'every case where active assistance was forthcoming', was said to have had the desired effect of 'stimulating popular co-operation'.<sup>25</sup>

The revolutionaries particularly targeted soldiers and military units<sup>26</sup> to undermine the armed forces, the backbone of British power in India. Inciting mutiny in military regiments was a clever strategy as it would strike at the heart of British power.<sup>27</sup> However, the revolutionaries were often met with opposition from soldiers. The attempt by some 'agents' at 'tampering' with the 22nd Cavalry in Punjab came to an ignominious end when they were 'seized and given up by the Sikh officers and men' of the regiment.<sup>28</sup> The plans 'for a mutiny in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry at Lahore cantonment... failed'.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Vishnu Ganesh Pingle<sup>30</sup> was arrested in the lines of the 12th Cavalry in Meerut.<sup>31</sup> In the words of Khushwant Singh and Satindra Singh, 'thus ended the second attempt to create a revolution in India'.<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, Ghadar outbreaks increased in early 1915. A simultaneous attempt at rebellion in various regiments on 19th February failed because the Government was able to get information through its spies.<sup>33</sup> A concurrent rising of the Muslim peasantry in south-west Punjab against Hindu moneylenders, unrelated to the Ghadar, 'showed how seriously the foundations of public security were being shaken in the Province which was the key to the military situation in India and the chief recruiting-ground for the Indian Army'.<sup>34</sup> The Lieutenant Governor, therefore, asked for stronger powers and the Defence of India Act was passed to help contain rebellion in the strategic province.<sup>35</sup>

### **Government Plans to Counter the Ghadar**

In addition to the two-pronged policy of prompt rewards for co-operation and severe punishments to the arrested Ghadarites, Michael O'Dwyer successfully involved 'the leading Sikhs of the Province' on the side of the Government. The British officials called a meeting with eminent men from the Sikh districts in Lahore on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1915. Michael O'Dwyer warned them that the Government was strong enough to 'crush' the rebels but counselled that there would be less bloodshed if the Sikhs co-operated. He cautioned them that 'the movement was bringing the Sikhs as a whole into discredit, and their interests as well as their honour were involved'. The assembled Sikh elders reportedly offered him the full extent of their influence.<sup>36</sup> They are reported to have asked the Government to be even stricter. According to a police report, 'The Sardars present advocated that all the returned emigrants should be interned in jail, as it was obvious that all were actually or potentially dangerous; but it was pointed out by the Lieutenant-Governor that it would be impossible to intern thousands'.<sup>37</sup> As a result of this conference, 'Sikh advisory committees were established in the central districts to assist the District Magistrates in the supervision of returned emigrants. These gave most valuable advice in regard to

restrictions, internments, relaxations and releases, and the influence exerted by the members on the side of law and order was of the utmost value.<sup>38</sup> While the revolutionaries killed many such 'loyal Sikhs', they are reported to have been tracked down and hanged in almost every case.<sup>39</sup>

The Chief Khalsa Diwan, 'the one significant Sikh political party' of the time, reiterated loyalty to the Crown, and priests of many Sikh shrines denounced the Ghadarites as 'renegades or thugs'.<sup>40</sup> The work of the Sikh Sardar's Committee of Amritsar was commended by the Commissioner who praised the people of the district for the loyalty which went 'deep down' and had been 'impossible to undermine' by the Ghadarites. Returned emigrants were 'carefully watched and reported on by their fellow-villagers' and all assistance was given to the authorities 'in securing bad characters'. On one occasion, after the Walla Bridge 'dacoity', the perpetrators went from village to village exhorting the people to join them in revolt. Instead, the revolutionaries were pursued by the villagers from dawn to dusk, and even though the gang killed a few of their pursuers, they were eventually arrested. According to the Commissioner, 'That was the death to unrest in Amritsar District.'<sup>41</sup> Indeed, as early as December 1914, the Commissioner of Jullundur could confidently claim that, 'I do not think there is any chance of disaffected Canadian emigrants receiving any measure of popular support; at least I shall be surprised, if they do so.'<sup>42</sup> The informal and hastily established system worked 'smoothly and so successfully', and the activities of the Ghadarites became so unpopular, that Michael O' Dwyer stated: 'By June [1915] the rural population were so disgusted at the Ghadar outrages and so confident of support and reward from Government, that of their own motion they took up the hunting down of even the most desperate Ghadar gangs with courage and enthusiasm'.<sup>43</sup>

