

**THE ANTI-BRITISH MOVEMENTS FROM  
GADAR LEHAR TO KIRTI KISAN LEHAR  
: 1913-1939**

A Thesis  
Submitted to the  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
of the  
**PUNJABI UNIVERSITY, PATIALA**  
In Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
IN  
HISTORY**

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**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
PUNJABI UNIVERSITY, PATIALA  
2011**

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*Dedicated to  
My Dear Supervisor and Parents*

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Dated.....

## **CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that this thesis entitled **“The Anti-British Movements from Gadar Lehar to Kirti Kisan Lehar : 1913-1939”** embodies the work carried out by Mr. Bhupinder Singh himself under my supervision and that it is worthy of consideration for the award of the Ph.D. Degree.

**(Dr. Nazer Singh)**  
Supervisor

## DECLARATION

I hereby affirm that the work presented in this thesis entitled, “**The Anti-British Movements from Gadar Lehar to Kirti Kisan Lehar : 1913-1939**” is exclusively my own and there are no collaborations. It does not contain any work for which a degree/diploma has been awarded by any other university/institution.

Date.....

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Date.....

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.D.	Anno Domini.
A.G.G.	Agent of Governor General.
A.M.	Ante Meridian
C.I.D.	Central Investigation Department.
C.M.G.	Chief Magistrate of Government.
C.P.C.	Criminal Procedure Code.
C.P.I.	Communist Party of India.
D.A.V.	Dayanand Anglo Vedic
D.B.Y.L.	Desh Bhagat Yadgar Library, Jalandhar.
D.I.G.	Deputy Inspector General.
E.A.C.	Extra Assistant Commissioner.
F.F.	Frontier Force
I.C.S.	Indian Civil Services.
M.L.A.	Member of Legislative Assembly.
N.A.I.	National Archives of India, New Delhi.
N.D.	No Dated.
N.M.M.L.	Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Teen Murti House, Delhi.
N.P.	No Publishers
N.W.F.P.	North West Frontier Province.

P.M.	Post Meridian
S.A.D.	Shiromani Akali Dal.
S.D.M.	Sub-Divisional Magistrate.
S.G.P.C.	Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee.
S.P.	Superintendent of Police.
S.R.L.	Sikh Reference Library, Amritsar.
U.P.	Uttar Pradesh.
U.S.	United States.
U.S.A.	United States of America.

## **AKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

*I am deeply indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Nazer Singh, Professor of History in Department of Distance Education, Punjabi University, Patiala, for his seasoned and generous guidance as well as keen interest in my work. He has been a providential influence and presence, like that of a father and true guide in my life. He watched my progress over the years and very kindly spared time for discussing my problems related to the present topic for months together and also going through all my drafts with his habitual thoroughness. He also graciously allowed me the use of his personal library. I undertook and finally completed my work with the patience revived time to time by his inspiring and sympathetic attitude. Without his intellectual assistance, sustained attention, pains for taking interest, constant encouragement and intelligent criticism, this work would never have become what it is today.*

*My sincere thanks are also due to all the faculty members in the department of History. I will remain beholden to Dr. Kulbir Singh Dhillon, Professor and Head, Department of History, and Dean Students Welfare, Punjabi University, Patiala, Dr. Sukhninder Kaur Dhillon, Professor, Dr Jaspal Kaur, Professor and Muhammad Idrish, Senior Lecturer, Department of History for their usual courtesy and ungrudging help that they have extended to me from time to time guidance, inspiration and cooperation during the course of my research.*

*I am also grateful to Dr. Balwinder Singh Tiwana, Professor, Department of Economic, and Provost, Punjabi University Patiala, and Kulwinder Singh Bajwa, Professor, Department of Historical Studies, as it was entirely due to*



*their encouragement that I finally undertook this study. They also guided me with patience and kindness, giving me freedom to pursue my own ideas. That in spite of the constant and valuable criticism and suggestions given by my advisor many errors still have crept in its entirety due to my own imperfection and intellectual limitations. I am also thankful to Indian Council of Historical Research (I.C.H.R.) for its valuable financial support in completing my work.*

*We are fully aware, librarians provide the crucial link between a researcher and his source material, so I am also thankful to staff of National Archives of India, Jan Path, New Delhi; Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, New Delhi; Punjab State Archives, Chandigarh, Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha Library, Punjabi University, Patiala; Dr. Ganda Singh Punjabi Reference Library, Punjabi University, Patiala; Punjab Historical Studies Library, Punjabi University, Patiala; Central Public Library, Patiala; Desh Bhagat Yadgar Library, Jalandhar; Punjab State Archives, Patiala; Panjab University Library, Chandigarh, Guru Nanak Dev University Library, Amritsar; Sikh Reference Library, Amritsar; Khalsa College Library, Amritsar, who had been very kind and helpful during the entire period of my research work.*

*My sincere and earnest thanks are due to my loving parents, specially my father, mother, elder brother and sister who always encouraged and inspired as well as financially assisted me whenever I was in need of some money without which the present work would not have been completed. I shall remain always indebted and beholden to them for their love, the encouragement and assistance they gave me at every step during the time of my research.*

*My reverence thanks to all my friends especially Jagpal Singh Maan, Palwinder Gill and Jatinder Singh for their moral support, unfailing help and*

*cooperation. They were special sources of inspiration during the time of my research.*

*I must thank S. Paramjeet Singh office incharge of Department of History, Punjabi University, Patiala for his valuable support and co-operation in completing all the administrative formalities fulfill in connection with the procedure since the day I submitted my request for enrolment and registration of my Ph.D. till the last day of its submission. I am also thankful to Sohan Singh Thakur, Library Restorer, Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha Library and Mehar Kaur, Librarian of Historical Studies Department, Punjabi University, Patiala for their kind help.*

*I would like to articulate my ineffable sense of deep reverence and gratitude for Sri Guru Granth Sahib whose divine presence have imparted a purposeful meaning to this meaningless life.*

*Last but not least, I would like to express my heartiest thanks to S. Avtar Singh, proprietor, Kamal Computers, Opposite Punjabi University Patiala for typing this work skillfully and well-in time in an attractive manner.*

**BHUPINDER SINGH**

## **ABSTRACT**

The 20th century saw many movements against the British Government in India and the Punjab. In this concern important were the Gadar Movement, the Satyagraha Movement, the Gurdwara Reform Movement, the Babbar Akali Movement and the Kirti Kisan Lehar. In order to prepare the balanced sheet or abstract of the present study it will be appropriate at the very out-set to write in brief about these movements one by one. The chapter number one stands for these movements as a whole.

Our Chapter number two deals with the Gadar movement. The Gadar movement established in 1913 under the name of "Hindustan Association of Pacific Coast" in Astoria of U.S.A. one of the main objectives of this organization was to make India free from the British by violent means. During the first world war the Gadrities arrived in India and started the revolutionary activities, against the British.

But this movement could not succeed in its real aims our third chapter deals with the Satyagraha movement. This movement established against the Rowlath Act. Mahtma Gandhi decided to protest against this official act. During the movement one such conference was held at Jallianwala Bagh Amritsar on 13 April 1919. He killed 379 and wounded over 2000 Indians.

The Gurdwara Reform movement had been described through the forth chapter. The Gurdewara Reform movement started by the Sikhs against the immoral priests of Gurdwara. When the Govt. took the side of the protests the Akalis held morchas to free their Gurdwara. Final Govt. passed the Gurdwara Bill and gave the Sikhs the right of the Gurdwara in 1925.

