

# **Call of the Ghadaris**

# **Revolution**



**Communist Ghadar Party of India**  
**New Delhi**

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Communist Ghadar Party of India  
E-392 Sanjay Colony, Okhla Phase-II  
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email: [info@cgpi.org](mailto:info@cgpi.org)  
web: [www.cgpi.org](http://www.cgpi.org)

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email: [lokawaz@gmail.com](mailto:lokawaz@gmail.com)  
mobile: +91 98688 11998, 98101 67911

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# Publisher's Note

This book is the product of rigorous research and a series of inner-party discussions carried out under the leadership of Comrade Lal Singh, General Secretary of the Communist Ghadar Party of India. It is being published in Punjabi, Hindi and English languages by decision of the Central Committee of the Party.

The Communist Ghadar Party of India acknowledges the contributions of all those who have carried out painstaking research and documentation of the life and work of the activists of Hindustan Ghadar Party.

# Foreword

The Hindustan Ghadar Party, which was formed by Indian immigrants in North America and dared to organise a revolutionary uprising that shook the British Empire in 1915-16, has inspired several generations of Indian revolutionaries. It inspired Shaheed Bhagat Singh and other revolutionaries during the twenties and the following decades. In the sixties and seventies, it inspired communists to organise among Indians abroad in support of the Indian revolution and against racist attacks. It continues to inspire and guide the work of the Communist Ghadar Party of India and others who are striving to liberate Indian society from all forms of exploitation and enslavement.

The centenary year of the founding of the Hindustan Ghadar Party was celebrated in many parts of India and abroad in 2013. All Indian communists participated in these celebrations. It is to be noted that a section within the communist movement continues to conciliate with the official narrative that the Ghadar Party and the Congress fought for the same aim while only differing in their methods. Some even conciliate with the branding of the Ghadaris as terrorists.

There are Indian Marxist scholars who have promoted the notion that the Ghadaris were very heroic but naïve in their thinking. This implies that as far as the theory and program of Indian revolution are concerned, there is nothing to learn from Hindustan Ghadar Party. Such an idea is not only wrong but also extremely harmful.

The Hindustan Ghadar Party was the first political party of Indians that was committed to bring workers and peasants to power. It stands in striking contrast to the parties whose formation was sponsored by the British rulers, such as the Congress and the Muslim League. Such parties worked to bring the capitalists and landlords to power so as to preserve the colonial system of plunder.

It is our sincere belief that serious study of the work of the Hindustan Ghadar Party and its followers is an essential component of political education for every Indian revolutionary at the present time. The present generation of communists must recognise and respect the fact that we stand on the shoulders of previous generations of Indian revolutionaries and the thought material they have bequeathed to us.

The analysis of the past, including every major revolutionary episode, the material changes it brought about and the thought processes it gave rise to, is an essential ingredient for developing Indian revolutionary theory. The elaboration of the theory of Indian revolution is essential to win victory in the struggle to smash the entire legacy of colonialism, including capitalism and all remnants of feudalism and imperialism.

This book is dedicated to the memory of those brave and wise souls who established the Hindustan Ghadar Party. It is dedicated to all those who have since then contributed to keeping alive the aim and movement for the liberation of Indian society. It is aimed at nurturing fresh generations of Ghadaris to ensure the victory of revolution on Indian soil.

Inquilab Zindabad!

Lal Singh  
General Secretary  
The Communist Ghadar Party of India

## Chapter 1

# Introduction

The revolutionary uprising of 1915 was one of the most audacious attempts to forcibly overthrow British colonial rule in India. At the call of the Hindustan Ghadar Party, thousands of Indians abroad sold their belongings and returned to India to join the armed uprising.



Stockton Gurudwara California, one of the centres of Hindustan Ghadar Party

Source: <http://ghadar.homestead.com>

The uprising was global in scope, encompassing revolt by soldiers of the British Indian Army stationed in numerous countries around the world. It shook the foundations of the British Empire and brought back memories of 1857.

Addressing a group of Ghadaris departing for India on the ship S S Korea from San Francisco harbour on 29th August 1914, Maulana Barkatullah, one of the leading activists of the Hindustan Ghadar Party, said:

“Brothers, you people are the better kind of mujahideen of this world. Not the kind who will kill hapless people of other religious beliefs in the name of religion but the kind of mujahideen who will uproot a devilish rule. The kind of mujahideen who will cut the shackles on the feet of the powerless, smash to smithereens and cast aside the chains of slavery and wipe out the oppressor. But do remember, freedom is not replacing the white skinned sahebs by the dark skinned sahebs. That country is free in which the poorest of the poor and the weakest of the weak feels that he is the master of his country and his destiny. Hindustan is a victim of layer after layer of slavery. Like the skins of an onion, there is social slavery within political slavery, there is religious slavery within social slavery, then there is caste slavery – who knows how many kinds of slavery we are victims of. We have to smash all kinds of slavery, one by one. The first step in this direction is to free ourselves from the clutches of the foreigners so that we can wage other struggles – against the maulvis, the pandits, the stooges of the British sitting in the gurudwaras, the capitalists, the pawns at every level of administration, the sahebs. Today I am very happy and extremely proud to call myself an Indian. I congratulate you. Go, fulfil your mission.” <sup>1</sup>

The struggle against the multiple layers of slavery is continuing till this day. Those who are demanding freedom from one or more forms of slavery are being branded as “anti-national” and



thrown into jail by the new oppressors who have taken the place of the British. Just like the colonial rulers did, they are trying to turn the truth on its head about who is a patriot and who is the enemy of the people. This distinction was revealed very starkly during the anti-colonial struggle. The British colonialists rewarded their Indian collaborators with land and industrial licenses, thereby promoting the growth of capitalist and landlord classes. They unleashed brutal repression on all uncompromising patriots.

Leading activists of the Hindustan Ghadar Party were branded as enemies of the State and put to death by the British Raj. The judgment in the Lahore Conspiracy Case-I was delivered on 13th September 1915, in which 24 of the 82 accused persons were awarded death sentences. Following widespread public outcry, 17 of those were converted into life imprisonment. The first seven patriots thus condemned were hanged to death in November 1915. They included 19 year-old Kartar Singh Saraba and 22 year-old Vishnu Ganesh Pingley. The judgment in the Supplementary Lahore Conspiracy Case was delivered on 30th March 1916, in which five of the 102 accused were awarded death sentences. <sup>2</sup>

For any Indian today who seeks the truth about the distinction between fighting for freedom and collaborating with imperialism, it is essential to understand the clash between two opposing lines, which has characterised the development of our country since colonial times up to the present. One hundred years ago, the two opposing lines were represented by the Hindustan Ghadar Party and the Congress Party respectively.

The Indian National Congress, the oldest political party in our country, was formed in 1885, with the express purpose of preventing another revolutionary uprising like that of 1857 from taking place. Its formation was part of the project of consolidating



**The Indian National Congress, the oldest political party in our country, was formed in 1885, with the express purpose of preventing another revolutionary uprising like that of 1857.**



colonial rule, by accommodating within it the richest and most influential sections of Indian capitalists and landlords.

The Hindustan Ghadar Party was formed in 1913 by a group of Indian immigrants on the west coast of North America. They were largely from peasant families of Punjab, people who had hoped to escape the enslaving conditions at home but faced second class treatment as immigrant workers in the United States and Canada.

**The revolutionaries who formed the Hindustan Ghadar Party had learnt important lessons from the Ghadar of 1857. They defined the strategic aim of the struggle as the complete uprooting of the colonial state and building of a new state.**

The Hindustan Ghadar Party was formed with the recognition that Indians could not live with dignity abroad as long as India was enslaved back home. It was formed with the aim of overthrowing British colonial rule through a mass revolutionary uprising and creating an independent federal Indian republic on an entirely new foundation.

The revolutionaries who formed the Hindustan Ghadar Party had learnt important lessons from the Ghadar of 1857. They defined the strategic aim of the struggle as the complete uprooting of the colonial state and building of a new state, a modern democratic India that would be free from any form of exploitation of some persons by others, and of all forms of oppression of nations and peoples.

The capitalist business houses and big landlords, on the other hand, aspired to gain power in their own hands while keeping the toiling majority of people firmly out of power. Being more opposed to social revolution than to imperialist plunder, these beneficiaries of the colonial system were devising ways and means to accommodate their representatives within the colonial state.

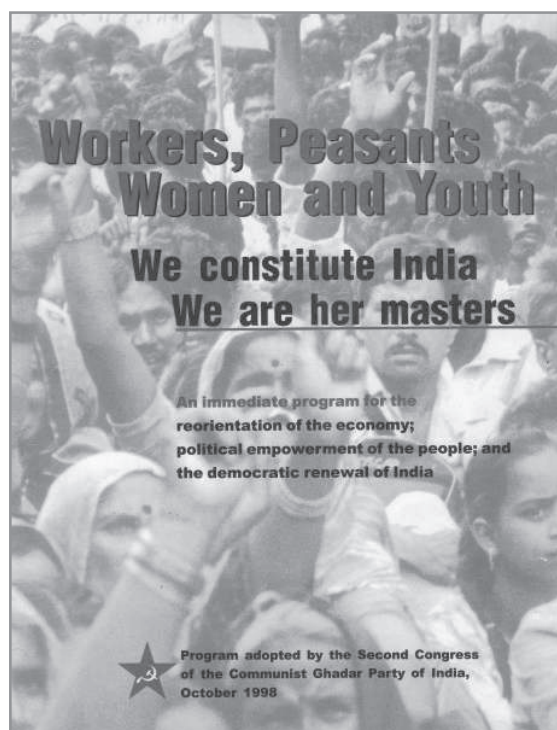
The battle between the two lines – the line of making a clean break with all colonial institutions and laying a new foundation

for a civilised human power, and the line of compromising with imperialism and preserving the State and system left behind by the British – continues till today. The capitalist monopoly houses have charted out a course to become a major global power on the backs of the labour of workers and peasants. They are rapidly arming the State to the teeth and militarising the economy, while disarming the workers and peasants ideologically with the slogan that “there is no alternative”.

Communists are engaged in organising the working class and toiling people to reject this mantra and unite around the alternative of bringing workers and peasants to power so as to carry out a social revolution to replace capitalism by socialism. There is much to learn from the experience of the Hindustan Ghadar Party, which was the first Indian political party to work towards the strategic aim of a revolution to establish the rule of the toiling majority and to liberate society from all forms of exploitation, oppression and discrimination.

The revolutionary uprising of 1915 showed that no matter how hard they tried, the British colonialists could not erase the yearning for revolution, for Ghadar, from the hearts and minds of the Indian people.

The aim of this book is not only to tell the story of the heroic deeds of the Hindustan Ghadar Party but also to elucidate its theory and program, which has inspired and guided several waves of



Program of the Communist Ghadar Party of India, 1998

Indian revolutionaries till this day. It is aimed at exposing and smashing the lie that the Ghadaris were brave but hot headed and violent people who had no scientific theory or political program.

While the story of the Ghadar Party has a very definite beginning, it has no definite end or finishing point because the Ghadar is still alive. From its birth on 25<sup>th</sup> December 1930, the Communist Ghadar Party of India has been committed to keeping alive and further developing the line of the Ghadaris, guided by the most advanced scientific theory of communism, inspired by the goal of complete emancipation of labour from exploitation, and the liberation of society from class divisions.

This book therefore concludes in the context of the struggle that is going on at present. It concludes with the call of our Party to all communists and all progressive Indians to join hands and work for the Navnirman of India, that is, to establish a voluntary and civilised union of peoples, the truly free India which the Ghadaris dreamed about and for which they laid down their lives.

Let us defeat the collaborators with imperialism who have usurped power and are maintaining by force a system of continued exploitation, rape and plunder of India!

Let us advance the struggle to make the workers, peasants, women and youth the collective master of India!

## References

<sup>1</sup> Ved Prakash 'Vatuk', Azadi Ya Maut (A Brief History of Ghadar Party), Gargi Prakashan, Delhi, 2015, p 82.

<sup>2</sup> Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich & Harinder Singh, Ghadar Movement Original Documents, Vol. I-B (Lahore Conspiracy Cases I and II), Chandigarh, Unistar 2014, pp 1-10, 245-255.

## Chapter 2

# Hindustan Ghadar Party

The Hindustan Ghadar Party was formed in 1913, by Indians who had migrated to Canada and the west coast of the US, where they faced racial discrimination and physical attacks. Those who had hoped to live with dignity in the most advanced capitalist society discovered that the so-called democratic states of Canada and the US treated "non-whites" like slaves.



Student activists of the Ghadar Party at Berkeley University

Source: <http://www.facts-about-india.com/the-ghadar-movement.php>



Indian workers  
constructing the Pacific &  
Eastern Railroad, 1909

Source: <http://iahmuseum.org/galleries/the-right-to-liberty/>

The majority of Indian immigrants in Canada and the US in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were from Punjab, mostly hailing from Sikh peasant families. This was due to various factors. One factor was the terrible destruction of the agrarian economy of Punjab by the colonialists and their extortionate taxation system. Another was the presence of Sikh regiments of the British Indian Army in numerous countries abroad which led to a large number of Punjabi peasants making international links.

The majority of the middle peasants who mortgaged their land and migrated to the US ended up as farm workers in California. Some of the migrants found jobs in timber and steel factories in the states of Oregon and Washington and in the saw mills of British Columbia in Canada. As explained by Comrade Sohan Singh Bhakna:

“The Indian peasant from Punjab was transformed into a worker on arrival in America ... Back home in Punjab, his mental make-up was of a proud land-owner. He thought of himself as a Sardar and landless workers were considered lowly by him. And now, when he was at the receiving end of the capitalists and ranch owners of California, he realised that his condition was far removed from that of a Sardar. He was a virtual slave.”<sup>1</sup>



New York Times article  
in 1907, reporting on  
racist attack on Indian  
immigrants

Source: <http://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/echoes-of-freedom/chapter4>

In periods of economic crisis and widespread unemployment, the capitalist class would incite white workers to vent their anger against immigrant workers. When Japanese immigrant workers were attacked racially, the Japanese government took steps to get compensation for the victims. But when Indian workers were subjected to racist attacks and abuse, the British government refused to take any steps in their defence.

Indian immigrants on the west coast of the United States established gurudwaras, which provided space for gathering

and discussing their common problems. Students who had come from India to study in California were also part-time workers. They worked on farms in the summer, to finance their studies and living expenses. Comrade Bhakna has noted that Indian students in American universities at that time were close to the workers and shared weal and woe with them.

### **Racist Attacks on Indian Immigrant Workers**

A small town called Wilhem in the state of Oregon had a large number of lumber yards employing Indians along with other immigrant labourers. During the depression of 1907, a racist attack was launched on the Indian workers' quarters. Their belongings were looted and the workers were humiliated. They were bundled into tram cars and left in jungles in the open in the extreme cold weather of January. The police were a mute witness to all this. When the Indians brought this to the notice of the British Counsellor, he did not even stir his little finger and ignored the incident.