The Government was also cognizant of the significance of the support of ordinary villagers. The Special Commission that reported on the Lahore Conspiracy Case following a dacoity in Chhaba village in Amritsar district noted: 'The courage and bravery displayed by these men form one of the few bright episodes in the whole of the trial. Men of little or no position, with no thought for themselves [sic], bravely attacked unarmed a gang of desperadoes armed with bombs and pistols, captured one, and nearly captured two others, drove off the marauders in flight, and only desisted when a number of them were injured and mutilated for life by the dacoits'.<sup>44</sup>

In early June 1915, revolutionaries from British districts collected in Kapurthala to raid the state magazine. On the 11<sup>th</sup>, eight of them ambushed a military picket, killed two sentries and escaped with four rifles. Once again, it is reported that 'the country-side turned up and gave chase'. Five of them was captured and hanged after trial by a Special Tribunal.<sup>45</sup> One of those who escaped eluded the police for months before being arrested 'by his own people' and was handed over to the authorities.<sup>46</sup> This broad support for the British Government, the rejection of Ghadar propaganda, and, not least, the active collaboration in foiling Ghadar insurgencies, is corroborated even in recent accounts: 'The Ghadarites were stigmatized as "fallen Sikhs" who had brought disgrace to the community by having played into the hands of wily Hindus and

agents of Germany. In the villages, *Zaildars*, *Nambardars*, *Safaidposhes* and *Chowkidars*<sup>47</sup> were led to describe these “American Sikhs” as “thieves and dacoits”.<sup>48</sup>

Moreover, the Ghadar activists were closely watched in America even after the Punjab authorities had managed to suppress the movement in India. The importance of Punjab in strategic terms, the omnipresent potential for disturbances in the crucial Sikh districts, the German connection with the Ghadarites,<sup>49</sup> and the ongoing War made it an exceptionally critical situation. The situation for the revolutionaries in North America changed for the worse after the United States joined the Allies. Not only was intelligence gathered by Canadian and American authorities, but the British also employed their own agents in North America.

One such, *Lance Dafadar*<sup>50</sup> Sawan Singh of the 25th Cavalry Regiment, had been sent to California to gather information on Ghadar activists. Sawan Singh's self-reported list of achievements, if true, are quite extraordinary. He claimed to have in his possession a letter by ‘a Bengali’ which ‘said very evil things about our Army’, and he, therefore, wanted to ‘take the letter to England myself, and I did not care if I lost my life over it as long as the letter got to England, as it threatened grave danger to the Army’. Sawan Singh warned ‘that the Germans believed that they could foster a quarrel between the United States of America and Mexico, and foment a rebellion among the Hindus and Germans’. He also claimed that he was responsible for the arrest of Hari Singh ‘who had been sent by the Germans’ to instigate rebellion in Singapore. In fact, Hari Singh had also ‘advised the Hindus to join the Mexican Army’. Sawan Singh furthermore claimed responsibility for ensuring that the ‘Germans and Hindus connected with the *Ghadar* [were] sent before the Grand Jury at San Francisco’. Many of the ‘leading Hindus’ had tried to recruit Sawan Singh to their cause, ‘and promised to make me a Colonel, but I went and told the Court all they had said’. Moreover, he was aware that the remaining Ghadarites were ‘trying to kill me’, but that he had substituted himself with another man to foil their attempts. This remarkable Sikh soldier wrote to his British commanding officer that he now wished to return to battle in Europe and ‘die under your command at the front’.<sup>51</sup>

Indeed, the extraordinary recruitment from Punjab, particularly of Sikhs, provides the ultimate proof of their general support for the British.<sup>52</sup> According to Michael O'Dwyer, the annihilation of the 14th Sikhs in Gallipoli on 4th June 1915 ‘in an [sic] heroic stand against an overwhelming Turkish force’ had ‘curiously enough’ galvanised the loyalty ‘of that martial race’. Feeling that they had ‘vindicated their reputation for loyalty and bravery’, Michael O'Dwyer noted that Sikhs enlisted in droves, and ‘the rush to the colours in the Sikh districts was extraordinary’. From a total population of 2.5 million, less than one per cent of British India, the Sikhs raised over 90,000 combatant recruits, one-eighth of all India.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, other sources state that Sikhs made up as high as one-fifth of the combatants of the British Indian Army.<sup>54</sup>