In fifth chapters we have narrated the Babbar Akali movement. Babbar Alail movement emerged when the Gurdwara Reform movement was passing through a critical stage of its own. Babbar Akalis aims to get free India from Britishers we have dealt with the kirti. Kisan Lehar in sixth chapter. In seventh chapter was disclosed the lights upon conclusion in these as a whole displays many things common although the differences among them were also significant. For example the Gadar movement was anti-British as the Satyagraha movement was but these two movements was quite different in their origin approach and method.

It is quite evident from the above discussion that these movements reciprocally necessitated the emergence of each other and both collectively and individually contributed to the demise of British Empire in India.

**Keywords:**

Gadrities

Sikhs

Babbar

Priests

Britishers

Government

Peasants

Indians

Punjabis

## SUMMARY

The 20th century saw many movements against the British Government in India and the Punjab. In this concern important were the Gadar Movement, the Satyagraha Movement, the Gurdwara Reform Movement, the Babbar Akali Movement and the Kirti Kisan Lehar. In order to prepare the balanced sheet or summary of the present study it will be appropriate at the very outset to write in brief about these movements one by one. The chapter number one stands for these movements as a whole.

Our chapter number two deals with the Gadar movement. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, peasants and small farmers in Punjab came into the forefront of public reactions against the British administration because they were under the debt. Repressive policies of the Government towards people in general were also the main reason for their protest. To improve their conditions some of them had gone to other countries, like U.S.A. and Canada and the countries of South East Asia. They engaged themselves as labour or agriculturists there wherever it was possible for them to do so. Their conditions were fraught with serious difficulties, because Indians were not treated cordially in

the Western countries and discrimination was faced by them on the basis of creed, colour and religion. It was not easy for them to settle down there. Another difficulty was the feeling of superiority among white man which had emanated to a large degree from a heritage of aggressive colonialism. The struggle of Punjabi immigrants in Canada and America against the immigration acts simultaneously became a struggle against the colonial rule in India. The British Government had not provided any protection and surety to the Indian immigrants to U.S.A. and Canada. It resulted in distrust and unsatisfaction spread against the Government in India between 1907 and 1913. They started organizing themselves for the freedom of India and for their own protection and prestige. For this purpose they established an organization in 1913 under the name of 'Hindustan Association of Pacific Coast' in Astoria of U.S.A. Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna was the first president of this new organization, Lala Hardial was its secretary and Pandit Kanshi Ram as the treasurer. This organization started a newspaper on 1 Nov. 1913. It was the famous, 'Gadar' newspaper. One of the main objectives of this organization was to make India free from the British by violent means and set up a democratic system on the basis of equality and liberty in India. To fulfill this objective the

workers of Gadar movement came to India for performing revolutionary activities against British rule during the First World War (1914-1918). The first batch of the revolutionaries started from Sanfrancisco in Aug. 1914. During the 1914-15 many ships carrying Gadar revolutionaries arrived in India and started the revolutionary activities against the British Government. But Kirpal Singh entered the party and he was an agent of British Government. He disclosed the secrets of this party to the police. Significantly, the party stood named as the Gadar party of Hindustan. The spy Kirpal Singh made the movement unsuccessful. There were many more reasons of or for its failure such as inability of the revolutionaries to keep secrets, lack of their experience, lack of arms and the efficiency of the British intelligence services throughout the empire. Despite efforts, this movement could not succeed in its real aims.

In spite of these limitations nevertheless, the movement had been of considerable importance. It was the first purely secular movement which aimed to liberate India by the violent means. For example, United India League was established (1911) and Hussan Rahim was its president. It may be added that the majority of the Gadar Party members were Sikh, its literature was published in

Gurmukhi its and meetings were held in the Gurdwaras. But Gadar movement had its leaders from all the other religions also. There were Hindus like Lala Hardyal and Ram Chandra and Muslims like Barkatuallah and Huassan Rahim. The party attracted and influenced other revolutionary groups in the country such as Satyagarha workers and Babbars to shed their religious biases while acting in politics.

The Gadrities did not fight in vain. Their movement was not a total failure. It deepened the national consciousness, evolved new strategies and methods of struggle, created new traditions of resistance, and the ideals such as democracy and human equality. After it there came a big radical change in the politics of Sikh community by 1918. It marked the end of the era of loyalty of the Sikhs to the British Empire or regime. Before it there were Singh Sabha Lehar and Chief Khalsa Diwan the two Sikh organizations that were loyal to the British Empire since the years 1872 and 1901. Although the Gadar was suppressed and submerged in the enthusiasm generated by the war, it continued to ferment and erupted a few years later during the Gurdwara Reform Movement which started in late 1920 and continued up to 1925. It had the flavor of Gadrities and revolutionary politics. Although the Akali



leadership had resolved to remain non-violent throughout their struggle, yet they could not keep the movement immune to revolutionary or national spirit between 1922 and 1925.

After the Gadar Movement there came the Babbar Akali Movement that was started in the year 1922. The Babbars were largely recruited from the ranks of the Gadar Party to avenge the excess perpetrated on the Punjab Sikhs. By preaching sedition and spreading disaffection the Babbars went about from place to place especially in Doaba. The Government took stringent measures to suppress the Babbars. After it (1923) some Gadrities organized themselves into the Kirti Kisan Party. It is because of the revolutionary zeal and politics of Gadrities that the Kirti Kisan Party represented the poor peasants, landless laborers and depressed classes of the Punjab, by their ideology and demands.

Finally, we can say, no organization in the region remained untouched by the revolutionary politics and revolutionary ideology of the Gadar movement, because every movement had some kind of anti-colonial feeling or understanding. Nevertheless the Gadrities remained ahead of others in context of valor, sacrifice and consistency.

Our third chapter deals with the Satyagraha Movement. The

people of Punjab had given many services to the British during the World War (1914-18). But Punjabis got in return only medals and certificates that had little economic worth. During the war, the Government of India had armed itself with the Defence of India Act to watch and suppress revolutionary activities in the country. The Defence of the India Act was made only for the duration of the war and it was to end when the war would come to a close. But the situation being explosive, the Government was not ready to reduce the special powers vested in it by this act. In addition to that the Punjab Government adopted a repressive policy. The British Government decided to deal with violent activities of Gandhites and other revolutionary elements. For suggesting steps in this direction, a sedition committee was appointed by the Government of India with Justice S.A.T. Rowal as the president to make the report on what were termed as the criminal conspiracies connected with revolutionary movement in India. On the proposal of this committee the Government passed an Act on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1919. This act was called the Anarchical and Revolutionary Crime Act. By this act, police and magistrates got unlimited powers to suppress the revolutionary activities. They could arrest the nationalists from their homes or force them to leave themselves for particular places,

and even they could arrest them without any crime being made by them. Further, the Rowlatt Act had provoked feelings of fierce indignation and resentment throughout the sub-continent.

Mahatma Gandhi decided to protest against this official act. This protest of Gandhi took the shape of Satyagraha Movement. Mahatma Gandhi initiated the movement in 1919 by a hunger strike and this movement stimulated a chain of strikes and conferences through out the country. The Punjab was one of the main centers of this agitation. The participation of Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims to a great extent showed the success of his movement. One such conference was held at Jallianwala Bagh Amritsar on 13 April 1919. To suppress it General Dyer marched with his army. He occupied the only entrance and exit to the garden and, without giving any warning to the people to disperse, opened fire on the meeting. He killed 379 and wounded over 2,000 Indians. He imposed a martial law in the city and returned to his camp leaving the dying with the dead without any possibility of help reaching them. This event infuriated the whole country and resulted in a great awakening, resentment and anti- British literature.