A similar happening took place in a small town called Ebert. Indians were subjected to loot and pillage and left high and dry in the jungles. This also took place in 1907 and the British functionaries refused to stir themselves in this case as well. Comrade Sohan Singh Bhakna raises the question:

“What was the force that prompted all this hatred and ridicule? It did not take long for the Indians to find out. They discovered that it was the agents of the British CID and their operators who spread this hatred towards the Indians amongst the Americans. The master of this force, the British Government, could not digest the fact of common Indians living and working in a virtually democratic and rich country like America because this contact was sure to lead them to think about their own independence. The British were aware of the dangers inherent in the contact of ordinary Indians with the people of Canada and the US.”

Source: Sohan Singh Bhakna, “Notes on the History of the Ghadar Party”, in *The Ghadar Movement*, edited by Dr. P. R. Kalia, Progressive People's Foundation of Edmonton, 2013, pp 381-382.



**As Indian immigrant workers, students and teachers in North America began to organise and resist their inhuman treatment, they forged political unity with anti-imperialist and socialist groups in the US, Canada and other countries.**

As Indian immigrant workers, students and teachers in North America began to organise and resist their inhuman treatment, they forged political unity with anti-imperialist and socialist groups in the US, Canada and other countries. They were inspired and influenced by the revolutionary struggles against imperialism that were raging in different continents.

In 1908, in conditions of economic crisis and growing unemployment, the Canadian government tried to dupe Indian immigrants to go to Honduras, a poor British colony. The government even promised to pay for their travel costs. The Indian community sent a two-member delegation to assess the conditions in Honduras. This delegation, consisting of Nagar Singh and Shaam Singh, travelled to Honduras accompanied by Canadian government representatives.

Jaundice and malaria were rampant in Honduras at that time. Many Indian indentured workers had died of these diseases. They lived in squalid conditions and were not allowed to move around without permission. They were paid meagre wages and could not save enough to travel back home. The members of the delegation were promised huge bribes to present a good report to their compatriots on their return. However, the delegation presented the true picture of conditions in Honduras and the Indian immigrants in Canada rejected the nefarious scheme of the government.

The Canadian Government brought General Swayne, the Governor of Honduras, to Canada to persuade the Indian community. After discussing with one Teja Singh, a highly educated immigrant, the General advised the Canadian Government to forget about its plan of sending Indians in Canada to Honduras. General Swayne admitted to the Vancouver World newspaper:

“Teja Singh is right. The Sikhs ... don't want to leave British Columbia. In these circumstances, if they are expelled



forcibly, there is a danger of 50,000 Sikh soldiers going out of control in India, and in order to bring them under control, we shall have to send 200,000 soldiers.”

The Canadian and British governments started viewing immigrants from India as a potential threat, and initiated measures to prevent their further entry. In a communication dated 26<sup>th</sup> February 1908, John Moreley included the following among the reasons for limiting immigration of Indians to Canada: (a) close familiarity with white workers does not make for British prestige; (b) there is socialist propaganda in Vancouver and consequently, a danger of Indians being imbued with socialist doctrines; and (c) unfair treatment of Indians in Canada is certain to be exploited for the purpose of agitation in India.

In 1910, the Canadian Government passed a law which made it mandatory for any person arriving in Canada to have travelled directly from his/her country without any stoppage in between. No ship sailed directly from India to Canada at that time.

In March 1913, Indians in Canada sent a delegation to London, consisting of Balwant Singh and Narain Singh, in order to present their problems to the British Government. The Secretary of the Colonies refused to meet the delegation. This was the last straw, which convinced the immigrant community that petitions and appeals were not going to get any justice for Indians, either within the country or abroad.

One of the poems of the Indian immigrants at that time, subsequently published in the Ghadar weekly, expressed their sentiments and thoughts very succinctly:

*Des paiyen dhake, bahr dhoi koi naa; Sada pardesian da des koi na!*

■  
**The Canadian and British Governments started viewing immigrants from India as a potential threat, and initiated measures to prevent their further entry.**

■

In our country we are harassed, in alien lands we have no support; there is no land which we can call homeland!

In 1914, a ship named Komagata Maru attempted to transport Indians all the way from Hong Kong to the west coast of Canada. When the ship arrived in Vancouver, British Columbia, the passengers were not allowed to disembark. Indians in Canada and the US collected thousands of dollars to provide food and aid for the ship's passengers and to wage a legal battle for their admission. After more than 60 days of day-and-night struggle, the ship was forced to return with its passengers, who became revolutionised by the time they returned to India.

The Hindustan Ghadar Party was formed initially under the name of the Hindi Association of the Pacific Coast in April 1913, in Astoria, Oregon, USA. Comrade Sohan Singh Bhakna was elected as President, Kesar Singh Thathgarh as Vice President, Lala Hardayal as General Secretary, Lala Thakur Das Dhuri as Joint Secretary and Pandit Kanshi Ram Mardauli as the Treasurer.



Passengers on board the Komagata Maru

Source: <http://wpmedia.news.nationalpost.com/2016/05/cnsphoto-boswell-komagata.png?w=620>

The Hindustan Ghadar Party formulated its goals and tasks as follows:

- To liberate India with the force of arms from British servitude and to establish a free and independent India with equal rights for all.
- To establish Party headquarters in San Francisco, that would serve as a base to coordinate all the activities for achieving these aims and objectives.
- To publish a weekly paper, Ghadar, in Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi and other languages of India.
- To hold organisational elections every year to elect a Coordination Committee from the different committees to carry out all the work.
- To organise cells amongst Indian railway, industrial, and farm workers, as well as students, all directly linked to the centre.
- The Coordination Committee would elect a three-member commission to supervise the political and underground work.
- Revenue would be drawn from each member through a monthly contribution of one dollar.
- No discussion or debate was to take place on religion within the organisation. Religion was considered a personal matter and had no place in the organisation.
- Every member was duty-bound to participate in the liberation struggle of the country in which they were resident.

The party's weekly organ was named Ghadar because it was inspired by the Ghadar of 1857. The first issue was published in Urdu on 1st November 1913. Ten days later, the Punjabi edition was published. On its masthead, the paper had inscribed in bold letters – Enemy of the British Rule in India.

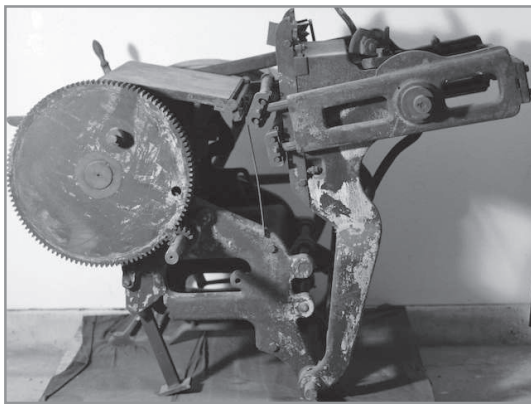


Ghadar Newspaper (Urdu)  
Vol. 1, No. 22, March 24,  
1914

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghadar-Party>

The inaugural issue declared that:

"Today on November 1, 1913, a new calendar is launched in the history of India. From now onward, a war against the British Rule is initiated from a foreign land in our native languages ...The power of the PEN will explode like a ball of cannon. This newspaper is a staunch enemy of the English Empire, and a bugle of challenge for the Indian youth. Wake up, take up arms and fight for the independence of India. ... What is our name? Ghadar. What is our work? Ghadar. Where will it break out? In India. The time will soon come when rifles and blood will take the place of pen and ink."



Hindustan Ghadar Party  
printing press  
Source: [http://aaww.org/  
ghadar-songs-of-revolt/](http://aaww.org/ghadar-songs-of-revolt/)

The weekly paper was initially printed on a hand-operated machine. As its circulation increased, a larger printing press was acquired. Over time, the press started operating in day and night shifts. A typical issue of the weekly highlighted revolutionary deeds from the past and present, covering numerous struggles for national and social liberation including those of the Irish, Egyptian, Russian, Chinese, Mexican and other peoples.

Every issue carried an article under the heading "Angrezi raj da kachha chittha" (Balance Sheet of British Rule) which highlighted the extent of colonial exploitation and plunder of India, supported by facts and figures.

A clarion call for the Ghadar Army was issued to all Indians abroad. It said:

"The British have occupied our dear land. Our commerce and industry has been ruined. They have plundered and looted the wealth of Hindustan and brought famine and plague. More than 90 million Hindustanis do not even have

one square meal a day. As many as 30 million have died due to famine and plague. They are sending all our produce and grains to England. It is due to these conditions of misery that Hindustanis have started going to far-off lands such as Australia, Canada, America, and Africa and when they have begun to fill their stomachs, it has poked needles and pins in the heart of the British. Because it has opened the eyes of the Hindustanis and they understand the schemes of the British, these British strangle us not only in India but also when we come abroad. They have closed Australia and Canada for us. Our mothers, sisters and children are treated like animals in Africa by the British.

“Now the British are pressuring the American Government to stop us from coming to the shores of America. The American Government has said that if the British Government is stopping Hindus from coming to their own-ruled countries, Australia and Canada, why should we allow them to come here? This bill is in their parliament (Congress). If this bill is passed, we will be ruined. Other countries will also make such laws. Now is the time to do something about this condition.

“Brave Indians! Awaken from your sleep. The British are getting you thrown out from everywhere. Let us unite and fight so that such laws are not passed here. Whether or not these laws get passed, we should think about what we should do. What is our duty at this time? Our duty at this time is to prepare an army to fight against British rule in India which is the root of all our problems. This is not the time for talk. This is the time for war. How long will you wait? How long will the world keep calling you slaves? On Sunday, February 15, a huge gathering will take place in Stockton. All Hindus and Muslims of America are called upon to join. No more petition to the oppressors. Now we have to take our rights with sword.

■  
**As many as 30 million have died due to famine and plague. They are sending all our produce and grains to England. It is due to these conditions of misery that Hindustanis have started going to far-off lands.**  
■

“Come brothers, you have earned plenty of dollars! Take the ship back to our motherland! Come let us go back to our motherland and raise the banner of revolt! Come to the gathering in Stockton and take a vow to go back to Hindustan and fight in the Ghadar! Just as this call is written in blood, in the same fashion the letter of freedom will be written in ours and the blood of the British on the soil of Hindustan. For this oath, this call is being sent out from the Yugantar Ashram. This is not a paper, but a declaration of war! Stop everything and come! Do not delay! **Only he is a brave fighter who fights for his country and does not leave the battlefield even if he is cut into pieces!**”

One of the posters highlighted the goal of a United States of India, which expressed the Ghadar Party’s vision of a liberated Hindustan. This subsequently became the name of a regular monthly organ which the party started publishing in 1923. The party was built with the spirit of internationalism and of the unity of all nations and peoples against imperialism and colonialism. No wonder that it attracted revolutionaries of different national backgrounds including Marathis, Bengalis, Punjabis and many more.



**The flag of  
Ghadar Party  
displayed  
two swords  
– symbolising  
knowledge and  
valour**

The flag of Ghadar Party displayed two swords – symbolising Vidya (knowledge) and Veerta (valour). The Party recognised the necessity to win the battle of ideas as well as the battle of muscle power – to wield the pen and the sword. This is reflected in the fact that the very first challenge it took up was to produce a weekly in Indian languages. That the spreading of knowledge and political mobilisation must precede any armed revolutionary uprising was clearly well understood by the Ghadar Party.

The colours of the Ghadar Party were saffron, green and red. Saffron represented valour and the spirit of self-sacrifice for the higher cause of the emancipation of society. Green reflected

### **National Debt of India**

(Extracted from an article published in September 1920, Issue No. 1 of The Independent Hindustan, a monthly publication of the Hindustan Ghadar Party)

The history of the National Debt of India is a sad reading. Generally speaking, "national debt" is no creation of wealth. At best, it can only be additive and give greater energy to production if it is used in assisting the creation of fresh wealth. Where the "debt" serves merely some other purpose which is not conducive to economic production, then there is so far a loss of national power.

Until the year 1792, the East India Company's debt did not exceed 7 million sterling. The Mysore-Maratha war added some 14 million ... the first Afghan War added some 15 million to the debt. The Sikh wars made a further addition of 15 million and so the total stood at nearly 60 million before the break-out of the War of Independence in 1857.

Lord Roberts had once expressed his opinion that:

"By the Act of 1858, the Government of India was transferred from the Company to the British Crown and thus, India, the brightest jewel in the British Crown became the so-called property of the British nation. But who paid the price of the jewel? Not the British nation, but through the sad irony of fate, India herself was made to pay the price of her own purchase! The entire capital stock and debt of the East India Company were added to the public debt of India, which now swelled to the enormous sum of 100 million sterling."

India is unjustly saddled with the burden of paying off the Capital Stock of the East India Company and the amount spent in checking the mutiny. The expenses of the wars fought outside the borders of India as a part and parcel of the imperialistic policy of British statesmen have been unjustly charged against the Indian Treasury, thus causing an unjust rise of the National Debt.

fertility and the productivity of our land and labour. Red stood for the unity of workers of all lands, of all nationalities, in the struggle against the unjust rule of imperialists and colonialists.

The Ghadar Party had its headquarters at 5 Wood Street, San Francisco, where it ran a printing press. Apart from Lala Har Dayal and Kartar Singh Saraba, others who worked actively at the headquarters when it was founded were Munshi Ram, who dealt with correspondence and kept the registers, and Hari Singh, the poet who wrote under the name of Fakir. The workers at the party press had to memorise over a thousand names of the subscribers, so as to leave no evidence for the intelligence agents of the British Government.

**Ghadar Party linked the misery of people with the nature of the political power that existed, and derived the need for a new political power to take care of Hindustan.**

As an offshoot of the weekly Ghadar, the party headquarters published several pamphlets, the most important of which was an anthology of poems and couplets called Ghadar-di-Goonj. Ten thousand copies of this pamphlet were published and quickly distributed. The native talent of the peasants-turned-workers, their deep feelings for justice, for freedom and equality, and their readiness to fight for their fulfilment, were all reflected in the verses composed by several poets. This pamphlet truly reflected the political consciousness of the Ghadaris who organised themselves as the first-ever revolutionary political party of Indians.

Poetry spread by the Ghadar Party highlighted the fact that the British Raj was organising wholesale plunder and super-exploitation of our land and labour. They wrote:

*Bhukhey Marnn Bacchey Kaall Vich Sadey; Khatti Khann Saadi Englistan Walley!*

Our children are dying in famines; the English are enjoying the fruits of our toil.



The Ghadar Party linked the misery of people with the nature of the political power that existed, and derived the need for a new political power to take care of Hindustan. One of their poetic verses says:

*Dhayi Totru Kha Gaye Khet Sada; Hindustan da Koi Kisan Kiyon Nahin?*

A handful of people have taken control of our land; why is there not a caretaker of Hindustan?