Sikh leaders, the Sikh clergy and, most significantly, the Sikh peasantry continued to believe that its interests were better served by the colonial state and

they actively rejected the revolution and the revolutionaries. In the words of a Sikh villager:

Here in the Punjab dacoities have become very common. The people in their sin do not remember that *the Government which protects us* is fighting an enemy. They are getting up a mutiny (ghadr), and what trouble is brought upon the Government. We pity their ignorance. The Lord will give them sense. In one week there were 15 dacoities. When will God give peace? The Government has made many arrests, and in the investigation it was discovered that the dacoits were men who had been turned back from America.<sup>55</sup>

The Ghadar was seen as unlawful and bothersome dacoities by ignorant emigrants at a time when a munificent government was engaged in the War. Thus, Michael O'Dwyer seems correct in stating that, 'By August 1915 that is within nine months of the first outbreak, we had crushed the Ghadar rebellion...and, above all, the Sikh community had again proved its staunch loyalty.'<sup>56</sup> Less partisan sources are equally emphatic: 'By the summer of 1915, the Ghadar Party in the Punjab was virtually smashed up.'<sup>57</sup>

The general disapproval of the rebellion by rural Punjab and its repression by the colonial state led to a situation where Punjab's Lieutenant Governor reported that some of the released emigrants were so eager to prove 'their return to loyal citizenship that they formally petitioned to be allowed to enlist in the Army during the War with their brother Sikhs'! The military authorities, however, denied permission for it was feared that these emigrants could 'contaminate' the regiments. The situation was considered fully under control now because 'America-returned Sikhs' did not give much trouble after 1917.<sup>58</sup>

The above highlights the significance of the assistance given by Sikh soldiers like Sawan Singh in exposing the revolutionaries. Not only did he risk his life in a foreign land in a role he was not trained for, his loyalty was also reflected in his desire to return to Europe and die fighting in the War for the British. Most of the Sikh districts remained loyal, too. The Manager of the Golden Temple apologised on behalf of the revolutionaries: 'We refer with pain and regret to the *un-Sikh conduct* of a small section of our community who in the early days of the war were entrapped by seditionists abroad and enticed from the paths of loyalty. To deal with this evil was the sacred duty of a true Sikh....'<sup>59</sup> Michael O'Dwyer also suggested that the role of 'denationalised Sikhs', those from America who had given up the main practices of Sikhism, had had negative repercussions for the Ghadarites in rural Punjab.<sup>60</sup>



### Why the Ghadar could not Succeed?

The revolutionaries attempted the destruction of the imperial state at an inopportune moment. The Indian National Congress was not in favour of such activities during the War and had openly professed support for the Government.<sup>61</sup> Even the 'extremist' nationalist Bal Gangadhar Tilak disapproved of those wishing to exploit the situation.<sup>62</sup> In addition, the movement suffered from organisational weaknesses and was obviously not in touch with the feelings of those it wished to influence.<sup>63</sup> Another history of the movement succinctly captures some of the reasons for the failure of the Ghadar movement:

The Ghadarites, moreover, failed to achieve their object because they relied mainly on Indian soldiers. The Punjabi masses had been little prepared to join the projected revolution. There was a wide gap between the outlook of the politically-conscious Ghadarites, who organised 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 independent peoples abroad.<sup>64</sup>

The real reason for failure of the Ghadar movement goes beyond 'faith' in any imagined notion of British 'fair play' or in the 'economic and political might' of the Empire. 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 allies like big landlords<sup>65</sup> and the priests gave expected support, but the rest of the rural society, too, was unstinting in active loyalty. This manifested itself not only in villagers chasing and capturing fugitives but particularly in the extraordinary Sikh recruitment during World War I. Ghadar revolutionaries met with little success even in recruiting from Indian soldiers made prisoners-of-war by the Germans as 'most Sikh soldiers, proud of their units, remained loyal to the British'.<sup>66</sup> The interests of the community were seen to be common with those of the Government. No political movement could succeed until this perception altered. It is significant that the then Lieutenant Governor could later acknowledge that, 'Fortunately, all through this difficult period the great mass of the rural population, including the Sikhs, remained staunch and loyal, and continued to give, often at great risk, the most active assistance to the authorities in rounding up and bringing to justice revolutionary gangs.'<sup>67</sup>