The impact of the Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy was far-

reaching. The character of Indian political milieu was completely changed quickly by the Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy for the event proved to be a turning point in the history Indian National Movement. It gave impetus to the struggle for India's freedom because people could no longer afford to be content. This Tragedy inspired the radical and revolutionary movements all over in India and particularly in Punjab like Babbar Movement and later Hindustan Republic Association and Nau-Jawan Bharat Sabha (1928). Thousands of previously uncommitted Indians were drawn into the arena of political activism. After it, the Indian National Congress emerged as one of the strongest political parties in the Indian politics and various Indian nationalist elements and forces gathered around the flag of Congress and fought against the British rule during the 1930's. Mahatma Gandhi had come forward with better zeal against the British carnage and emerged as a powerful national leader or accepted by various communities as their leader. The Gurdwara Reform movement also got motion from the prevailing anti-British temper of the people and loyal section of the Sikhs became powerless because after the tragedy this section had baptized General Dyer as a Sikh and presented him a *Saropa* through the Darbar Sahib Amritsar. The unity

among the members of the communities (Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims) unnerved the Punjab administration once again.

Finally it can be safely said that Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy undoubtedly marked a turning point in the History of freedom movement in India. This massacre infuriated and jolted the conscience of the Indian patriotic people. Never before had the people of India acted together on such a vast scale against British Rule since the day of 1857. After this tragedy the Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims had joined together and generated a strong spirit of communal harmony. It was a way for the future of national integration of India or the national unity on the secular bases.

Gurdwara Reform Movement had been described through the forth chapter. The establishment of Shriomani Akali Dal in 1920 marked a new turn in the Punjab politics. The Akalis were the product of the Gurdwara Reform Movement. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century the administration of the Gurdwaras including Golden Temple had gone into the hands of priests (mahants), who were appointed or patronized by the Government. They always worked in the interests of British Government. They were usually corrupt and immoral. They had become the virtual proprietors of the Gurdwaras. In many cases, with the help of Government officials the mahants could get

the Gurdwara's property transferred in their own names. Moreover, some of them had been leading luxurious life, and squandered large earnings of Gurdwaras on wine and women. Social and religious ideas of Singh Sabha Lehar had made a big impact on the Sikhs. The Chief Khalsa Diwan felt the need to get free their Gurdwaras from the hands of immoral priests but it could not succeed between 1902 and 1918. The Gurdwara Reform Movement was started by the Akalis to free the Sikh Gurdwaras from priests. They adopted the policy of non-violence to free their shrines. The Movement gave birth to new organization and ideas by 1919-20. Initially a conference was held at Akal Takhat in 1920 which resulted in the formation of S.G.P.C. (Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee) with the purpose of controlling and improving the administrative aspect of the Gurdwaras according to the Sikh code of conduct. Already the Central Sikh League was active since 1918. When Government took the side of priests, Akalis held morchas to get free the Gurdwaras. The *Guru-Ka-Bagh*, Morcha and the police interruption of Akhand Path at *Jaito* were the main events in this movement. Akalis faced many difficulties at the hands of Government and priests particularly during the *Jaito Ka Morcha* (1923).

Finally, the Government presented a bill called Sikh

Gurdwara Bill in Punjab legislative assembly in 1925. The bill was passed by the Assembly and gave Akalis the right of administration of Gurdwaras in 1925. Gradually the S.G.P.C. became an autonomous body of Sikhs by 1925. In the entire agitation, thousands of Sikhs sent to jail and 15 lakhs of rupees were collected as fine. About 400 lives were lost and the number of the wounded was about 2000.

The religio-political struggle of the Akalis was a direct action against the priests, Mahants and other vested interests in the Sikh shrines and consequently against the British imperialism. In fact, it was one of the most powerful and popular movement in modern India. Further the Gurdwara Reform movement was indirectly responsible for the political awakening in the princely states. The traditional concept of the Sikh loyalty on which O' Dwyer had waxed eloquence had lost its force. The implicit faith of the English in the traditional loyalty of the Sikhs also received a rude shock. After the settlement of disputes over the Gurdwaras the Akalis from princely states began to agitate against the autocratic misuse of power by the maharajas.

The reform movement provided the Sikh community with a new type of middle-class national leadership, consisting of

barristers, *vakils*, school teachers and retired military officers. During the movement the leadership of two different kinds came closer to each other as the Sikhs became inextricably involved in Congress activities, and the Gurdwara Reform movement became a part of the national movement. It was truly speaking main gestations of the Congress programme of non-cooperation at the provincial level that received an active sympathy and support from the Congress leadership as well as the people against the Government. After it the Sikhs could and did secure active sympathy and support of the Indian National Congress and other nationalist movements for their own struggle against British imperialism in Punjab. Gandhi visited Amritsar more than once between 1919 and 1947.

In fifth chapter we have narrated the Babbar Akali Movement. The Babbar Akali movement emerged when the Gurdwara Reform movement was passing through a critical stage of its own. While the Gurdwara Reform movement was prevailing peacefully up to February, 1921, the mahant of Nanakana Sahib had killed many innocent Akalis. After this event, Sikhs were much shocked and some zealot Sikhs started the violent movement against the enemies of Panth. It came to be known as the famous Babbar Akali



Movement. The Babbar Akali Movement was organized in 1921. In Doaba areas, the movement was at its height during 1922-23. The migrant Gadrates and retired army personal were involved in it. In fact, Babbar Akali movement was founded in March 1921 at a Sikh educational conference in Hosiarpur. The ultimate objective of Babbar Akali movement was to throw British out by the violent means. Campaign for the spread of the aims and programs of the Babbar Akali movement in August 1922 was to start a paper on the duplicator by Karam Singh Daulatpur which became famous as the 'Babbar Akali Doaba'. Kisan Singh Gargaj, Master Mota Singh, Narain Singh, Dalip Singh, Bela Singh were prominent and early leaders of the Babbar Akali movement. The movement progressed very well day by day. The Punjab Government found the situation out of control and adopted special measures to suppress the movement. The British Government did succeed in rounding up the Babbars. Total arrests by this time had numbered '226 of whom 104 were prosecuted under section 107, criminal procedure code. The arrested six Babbars Kishan Singh Gargaj, Babu Santa Singh, Dalipa Dhamian, Dharam Singh Hayatpur, Karam Singh Manko and Nand Singh Ghurial were sentenced to death and hanged to death on 27th Feb., 1926; other thirteen were sentenced to transportation for life. Thirteen to different terms of imprisonment

and forty were declared innocent and released. Despite sacrifices this movement could not achieve its objectives. Its main cause was unequal match of strength and resources between the Government and the Babbars.

The aim of Babbar Akali movement was an armed revolution in the country in cooperation with the noble army. But the Babbars were no more successful in their mission. There were many reasons responsible for their ultimate failure. The main cause was unequal match of strength and resources between the British Government and the Babbars. They had to suffer due to the shortage of money, arms and ammunition. They had tried to keep contract with the army and to procure arms and tried to purchase arms with the robbed money. But it was not sufficient for carrying out their mission. Another cause was that the Babbars were no more successful in keeping of their organization as a more secret than that of the Gadrities. The British C.I.D. did not have much difficulty in infiltrating the Babbar's inner circles. Another cause of failure of Babbars was the role of Jholichuks. Who gave their full cooperation to the Government against the Babbars. Some persons of Babbars became informer of the police after their arrest. This gave a big set back to the Babbars.