The Ghadaris appealed to hired soldiers, sons of peasants and workers serving in the British Indian Army, to wield their sword in defence of our people's honour and not in defence of the illegitimate and unjust British rule. They invoked the best of Indian thought in making this appeal which struck a chord with the Indian troops stationed in various parts of the world, with whom the Ghadaris had close links. One of their verses says:

*Karo paltan nun khabardar jaakey; Sutey payey kiyon teg chalaan walley?*

Go and arouse the army; why are those who wield the sword asleep?

The Ghadaris argued that British rule over India had no legitimacy because it did not fulfil the duty of the State to provide for the people and to protect them. It was based purely on brute force. It was therefore justified and essential for the people to use force to end this unjust rule. They pointed out:

*Binan joot yeh bhoot na jaayi! jaldi Ghadar macha diyo bhai!*

Without force, this Devil will not leave; Hurry to the call of revolution!

■ **The Ghadaris argued that British rule over India had no legitimacy because it did not fulfil the duty of the State to provide for the people and to protect them.** ■

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The Hindustan Ghadar Party argued, on the basis of facts, that the line of the Congress would not put an end to the oppression and plunder of our land and labour. It warned people not to be deceived by the false promises of Congress leaders, which were part of the tactics of London. One of the party publications stated:

"All wise men know that the Congress is an official assembly. The founder of this assembly ... was an Englishman named Mr. Hume. Almost every year, an Englishman is appointed as its President. Mr. Gokhale, who takes a great part in it, is a titled man and member of the Imperial Legislative Council. Messrs. Mehta and Nauroji are also titled men ... In short, all its members are flatterers and timid men. They do not think of measures for the prevention of famine and plague ... The appointment of a few young men to legislative councils cannot result in any good to the country, even though they may be able to deliver very eloquent speeches. The acceptance of government service by able Indians only causes great harm to the nation...This is not the way to free the country from the calamities which are devastating it ... great courage and wisdom are required to awaken the country. The flattery of Englishmen can be of no avail ... Congress is in the hands of Englishmen and conducted by them from London ... Avoid it ..."

Ghadar Party warned the people about various diversionary movements and ideas, including the concept of Hindu Rashtra, sponsored by the colonialists and spread by their collaborators. One of its publications states:

"Religious disputes among different sections are considered by some as signs of the activity and energy of the Hindu nation ... They think that when there is one religion throughout India, no foreign nation can aspire to become her ruler. But this is not borne out by history and is opposed

to common sense. Every person can have his/her own philosophical or religious principles ... India has produced patriots like Ram Singh, Nana Sahib, Tantia Tope, Rani of Jhansi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Amba Prasad Sufi and Ajit Singh, but the religion of these persons was not the same. So it is not necessary that there should be one religion throughout the country ... The prosperity and happiness of a people does not depend on a particular creed. ... To abandon efforts for liberty and equality and to devote one's entire zeal to religion is to degrade one's self below the status of man."

Special issues of Ghadar were also printed in Nepali, Bengali, Pashto, Gujarati and other languages. In spite of their best attempts, the British rulers could not prevent the weekly Ghadar from being distributed all over the world or from reaching India. By 1916, an estimated one million, that is, ten lakh copies of Ghadar were being published every week. There were Ghadar Party branches in China, Malaya, Siam, Europe, the Philippines, Africa, Hong Kong, Singapore, Panama, Argentina, Brazil, Iran, Afghanistan, Japan and Russia amongst other locations. Wherever there were immigrants from British India, there were Ghadar Party branches. Leaders of the party took up assignments to build and strengthen its branches in different countries, and to meet with various imperialist enemies of Britain at that time, to gauge the situation.

Maulana Barkatullah, who was a professor in Tokyo University, faced harassment for his political work there. He moved to Canada, where he helped the Party attract the support and sympathy of most of the Muslims among Indian immigrants. He also went to Kabul on a party assignment. Kapur Singh Mohi met with Sun Yat-sen in China. Sohan Singh Bhakna met with the German Counsellor in Tokyo.



**Ghadar Party warned the people about various diversionary movements and ideas, including the concept of Hindu Rashtra, sponsored by the colonialists and spread by their collaborators.**

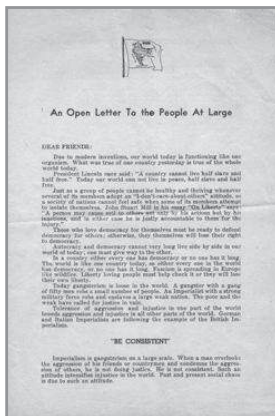


In an **Open Letter to the Peoples of India**, the Hindustan Ghadar Party said:

"Another world war is approaching. We must take advantage of this opportunity. England is sure to get involved in the coming war. Political wisdom demands that we must utilise this rare opportunity for our good. We must put forward our demand for complete independence when our enemy, British imperialism, is engaged in a life-and-death struggle. To save her life, Britain will need India's friendship more than anything else. We must demand complete independence as the price of our friendship. We must let the British rulers know in clear terms that if they care for the friendship of India, they must be prepared to give full independence to India at once. Otherwise, India will resist to the limit, their efforts to get any help from India. It is besides the point how we will resist, but resist we will.

"Complete independence means India's control over the treasury, foreign affairs, and military forces. Nothing short of that will do. We must remember that we can no longer trust any more promises from the British imperialists. To our sorrow, we have found out many times that we cannot rely upon their words. We must stand pat on our demands; we must one way or the other unite until our demands are met. The world situation is such that the British will think twice before refusing India's demand. We must not miss this golden opportunity.

"To gain full advantage of the situation, we must put up a strong united front. All those Hindustanis who really work for independence must come together in a united front. Personal differences must be forgotten. Unity of purpose is essential for our cause. All of us who hold India's freedom dear, must work to establish a formidable united front.



An Open Letter To the People At Large

Source: <https://www.saada.org/item/20141106-3902>

Our demands backed by our united front will have a telling effect. Our demands must be popularised among our countrymen. Our people must be made to act in case our demands are not met.

“Now is the time to educate our people; tomorrow may be too late. During the war, martial law will make things difficult. Unless the masses are made ready to act, our demands will not have much weight. The British imperialists care little for empty resolutions unless they are backed by the united might of the masses.

“War may start any day. We have not a moment to lose. We must do our best to educate and organise the Indian masses while we have time. Our slogans must be such as: Complete Independence or Non-cooperation! Freedom or Nothing Else! No Freedom, No Soldiers from India! No Freedom, No Money from India! Freedom or Resistance!”

One of the most striking features of the Hindustan Ghadar Party was its spirit of internationalism and commitment to build unity of all oppressed nations and peoples against imperialism. For example, an issue of Hindustan Ghadar Dhandora in the 1920s clearly stated:

“The freedom of India and the freedom of China have a close connection with each other. By the freedom of China, the day of the freedom of India will draw near.”

A poem addressed to Indian soldiers in Ghadar di Goonj said:

“Oh Brother, do not fight in a war against the Chinese. Beware of the enemy. He should not deceptively instigate you to fight your Chinese brothers. The enemy splits brothers and makes them kill each other. The people of Hind, China and Turkey are real brothers. The enemy should not be allowed to besmirch their brotherhood.”



**One of the most striking features of the Hindustan Ghadar Party was its spirit of internationalism and commitment to build unity of all oppressed nations and peoples against imperialism.**



During the high tide of anti-imperialist protests in China between 1925 and 1927, the British rushed Indian troops to Shanghai and Canton to brutally suppress mass protests by workers and youth. Ghadar Party activists in China organised to get in touch with Indian troops as soon as they landed on China's shores. They persuaded them not to fire on the Chinese. Many battalions of soldiers refused to fire and had to be hastily sent back to India by the British. <sup>2</sup>

## References

<sup>1</sup> Sohan Singh Bhakna, "Notes on the History of the Ghadar Party", in The Ghadar Movement, edited by Dr. P. R. Kalia, Progressive People's Foundation of Edmonton, 2013, p 380.

<sup>2</sup> Madhavi Thampi, Indians in China 1800-1949, Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2005, p179.

## Chapter 3

# The Uprising of 1915

The uprising led by the Hindustan Ghadar Party was global in scope, involving revolts within the British Indian Army stationed in many continents. In August 1914, the Executive Committee of the Party met and decided to call upon all the Ghadaris everywhere to return to India and organise the revolt.



The Government-in-Exile of Free Hindustan established in Kabul in 1915 with Raja Mahendra Pratap as President meeting with a foreign delegation to build an anti-British alliance

Source: <http://waziristanonafancy.blogspot.in/2013/10/the-niedermayer-hentig-expedition-to.html>

**The Hindustan  
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understood that  
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Huge rallies and public meetings were organised, calling on all patriotic Indians abroad to return home and participate in the armed revolt against the British. On 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1914, the first ship with 26 Indians left Vancouver. On 29<sup>th</sup> August, another ship with over 60 Indians left San Francisco for India. The latter included Bhai Kesar Singh, Bhai Javala Singh Thathian, Bhai Nidhan Singh Chuggha, Udham Singh Kasel and Pandit Jagat Ram.

The Komagata Maru, SS Korea, and the Namsang were some of the ships on which thousands of Ghadaris returned home. According to British Government records, 2,312 Ghadaris had entered India between 13<sup>th</sup> October 1914, and 25<sup>th</sup> February 1915. Their influx continued until 1916 when their number increased to more than 8,000. The official colonial records note the likelihood of the numbers having been much larger than what was known to the government.

Taking note of the Declaration of War in Ghadar, the British authorities issued an ordinance in September 1914, according to which provincial governments were empowered to arrest people entering India from abroad, even if they were Indian citizens. Many of the early entrants were arrested at the ports of entry. Out of those apprehended, about 2,500 were confined to their respective villages and 400 considered dangerous and kept under detention. The capture of so many of their leaders and activists upset the plan of the revolutionaries. Yet they did not give up. New leaders came forward and the Ghadaris reorganised themselves. They established their headquarters at Amritsar, later shifting to Lahore.

The Hindustan Ghadar Party established a press within India and published many pamphlets, including Ghadar Sandesh, Ailan-i Jang, Tilak, Nadar Mauqa, Rikabganj, Naujawan Utho and Sachchi Pukaar. These pamphlets were published in



Punjabi, Urdu and Hindi, and were distributed among workers, peasants and soldiers stationed in the cantonments of Punjab and other parts of British India. Contacts were established with revolutionaries in Bengal, the United Provinces and other parts of British India, including with Rash Behari Bose and Sachindranath Sanyal.

The Hindustan Ghadar Party understood that the First World War was an inter-imperialist war to re-divide the world among a few imperialist and colonial powers. It was a war aimed at the conquest of new markets, territories and sources of raw materials by rival capitalist groups, for which workers and peasants of different nations were being made to slaughter each other.

The greatest number of soldiers who fought in the British Army during the First World War came from Hindustan, that is, from present-day India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar <sup>1</sup>, 1.6 million men (soldiers, labourers, porters, water-carriers, mule drivers and cooks). <sup>2</sup> The British imperialists also obtained ammunition, steel, horses, mules and livestock in addition to monetary loot to fund their war machine. In 1917, £100 million was taken from India (current value – £8 billion), pushing our people deeper into debt to finance British imperialist war efforts.

Ghadar Party took the same political position with respect to the inter-imperialist war as the Bolshevik Party of Lenin did in Czarist Russia. Lenin said, "Let us turn this unjust war between gangs of slave-owners into a revolutionary war to end all slavery!"

It was estimated that there were less than 300 British Army men in any typical cantonment in North India at that time, while there were enough arms in them to sustain the war for a year or more. The Ghadaris gathered detailed information on

■ **Ghadar Party took the same political position with respect to the inter-imperialist war as the Bolshevik Party of Lenin did in Czarist Russia.** ■

### **Return of the Ghadaris**

Many of the Ghadaris who returned had connections in the British Indian Army and the plan was to use their contacts to get into the army cantonments and sow the seeds of rebellion among the Indian soldiers. So dedicated were they to accomplish this task that in every port where they anchored, they mingled with Indian soldiers to mobilise support for the revolt.

The major centres of revolutionary activities at that time were in Punjab, the United Provinces and Bengal. Initially there was not much contact between the Punjab and the Bengal groups. However, each group was aware of the existence of the other groups and proudly regarded the activities of other groups, reported in newspapers as acts of robberies and bomb blasts, with great interest. Such news indicated that revolutionaries were active and they were a source of strength and inspiration for revolutionaries in other places. With the coming back of the Ghadaris, contact was established between these centres and meetings were held to coordinate actions.

While British soldiers were engaged in war in other countries, it was an opportune time for the revolutionaries to occupy the barracks. At that time, the Ghadaris were in contact with the garrisons in Lahore, Rawalpindi, Meerut, Lucknow, Peshawar and Bannu. The magazine of the Northern Command was in Ferozepur cantonment; with its occupation, the entire ammunition could have been obtained to defeat the British Army. Bengali revolutionaries had infiltrated the Lucknow Division and the cantonments east of Bihar. The party had established a reputation among Indian soldiers in Hong Kong, Penang and Rangoon.

Sources: (i) Sachindranath Sanyal, "Bandi Jeevan", Shakshi Prakashan, New Delhi, pp 31, 42 and 83.  
(ii) Hey compatriots, keep us in your memories lest we are forgotten!  
Ghadar Centenary Committee Toronto, 2013.



the amount of stored up arms and ammunition as well as the number of soldiers guarding each armoury and which of them could be trusted to join the revolt.

The party executive met on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1915, and decided to start the rebellion on 21<sup>st</sup> February. The plan was to capture and occupy the army cantonments of Mian Mir, Firozpur, Meerut, Lahore and Delhi; and proclaim the Republic of India. The 128<sup>th</sup> Pioneer and 12<sup>th</sup> Cavalry were to capture the Meerut Cantonment and then proceed to Delhi. Soldiers in numerous cantonments in northern India were organised to join the rebellion upon receiving an agreed-upon signal. Leading organisers of the party were sent to Jhelum, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Ambala, Meerut, Lucknow, Allahabad, Varanasi, Dinapur and Faizabad. The organisation of revolt in the eastern part of India was to be coordinated by the revolutionaries from Bengal. The rebellion was to engulf the British Empire from Peshawar to Hong Kong.

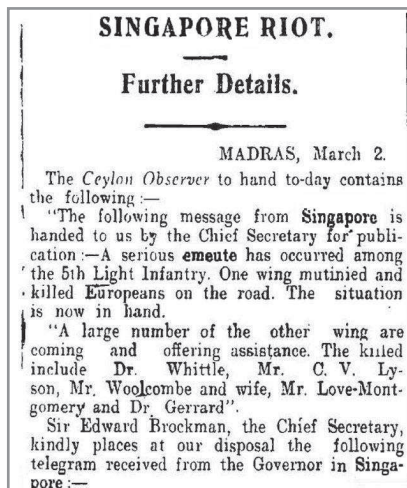
The British Government had posted their intelligence men at railway stations in all the cities and important villages. They had even managed to plant informers within the Ghadar Party organisation. When the party learnt that information about the day of the uprising had leaked, it advanced the date of the rebellion to 19<sup>th</sup> February. However, the British authorities acted swiftly to take pre-emptive action. The police raided the party headquarters at four different places in Lahore and arrested 13 of the “most dangerous revolutionaries”.