More recent histories of the Ghadar movement, too, attest to the collaboration between Sikh elites and the Government. According to Harish K. Puri, 'the leading institutions of the Sikh community, such as the Chief Khalsa Diwan and the priests of the Golden Temple, were all passionately dedicated to work and pray for the victory of the British masters.'<sup>68</sup> However, to consider this state of affairs as toadying up to the British would be to misleadingly reduce a

complex relationship to the trope of dominant colonial ‘master’ and compliant native ‘subject’. G. S. Deol attributes the failure of the Ghadarites ‘in enlisting mass support in the Punjab owing to lack of consciousness among the Punjabis’. At best, Deol underestimates the practical and emotional calculus of the ‘mass’, but he may also be alluding to another trope, of the humble peasant who lacked ‘consciousness’ of the realities of colonial exploitation. In either case, the analysis would be incomplete, if not incorrect.

The Sikhs associated with the British on terms unique in the history of the British Indian Empire. Fazl-i-Husain, the pre-eminent political leader in all of Punjab until his death in 1936, reflected on the nature of this relationship when he noted that the Sikhs ‘may be small in number, but they are the only community in India who have won against the British Government and *established the position of domination* which commands the respect as well as the fear of others and makes the Government give in. In case of conflict, the Government give in and they are always careful indeed that there may be no conflict.’<sup>69</sup> The Sikhs extended support to the Government based on the recognition of tangible economic and social benefits that accrued to the community<sup>70</sup> because of its outstanding contributions to the British Indian Army. No anti-colonial revolution could be successful in the Punjab until its dominant communities could be persuaded that the colonial state was their oppressor, not benefactor.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), p. 3.
- <sup>2</sup> G.S. Deol, *The Role of the Ghadar Party in the National Movement* (Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1969), p. 175.
- <sup>3</sup> For colonial policies favoring recruited communities and recruiting areas, see Rajit K. Mazumder, *The Indian Army and the Making of Punjab* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2011), pp. 93-138.
- <sup>4</sup> For the economic benefits of military service, see Rajit K. Mazumder, *The Indian Army and the Making of Punjab*, pp. 22-46, 139-201.
- <sup>5</sup> ‘Punjabisation’ refers to the disproportionate recruitment from Punjab in the British Indian Army, as the total number of soldiers from the province increased from 25,810 in 1880 to a staggering 362,027 by 1919. These figures are even more remarkable in percentage terms: Punjabis made up 18.8% of the total combatants in the army in 1880 and 45.5% by 1919, and this proportion continued into the following

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decades. The significance is striking when expressed in demographic terms: British Punjab constituted less than 10% of the population of the British Indian Empire, yet it supplied nearly of half its fighting forces. Rajit K. Mazumder, *The Indian Army and the Making of Punjab*, pp. 7-19.