In addition to this the other parties like the S.G.P.C. and Indian National Congress though anti-imperialist in their own ways yet disapproved revolutionary methods of the Babbars. However their ideals and mission continued to work even after 1924. The S.G.P.C. radically protested against the activities of the movement and appealed to the people not to give any support to the Babbars. In spite of these reasons, the Babbar Akali Movement encouraged the national awakening and infusion of new spirit among the freedom fighters. Conclusively people realized their natural rights and started efforts to remove their imposed problems. Babbars drew their encouragement from the revolt of 1857 and Gadar Movement. But their movement also influenced greatly the later movements like Nau-Jawan Sabha and Kirti Kisan Party. Subsequently, they played progressive role in the freedom struggle of India by giving it a secular or non-communal touch.

We have dealt with the Kirti Kisan Lehar in sixth chapter. The Babbar Akali movement gave birth to the Kirti Kisan Lehar that made a big contribution to anti-British activities. The Kirti Kisan Lehar represented the poor peasants and landless labourers in the Punjab. Literally, the word 'Kirti' means the toiler. The party defined a Kirti as a person who performed his work with his hand

and did not exploit other. With the origin of Kirti, a monthly, Kirti Lehar came into being in Punjab. In Feb. 1926 the first issue of the Kirti was published. Bhai Santokh Singh was prominent among the founding members of this paper. He was also an active member of Gadar party from 1914 to 1922. Santokh Singh felt that an organization for the working class was desperately needed. The Kirti emphasized the importance of organization of workers, because workers faced many problems in those days under the British Government. Accordingly, Kirti conferences were held in Hoshiarpur and Lyallpur in Oct. 1927. The conferences announced that the Kirti would start the work of organizing its poor brothers in the beginning of the year 1928.

On the invitation of Sohan Singh Josh and Bhag Singh Canadian a meeting was held at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar on April 12, 1928 to organize the Kirti Kisan party. It was decided to organize peasants and labourers simultaneously. In this meeting ordinary peasants, leaders of Gadar lehar and Communist group also participated. It was unanimously resolved to name the organization as "Kirti Kisan Party". Sohan Singh Josh was its secretary and M.A. Majid was its joint secretary. Kirti Kisan party criticized the Government through the Kirti newspaper for its anti-

Kisan policies. It demanded Government to reduce the land revenue and to provide them necessary facilities. Many of the peasants became members of Kirti Kisan party. Government enacted repressive policy to suppress Kirti Kisan party and gave some facilities to peasants. Gradually, many leaders of Kirti Kisan Lehar were involved in the Communist Movement and Kisan Sabhas during the 1930's.

After it the Kirti Kisan Party attempted to make class consciousness an integral part of the freedom movement in the Punjab in the 1930's. A united front of the working class, peasants and bourgeoisie was expected to play a vital role in conducting an effective and decisive fight against injustice, atrocities of the Government, and the fight against imperialism and capitalism. The leadership of the Kirti Kisan's blamed the Congress for having failed enlisting the support of the masses and convinced that the involvement of the working class and peasants was the pre-condition for the success of any movement.

These movements such as the Gadar Movement, the Satyagraha Movement, the Gurdwara Reform Movement, the Babbar Akali Movement and the Kirti Kisan Party against the British have not been studied collectively so far. These movements

had made the 1920's and the 1930's an important period in the political and social life of Punjab. No historical account of Punjab or India's freedom movement and its concerns is complete without their knowledge. Each movement played an important role to get India free.

These movements had many things in common although the differences among them were also significant. For example the Gadar Movement was as anti-British as the Satyagraha Movement was but these two movements were quite different in their origin, approach and method. Further, the Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Babbar Akali Movement had many common things such as their concern for the Gurdwaras and other interests of Sikh community. But the methods of Babbars were closer to the ones adopted by the Gadrities. Likewise the Kirti Kisan Lehar shared many things with the Communist movement yet the two remained distinct and worked parallel to each other for most of the time.

However, these movements as a whole display many drastically similar features. These were all anti-British, for the ultimate aim of them was to get India free from British by every possible way. To this extent they strengthen the freedom movement in India. Secondly, they were also anti-Colonial. The similarity

among all these movements is conspicuous in their ideological propaganda. They primarily confined themselves to the religious congregations, places like Gurdwaras or *Dharamshalas* of their villages for spreading their views among the masses. All the prominent leaders of all these movements propagated their ideological stances and objectives by using almost similar methods. Although these movements were active across the country but inarguably Punjab remained the epicenter of all these movements. The cause behind the genesis of these movements was primarily the oppressive policies of the British Government towards the Indians at all levels. All these movements attempted to influence the educated section of the society. For example members of the Gadar Party and Babbar Akalis tried to establish contact with the army by working in it. The involvement of the members of Gadar Party in all these movements reveals the ideological compatibility among them. As the member of Gadar Party Baba Bhagwan Singh Dusanj brought a *Shahidi Jatha* from Canada to the "*morcha of Jaito*" which took place during the Gurdwara Reform movement. Similarly the prominent Gadrities such as Karam Singh Daulatpur, Pyara Singh Langeri and Karam Singh Jingar worked for Babbar Akali movement. Moreover the Kirti Kisan Party was established by

the Gadrites who survived even after the suppression of the party by the British Government and came under the influence of communism.

Besides the above mentioned similarities they also differ to a considerable extent. For example Gadar party adopted violent means to achieve their objectives. However Satyagraha movement was in a radical contrast to the Gadrites, opposed to violence and had adopted the path of non-violence. Such a contrast is also quite evident in between the Gurdwara Reform movement and the Babbar Akali movement. These movements also differ in terms of their geographical bases. The Gadar Movement was an international movement. Its international character leads to its spread and establishment of its branches across the globe. This movement not only performed revolutionary activities in India but also shook the British Empire with its anti-British radicalism at the international level. The anti- British, anti-colonial movements in other countries exerted a formidable influence upon the ideology and functioning of this movement. The geographical spread of the Satyagraha movement embraces the entire India. Moreover the Satyagraha movement differs from other movements as only in this movement the primary membership of Congress played a leading



role in spreading its influence.

The Gurdwara Reform movement under the leadership of S.G.P.C. made the entire Punjab the epicenter of its activities. The influence of the Babbar Akali movement was primarily confined only to the Doaba area. The Kirti Kisan Lehar not only had relations with the other labour movements in India, but also maintained intimate relations with the movements active across the abroad. Most of the members of this movement are from outside India. This is why it is termed as the reincarnation of the Gadar party. The Russian revolution exerted a formidable influence upon the ideological stance of this movement.

These movements mutually also influence each other to a great extent. For example the secular character of the Satyagraha movement was greatly indebted to the secular ideology of the Gadar Movement. Under the influence of Gadar movement Satyagraha movement brought the people of various communities closer to each other against the British Government. Prior to the emergence Gadar movement the movements within the Sikh community had shown loyalties towards the British Government. But under the influence of the Gadar party the Gurdwara Reform movement became anti-British in character. Gurdwara Reform movement

followed the path of non-violence under the inspiration of the Satyagraha movement under Gandhi, M.K. Similarly the Babbar movement adopted the Gadrities violent ideology under the influence of Gadar party, Babbar Akali decided to teach a lesson to the '*jholichuks*', because the remaining members of the Gadar party killed the Kirpal Singh the main culprit responsible for the demise of Gadar movement. These movements mutually necessitated the emergence of each other. For example Rowlatt Act was formulated to suppress the activities of the Gadrities who had survived even after the collapse of Gadar movement. The Satyagraha movement emerged in opposition to this inhuman act committed by the British. Similarly, the Satyagraha movement influenced the Gurdwara Reformation movement. The *Sarbrah* of Golden Temple Amritsar Arur Singh gave *Saropa* to the culprit of the Jalanwala Bagh tragedy. This created an atmosphere of distrust among the Sikh community. This resulted in the formation of the Gurdwara Reform movement. Immediately after this movement Babbar Akali movement came into existence which emerged as a reaction to the tragedy of Nankana Sahib.