All cantonments were alerted and the Indian troops were disarmed. Arrests of Ghadaris took place all over Punjab. Rash Behari Bose, with the help of Kartar Singh Saraba, escaped from Lahore to Varanasi. Vishnu Ganesh Pingley was arrested in Meerut on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1915. All the arrested leaders were placed in Lahore jail.

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■

Meanwhile, the 130<sup>th</sup> Baluchi regiment stationed in Rangoon, Burma, had revolted in January 1915. The soldiers refused to fight in the war for the British. On 15<sup>th</sup> January 200 soldiers of this regiment were court-martialled. Four soldiers were hanged, 69 were given life imprisonment and 127 were given rigorous imprisonment for varying terms.



Snapshot of a Times Of India article from 1915 on the Singapore Mutiny

Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Singapore-Mutiny-of-1915-A-standalone-episode-not-linked-to-freedom-struggle/articleshow/39563737.cms>

About 850 Indian soldiers belonging to the 5<sup>th</sup> Native Light Infantry, posted in Singapore, turned their guns against their British officers on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1915. Led by officers Dundee Khan, Chisti Khan and Ali Khan – they laid siege to the bungalow of the British commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Martin. They, thereby, effectively blocked the route into the city of Singapore. The mutiny lasted nearly seven days and resulted in the deaths of close to 50 British soldiers and officers before it was quelled by reinforced British troops and allied naval detachments of France, Russia and Japan. More than 200 soldiers were tried by court-martial in Singapore, of which 47 were executed, 64 were transported for life and 73 were given terms of imprisonment ranging from 7 to 20 years.

Within British India, the colonial government introduced, through an Ordinance, the "Defence of India Rule" to legalise summary trials of the revolutionaries. The Ordinance was opposed by all the Indian members of the provincial legislative assemblies. A special three-judge tribunal was set up to try the Ghadaris in what came to be known as the first Lahore Conspiracy Case.

On 13<sup>th</sup> September 1915, as many as 24 Ghadaris were sentenced to death and life imprisonment imposed on most of the remaining 58 prisoners. This judgment raised a wave of protest and demonstrations against the British Raj all over India.



Public execution of the rebel soldiers in Singapore, March 1915

Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/photo/39563900.cms>

The British Viceroy was forced to convert the death sentence of some of the Ghadaris into life imprisonment and reduce the terms of imprisonment of some others.

On 16<sup>th</sup> November, the first set of Ghadaris awarded the death sentence were hanged. They included Kartar Singh Saraba, Vishnu Ganesh Pingley, Harnam Singh Sialkoti, Jagat Singh, Bakhshish Singh Gillwali, Surain Singh Gillwali (son of Bur Singh) and Surain Singh Gillwali (son of Ishar Singh). <sup>3</sup>

In the second Lahore Conspiracy Case, 102 Ghadaris were tried. This case began on 25<sup>th</sup> October, 1915 and sentences were handed down on 30<sup>th</sup> March, 1916. Five were sentenced to death, consisting of Bir Singh Bahowali, Ishar Singh Dhudike, Ranga Singh Khurdpuri, Rur Singh Dassanj and Uttam Singh Hans. <sup>4</sup> As many as 45 received life sentences and 41 were given rigorous imprisonment, varying from eight months to four years. Eleven were let free. Subsequently, a third, fourth and fifth Lahore Conspiracy Case followed.

Pandit Sohan Lal Pathak, one of the leaders of the Ghadar Party, was hanged on 10<sup>th</sup> February, 1916, in Mandalay Jail in Burma, for inciting rebellion against British rule. At his martyrdom, his comrade Amar Singh wrote:

*Chadha mansoor phansi par, Pukara ishk bazon ko  
Yeh beeda hai tabahi ka, Uthaye jiska ji chaahey*

From the gallows, Mansoor called those who dared to love. This is the path of self-sacrifice; those who march on it, should do so with complete free will

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a Government-  
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While the planned insurgency within India and in the east including Burma and Singapore was foiled, the struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of the British Raj advanced in the neighbouring countries in the west. Ghadar Party organised the Hindustani prisoners of war, who had been fighting in the British Army in Turkey, Germany, Mesopotamia and the Middle East. Ghadar fighters in Turkey turned their guns against the British not only in that country but also in Iran and Baluchistan.

Ghadar Party built cells amongst soldiers in the British Indian Army stationed in Iran and Iraq, especially in Basra and Bushehr. It is here that the Indian Independence Army was organised by the Ghadaris, to invade British India from Iran. This contingent of the Ghadar Army reached the borders of Baluchistan. It attacked the frontier city of Karman and turned it into its base after arresting the British officer who was posted there.

Ghadar troops defeated the British forces in the province of Sistan in Afghanistan. They chased them into the Karamshir area of Baluchistan. They then advanced towards Karachi and took over the coastal towns of Gwadar and Dawar. The Baluch chief of Bampur declared his independence from British rule and joined the Ghadar forces.

In December 1915, a Government-in-Exile of Free Hindustan was established in Kabul, Afghanistan, with Raja Mahendra Pratap as President, Maulana Barkatullah as Prime Minister, Maulavi Abaidullah Sindhi as Home Minister, Maulavi Bashir as War Minister and Champakaran Pillai as Foreign Minister. All of them, except Raja Mahendra Pratap, were members of the Ghadar Party. This government-in-exile established diplomatic relations with anti-British governments such as those in Turkey, Germany, Japan and China.

Meanwhile, the war in Europe took a turn for the better for the British. This was the principal factor that turned the tide. Turkey was defeated and Baghdad came under British control. This cut off the supply lines for the Ghadar Army, forcing it to retreat and regroup in Shiraz in Iran. Reinforced by their victory in Turkey and Iraq, the British attacked Shiraz. The Ghadar Army fought very bravely but was defeated. Even then, the Ghadaris carried on guerrilla warfare along with the Iranian partisans. When the Iranian patriots were defeated, the Ghadaris had to leave that country, in 1919.

Following the defeat of their first attempt at overthrowing colonial rule, survivors among the Ghadaris merged into the numerous streams of revolutionaries who were active in British India at that time. The Hindustan Ghadar Party continued to function and publish its weekly paper from North America. In the conditions of intense British espionage and denial of political rights, revolutionaries within the country and abroad could not function as one unified party.

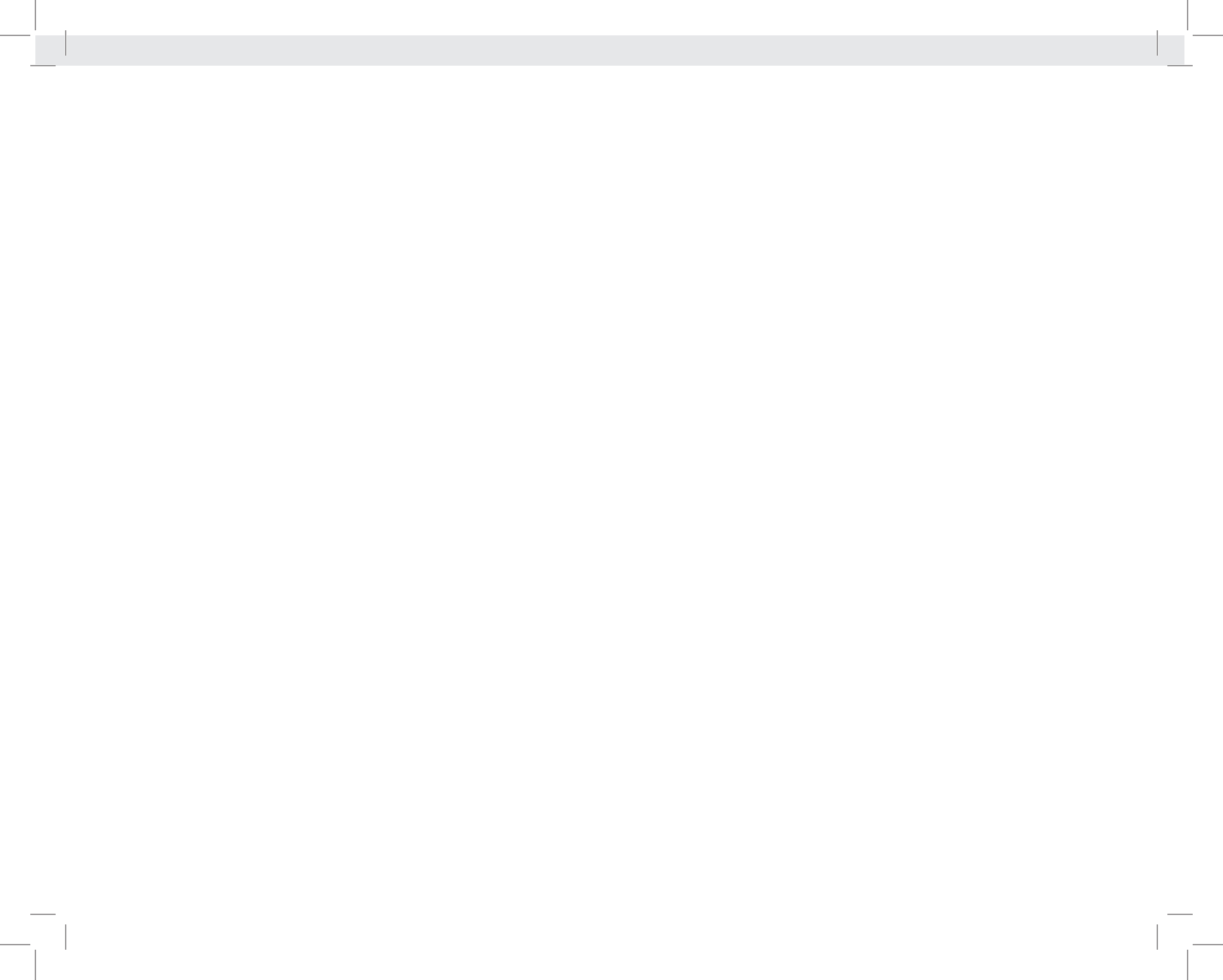
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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bl.uk/world-war-one/articles/the-indian-sepoy-in-the-first-world-war>

<sup>2</sup> <http://forbesindia.com/article/think/the-forgotten-indian-heroes-of-world-war-i/39537/1>

<sup>3</sup> Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich & Harinder Singh, Ghadar Party Original Documents, Vol. I-B (Lahore Conspiracy Cases I and II), Chandigarh, Unistar 2014, pp 1-9.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, pp 245, 248, 252 and 254.





## Chapter 4

# Historic Significance

In order to appreciate the significance of the work of the Hindustan Ghadar Party, it is essential to go back in time by about 60 years at least. The Ghadar of 1857 was the watershed, a defining moment of the anti-colonial struggle.



A view of the Great Ghadar of 1857

It was a defining moment because it articulated a political goal that galvanised peoples of different nationalities and of different languages, castes, tribes and religious beliefs.

*Hum hain iske maalik! Hindustan hamaara!*

Hindustan belongs to us! We are her masters!

This slogan of the insurgents became a powerful expression and assertion of sovereignty of the people of India.

■ **The Ghadar of 1857 was one of the greatest wars in the 19th century, in terms of geographical scope and numbers of people involved.**



The Ghadar of 1857 was one of the greatest wars in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in terms of geographical scope and numbers of people involved. It enveloped most parts of the Indian subcontinent, with a continental sweep, and involved millions of people. People of numerous classes, castes, nationalities and religious faiths within Indian society united against the rule of the British East India Company. This alien rule was devastating “our way of life”, they declared. The hired soldiers in the armies of the British Company were joined by hardworking peasants and artisans, as well as by patriotic kings, queens and warriors of different kingdoms, all of whom recognised the British Raj as their common enemy.

The patriotic forces of India were learning their lessons from past experience, when different rulers of Indian states had attempted to unite against the British colonial forces. As early as 1779, Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan in Mysore had tried to put together a confederacy and build mutual agreement with Nana Fadanvis, Janoji Bhosle, Mahadji Scindhia and the Nizam of Hyderabad. The plan was that the Mysore armies would attack the Arcot area and Madras; Janoji Bhosle would attack the British in Bengal; while Nana Fadanvis and Mahadji Scindia would attack their base in Bombay and the Nizam of Hyderabad would attack the

Circar districts (parts of the Odisha and Bengal Presidencies). While Hyder and Tipu went ahead with the plan, the others did not fulfil their commitments.

Conditions became more difficult for Indian revolutionaries by the 1850s. British colonial power had grown more powerful, with a more centralised state structure and armed with modern means of transport and communication, including railways, steamships and the telegraph. The East India Company's Army, which was divided into the Bengal Army, Bombay Army and Madras Army, had grown to nearly 2,38,000 strong, with 2,00,000 Indians and 38,000 British soldiers and officers. It was a battle-hardened army, having been deployed not only to suppress internal rebellions but also in numerous offensive wars, including the first Afghan War of 1839-1842; the Gwalior War of 1843; the Sindh War in 1844; the Punjab Wars of 1845-46 and 1848-49; the Opium Wars in China between 1840-42 and 1858-60; the Crimean War against Russia in 1854; and the War in Persia during 1856-57. In spite of all these factors, the Ghadar of 1857 shook the foundations of British colonial rule.

The reaction of the British colonialists to 1857 was to unleash genocide, accompanied by elite accommodation. Besides putting to death an estimated one crore (10 million) people of Hindustan, they destroyed all symbols of Ghadar, including books, libraries and universities. They banned any publication about 1857 by any Indian author. On the other hand, they rewarded and accommodated traitors and collaborators among Indians.

The proclamation of Queen Victoria in 1858 vested sovereignty over India in the British Crown, ending the period of delegated power exercised by the East India Company. In 1860, the British rulers enacted the Indian Penal Code, declaring the colonial plunder of India to be legitimate and any opposition to colonial rule to be a crime. They also passed the Societies Registration



Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi, one of the leaders of the Ghadar of 1857

Source:  
[https://www.tutorialspoint.com/modern\\_indian\\_history/modern\\_indian\\_history\\_centers\\_of\\_1857\\_revolt.htm](https://www.tutorialspoint.com/modern_indian_history/modern_indian_history_centers_of_1857_revolt.htm)

**The growth of capitalism in the conditions of colonial rule led to the development of a bourgeois class, on the one hand, and of the working class, on the other hand. Both grew in the midst of an ocean of toiling peasants and artisans.**

Act in that year. From the experience of the Ghadar of 1857, they had realised the power of various people's organisations and therefore enacted a law whereby any organisation of people had to register with the State. Knowing the power of the written word and seeing the effective role it played in the uprising, the colonial rulers passed the Press and Registration of Books Act in 1867. This regulatory law was aimed to enable the government to regulate printing presses and newspapers and other matter printed in India. The Arms Act 1877, was passed to disarm people and even banned the production of steel in India envisaging its use for making weapons. Thus, a legal system was created to legitimise the illegitimate rule of Britain over India, which had been established by brute force and continued to be maintained by brute force.