- <sup>6</sup> For details see Rajit K. Mazumder, *The Indian Army and the Making of Punjab*, pp. 247-257.
- <sup>7</sup> For details of the agitations of 1905-1907 and the consequent withdrawal of the concerned legislations, see Rajit K. Mazumder, *The Indian Army and the Making of Punjab*, pp. 203-213.
- <sup>8</sup> F.C. Isemonger and J. Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadr Conspiracy (1913-1915)* (Lahore: Government Printing, Punjab, 1919; reprint Meerut: Archana Publications, 1998). Both were officers of the Indian Police Service in Punjab; Michael O' Dwyer, *India as I Knew It (1885-1925)*, (London: Constable and Co., 1925), pp. 186-188; M. S. Leigh, *The Punjab and the War* (Lahore: Superintendent of Government Printing, Punjab, 1922), p. 17; Harish K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement: Ideology, Organisation & Strategy* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University Press, 1983), pp. 38-40, 67-76; Harish Puri, 'Making of the Ghadar Movement' in J.S. Grewal, Harish Puri and Indu Banga (Eds.), *The Ghadar Movement: Background, Ideology, Action and Legacies* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 2013), pp. 125-182.
- <sup>9</sup> Michael O'Dwyer, *India As I Knew It (1885-1925)*, pp. 188-191; G. S. Deol, *Role of the Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, pp. 81-82.
- <sup>10</sup> The authorities were correct in their hunch. '... North India was selected for the proposed insurrection. In the Northern part, too, it was decided that one province should be liberated first and it should be used as the base for the liberation of other provinces.' G.S. Deol, *Role of the Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, p. 77.
- <sup>11</sup> Note by 'an officer of the Central Intelligence Office, Delhi' quoted in F. C. Isemonger and J. Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadr Conspiracy (1913-1915)*, pp. 52-53.
- <sup>12</sup> 'Nearly one thousand Ghadarites had arrived in Punjab by December 1914.' Anil Baran Ganguly, *Ghadar Revolution in America* (Delhi: Metropolitan Book Co., 1980), p. 60.
- <sup>13</sup> F.C. Isemonger and J. Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadr Conspiracy (1913-1915)*, p. 59.

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- <sup>14</sup> Michael O'Dwyer, *India As I Knew It (1885-1925)*, pp. 190-192, 207.
- <sup>15</sup> For details see, F.C. Isemonger and J. Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadr Conspiracy (1913-1915)*, pp. 40-48, 59-63; Roy Gardner, 'Komagata Maru Affair: When Vancouver Turned Back the Sikhs (in 1914)', *The Panjab Past and Present*, April 1978, pp. 142-154, quotation from *ibid*; Harish K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement: Ideology, Organisation & Strategy*, pp. 76-81.
- <sup>16</sup> Michael O'Dwyer, *India As I Knew It (1885-1925)*, p. 194; see also, F. C. Isemonger and J. Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadar Conspiracy (1913-1915)*, pp. 69-71.
- <sup>17</sup> It was anticipated that the Government would be preoccupied in a war with other great powers and the bulk of British troops would be absent from India. Also, it would allow revolutionaries to seek help from the enemies of the British. Indian students in the US were trained in military tactics, and were to be sent to India to instigate military units into insurrection. See also, G. S. Deol, *Role of the Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, pp. 77-80.
- <sup>18</sup> The biography of Taraknath Das, an important Indian revolutionary in North America, has an entire chapter titled 'The Great War and Aborted Revolution (1914-1916)'. See Tapan K. Mukherjee, *Taraknath Das: Life and Letters of a Revolutionary in Exile* (Calcutta: National Council of Education, Bengal, 1998), pp. 69-90.
- <sup>19</sup> Khushwant Singh and Satindra Singh, *Ghadar 1915: India's First Armed Revolution* (New Delhi: R&K Publishing, 1966), p. 39.
- <sup>20</sup> Harish K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement: Ideology, Organisation & Strategy*, p. 85.
- <sup>21</sup> M.S. Leigh, *The Punjab and the War*, p. 19.
- <sup>22</sup> Khushwant Singh and Satindra Singh, *Ghadar 1915: India's First Armed Revolution*, p. 39.
- <sup>23</sup> A zaildar was a native officer in-charge of a zail, which could consist of between 2 to 40 villages.
- <sup>24</sup> It also led to the rule that any 'Punjabi returning emigrants' not arrested in Calcutta should report for police verification in Ludhiana. F.C. Isemonger and J. Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadr Conspiracy (1913-1915)*, pp. 71-73, 78-79. According to Harish K. Puri, 'Some of the impulsive actions like that of the murder of a police constable and a

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Zaildar near Ferozeshahar led to a huge loss: two of them were killed there and seven, including the prominent leader Kanshi Ram, were sentenced to death and hanged.’ Harish K. Puri, ‘Making of the Ghadar Movement’, p. 160.