It is quite evident from the above discussion that these movements reciprocally necessitated the emergence of each other and both collectively and individually contributed to the demise of British Empire in India.

# CHAPTER – I

## THE HISTORICAL SETTING

In the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century some Anti-British movements came into being which had an objective to get India free from the Britishers. Significantly, these movements are named in India as The Gadar Movement, The Satyagraha Movement, The Babbar Akali Movement, The Gurduwara Reform Movement and The Kirti Kisan Lehar. Basically these movements were revolts against the British rule in India. Further, the starting of these movements were neither the result of one circumstance nor efforts of one person or a group of rebels.<sup>1</sup>

The annexation of the Punjab in 1849 by the British put an end of the independence of the land of five rivers. By that time industrial revolution had taken place in England and her industrialists were in search of markets to sell their goods and to get cheap raw materials for their manufactured products. Consequently, Punjab was also opened to the vigor process of the British colonization and had been incorporated into the vortex of imperialist market economy. "The strategy of which the British government pursued for the development of agriculture built a strong infrastructure, raised production, but simultaneously

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<sup>1</sup> Generally, it happened to be a national reaction of the zealot and brave Punjabis against the social, economic and political circumstances that had been emerged in India, and out side of their country. In fact, during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century some tragedies happened that infuriated the whole country and became the main cause of starting these movements.

unleashed forces of increasing exploitation of the small and middle peasantry”<sup>2</sup>, says Harish K. Puri ;

The revolt of 1857 had been taken as a landmark in the history of freedom struggle of India. During the revolt a major portion of entire population of north India including some chiefs and the masses of Punjab participated against the British regime. Some sporadic incidents took place in the region that symptomizes the agitated minds of the Punjabis<sup>3</sup>. According to Parambaksish Singh “No less than twenty-two persons were sentenced to death.”<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Between the Satluj and Jehlum the tribal and rural populations even fought pitched battles with the British. In fact, the cities of Jullundur, Ferozepur, Sailkot and Peshawar were in an open revolt.<sup>5</sup> Both Jind and Patiala soldiers not only cleared the roads to Delhi but also protected the British ways from insurgents

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<sup>2</sup> Harish K. Puri, *Gadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 1983, p.11.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Edwardes, *Battle of the Indian Mutiny*, London, 1963, p. 34; At Amritsar, a large number of “*bairages*” were arrested and locked up. Many Sikh soldiers were also hanged for their Anti-British activities. At Ludhiana, the local brigadier was indecisive and the town was burnt and robbed by the rebels. In this city, it posed a serious threat to the British Empire, because people not only sympathized with the mutineers but also collected weapons which were later seized by the Government.

<sup>4</sup> Parmbaksish Singh and Davinder Kumar Verma, *Punjab and The Freedom Struggle*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1998, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> ‘At Ferozpur a sadhu named Sham Dass collected some followers with *treasonable intent*’. He was executed and his followers were attacked and killed. ‘At Sailkot even the punjabee military police revolted. Here, treasury was looted, twelve guns plundered and the magazines blown up. The villagers of the neighborhood also revolted and entered the city. Many village leaders were flogged’. ‘Except for the Phulikian chiefs, all other Punjabi princes and chieftains either openly opposed or were looking for a proper opportunity to join the rebellion. In spite of general discontent prevailing in the Punjab, there was no major organized attempt to oust the Britishers from the country. This limitation may be found in the absence of proper leadership. Phullkian chiefs had their selfish interests; with their illiterate armies they openly furnished the backbone of support to the British in the Punjab’. See in more detail, Bosworth Smith R., *Life of lord Lawrence, Vol, II*, Smith Elder & Co. London,1883, p. 53; R. C. Majumdar, *The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857*, Firma, K.L. Mukhopadhyay Calcutta,1963, p.97; *Parliamentary, Paper, 238 of 1859*, p.27; and Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party- A Short History*, People’s Publishing House, New Delhi, 1977, p.13.

during the period when the revolts in the region was in full fury.<sup>6</sup> The third Phullkian state, Nabha with its eight hundred troops escorted the British siege train for Phillor, and assisted in quelling rebellion in this region. Kapurthala and Faridkot were other two Punjab states which provided two thousand strong contingents to the Government in the Jalandhar Doab.

The fall of Delhi in fact was the turning point in the history of revolt of 1857 for the Punjab. After this event chiefs of rebels surrendered to the British and people were disarmed. May be the war would have been won by the rebels if the Sikh armies under the leadership of Sikh feudal rajas had not sided with the British rulers. By the revolt British Empire did not fall but the East India Company had to go. The Crown British took over its direct rule over India in 1858. Although the revolt could not succeed yet the sacrifices made by the rebels in it became a shining example to be followed by the Indian youth in days to come.

The Kuka movement was the biggest event in the history of Indian politics after the revolt of 1857. It had established itself by 1863 under the leadership of Baba Ram Singh, a carpenter saint of village Bhaini, District Ludhiana. He had resurrected the Khalsa to

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<sup>6</sup> The Raja of Jind personally led his contingent of 800 troops. The Maharaja of Patiala provided 8 guns and 6500 troops-both horse and foot, *Mutiny reports*, London, 1915, Vol.III, No. 87, Para 12, Also see *Mutiny records Vol.VII*, pt. I, No. 146 Lahore, 1915 quoted in Khushwant Singh, *History of The Sikhs Vol.II*, Delhi 1966, p. 123.

drive the English out of Hindustan and establish a new Sikh dynasty.<sup>7</sup> The Kukas had incurred the wrath of British rulers because they had boycotted English Schools, foreign goods, courts and post office services, preached self reliance and wore homespun *swadeshi* cloths.<sup>8</sup> They established their local *panchyats* for the settlement of their mutual disputes. Instead of newly established schools which had followed the western system of education they were also instructed to send their children to local schools [pathshalas] where education in the mother tongue was imparted. They protested against some social customs like female infanticide, child marriage and dowry system.<sup>9</sup>

As for as the organizational set up was concerned, Baba Ram Singh appointed *subas* [governors] to collect funds for the saint Khalsa.<sup>10</sup> In 1871 some Kuka fanatics murdered some Muslim butchers of Amritsar and Raikot. In Amritsar case, four Kukas were hanged and two sentenced to transportation of life by the British. In the Raikot case, four Kukas were hanged.<sup>11</sup> A few month later,

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<sup>7</sup> Khushwant Singh, *History of The Sikhs, Vol. II*, p.139.

<sup>8</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party-A Short History*, p.14.

<sup>9</sup> G.S. Chhabra, *Advanced History of Punjab, Vol.II*, Parkash Brothers, Jalandhar, 1973, p. 448.

<sup>10</sup> Khushwant Singh, *History of The Sikhs, Vol. II* p. 130: The collected funds were remitted to *Bhaini* by and for the Kukas. Baba Ram Singh arranged for the military training to young men and built up a strong Para-military organization. As the movement grew in strength, its anti-British character crystallized. With the increasing popularity of the movement, the Government began to take a very serious view of it. In turn, having secured the freedom movement, Kukas sharpened their activities.

<sup>11</sup> Parmbakhshish Singh and Devinder Kumar Verma, *Punjab and the Freedom struggle*, p. 16.