During the 50-year period following 1857, the class of capitalists grew in strength within British India, along with the class of landlords. These two classes benefited from the colonial and imperialist rule. The growth of capitalism in the conditions of colonial rule led to the development of a bourgeois class, on the one hand, and of the working class, on the other hand. Both grew in the midst of an ocean of toiling peasants and artisans who constituted the majority of the population in pre-capitalist Indian society.

The propertied classes headed by capitalist business houses were encouraged by the British Raj to form their own political party in 1885. The Indian National Congress was formed at the suggestion of a retired British civil servant, Allan Octavian Hume. It was aimed at creating a safety valve – that is, to provide a platform and vehicle for “acceptable demands by Indians”. The creation of this platform of compromising with imperialism was accompanied by the unleashing of brute force against those who wanted revolution.

As part of the preparatory work, Hume wrote a letter to the University of Calcutta in 1883, calling on the “most highly educated of the nation” – those who constituted the early generation of English educated Indians – to form a “reasonable” nationalist party. The main purpose was to prevent the Indian people from taking to the revolutionary path. Hume had witnessed the extent and depth of the revolutionary uprising of 1857 with his own eyes as Collector of Etawah in the then United Provinces, from where he bolted to Agra to save his life. Soon after the suppression of the war of independence, he started advocating reforms and rewards to the collaborators.

The Indian National Congress was, from its birth, a party committed to the aim of the brown sahebs to replace the white men one day and wield the same oppressive state power to exploit and plunder our land and labour. It represented the striving of the bourgeois class, which had decided that the way forward was through gradual reforms achieved through compromises and without any revolutionary transformations. Blocking the path to revolution at all costs was central to the program of the Indian bourgeoisie, and in consonance with the needs of British imperialism.

As part of their efforts to prevent the people from uniting as they had done in 1857, the British colonial rulers ruthlessly implemented their divide and rule strategy. They developed the method of organising Hindu-Muslim “riots” and then intervening in the name of restoring communal harmony. The police forces of the Raj worked in tandem with its spy agencies in spreading rumours to inflame passions and instigate revenge killings. The police officers were provided with manuals on how to deal with communal clashes. There were clear instructions to let the situation burn for a certain number of days, and only then intervene to restore law and order.

■ **As part of their efforts to prevent the people from uniting as they had done in 1857, the British colonial rulers ruthlessly implemented their divide and rule strategy.**

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In the name of “tolerance” the British rulers sponsored the spreading of obscurantist beliefs and old oppressive customs against which the people of India had fought for many centuries. In the name of “fair play” the colonial State interfered in religious affairs, allegedly treating all religions fairly and acting as an impartial umpire to mediate disputes between Hindus and Muslims. The British deliberately rekindled the Ayodhya dispute, which had been settled peacefully between the leaders of local Hindu and Muslim communities.

**While Mohandas Gandhi was recruiting more Indians to fight and die in the interest of British imperialism in the First World War, the Hindustan Ghadar Party called on soldiers in the British Indian Army to turn their guns against the colonial Raj.**

The uprising of 1915 showed that in spite of the cruel repression and cunning methods employed by the British imperialists, they could not eliminate the reverberations of the Ghadar of 1857 from repeatedly igniting the conscience of Indians. They could not erase the aspiration for social revolution from Indian minds, no matter how hard they tried.

“You can burn our books, but you cannot burn the thoughts in our heads or the poems we sing to one another.”

This was proved by the Ghadar of 1915. It brought about a qualitative leap in political consciousness, by breaking the stranglehold of the Congress Party and the Muslim League over the anti-colonial struggle.

The program of Ghadar Party was the diametrical opposite of the program of the Congress and the Muslim League. While the Congress and the Muslim League worked to advance the narrow interests of factions of capitalists and landlords, Ghadar Party fought for the common interests of the working class and peasantry, who together constituted the vast majority of Indians around the world. While Mohandas Gandhi was recruiting more Indians to fight and die in the interest of British imperialism in the First World War, the Hindustan Ghadar Party called on soldiers in the British Indian Army to turn their guns against the colonial Raj.

The Ghadar of 1915 ended in military defeat for the revolutionary forces, but it left behind its imprint, both on the State and on the conditions of life in our country. One such imprint is the Defence of India Rules, enacted to legalise arbitrary sentences of death by hanging or life imprisonment for anyone that the authority considers to be a “threat to India”. Such legislation has multiplied over the past 100 years. The independent Indian Republic is armed with numerous such barbaric laws today, including the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, Disturbed Areas Act and Unlawful Activities Prevention Act.

The truth that was revealed by the Ghadar of 1915, the idea and vision that inspired thousands of Indians from all over the world to sacrifice themselves for the cause, penetrated the thought process of society. In particular, the idea was born and began to develop that Indian society needs to be reconstituted afresh, on an entirely new foundation. The foundation must be new, in the sense of making a clean break with the colonial legacy in all aspects of social life, including economic relations, political institutions and the theories that justify them. The vision of a liberated India that had emerged in 1857 took a more concrete shape in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, enriched by its elaboration in theory and practice by the Hindustan Ghadar Party.

The starting point of the theory and program of the Ghadaris was the recognition that our wealth is being plundered and those who toil are suffering and perishing. This was recognised as being in violation of the fundamental law of social reproduction. Those who create wealth must be looked after, not systematically destroyed.

The Hindustan Ghadar Party identified the alien and illegitimate power created by the British colonialists as the root cause of all the problems of Indians. It posited the need for a new power to



**The vision of a liberated India that had emerged in 1857 took a more concrete shape in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, enriched by its elaboration in theory and practice by the Hindustan Ghadar Party.**



take care of Hindustan. It defended and further developed the demand of the Ghadar of 1857 that the people must become the master of Hindustan.

In the course of organising Indians abroad for the revolution, Ghadar Party realised that the people who must become the master of Hindustan consists of Punjabis, Bengalis, Kashmiris, Sindhis, Marathis, Gujaratis, Tamilians, Odiyas and many other peoples who have inhabited this land from ancient times. They concluded that the only way to build a stable Hindustan is to respect the rights of each of these ancient peoples, and create a cooperative union of sovereign states.

**A federal Republic of United States of India is a conception which had not been put forward by anyone else in the country. It was very advanced for its time.**

A federal Republic of United States of India is a conception which had not been put forward by anyone else in the country. It was very advanced for its time. It shows the profound internationalism of the leaders of the Ghadar movement, and their prompt assimilation of the lessons emerging from the experience of other peoples and states. They were influenced by the advance of bourgeois democracy and federalism in the United States of America, and subsequently by the advance of proletarian democracy in the voluntary Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The decade of the twenties was marked by the clash between the two opposite trends within the anti-colonial movement in India. On one side, there was the path of uncompromising opposition to colonialism and its institutions and theories, following the line of the Hindustan Ghadar Party; and on the other side, the path of seeking accommodation for Indian elite within the British Raj, spearheaded by the Congress and the Muslim League.

There were numerous political organisations in the country that followed the line of Ghadar Party in those times. There was a



reorganised Ghadar Party with Santokh Singh as its General Secretary, which took initiative to establish contact with the Communist International in 1922. In addition, there was the Kirti Kisan Party, Revolutionary Party of India, Naujawan Bharat Sabha and Hindustan Republican Association.

The passing of the Rowlatt Act in February 1919 led to mass protests in the country. The Rowlatt Act (officially known as the Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act) was targeted at the threat of revolution. The British Raj committed one of the most inhuman acts of terror against our people – the horrific Jallianwala Bagh massacre at Amritsar on 13<sup>th</sup> April, 1919. General Dyer fired 1,600 rounds of ammunition on the unarmed crowd of around 10,000 that had gathered for a public meeting, killing over 1,000 and leaving over 1,200 wounded.

The Jallianwala Bagh massacre galvanised the patriotic people of the entire country. The feeling of hatred against the colonialists was running extremely high. In these conditions, Gandhi announced a non-cooperation movement in 1920 with the aim of achieving “Swaraj in One Year”. Millions of people all over the country came out on the streets to oppose the



1919 Jallianwala bagh massacre

Source: <http://channel24.pk/breaking-news/2017/04/13/jalianwala-bagh-massacre/>

British regime and refused to pay taxes and exorbitant rents. All the revolutionary organisations of workers and peasants participated actively in this mass campaign. However, Gandhi suddenly withdrew the entire agitation in February 1922, when a group of peasants, responding to brutal police firing

### **Causes of Hindu-Muslim Trouble – Reply to Lord Irwin**

(Extracted from the monthly publication of the Hindustan Ghadar Party called The Independent Hindustan, Vol. IV, No.4, October 1926; an article by B. F. Bharucha)

The Viceroy, Lord Irwin, speaking on Hindu-Muslim disturbances at the Chelmsford Club, Simla, appealed to leaders of the two communities "to compose their own differences".

Why cannot the government keep peace and order with the most highly paid services at their beck and call, amidst a people that are disarmed, divided and famishing?

The CID can follow the national leaders and report all their movements; can smell the communists and send them safely to jail; on mere suspicion spirit away highest executive officers of city corporations; and can make searches of houses at the dead of night and lock up innocents for many hours! The same CID, the same secret service and Scotland Yard could not trace the "goondas" and mischief mongers of Calcutta and other disturbed areas!

Moreover, though the Indian Princely States do not possess highly paid police or army or secret services, there are no riots worth the name between Hindu and Muslim subjects. Nay, their relations are mostly harmonious. In Hyderabad there is a preponderant Hindu population under a Muslim ruler; in Kashmir there is a preponderant Muslim population under a Hindu ruler; there are big states like Mysore, Baroda, Gwalior, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Indore, etc., but there are no Muslim-Hindu feuds. What have you to say to this, Lord Irwin?



William Charles Hopkinson (far right) was murdered in 1914 by political activist Mewa Singh for spying on Indian immigrants on behalf of the British  
Source: <https://www.sikh24.com/2017/05/15/100-years-of-surveillance-infiltration-of-sikhs-by-white-indian-governments/#.WSFwd2bhW2d>

that killed many of their comrades, burnt down the *thana* and killed 22 policemen at Chauri Chaura in the then United Provinces (UP).

The withdrawal of the mass campaign spread demoralisation in the ranks of the people. The British rulers used this situation to whip up communal tension and incite communal violence. The Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha were both revived in 1923 and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was formed in 1925. According to the Simon Commission Report, 112 major "communal riots" broke out in the country between 1922 and 1927. While they were recorded as riots, in reality they were organised by the colonial State and provided justification for all-round escalation of state repression in the name of restoring order. The Ghadaris carried out consistent propaganda to expose this fact, that the colonial State was responsible for inciting communal conflicts.

■ **The Ghadaris carried out consistent propaganda to expose this fact, that the colonial State was responsible for inciting communal conflicts.**



Some prominent leaders of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association

Source: <http://www.frontiertimes.in/2016/02/24/h-r-a-h-s-r-a/>

The twenties witnessed important advances in the working class movement. The first workers' strikes had emerged in the Bombay textile mills as early as 1890. Over the following decades, the workers of Indian Railways played an exemplary role in bringing about the spread and growth of trade unions in different sectors and regions of the country. The country witnessed the first political general strike by Mumbai workers against the arrest of Bal Gangadhar Tilak in 1908. The All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was formed in 1920.

The living experience of the socialist Soviet Union, where workers and peasants were in power, had a profound influence on Indian revolutionaries during the twenties. Numerous attempts were made to establish one united Communist Party to lead the Indian revolution. The political conditions, however, were extremely unfavourable. The colonial State was engaged in large-scale arrests and persecution of all suspected Ghadaris and "Bolsheviks". As a result, numerous organisations worked independently for the aim of liberation from colonial rule and of building a socialist India. Some of these organisations stuck to the line of the Ghadar Party, some tailed behind the compromising path of the Congress, while some others vacillated between the two.

A Manifesto of the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA) <sup>1</sup>, signed by "Vijay Kumar", President, Central Council, Revolutionary Party of India (Vijay Kumar was a pseudonym of Sachindranath Sanyal), was published on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1925. This Manifesto contains a precise statement of the political aim and programme of the Indian revolution at that time. It represents a bold defence and development of the line of the Hindustan Ghadar Party.

The 1925 Manifesto of HRA declared:

"The immediate object of the revolutionary party in the domain of politics is to establish a federal Republic



of United States of India by an organised and armed revolution. The final constitution of this Republic shall be framed and declared at a time when the representatives of India shall have the power to carry out their decision. But the basic principles of this Republic will be universal suffrage and abolition of all systems which make the exploitation of man by man possible, e.g. the railways and other means of transportation and communication, the mines and other kinds of very great industries such as the manufacture of steel and ships – all these shall be nationalised.

“In this Republic, the electors shall have the right to recall their representatives, if so desired, otherwise democracy shall become a mockery. In this Republic, the legislature shall have the power to control the executives and replace them whenever necessity will arise.

“The revolutionary party is not national but international in the sense that its ultimate object is to bring harmony in the world by respecting and guaranteeing the diverse interests of different nations. It aims not at competition but at cooperation between different nations and states and in this respect, it follows the footsteps of great Indian Rishis of the glorious past and of Bolshevik Russia in the modern age. Good for humanity is no vain and empty word with the Indian revolutionaries. But the weak, the cowardly and the powerless can do no good either to themselves or to humanity.

“With regard to the communal question, the revolutionary party contemplates to grant whatever rights the different communities may demand, provided they do not clash with the interests of other communities and they lead ultimately to hearty and organic union of different communities in the near future.



**The immediate object of the revolutionary party in the domain of politics is to establish a federal Republic of United States of India by an organised and armed revolution.**



"In the domain of economic and social welfare, the party will foster the spirit of cooperation on as large a scale as possible. Instead of private and unorganised business enterprises, the party prefers cooperative union."

After laying out the strategic aim of the party of revolution, the HRA Manifesto also states the policy and principles guiding its tactics and methods of struggle. It says:

"This revolutionary party pursues the policy of cooperation when possible and dissociation where necessary with the Congress and its different allies. But this party views all constitutional agitation in this country with contempt and ridicule. It is a mockery to say that India's salvation can be achieved through constitutional means, where no constitution exists."

And further on, the Manifesto explains why a clean break has to be made with the British colonial system and its laws. It says:

"The ideal before us is to serve humanity in an organised way. This ideal can never be realised by India so long as India remains British India. In order that India may realise her ideal, she must have a separate and independent existence. This independence can never be achieved through peaceful and constitutional means. Even a child can understand that the laws that govern British India are not made by Indians, nor can they have any control over them. British India can never be transformed into a federal republic of the United States of India through the British laws and constitution."