- 25 Michael O’Dwyer, *India As I Knew It (1885-1925)*, pp. 198-199.
- 26 ‘The Ghadarites depended on the Indian army most, because it was easier for them to seduce the troops, as 75 per cent of the members of the party were ex-soldiers.’ G. S. Deol, *Role of the Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, p. 77.
- 27 For the summary punishment meted out to mutinous soldiers in Singapore, see Harish K. Puri, ‘Making of the Ghadar Movement’, p. 165. The greatest fear of military authorities was a repeat of the great Ghadar of 1857, and they brutally repressed the slightest sign of mutiny.
- 28 Michael O’ Dwyer, *India As I Knew It (1885-1925)*, p. 203.
- 29 Harish K. Puri, ‘Making of the Ghadar Movement’, p. 160.
- 30 Pingle, radicalized in America, had studied at the University of Oregon, and was the main associate in Punjab of the famed Bengal ‘extremist’ leader Rash Behari Bose.
- 31 Michael O’Dwyer, *India As I Knew It (1885-1925)*, p. 203; Khushwant Singh and Satindra Singh, *Ghadar 1915: India’s First Armed Revolution*, pp. 42-43. In addition, the attack on the arsenal at Mian Meer, the military cantonment in Lahore, and an attack on the Ferozepur magazine also ‘failed’. See also, H. K. Puri, ‘Making of the Ghadar Movement’, pp. 159-160.
- 32 Khushwant Singh and Satindra Singh, *Ghadar 1915: India’s First Armed Revolution*, p. 43.
- 33 Khushwant Singh and Satindra Singh, *Ghadar 1915: India’s First Armed Revolution*, pp. 122-125; Harish K. Puri, ‘Making of the Ghadar Movement’, p. 161.
- 34 Michael O’Dwyer, *India As I Knew It (1885-1925)*, pp. 200-201.
- 35 Khushwant Singh and Satindra Singh, *Ghadar 1915: India’s First Armed Revolution*, p. 38.
- 36 Michael O’Dwyer, *India As I Knew It (1885-1925)*, pp. 204-206.

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- <sup>37</sup> F.C. Isemonger and J. Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadr Conspiracy (1913-1915)*, p. 73.
- <sup>38</sup> F.C. Isemonger and J. Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadr Conspiracy (1913-1915)*, p. 74.
- <sup>39</sup> Michael O'Dwyer, *India As I Knew It (1885-1925)*, p. 206.
- <sup>40</sup> Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 183.
- <sup>41</sup> Speech by Commissioner, Lahore Division at the Recruitment Durbar, Amritsar on 17 April 1918 in Government of Punjab, Home-Military Department, B Proceedings, July 1918, Nos. 229-31. See also, F.C. Isemonger and J. Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadr Conspiracy (1913-1915)*, pp. 136-138.
- <sup>42</sup> Quoted in Harish K. Puri, 'Making of the Ghadar Movement', p. 159.
- <sup>43</sup> Michael O'Dwyer, *India As I Knew It (1885-1925)*, pp. 204-206.
- <sup>44</sup> F.C. Isemonger and J. Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadr Conspiracy (1913-1915)*, p. 117.
- <sup>45</sup> Michael O' Dwyer, *India As I Knew It (1885-1925)*, p. 206; Michael O'Dwyer, subsequently responsible for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, was typically quick and ruthless in asking for the death penalty for Ghadar revolutionaries. So egregious was this system of justice through Special Tribunal, that viceroy Hardinge had to travel to Lahore to commute 17 of the 24 death sentences meted out in the Lahore Conspiracy Case. Harish K. Puri, 'Making of the Ghadar Movement', p. 161.
- <sup>46</sup> M.S. Leigh, *The Punjab and the War*, p. 21.
- <sup>47</sup> Nambardar was a village headman; *Safaidposh* (literally, 'white-clad' and meaning middle-class in today's Urdu) had been granted sizeable tracts of land, usually in the canal colonies; *chowkidar* was the village policeman.
- <sup>48</sup> Harish K. Puri, 'Making of the Ghadar Movement', p. 159.
- <sup>49</sup> Indian revolutionaries were based in Berlin, and, among other schemes, the German authorities in Germany as well as the United States facilitated shipment of arms into India. For details see Tapan K.

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Mukherjee, *Taraknath Das: Life and Letters of a Revolutionary in Exile*, pp. 69-88.