Kukas raided at Maloud and Malerkotla to acquire arms for themselves. All the rebels were immediately rounded up. Leaving to ladies who were released, sixty six of the arrested were blown off from the mouths of cannon.<sup>12</sup> One was hacked to pieces and two were transported for life.<sup>13</sup> The Kuka's headquarters at *Bhaini* were searched by the police.<sup>14</sup>

But the Kuka movement left an important stamp on the outlook of the people of Punjab. Some of the Gadar leaders like Sohan Singh Bhakna were encouraged by the glorious sacrifices of the Kukas or Namdhari Sikhs. After the Kuka movement had passed its meridian, moderate section of the Sikh population, under the influence of western ideas, tried to reinterpret Sikhism so as to make it consistent with their modern systematic point of view. There were special circumstances in the Punjab during the later half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in which many socio-religious movements were organized in the province.

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<sup>12</sup> *Parliamentary papers on the Kukas outbreak*, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Parmbakhshish Singh and Devinder Kumar Verma, *Punjab and the Freedom struggle*, p. 16

<sup>14</sup> Ram Singh himself and eleven of his followers were arrested and deported to Burma where the Baba breathed in last in 1885. During this time, attempts were made by the Kukas to spread their relations with Nepal, Bhutan and Kashmir. But due to the pusillanimity and duplicity of their native rulers, the attempts achieved little success. Nevertheless, a Kuka suba Gurcharan Singh visited central Asia several time and tried to persuade Russia to attack India to help the Kukas to throw out the British from India. During the eighties of the last century, there were symbols of other storms. But with the support of Sikh army, Sikh literate elite and aristocracy, the movement once again became unsuccessful and could not put to make any considerable mark on the British Government., See also *Parliamentary papers on the Kukas outbreak*, p.11; G.S. Chhabra, *Advanced History of Punjab, Vol. II*, p. 449.



After the decline of the kuka or the Namdhari movement the Singh Sabha movement was established in 1873, because, a flood of Christian missionaries had moved into the province after the annexation of the Punjab. The Christian missionaries started their proselytizing activities in Punjab with the advent of the British domination. English and Vernacular schools, hospitals and orphanages etc. were opened. The Church missionaries opened centers at the various cities of province. "The British Government themselves took an unjustified and unreasonable interest in these missionary activities. Sir John Lawrence the chief commissioner of the Punjab used to contribute rupees five hundred a year towards these activities".<sup>15</sup> The main objective of these missionary centers was to convert the Sikhs and Hindus into Christianity.<sup>16</sup> "In the summer of 1877, Dayanand came to Punjab where he received a great welcome from the Hindus and Sikhs".<sup>17</sup> Later on, the Arya Samaj started the Sudhi movement which was an important part of his activities.

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<sup>15</sup> G.S. Chhabra, *Advanced History of Punjab, Vol. II*, p. 456.

<sup>16</sup> Not only the missions, Swami Dayanand came into forefront at that time and posed a greater challenge to the Sikhs. Swami Dayanand was the founder of Arya Samaj and a great scholar of the Vedas. His motto was "Back to the Vedas". He maintained that in the Vedas, the stress is laid on the worship of one omnipresent and invisible God and in the equality of human beings. He was a great and forceful orator and his dogmas greatly influenced the people. His iconoclastic monotheism and egalitarianism had special appeal for the Sikhs and his doctrine greatly influenced the Sikhs. See in detail Khushwant Singh, *History of The Sikhs, Vol. II*, p.138.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p. 139.

In the beginning of 1873, four Sikh students of the mission school at Amritsar offered themselves for conversion into Christianity. This event greatly shocked the Sikhs. Besides, Pandit Sharda Ram Philori, supposed to be an agent of the British, began to criticize the Sikh faith by this time.<sup>18</sup> To protect the Sikhism, some prominent Sikhs assembled at Amritsar in 1873 to deliberate over the challenges facing the Sikh community and established an association which was named Singh Sabha. Thakar Singh Sandhawalia was president and Gyani Gyan Singh secretary of the Amritsar Shri Singh Sabha.<sup>19</sup> The main principles of the movement were to remove the Sikh short-comings and to revive the basic Sikh conduct.<sup>20</sup>

In 1879 another Singh Sabha was formed at Lahore by Professor Gurmukh Singh. A group of educated and energetic men of the Sikh middle class were leaders of this Sabha.<sup>21</sup> "The Governor of the Punjab, Sir, Robert Egerton, being requested, agreed to be its patron and induced the viceroy, Lord Lansdowne to

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<sup>18</sup> G.S. Chhabra, *Advanced History of Punjab, Vol. II*, p.456.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> The object of the Sabha were the reformation of the teachings of the gurus, publishing Sikh religious literature in Punjabi, propaganda against illiteracy, reform and bring back into the Sikh fold the apostates; and interest the highly placed English men in their organization for the educational activities of the Sikhs. All activities of Singh Sabha were to be carried on in co-operation with the British Government. The movement thus organized herself and rose to great popularity. Many Sikhs, even British administration and *Udasis* joined it. See also Jagjiwan Mohan Walia, *History of the Punjab, 1799-1947*, Kalyani Publishers, Ludhiana, 1992, p. 254.

<sup>21</sup> Khushwant Singh, *History of The Sikhs, Vol. II*, p. 142.

lend his support"<sup>22</sup> The Lahore Singh Sabha established branches in many towns, sent its own missionaries to the villages, and began publishing journals in Punjabi. After some time these Sabhas met together and set up a General Sabha to guide the smaller ones. In 1883 an effort was made to revive the General Sabha and named it as Khalsa Diwan. With the efforts of Diwan, the Khalsa College Amritsar was established in March 5, 1892, by Sir James Lyall. In 1899, this institution became a degree college.<sup>23</sup> The Khalsa Tract society was founded by Bahi Vir Singh in 1890 and a news organ named *Khalsa Samachar* was published on different aspects of Sikh history and religion. These were the main achievements of Singh Sabha. Although, the Singh Sabha was not against the British Government, yet the spread of education among the Sikhs made them conscious of their religion and political disabilities. This movement on the one hand tried to safeguard Sikh religion and community from the threat of conversion and on the other hand tried to improve the condition of the Sikhs in the field of education. This movement produced a strong national feelings and emotional spirit was infused against the British Government. With the establishment of Singh Sabha, a powerful middle class came in

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<sup>22</sup> *The Tribune*, 23 October, 1890.

<sup>23</sup> G. S. Chhabra, *Advanced History of Punjab*, Vol. II, p. 461.

force in Punjab which latter on became a vanguard of freedom struggle.

The Brahmo Samaj was established in Bengal in 1828 by Raja Ram Mohan Rai. It presented a reformed and modernized Hindustan which could adequately meet the challenge of Christian missionaries. Emphasizing the unity of God and mankind, it projected religion as a universal force and at the same time assisted in moulding a national outlook. The movement, however, could not find much success in the Punjab. Dev Samaj was established by Pandit Satyanand Agnihotri at Lahore in 1887. Shri Satyanand Agnihotri emphasized the ideas of social work and ethical excellence. However, it had a very limited impact on the society. Arya Samaj established by Swami Dayanand in 1875 was another major reform movement of the Hindu community of the Punjab. The Arya Samaj protected Hinduism from the activities of Christian missionaries and pleaded re-admission of converts into the Hindu fold by means of *Sudhi*, a ceremony of purification. These movements had a direct relation with political affairs and provided a strong national and cultural force base to counteract the western influences.

Before the annexation of the Punjab by the British Government, cultivated and wasted lands were owned by the village community and the peasant had no individual proprietary right over the land. Therefore, it was very difficult for the peasant to alienate the land without the consent of the whole brotherhood or community. The cultivator did not understand the meaning of individual rights of property such as "the purchasing power of the money and "credit and attachment and sale". As the moneylender could not resort to the court for the recovery of his debt, the cultivator paid to him whenever he had surplus. The moneylender could not dispossess the cultivator on account of the existence of [1] a strong village community and [2] the apathy of the state towards recovery. The moneylender was dependent on his personal influence rather than the state for the recovery of his debt. However, under the British rule, the land became a private property also.