Responding to the slanderous propaganda of the rulers, the Manifesto clarifies that:

"The Indian revolutionaries are neither terrorists nor anarchists. They never aim at spreading anarchy in the land and therefore they can never properly be called anarchists."

Terrorism is never their object and they cannot be called terrorists. They do not believe that terrorism alone can bring independence and they do not want terrorism for terrorism's sake although they may at times resort to this method as a very effective means of retaliation."

The Manifesto of Hindustan Republican Association reflects the further development of the theory and program of Indian liberation, based on the lessons emanating from the Russian Revolution and advance of socialism in the Soviet Union. Realising that the introduction of private property over land and other resources was at the heart of the British colonial system of plunder, the HRA proclaimed that "Instead of private and unorganised business enterprises, the party prefers cooperative union". It called for the "abolition of all systems which make the exploitation of man by man possible", which means the replacement of capitalism by socialism. It called for the nationalisation of "railways and other means of transportation and communication, the mines and other kinds of very great industries such as the manufacture of steel and ships.

On the question of the political process, the HRA Manifesto put forward the most advanced position of the time, consisting of (i) universal suffrage, (ii) executive power answerable to and subject to recall by the elected legislative body; and (iii) all elected representatives subject to recall by the electorate.

The revolutions that took place in Europe, in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, gave rise to bourgeois democratic states, where equality of political rights was recognised only for men of property. This privileged minority of citizens gave each other equal rights to elect and be elected as representatives of the propertied classes and govern for a determined period of time. The vast majority of the people were not included in

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**The Manifesto of Hindustan Republican Association reflects the further development of the theory and program of Indian liberation, based on the lessons emanating from the Russian Revolution**  
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The beginning of popular uprising in Russia, Petrograd, 8 March 1917

Source: <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/february-revolution-begins-in-russia>

**Political theory and practice developed further with the birth of the Soviet state. It was a political power of the working class in alliance with the toiling peasantry and all the oppressed nations and peoples.**

this political process of representative democracy. They were considered to be a mere productive force to be kept in a state of ignorance.

The Paris Commune in 1871 was the first attempt at establishing a qualitatively superior, proletarian democracy, inclusive of all the working people. It lasted only for a short period. However, it led to important advances in political thought. It established the principle that public servants must receive only workmen's wages and that judges must be elected and subject to recall by the electorate, in case they did not function properly.

The civil war in the United States of America, for the abolition of black slavery, and the struggle of working men and women for universal suffrage gave rise to some important developments in the recognition of the political rights of all citizens. It provided the right to keep and bear arms, election of judges and right to be tried by a jury of peers. The Right to Recall was introduced in the Municipality of Los Angeles in 1903, followed by the State Governments of Michigan and Oregon in 1908. The US bourgeoisie could afford to concede this right at the state and local levels, but not at the federal level.

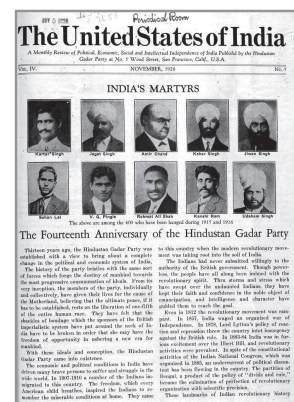




Political theory and practice developed further with the birth of the Soviet state. It was a political power of the working class in alliance with the toiling peasantry and all the oppressed nations and peoples liberated from the rule of the Russian Tsar. It was a truly voluntary union of nations and peoples. The Constitution of USSR explicitly recognised the national rights of its constituent Republics, including the right to self-determination and explicit recognition of the right to secession in the case of all Union Republics.

One of the first political acts of the Soviet power was to introduce the Right to Recall at all levels of elected legislative bodies, from local bodies to the national republics and up to the Supreme Soviet. This right is emphasised in the Manifesto of the Indian revolutionaries in 1925. Without this right, they declared that "democracy shall become a mockery". Their wisdom is proved by the present situation, where the representatives of big bourgeois interests do indeed make a mockery of democracy, in India and in the US, Britain and other capitalist countries.

In November 1926, the journal United States of India, Volume IV, No. 5, carried a front page article on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Ghadar Party. It opened with the following words: "Thirteen years ago, the Hindustan Ghadar Party was established with a view to bring about a complete change in the political and economic system of India." Further on, the article says, "Independence has not been won; but the desire burns within the breast of every Indian. Our members have been executed, interned and imprisoned. In the Punjab alone, 400 were hanged and 5,000 were sent to various terms of imprisonment in 1915-1916." It concludes with the words: "With the conviction of our aims, confidence in our achievements and faith in the judgment of the free peoples, the members of the Hindustan Ghadar Party on its Fourteenth Anniversary send greetings to all!"



United States of India  
Cover page of the  
November 1926 issue  
Source: South Asian American  
Digital Achieves, <http://www.saada.org/item/20111212-536>

The Hindustan Ghadar Party continued to be active among Indians abroad. Available documents reveal that in 1928, a modified Party constitution and charter of functions was adopted, and in that year it had 1,500 members from among 6,000 Indians in California. However, it could not maintain any organisational link with the revolutionaries within the territory of British India at that time.

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In the midst of such a reign of terror, the HSRA decided that its armed wing should carry out a bold and symbolic act that would shake the status quo.  
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The decade of the twenties closed with a dramatic event. It was a time when leaders of the working class and of all revolutionary parties and groups were being arrested all over the country. In the midst of such a reign of terror, the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association decided that its armed wing should carry out a bold and symbolic act that would shake the status quo, an act that would awaken the people and advance the cause of revolution. This was the act of throwing two bombs on empty seats and throwing leaflets in the air when the central Legislative Assembly was in session. It was carried out by Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt, who were immediately arrested.

In the statement written by the two accused <sup>2</sup>, which was read out in court, they said:

"... we dropped the bomb on the floor of the Assembly Chamber to register our protest on behalf of those who had no other means left to give expression to their heart-rending agony. Our sole purpose was **'to make the deaf hear'** and to give the heedless a timely warning. Others have as keenly felt as we have done, and from under the seeming stillness of the sea of Indian humanity, a veritable storm is about to break out. We have only hoisted the **'danger-signal'** to warn those who are speeding along without heeding the grave dangers ahead. We have only marked the end of an era of utopian non-violence, of whose futility the rising generation has been convinced beyond the shadow of doubt."



The British colonial law held the two accused to be terrorists for having thrown bombs in the assembly, even though they had not shed a drop of anyone's blood.

Explaining why they used the term "utopian non-violence", Bhagat Singh and his co-accused stated:

"Force when aggressively applied is '**violence**' and is, therefore, morally unjustifiable, but when it is used in the furtherance of a legitimate cause, it has its moral justification. The elimination of force at all costs is Utopian, and the new movement which has arisen in the country, and of that dawn we have given a warning, is inspired by the ideal which guided Guru Gobind Singh and Shivaji, Kamal Pasha and Riza Khan, Washington and Garibaldi, Lafayette and Lenin."

Answering the question as to what he means by the word revolution, Bhagat Singh answered:

"Revolution does not necessarily involve sanguinary strife nor is there any place in it for individual vendetta. It is not the cult of the bomb and the pistol. By **Revolution**, we mean that the present order of things, which is based on manifest injustice, must change. Producers or labourers, in spite of being the most necessary element of society, are robbed by their exploiters of the fruits of their labour and deprived of their elementary rights. The peasant who grows corn for all, starves with his family; the weaver who supplies the world market with textile fabrics, has not enough to cover his own and his children's bodies; masons, smiths and carpenters who raise magnificent palaces, live like pariahs in the slums. The capitalists and exploiters, the parasites of society, squander millions on their whims. These terrible inequalities and forced disparity of chances are bound to lead to chaos. This state of affairs cannot last long, and it is obvious, that the present order of society in merry-making is on the brink of a volcano.

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**By Revolution, we mean that the present order of things, which is based on manifest injustice, must change.**  
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"The whole edifice of this civilisation, if not saved in time, shall crumble. A radical change, therefore, is necessary and it is the duty of those who realise it to reorganise society on a socialistic basis. Unless this is done and the exploitation of man by man and of nations by nations is brought to an end, the suffering and carnage with which humanity is threatened today cannot be prevented. All talk of ending war and ushering in an era of universal peace is undisguised hypocrisy.

"By **Revolution**, we mean the ultimate establishment of an order of society which may not be threatened by such breakdown, and in which the sovereignty of the proletariat should be recognised and a world federation should redeem humanity from the bondage of capitalism and the misery of imperial wars.

"This is our ideal, and with this ideology as our inspiration, we have given a fair and loud enough warning. If, however, it goes unheeded and the present system of government continues to be an impediment in the way of the natural forces that are swelling up, a grim struggle will ensue involving the overthrow of all obstacles, and establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat to pave the way for consummation of the ideal of revolution."

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**The struggle within the anti-colonial movement, between the line of irreconcilable opposition to imperialism and the line of seeking accommodation within the imperialist system, continued in the decades of the thirties and forties.**

Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the official historian of the Congress Party, says, "it is no exaggeration to say that, at that moment, Bhagat Singh's name was as widely known all over India and was as popular as Gandhi's." A confidential Intelligence Bureau report of the British Government, 'Terrorism in India' (1917-1936) declared about Bhagat Singh that, "for a time, he bade fair to oust Mr. Gandhi as the foremost political figure of the day."

The struggle within the anti-colonial movement, between the line of irreconcilable opposition to imperialism and the

line of seeking accommodation within the imperialist system, continued in the decades of the thirties and forties. Branches of the Hindustan Ghadar Party continued to be active among Indians abroad, as shown by the work of Baba Bujha Singh and others in Latin America. Kirti Kisan Party, in which Sohan Singh Bhakna and other Ghadaris played an active role, merged with the Communist Party of India in 1942, for the sake of unity of all Indian communist revolutionaries.

Looking back at the history of development of the movement for Indian liberation and at the communist movement in particular, we observe that the line of HGP had a profound impact on the broad masses of people and on all political forces. The principled position taken by HGP and its successor organisations, that the peoples of India must decide their own destiny had a major impact on the anti-colonial movement. For instance, its widespread influence can be seen in the political unity that was achieved in the thirties around the principle that only a truly representative body elected by Indians on the basis of universal franchise can be entrusted with the task of formulating the Constitution of independent India.

In the decade of the thirties, not only the Communist Party of India and other revolutionary parties but also the Congress upheld the position of the Ghadaris. The April 1936 Lucknow Congress Session, with Nehru as President, passed a resolution which said:

“The Congress stands for a genuine democratic State in India where political power has been transferred to the people as a whole and the Government is under their effective control. Such a State can only come into existence through a Constituent Assembly, elected by adult suffrage, and having the power to determine finally the Constitution of the country.”

This position was subsequently betrayed by the Congress and others who participated in the unrepresentative Constituent



Sohan Singh Bhakna with other arrested Ghadaris at Amritsar Station, 1938

Source: <https://americanturban.com/2013/09/19/picture-of-the-day-sohan-singh-bhakna/>

Assembly, which was not elected by adult suffrage. This betrayal of the political demand of all patriotic forces was brought about by the cunning tactics adopted by British imperialism at the end of the Second World War.

The year 1945 had witnessed the final defeat of Nazi Germany followed by the defeat of Japanese militarism. The decisive role in this was played by the socialist Soviet Union. Led by the communists, the people of many countries of Europe and Asia liberated themselves from the jackboots of fascism and militarism. The struggle of the peoples to end colonial rule began to intensify all over the world, including in Hindustan.

**Negotiating separately with the Congress and Muslim League while isolating and outlawing the Communist Party of India, the British imperialists brokered a deal in 1947.**

It was a time when the tide of revolution was in full flow on the world scale. The international communist movement was waging some of the finest struggles to safeguard human values and human civilisation from the scourge of the worst fascists and militarists that the capitalists of the world brought to the fore. This included not only Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo but also Franco of Spain, Salazar of Portugal, the monarcho-fascists of Greece, Chiang-kai-Shek of China and many more. The struggle against fascism and militarism continued in various parts of the world, directed primarily against US imperialism which had taken on the mantle of fascism after the fall of Hitler.

A number of countries freed from colonial rule and foreign occupation were choosing to join the rapidly growing socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union. In such conditions, British imperialism acted swiftly and cunningly to prevent India from going the revolutionary way, to ensure that it remains within the camp of world imperialism.

Negotiating separately with the Congress and Muslim League while isolating and outlawing the Communist Party of India,

the British imperialists brokered a deal in 1947, to divide India on a communal basis and transfer power into the hands of the classes they had groomed within our country. The anti-colonial struggle ended in the transfer of power by the decision of the British Parliament. This transfer of power was implemented in the midst of communal Partition of the territory of British colonial India into the states of India and Pakistan, which resulted in enormous bloodshed and the biggest forced migration of peoples in human history.

Sovereignty was transferred from London into the hands of two ruling cliques in New Delhi and Karachi respectively. This was a victory from the standpoint of the Congress and Muslim League, whose aim was the achievement of political independence without social revolution. From the standpoint of the toiling majority of people, it was a major betrayal. The aim of our revolutionary martyrs to make a clean and complete break with the colonial legacy was trampled in the mud. The transfer of power was designed to preserve the colonial institutions and system of oppression and plunder without the colonialists. It was designed to sow the seeds of permanent animosity and tension between the states of India and Pakistan, with borders arbitrarily drawn and hastily imposed.

A Constituent Assembly consisting of members who had been elected on a limited and communal franchise, dominated by leaders of the Congress, adopted a Constitution of India in the name of the whole people. This was done while the country was engulfed in communal violence and most members of the Communist Party were in jail.

The 1950 Constitution was, in the main, a reproduction of the Government of India Act passed by the British Parliament in 1935. The leaders of the Congress, representing the interests of the big capitalists and landlords, decided in the main to

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**A Constituent Assembly consisting of members who had been elected on a limited and communal franchise, dominated by leaders of the Congress, adopted a Constitution of India in the name of the whole people.**  
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■ **The course on which independent India is headed shows that Ghadar Party and its successor organisations were correct in their assessment that without uprooting the colonial institutions and theories, Indian society cannot flourish.** ■

continue with the alien and communal State, political process and “Rule of Law” established by the British capitalist class to exploit and plunder our land and labour and to divide and rule over the toiling masses.

Ironically, the present-day rulers of independent India arrogantly declare those who protest against injustice and against the dangerous course of our society as being “anti-national”. Truth is once again being turned on its head so as to prevent revolution and maintain an increasingly unbearable status quo.

The course on which independent India is headed shows that Ghadar Party and its successor organisations were correct in their assessment that without uprooting the colonial institutions and theories, Indian society cannot flourish.