- <sup>50</sup> A non-commissioned cavalry officer.
- <sup>51</sup> Sawan Singh, Sikh, Lance Dafadar, Instructor, 25th Cavalry, c/o Mr. Ram Singh, 411E 4th Street, Los Angeles, California to the Commanding Officer, 25th Cavalry, c/o India Office, 5th October 1917, *Censor of Indian Mails, 1914-18*, Part 1, p. 158, No. 17. The *Censor of Indian Mails* was the censored correspondence to and from Indian troops, primarily in Europe, during World War I reported by the Chief Censor of Mails. For details of the San Francisco trial, see Tapan K. Mukherjee, *Taraknath Das: Life and Letters of a Revolutionary in Exile*, pp. 118-139; Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire*, pp. 89-94; Harish K. Puri, 'Making of the Ghadar Movement', pp. 169-172.
- <sup>52</sup> '...the State of Punjab had been contributing the best of her youth for the battle fields in Europe and the Middle East. Moreover, one important Sikh political party, the Chief Khalsa Diwan, had established its loyalty to the British Government and the religious leaders of all principal Sikh shrines had been made to recognise the Ghadar revolutionaries simply as bandits and not patriots. Under such circumstances...[a]n average person could never recognise a Ghadarite as the true rebel to fight for the country....' Anil Baran Ganguly, *Ghadar Revolution in America*, p. 85.
- <sup>53</sup> Michael O'Dwyer, *India As I Knew It (1885-1925)*, p. 207.
- <sup>54</sup> See, Evidence of Maj. J. Hill, Second-in-Command, 15<sup>th</sup> Sikhs, in *The Army in India Committee, 1912, Vol. III, Minutes of Evidence*, 879. See also, Byron Farwell, *Armies of the Raj: From the Mutiny to Independence, 1858-1947* (London: Viking, 1989), p. 182.
- <sup>55</sup> From a Khatri Sikh in India, to a friend in a regiment serving in France, 30th January 1915, *Censor of Indian Mails, 1914-1918*, Part 2. Emphasis added.
- <sup>56</sup> Michael O'Dwyer, *India As I Knew It (1885-1925)*, p. 206.
- <sup>57</sup> Khushwant Singh and Satindra Singh, *Ghadar 1915: India's First Armed Revolution*, p. 44.
- <sup>58</sup> Michael O'Dwyer, *India As I Knew It (1885-1925)*, p. 208.

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- <sup>59</sup> Speech by Arur Singh, Manager of the Golden Temple on 17 April 1918, p. 2 in Government of Punjab, *Home-Military Department, B Proceedings*, July 1918, Nos. 229-231. Emphasis added.
- <sup>60</sup> Michael O'Dwyer, *India As I Knew It (1885-1925)*, p. 204.
- <sup>61</sup> Harish K. Puri, 'Making of the Ghadar Movement', p. 158.
- <sup>62</sup> Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. 2, p. 183.
- <sup>63</sup> Harish K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement: Ideology, Organisation & Strategy*, pp. 126-145.
- <sup>64</sup> Michael O'Dwyer, *India As I Knew It (1885-1925)*, pp. 55-56. Emphasis added.
- <sup>65</sup> 'As was to be expected, rich landowners had called on the governor assuring him of their loyalty and set up committees in the districts to watch the movements of returning emigrants and bring them back to paths of obedience'. Khushwant Singh and Satindra Singh, *Ghadar 1915: India's First Armed Revolution*, p. 56.
- <sup>66</sup> Tapan K. Mukherjee, *Tarak Nath Das: Life and Letters of a Revolutionary in Exile*, p. 75.
- <sup>67</sup> Michael O'Dwyer, *India As I Knew It (1885-1925)*, p. 198.
- <sup>68</sup> Harish K. Puri, 'Making of the Ghadar Movement', pp. 158-159.
- <sup>69</sup> Fazl-i-Husain, 'Punjab Politics' (written in 1936), reprinted in *The Panjab Past and Present*, April 1971, pp. 146-147. Emphasis added. While Husain wrote this in the context of the Akali movement of the 1920s, the import of his words are relevant for this discussion.
- <sup>70</sup> Indeed, Deol himself concedes that, '...the element which dominated the Punjabi masses at the time, was supporting the Government in their personal interests.' G. S. Deol, *Role of the Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, p. 123.