Further, after the annexation of Punjab, the reclamation of desert lands was done. By extending canal irrigation and facilities of marketing agricultural produce, brought an era of prosperity that the Punjab had never seen before 1849 A.D. But this prosperity brought pushed to other economic changes which

radically altered the social fabric of life in the Punjab. Increase in price of agricultural produce was bound naturally to rise the price of agricultural land, and thus, whereas prior to the British rule, the transfer of land were comparatively rare, shortly after it land began to attract attention and its prices rose from average of Rs. 10 per acre in 1869-70, to Rs. 18 in 1880-1881, Rs. 61 in 1890-1891 and Rs. 77 in 1900-1901.<sup>24</sup> The industrial revolution of England had closed the village cottage small industries.<sup>25</sup>

The revenue was assessed and collected with harshness. To pay taxes, the peasants were compelled to borrow money from the *Seth* or *Sahukar*. In the Sikh kingdom, it was a fixed share of the crop. The British Government substituted it by a system of cash payment. The Government appointed officers to fix the assessment, value the land, estimate the average produce, average requirement of the peasant for his subsistence, average cost of cultivation as well. The assessment which was fixed by the Government was high and the peasant had to pay twice a year. The cultivator was forced to borrow money at a higher rate of interest to pay the revenue. The

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<sup>24</sup> Calvert, H., *Wealth and Welfare of the Punjab*, Civil & Military Gazette, Lahore, 1927, pp. 101- 103.

<sup>25</sup> These circumstances forced the people to resort to agriculture that was the only avenue for employment and sustenance of people. During the time of economic prosperity and progress, the population of Punjab began to increase and it was estimated that between 1855 and 1881 the Punjab population rose by nearly 20 percent. See for detail, Ibbetson, D. C, *Punjab Census, 1881-1, 8., 3 vols.*, Central Goal press, Lahore, 1883 and Khushwant Singh, *History of The Sikhs, Vol. II*, p. 153.

result was a fast rise in the scale of indebtedness of the peasant and consequent alienation of lands of peasants in west Punjab districts. Because in the Punjab agriculture depended largely on the nature. Often the failure of the monsoons resulted in famines. The famines which occurred in Punjab worsened the condition of the peasantry. Due to the scarcity of fodder, the animals died in large number. "In 1869, 3, 00,000 cattle perished in the single district of Hissar".<sup>26</sup> At the time of such natural calamity, the cultivator was forced to borrow money from the moneylender at an exorbitant rate of interest. There were other causes for the increasing indebtedness. The illegal extortions of the settlement officials, bribe which the agriculturists had to give to the *Tehsil* and *Thana* understanding and there occurred Sundry and other cases<sup>27</sup>. Due to all these reasons the indebtedness increased, and the land owners by mortgaging or selling land into the hands of the *baniyas*, were being increasingly converted into occupancy tenants or the tenants at will. Between the 1872-73 and 1902-03 the number of tenants-at-will increased by 360 percent.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Jagjiwan Mohan Walia, *History of the Punjab, 1799-1947*, p. 227.

<sup>27</sup> G.S. Chhabra, *Advanced History of Punjab, Vol. II*, p. 416.

<sup>28</sup> Sukhwant Singh, *Agricultural Development in the Punjab 1849-1946; Unpublished M Phill Dissertation, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 1979*, p. 174.

The exactions of the moneylenders and the process of transfer of land from cultivators to the moneylenders greatly contributed to the increase of anti-Government feelings among the cultivators.<sup>29</sup> The land Alienation Act was framed to protect the agriculturists from the influences of the moneylenders. It was under these conditions that the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1901 was passed.<sup>30</sup> According to Act, lands now could not be sold to the non-agriculturists by the members of agricultural tribes, old mortgages of land by agriculturists to non-agriculturists were rendered illegal except such as provided for automatic redemption after twenty years and the agricultural land could not be attached sold in execution of a decrees.<sup>31</sup> After this, the question as to who was or was not an agriculturist was not decided by actual occupation but by the castes. Thus all *Jats*, *Rajputs* and members of scheduled castes were declared as agriculturists while all *Khattris*, *Aroras* and

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<sup>29</sup> The British Government wanted to improve the pitiable condition of the peasantry. The Government of India was of the view that the restrictions on the transfer of land would improve the miserable condition of the peasants, but its main purpose was political. Because the Government realized the dangers of having unsatisfied peasantry specially a peasantry from which it drew the largest number of soldiers for the army and on whose loyalty depended the internal security of the country. The British Government influenced the rural masses through the peasant proprietors. But these peasant proprietors were being deprived of land by the moneylenders. See also, *In a note of 1895, on the proposal to check Alienation of Land, The Lieutenant Governor, Sir, D. Fitzpatrick, warned that if Landowners were reduced to the condition of tenants or labourers they would constitute "a political danger of formidable dimensions". Govt. of India records, Agricultural indebtedness and transfers, II, Punjab correspondence, p.2, quoted in Khushwant Singh, History of The Sikhs, Vol. II, p. 154.*

<sup>30</sup> G.S Chhabra, *Advanced History of Punjab, Vol. II, p. 417.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*



*Banias* were classed as non-agriculturists.<sup>32</sup> But the act did not provide any concession in the case of *Jat* moneylenders or *Aroras* agriculturists.

The Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1901 gave a new shape to political consciousness in the province. The restriction imposed by the bill offended 'non-agriculturists' who expressed their concern through petition and the press. The act was meant to prohibit the transfer of land from the agriculturist to non-agriculturist.<sup>33</sup> But it did not stop the exploitation of the peasantry. Because after the act, a class of agriculturist moneylenders came into being who replaced the non-agriculturist moneylender. As the experience shows, the former was not less rapacious and exacting than the latter. In this way, the act could not decrease the sale and mortgages of the land which continued to increase and is proved from the fact that as such sales and mortgages increased respectively to 1, 50,000 and 1, 90,000 acres between 1902 and 1906 they increased respectively to 1, 66,000 and 2, 84,500 acres in 1919-20.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Khushwant Singh, *History of The Sikhs, Vol. II*, p.156.

<sup>33</sup> S. C. Mittal, *Freedom movement in Punjab (1905-29)*, Concept Publishers, Delhi, 1977, p. 21 and Puri Nina, *Political Elite and Society in the Punjab*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 48-49.

<sup>34</sup> Calvert, H., *Wealth and Welfare of the Punjab*, p.13.

The Land Alienation Act of 1901 banned the Agricultural land from passing to the moneylenders, but it did not solve the problem of rural indebtedness, because the Punjab was visited by a series of natural calamities.<sup>35</sup> Ibbeston, the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab lamented in one of his reports of 1907 to the Governor-General of India that plague alone was killing 60,000 Punjabis a week.<sup>36</sup> The epidemics took a toll of two million lives in the province leading to a net reduction of 2.2 percent in the population between the year 1901 and 1911.<sup>37</sup> The prices rose very high due to the absence of the monsoon and the British Government enhanced the land revenue which led to a great rise in political temperature against the British Government.