In sum, it can be concluded that the Hindustan Ghadar Party and its numerous successor organisations, including Hindustan Republican Association, subsequently renamed as Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, made important contributions to the theory of Indian liberation. Anyone interested in the revolutionary transformation of Indian society must pay serious attention to that theory and program, which is the diametric opposite of the theory and program of the Congress and other parties that compete to manage the existing State.

## References

<sup>1</sup> <http://shahidbhagatsingh.org/index.asp?link=revolutionary>

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## Chapter 5

# The Ghadar Continues

"Our struggle will continue as long as a handful of men, be they foreign or native, or both in collaboration with each other, continue to exploit the labour and resources of our people. Nothing shall deter us from this path."

These immortal words of the Ghadaris ring true till this day.



The Ghadar continues ...

**Colonial rule of the British bourgeoisie has been replaced by the rule of an equally elitist and arrogant class of persons who think that the toiling majority should live like animals while they themselves must reach the top of the world.**

Nobody can deny that the labour and resources of our people are still being exploited and plundered by native and foreign capitalists. Colonial rule of the British bourgeoisie has been replaced by the rule of an equally elitist and arrogant class of persons who think that the toiling majority should live like animals while they themselves must reach the top of the world.

Human society is still going through the epoch of imperialism and proletarian revolution. Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, we are going through a period when the tide of revolution is on the ebb. The counter-revolutionary forces are on the offensive. The toiling majority of people are waging tough battles every day against the attacks on their livelihood and rights. In the course of waging the defensive battles, we communists are preparing the conditions for the working class and people to launch their own revolutionary offensive at an appropriate time.

Within the crisis-ridden capitalist world, India is seen as an emerging economic and military power. It is a State which is staking its claim to join the elite club of permanent members of the UN Security Council. At the same time, India remains the home of the largest concentration of extremely poor and diseased people. The contradictory nature of post-colonial development is an outcome of the anti-colonial struggle having culminated in a transfer of power engineered by imperialism to deliver political independence without social revolution.

Colonial rule came to an end nearly 70 years ago but the toiling majority of people are not free from super-exploitation and plunder, or from state terror, communal violence, caste discrimination and the oppression of women. Indians abroad are not free from discrimination and physical attacks.

Capitalism has grown by leaps and bounds, assisted by the colonial-style state power that has been preserved and prettified over the past hundred years, by the British imperialists and subsequently by the Congress and other parties of the Indian bourgeois class.

At one pole of our society is the bourgeois class, the owners of the means of social production, those whose incomes (profits, interest, rent) derive wholly or primarily from the private property they own. At the head of this class are about 150 monopoly houses, constituting the wealthiest and most influential section of the class. They control the bulk of the means of production in mining, industry, transport, trade and other sectors. They control the financial resources of the country, which are concentrated in the hands of giant banks, non-banking financial institutions and insurance companies. They control the central State machinery and dictate the course of the country.

At the other pole is the working class, those who make a livelihood wholly or primarily from wage or salary income. Rapid capitalist growth has led and continues to lead to an increase in the size of the working class and to wide-ranging changes in its composition. Families that depend on wage and salaried incomes accounted for less than a quarter, perhaps even less than one-fifth of the population, in 1947. They now make up about half the entire population of the country. A growing proportion of the working class is literate and engaged in computerised modern processes of production. Women constitute a significant and increasing proportion of the working class.

In between the capitalist class and the working class are various intermediate strata – those who work with their own small

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■ **The size of the proletariat is increasing, while the intermediate strata, those with some small means of production, are disintegrating.**

**Workers and peasants together constitute the vast majority, in every region and in the country as a whole.**



means of production. Such “self-employed” persons include the majority of peasants, artisans, shopkeepers, doctors running individual practice and other professionals. Year after year, peasants and others of the intermediate strata lose their property and join the ranks of the working class, roaming the job market and dependent on wage income for survival. Large numbers of peasants are clinging on to small plots of land but increasingly dependent on wage income for the survival of the family. They are semi-proletarian, on the verge of becoming totally dependent on selling their labour-power. The size of the proletariat is increasing, while the intermediate strata, those with some small means of production, are disintegrating. Their numbers are declining. Peasants, who made up the majority in 1947, are now the second most numerous strata in society, next to the working class. Workers and peasants together constitute the vast majority, in every region and in the country as a whole.

The form of State intervention has undergone change from the Nehruvian period to the present period of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. What remains unchanged is that the State intervenes in the interest of wealth accumulation by a minority of exploiters. The central State intervenes in the interest of ensuring maximum profits at all times for the capitalist monopoly houses.

■ Indian monopoly capitalists have emerged as major exporters of capital in this period. They are expanding their markets and investments abroad and are engaged in a race with the monopoly capitalists of other countries. Several leading Indian monopoly groups are already earning more from their capital invested abroad than from their capital invested within the country.

Indian monopoly capitalists view foreign capital being invested in India as a factor that can accelerate their own

growth and global expansion. Through joint ventures and collaboration in key sectors, they have greatly escalated the extent and intensity of exploitation and plunder of our land and labour. In the “organised” segment of mining, plantations, manufacturing, transport and communication sectors of the Indian economy, the combined rate of surplus value extraction, or average degree of exploitation of labour, rose from 89% in 1990-91 to 175% in 2007-08 <sup>1</sup>. It means that for every 100 rupees paid to workers in 2007-08, the capitalist owners extracted 175 rupees of surplus value in the capitalist segment of the economy.

Peasant distress has reached unbearable levels in many parts of the country. Rapid integration with the capitalist global market and the lowering of import duties on agricultural products, expansion and domination of giant capitalist corporations in seed production, fertiliser supply and procurement of crops, along with the wrecking of whatever existed as the system of public procurement and distribution of food grains, have together driven peasants to unbearable levels of insecurity and indebtedness. In addition, the insecurity of peasants has been aggravated by the drive of capitalist monopolies to grab the most lucrative land to set up Special Export Zones and industrial parks.

Under the banner of privatisation and disinvestment, Indian and foreign monopoly corporations have seized public assets in many strategic sectors of industry, energy, transport and communication infrastructure. The state sector of the economy, built with public funds to serve capitalist monopolies in the past, is being systematically wrecked so as to enable monopolies to directly control and milk these assets. Essential public services such as education, health, water, public transport and power distribution, which people expect the State to guarantee for free or at prices affordable to all, are being opened up

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for monopoly capitalists to plunder for maximum profits. In the name of public-private partnership, central and state governments are making deals to guarantee maximum profits for private investors while unloading all liabilities and risks on the public at large.

The British colonial State invoked the concept of "eminent domain" to legalise the seizure of forests and other common property resources of various peoples of Hindustan. The present Indian State has retained the colonial laws and is further fine-tuning them to provide legal backing to deprive peasants and tribal peoples of their land in the name of "public interest" and hand it over to private corporations. The Parliament has enacted laws to make it easier for capitalist companies to displace people from their traditional abode to loot the mineral wealth that lies beneath their land.

The more the ruling class boasts about India's growth, the more glaring is the truth that Indian society cannot progress until and unless a social revolution is carried out by the workers, peasants and all sections of the people who are victimised by the present conditions.

The Hindustan Ghadar Party and its followers recognised the necessity for social revolution, a revolution to end the exploitation and plunder of our labour and resources. They recognised the need for an entirely new State that would be duty-bound to provide prosperity and protection for all, based on a Constitution to be adopted by the people after the British had been driven out. This aim was elaborated clearly in the 1925 Manifesto of the Hindustan Republican Association. It captured the imagination of the vast majority of Indians in the decade of the thirties. However, this aim was betrayed in 1947 by the Congress and Muslim League, which agreed to

a communal partition and transfer of power into their hands through a backroom deal.

Today, those who betrayed the aspirations of the majority of participants in the anti-colonial struggle are dragging the country on a dangerous anti-national course, to fulfil their unlimited greed and imperialist aims. At the same time, they are branding anyone who does not agree and fall in line with this course as anti-national. Truth is being turned on its head.

The real nation-building project, that is, the project of creating an India out of the diverse nations, nationalities and peoples who had come together to liberate themselves from British colonial rule, began as far back as the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It began in the days when Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan attempted to unite the various kingdoms to fight against the British East India Company. The political aim became clearly articulated by the time of the Great Ghadar of 1857, finding expression in the slogan: Hindustan belongs to us – We are her masters! The political line was further developed by the Hindustan Ghadar Party and by its followers, including Hindustan Republican Association, positing the goal of a modern democratic India that would be a voluntary union of states and guarantee prosperity and protection for all, by ending all forms of exploitation of some classes and entire nations by a wealthy minority.

A striking feature of Hindustan Ghadar Party is that its work was based on the philosophical outlook of learning from the experience of our forefathers and from the experience of the modern working class and revolutionary movements on the world scale. This is an important lesson for all revolutionaries of today.

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■ Our people have over 5000 years of experience with Indian political theory, with forms of political power and ideas about rights and duties, from the period of the Vedas and through the period of Ramayana and Mahabharata, of Arthashastra and Ain-i-Akbari.

■ Our people have over 5000 years of experience with Indian political theory, with forms of political power and ideas about rights and duties, from the period of the Vedas and through the period of Ramayana and Mahabharata, of Arthashastra and Ain-i-Akbari. Our people gave birth to many philosophies and schools of thought such as Buddhism, Jainism, Charvaka, and many darshanas. We have experienced movements for enlightenment and for equal rights, such as the Bhakti and Sufi movements that spanned many centuries. We Indian communists have to deal critically with this heritage of thought material from the vantage point of today. We have to appropriate what is best from this heritage, suitable for solving the problems of the present time, while rejecting everything that is outdated.

■ Our forefathers theorised about political power since ancient times, as is shown by the definition and elaboration of the relationship between raja and praja. The very word praja means the one who gives birth to raja. This reveals that there existed a period in our history when people enjoyed the right to elect the king and the right to get rid of a king who does not fulfill



Activists of Ghadar Party participating in demonstration in World Social Forum in Mumbai, 2002



his duty of ensuring prosperity and protection for all. The right of the people to select the king was negated in a subsequent period, when the king became the sovereign. This concept of a sovereign ruler has to be purged from Indian political theory to render it modern. It is the people who must govern and also be the governed.

We have to modernise the Indian political theory (raj dharma), that is, to bring it on par with modern conditions. Modern conditions are characterised by large-scale production using combined human labour power, and by the supremacy of collectives in all spheres. The theory guiding economic organisation and political power has to be brought up to par with these conditions. We have to develop modern Indian revolutionary theory to illuminate the path to establish a new State with sovereignty vested in the people, put an end to capitalist exploitation and imperialist plunder, sweep away all remnants of pre-capitalist relations and eliminate the entire colonial legacy. It is the theory of liberating our society from all the chains binding it, including all caste and class distinctions as well as the chains of imperialism, and open the path for India to march on the high road of civilisation, as a force for peace and social progress on the world scale.

Marx and Engels pointed out that the philosophy of every epoch presupposes certain definite thought material handed down to it by its predecessors, from which it takes its start. Marx and Engels dealt critically with the philosophy of Hegel and other German philosophers to arrive at their philosophy of dialectical materialism. They did not reject the thought material of German philosophy. Referring to this process, Engels said:

“Hegel was not simply put aside. On the contrary, a start was made from his revolutionary side ... from the dialectical method. But in its Hegelian form, this method was unusable <sup>2</sup>.”

■ **We have to appropriate what is best from this heritage, suitable for solving the problems of the present time, while rejecting everything that is outdated.** ■

Marx and Engels took from Hegel what was precious, the dialectical method, while they stripped Hegelian philosophy of its idealist foundation.

We must beware of the pressure of Euro-centrism and dogmatic rendering of Marxism, which teaches Indians to look down on everything inherited from our own past as being backward and “feudal”, and look towards foreign models for solving our problems.

**Euro-centrism is an outlook based on the prejudice that all knowledge of relevance for modern society comes from Western Europe, whose origin is traced to Greek philosophy.**

Euro-centrism is an outlook based on the prejudice that all knowledge of relevance for modern society comes from Western Europe, whose origin is traced to Greek philosophy. It disregards the experience and thought material of the civilisations of Hindustan, Persia, China and other peoples of Asia, and of other parts of the world. Once an Indian brain rejects its own heritage and succumbs to the Euro-centric outlook, it becomes incapable of contributing to the theory and program of Indian liberation.

If all of Indian thought is simply put aside, the result is a kind of mechanical materialism, a form of imported thought that prevents the development of Indian revolutionary theory. Such an outlook produces a caricature of an Indian Marxist, one who looks down on all aspects of our own heritage and adds to the domination of Euro-centrism over Indian brains.

It is to the credit of the Hindustan Ghadar Party that a century ago it rejected Euro-centrism and paid serious attention to our revolutionary heritage. The Ghadaris studied the experience of the revolutionary uprising of 1857. They systematically developed skillful propaganda through their weekly publication called Ghadar, written in Punjabi, Urdu and Hindi. That the global circulation of this weekly reached as large a number as 10 lakhs (one million), at a time when means of transport and

communication were costly and slow, is truly an astounding measure of the irresistible attraction of the political line as well as the organisational capacity of the Hindustan Ghadar Party.

The remarkable success achieved by the Ghadaris in terms of political mobilisation was, in large part, a result of the content of their program and the effective communication of their key messages in simple and poetic form and in numerous languages spoken by the toiling majority of people. They did not reject our heritage but brought forward its best elements.

An entire stratum of Anglicized intellectuals has been created in our country, which worships British parliamentary traditions, American pragmatism and European social-democracy, while looking down on anything from our own past. The members of this stratum follow Nehru's thesis that the Ghadar of 1857 was a "feudal reaction" to the modernity being allegedly created under British colonial rule. This Euro-centric and prejudiced outlook, expressed in Nehru's Discovery of India, has shaped the thinking of most Anglicized Indian intellectuals, including many who claim to be Marxists.

Enormous harm has been caused as a result of many leading thinkers in the communist movement calling on revolutionaries to reject the heritage of Indian thought as backward and feudal. This has enabled organisations like the BJP to stake claim to this heritage. It is necessary for us communists to expose such pretensions. We must make the people aware that the BJP is acting in blatant violation of the basic tenets of Raj Dharma when it invites foreign companies to own land, mines and other means of production in our country; and when it sells public property to private companies, Indian and foreign. We must expose the fact that BJP's chauvinist and divisive interpretation of history is based on fully accepting the lies and distortions of the British colonialists.



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**By targeting a particular party or coalition, voting for some other party in the next election is promoted as the solution. This illusion is kept alive even though life experience repeatedly shows that a change of the party in charge of executive power does not change the class nature of the State.**  
■

When we look at the collective experience of the communist movement as a whole, we see that the movement has suffered as a result of various communist leaders and parties deviating from the sound conclusions drawn by the revolutionaries of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. For instance, the Hindustan Ghadar Party and its successor organisations clearly recognised that the political system and process of representation through elections, which the British rulers introduced, is a dead-end road as far as the toiling masses of people are concerned. We cannot achieve our aims through this process. This sound conclusion was overturned by those who conciliated with the Congress line of allegedly building socialism through gradual reforms to be achieved through the parliamentary process.

The Hindustan Ghadar Party clearly recognised that both the openly communal and chauvinist organisations like the Punjab Hindu Mahasabha and the All-India Muslim League, as well as the so-called secular parties like the Congress served the common aim of the British imperialists to divide and rule over our country. This sound conclusion is being contradicted by those who conciliate with the Congress line of defending the “secular foundation of the Indian Republic from the communal forces”.

The existing electoral process and accompanying propaganda create the impression that our fate depends on the policies and actions of the party in power. All problems are blamed on the party or coalition in charge of the political executive, hiding the role of the class in power and of the other institutions of the State. In this way, the working class and other oppressed people are depoliticised; that is, they are prevented from recognising that the struggle is of one class versus another.

By targeting a particular party or coalition, voting for some other party in the next election is promoted as the solution.

This illusion is kept alive even though life experience repeatedly shows that a change of the party in charge of executive power does not change the class nature of the State. The State remains a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Replacement of BJP by the Congress at the head of the ruling alliance in 2004 did not lead to any change in the course being followed. Nor has the replacement of Congress by BJP once again in 2014. However, the degree of exploitation of labour and the brazenness of attacks on the rights and livelihood of the toiling majority of people have all gone from bad to worse. Each regime seems to be worse than the previous one, no matter whether it is led by an openly communal party or a so-called secular party.

The principal contestants in elections for the parliament and state assemblies are financed by the capitalist class. Parties backed by the monopoly houses enjoy maximum TV time and numerous other privileges in addition to extraordinarily high campaign budgets. Such parties dominate the process of candidate selection; and the toiling majority of people are asked to choose among candidates they do not trust. Elections are used to select that party and leader who can most effectively deceive the people, saying what they want to hear while doing what the big bourgeoisie has laid out.

One of the most harmful lies that is propagated widely among all classes in our society is that the Constitution of India is something sacred and precious for all classes. This Constitution was formulated and adopted by a set of Anglicised individuals in 1950, who had been elected by a propertied minority of the population, in communally divided Hindu majority and Muslim minority constituencies, under the British Raj.

The toiling majority of people were neither represented in the Constituent Assembly nor consulted in formulating and adopting the Constitution. They had no say in the fundamental law that

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■

was established. The Constitution was drafted in English and the entire debate in the Constituent Assembly was in English. Translations in Indian languages became available only after 1950, when the Constitution had already been adopted.

The Constitution of the Indian Republic is based on the principle of “parliamentary sovereignty”. According to this principle, espoused by English bourgeois political theory, Parliament alone has the power to make or change laws. Within the parliament, decision-making power is further concentrated in the hands of the Cabinet formed by the ruling party or coalition of parties. People have no power except to vote on polling day, to choose among candidates selected by rival parties backed by different sections of the bourgeois class. The Union Government has overriding powers over all state governments, including the power to dismiss any elected state government in the name of “national security” or other justifications.

**The party which gets elected to power claims to have the “people’s mandate”.**

**However, it is the bourgeois class that has entrusted it with the mandate.**

The party which gets elected to power claims to have the “people’s mandate”. However, it is the bourgeois class that has entrusted it with the mandate. It is the will of the bourgeoisie that is imposed on society. The toiling majority of people are powerless in this system. Their vote only lends legitimacy to the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

The fact that the communist movement has not championed the demand for the formulation and adoption of a new Constitution based on recognising the sovereignty of the peoples who make up India, shows that it has got diverted from the strategic political aim identified by the Ghadaris in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The objective conditions are still crying out for the creation of that new State which was envisioned by the Ghadaris. However, the working class and people are being prevented from recognising this truth by the prevalence of illusions about parliamentary democracy and the existing Constitution.

An extremely harmful impression has been created that it is dangerous to call for a new Constitution, or even to call for a review of the existing one, allegedly because it will play into the hands of the BJP and its allied organisations, collectively called the Sangh Parivar. Just because there are some organisations that want to revive the most backward ideas from our past, can enlightened Indians close their minds to any kind of change? Such a stand militates against progress. To think that a fundamental law adopted in 1950 must be preserved forever disregards the fact that society is in motion, in a state of *awagaman*, which implies that the Old has to give way to the New.

In the name of defence against the communalism of the Sangh Parivar, harmful illusions are spread about the so-called secular foundations of the Indian State. If the foundations of the Indian State are anti-communal, then why does communal violence take place again and again? The answer would then have to be because the people of India are communal and backward. Thus, the assertion that the Indian State is secular and anti-communal actually leads inevitably to the conclusion that the problem lies with the people being backward and divided on the basis of their religious faith. It follows then that it is up to the Indian State to maintain “peace” and “communal harmony”.

British colonialism concocted the view that there were no nations and nationalities in India, but only religious communities. The people of India were divided into a “Hindu majority” and many religious minorities including Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and others. They were portrayed as backward people who were always at each other’s throats. It was alleged that the only way the “natives” could live in peace was if English educated liberal-minded men ruled over them, to maintain communal harmony and preach tolerance. In short, it was the white man’s “burden” to maintain “order” in backward and communally divided India. With this aim and agenda, the British colonialists

■ **British colonialism concocted the view that there were no nations and nationalities in India, but only religious communities.** ■

preached secularism while organising communal violence to divide, divert and enslave the peoples of this subcontinent.

The major parties of the Indian bourgeoisie, such as the BJP and the Congress Party, continue to follow the colonial methods and the communal outlook. BJP presents Hindu chauvinism as nationalism and demands that religious minorities must learn to accept the customs of the "Hindu majority". The Congress Party preaches that the "Hindu majority" should be tolerant towards the Muslims and other religious minorities. The BJP and the Congress Party both share the same communal outlook that India consists of a Hindu majority and numerous religious minorities. They play complementary roles in communalising political discourse and implementing the method of divide and rule.

**The BJP and the Congress Party both share the same communal outlook that India consists of a Hindu majority and numerous religious minorities.**

Neither the Hindustan Ghadar Party nor Hindustan Socialist Republican Association used the term "secularism" or "secular" to characterise the State that was to be established in India once British rule was overthrown. They developed their political program based on the theory that the State is duty-bound to defend and protect the inalienable rights of all individual members of society and of all the collectives including the numerous nations, nationalities and tribal communities. They defended the right to conscience, carrying forward the deep-rooted progressive traditions emanating from the Bhakti and Sufi movements. They forged the unity of all Indians in the struggle against colonial rule, rising above differences of religion, caste and language, thereby carrying forward the spirit of the martyrs of 1857. They conceived of India as a multi-national union of states. They upheld the principle that the people are the master of Hindustan; hence the people would elect their Constituent Assembly through universal franchise after driving the British out, and only such a body would have the authority to formulate the Constitution of independent India.



One of the important lessons from the collective experience of the communist movement is that an armed struggle against the State does not become revolutionary unless it involves the toiling masses of people and is waged with a clear vision of the new State and system to be ushered in. The Hindustan Ghadar Party paid a great deal of attention to both the battle in the ideological sphere and the armed struggle for revolutionary seizure of power. Without presenting the vision of the new political and economic system and the program of action to bring it about, and without ideological and political preparation of the revolutionary classes, a victorious social revolution is not possible. An armed struggle without political theory in support of a new political order only adds to the cult of violence that the ruling class wants to promote in order to depoliticise and terrorise the toiling masses of people.

Another important lesson is that the problems of the economy cannot be addressed without placing on the agenda its reorientation towards fulfilling human needs rather than fulfilling monopoly capitalist greed. With respect to the goal and motive force driving the process of social production, there are only two possibilities – maximisation of private profits of the owners of capital; or the fulfilment of the growing needs of the entire population. There cannot be anything in between. The Ghadaris were clear that the orientation of maximum plunder must be replaced with the orientation of providing for all. Considerable confusion has been created by the followers of Soviet and Chinese revisionism in the past, about some kind of intermediate system between capitalism and socialism. Such unscientific thought inevitably leads to conciliation with the illusion promoted by the Congress Party and others that there is a “middle path”, an allegedly reformed capitalism with a “human face”.

To advance the cause for which the Ghadaris fought means to organise for the victory of revolution in the present conditions.

■ **The problems of the economy cannot be addressed without placing on the agenda its reorientation towards fulfilling human needs rather than fulfilling monopoly capitalist greed.**

■

The nature of the revolution that India requires is determined by the fact that (i) capitalism is the motor driving the economy, while perpetuating older social relations to maximise the degree of exploitation; (ii) the State is a legacy of colonialism, an organ of class and national oppression, of communal division and of perpetuating caste discrimination; and (iii) capitalist development has given rise to giant monopolies and the Indian capitalist class is aggressively pursuing an imperialist course.

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The present stage of revolution in India is the elimination of capitalism, all remnants of feudalism, colonialism and imperialism. It is a revolution whose aim is not to expand the space for capitalism but to dig its grave and build socialism. Such a revolution can only be carried out by the working class in alliance with the peasants and all sections of exploited and oppressed people. We communists have to provide the vision and lead the struggle for the revolutionary transformation of society.

There are two key questions concerning the form of proletarian state power in a multinational country such as ours. One is the question of the relations between the citizens and the State and the other is the question of the relations between the Union and its constituents. Both these questions are interlinked and together determine where sovereignty, the supreme decision-making power, resides.

What exists today is a system of parliamentary democracy in a "union of states of India", where the central Cabinet in Parliament has overriding powers over elected bodies at the state level, and elected bodies have overriding powers over those who elected them. This form of political power facilitates the old content, that is, the rule of a minority of big capitalist exploiters over the entire territory that was conquered and colonised to create British India. The new content – the rule of

the toiling majority of people of all nations, nationalities and peoples, led by the modern working class – requires a new form of state power and political process of representation and governance. Sovereignty, the ultimate decision-making power, must be in the hands of the constituents who voluntarily come together to form the union. It must be in the hands of the entire people of India.

Workers and peasants, who together make up the overwhelming majority of the population, must be able to select and elect their best representatives to the highest decision-making bodies and participate in setting the agenda for society. They must be able to hold those elected to account and to recall those they elect at any time. People must have the right to make and change laws, to approve major decisions through referendums, and the right to re-write the Constitution as and when necessary.

We must mobilise the workers and peasants to fight for a new State and political process based on the principles that sovereignty belongs to the people; the State is duty-bound to ensure prosperity and protection for all; and a political party is duty-bound to ensure that the people are able to govern themselves, by providing them with the organised leading conscious force. Such a State will be an instrument for advancing the struggle to eliminate exploitation, oppression and discrimination of all kinds and to end all class and caste divisions in society once and for all. In class terms, it will be a dictatorship of the proletariat, an alliance of the toiling majority of people led by the working class.

We, as communists, must lead the working class and toiling masses of people in establishing a new Constituent Assembly which will formulate a new Constitution based on the principle of vesting sovereignty in the people. The new Constitution must define the inviolable rights of workers, of peasants, women

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Activists of Ghadar Party taking part in demonstration in Delhi against the visits of US imperialist chieftain, 2010

and youth as well as the rights of all human beings including the right to conscience, and equal political rights of all adult citizens. It must declare it to be the duty of the State to ensure that these rights are protected and all violators are punished. It must define and guarantee the rights of the numerous nations, nationalities and peoples who make up India, including the right to self-determination, up to and including secession. The constitutional guarantees must be made effective by enabling laws and mechanisms for strict enforcement.

The strengthening of a politically united working class and democratic movement around the goal of creating such a new State and system will convert the sporadic and separate protests among different sections of the people into one mighty revolutionary wave. India could then become the weak link in the imperialist chain, where the proletarian revolution breaks out. It is with this exciting perspective that the Communist Ghadar Party of India strives to restore the unity of the communist movement.

Let us cleave to the path of the Ghadaris and reject the path of conciliating with social-democracy, with the existing State and a so-called middle path between capitalism and socialism! This is the call of the Communist Ghadar Party to all communists, all enlightened Indians and all those who are oppressed by the existing conditions and eager to make a revolutionary breakthrough.

The Ghadar that burst out in 1857 and again in 1915 is still alive. It is calling on us to rise to the occasion, to organise to create a society and state which will ensure prosperity and protection for all. Let us lead the working class and all the oppressed on the path of revolution, to usher in the India of our dreams. This is the call of our martyrs. It is our duty to respond to this call.

Ghadar Party Lal Salaam!

Inquilab Zindabad!

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<sup>1</sup> Statement 76.1, National Accounts Statistics 2009; Central Statistical Organisation.

<sup>2</sup> F. Engels, "Ludwig Fauerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy", Chapter 4; available at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1886/ludwig-feuerbach/ch04.htm>

# Glossary

Ain-i-Akbari	The third volume of the Akbarnama containing information regarding Akbar's reign in the form of administration reports, statistical compilations, or gazetteers
Arthashastra	An ancient Indian treatise on statecraft, economic policy and military strategy, written in Sanskrit
Awagaman	The coming into being and passing away of things and phenomena in nature
Bhakti movement	A movement which spanned several centuries across the sub-continent. It was a movement that upheld the right to conscience and mobilised people against the caste system and other backward customs in society. Its practitioners came from different religions, castes and strata of society.
Bolsheviks	Members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik) who led the victorious October revolution under Lenin's leadership
Charvaka	Ancient school of Indian materialism
Darshanas	Philosophies, world views and teachings based on Vedic and other traditional texts and representing distinct schools of thought
Ghadar	An Urdu word meaning 'Revolution'
Ghadaris	Revolutionaries
Gurudwaras	Meaning 'door to the Guru'. It is the place of worship for Sikhs.



Hindu rashtra	It is a concept based on the two-nation theory that Hindus and Muslims belong to separate nations on account of their religious differences in opposition to the definition of nations and nationalities on the basis of language, culture and common historical identity. The British colonialists used it as a weapon to divide Indian people on the basis of religion to preserve their rule.
Mahabharata	One of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India. It has specific sections on philosophical and political thought material of the time, including statecraft.
Mujahideen	Fighters who defend their religion against external attacks
Navnirman	To establish the state and political process afresh, with a new Constitution that enshrines the inviolability of rights of every nation, nationality and people; the rights of toilers, tillers, women, youth, and the national, linguistic, religious and other minorities; and the democratic and human rights of every individual member of society
Raj Dharma	A set of inviolable principles ensuring the duty of the rulers, to provide safety and security for their subjects
Ramayana	An ancient Indian epic poem
Rishis	Denotes a "seer" or "sage", who after intense meditation realised truths and eternal knowledge
Sangh Parivar	Refers to the family of Hindu nationalist organisations. It includes the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and several other affiliated organisations.
Sufi movement	A socio-religious movement between the 14 <sup>th</sup> and 16 <sup>th</sup> centuries advocating equality of human beings, the right to conscience and universal brotherhood

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