In the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Punjab became a fertile soil of revolutionary seed. The resounding victory of the Japanese over the Russians shook the belief of the Punjabis in the superiority of western civilization. In fact, the new wind was

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<sup>35</sup> Six famines visited Punjab during the first half century of British rule. The famines occurred twice and more than four million people died of an epidemic of bubonic plague in the province. The administration did not care for these disasters. During the famine years, while food supply went down and prices galloped unchecked, the Government did not think it wise to check the export of food grains. Economic conditions worsened further during the first decade of the 20th century. Drought conditions of 1905-07 and recurrent epidemics of malaria and plague caused unprecedented mortality. For detail H. K. Puri, *Gadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, pp. 15-16; Khushwant Singh, *History of The Sikhs, Vol. II*, p. 156 and Inderjeet Sharma, *Punjab famines and the British Policy in the 19th century*, Punjab History Conference, 1979, Proceedings (Punjabi University, Patiala) 1980, p. 185.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in N. G. Barrier, '*Punjab politics and the Disturbances of 1908*' (Ph. D. Dissertation Duke University, 1966) pp. 232-33.

<sup>37</sup> *Report Census of India 1911, XIV*, pp. 41-42 and 59.

blowing across the length and breadth of the whole country. But the immediate cause of unrest was the introduction of the Punjab colonization of land bill of 1906 and the enhancement of the canal water rates. One provision of the bill deprive them from the exercise of their right to cut down trees standing on their own lands or even to lop off a branch of them, without the previous written permission of the revenue authorities particularly upset them.<sup>38</sup> The Colonization Bill of 1906 generated political discontent in Punjab. The atmosphere in the cities of province and the affected colonies had become tense. The bill was vigorously criticized in the Indian press and by the members of the Punjab Legislative Council. A newspaper *Zamindar*, was started to publicize the sufferings of the people.<sup>39</sup>

While the colonization bill was rousing agitation in the minds of the people, a new settlement of Rawalpindi district was made at a higher rate of assessment and also with the occupiers' rates on the Bari Doab canal. It also led to the increase of tension.<sup>40</sup> The area of the districts of Layallpur and Rawalpindi particularly were affected. Although the average increase was twenty five percent, in

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<sup>38</sup> Khushwant Singh, *History of The Sikhs, Vol. II*, p. 157.

<sup>39</sup> *The Zamindar*, 11, August 1905, selections from the Punjab vernacular press 1905, p. 215, Siraj-ud-din Ahmed, a retired postal officer who ran the paper had no previous connection with agitation or public criticism of the British.

<sup>40</sup> S.C. Mittal, *Freedom movement in Punjab (1905-29)*, p. 43.

the case of sugarcane and vegetable gardens bordering urban areas it ran as high as fifty percent.<sup>41</sup> But water rates had previously been kept lower in these districts than in the western Punjab because the Punjab Government hoped that a policy of kindness would ensure the loyalty of the Sikh Jats who supplied many soldiers for the Indian army. The districts watered by the Bari Doab canal were the heartland of the Majha, the chief recruiting ground for Sikh soldiers.

The discontent over the amendment merged with the discontent of the colonizers of the Chanab colony over the question of proprietary right and of the peasants of the Bari Doab over the enhanced rates of water for irrigation. The political temperature had raised high in the first two months of 1907. Many people attended public meetings which were held at Lahore, Rawalpindi and Sangla. The native press supported their cause and helped to enlarge their grievances against the colonization bill and it soon become a racial issue between the brown and the white man. *The Tribune* and *The Punjabi* were sued for libel for English officers; India and the Hindustan were prosecuted for sedition against the Government.<sup>42</sup> The agitation assumed a momentous political turn

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<sup>41</sup> Jagjiwan Mohan Walia, *History of the Punjab, 1799-1947*, p. 267.

<sup>42</sup> Khushwant Singh, *History of The Sikhs, Vol. II*, p. 158.

in the hands of Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit Singh and they organized public meetings and published articles on the economic discontent widespread in Punjab.<sup>43</sup> Sardar Ajit Singh the most dangerous and seditious 'revolutionary' toured the principal districts of the province and addressed numerous meetings in the summer of 1907.<sup>44</sup> By March 1907 the atmosphere in the cities and the affected colonies had become tense. An important meeting was convened by the colonists at Lyallpur on 22 March, in which approximately 9,000 colonists gathered to protest against Government tyranny. In the meeting, Lala Prabh Dayal read an emotional poem '*Pagri Sambal O Jatta, Pagri Sambal O*' (O Jat take care of the turban). The turban was a symbol of self respect for the war like Jat zamindar.<sup>45</sup> After a number of patriotic songs Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit Singh delivered lectures at Lahore. Besides Pandit Ram Bhaj Dut Chaudri, pleader of Lahore, Ghulam Qadir Fasih and Chaudhri Shahab-ud-din spoke against the bill. After this meeting '*Pagri Sambhal O*' Jatta' song was on the lips of the people of province as a whole. The resentment was unlike any other agitation previously witnessed in the Punjab. For the first time the local Government aggrieved a large portion of the rural

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<sup>43</sup> S.C. Mittal, *Freedom movement in Punjab (1905-29)*, p. 45.

<sup>44</sup> *Proceedings Home Political Deposit*, August, 1907, No. 3 (N.A.I.).

<sup>45</sup> Jagjiwan Mohan Walia, *History of the Punjab, 1799-1947*, p. 268.

population and in response the Chanab Zamindars and their sympathizers organized mass demonstrations. The unrest was not limited to the colony rather it entered to the agricultural families of the central districts. Their relatives in the colony, students, lawyers and members of the Arya Samaj added their voice to the protests. Ajit Singh and his organization the Anjuman-i-Muhibban-i-Watan [society of lovers of homeland] engineered the demonstrations against the Bari Doab enhancements.

At this time Government imposed restriction on the public meetings organized against the Government. Restriction also imposed on the press and party which spread disaffection. Increasing unrest among the people and sympathy extended to them by civil and military native officers confirmed Government's suspicion that some more violence might come in the wake of present crisis. They extended full sympathy and support to the mutineers who were bent upon perhaps to refresh the memory of great uprising of 1857. Whose fifty anniversaries fell on the 10<sup>th</sup> may of 1907.<sup>46</sup> It was apprehended that the situation might deteriorate after the spread of disaffection among the soldiers because of provoking activities of Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit

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<sup>46</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, (A), September, 1907, No. 64-72, Weekly report (N.A.I.).

Singh who were very fiery orators. The Lieutenant Governor of Punjab requested to the Imperial Government of India to issue warrants for the arrest and deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh.<sup>47</sup> On a submission from Sir Denzil Ibbetson the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, Lord Minto gave order on May, 7, 1907, for deporting Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit Singh under the Regulation III of 1818.<sup>48</sup> Lala Lajpat Rai was arrested and deported on 9<sup>th</sup> May and Sardar Ajit Singh on 3, June, 1907. Their arrest roughed feelings of resentment throughout the country. Despite the Government repression the opposition still did not subside. Lord Minto vetoed the bill as he was averse to the spread of disaffection among the soldiery. The Government announced reduction in land tax and water rate. On the birthday of the king emperor, general amnesty was proclaimed and Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit Singh were released on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1907,<sup>49</sup> and they returned to their home province after six months in Burma.

It was for the first time since annexation that the peasantry came into action on the questions of enhanced land revenue and water-rates. The burden of indebtedness also stirred them to participate in the new movement. The forms of struggle generally

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<sup>47</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (A)*, August, 1907, No. 148-235 (N.A.I.).

<sup>48</sup> S. C. Mittal, *Freedom movement in Punjab (1905-29)*, p.52.

<sup>49</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (B)*, November, 1907, No. 2-9 (N.A.I.).

were public meetings, press statements and articles, petition and resolutions. The agrarian unrest in the Punjab exploded the myth of the renowned loyalty of the Punjabis. The agrarian unrest in the first decade of the 20th century served a very severe blow to the power of British in India because a large number of Punjabis loyalty now could not be taken for granted. It unleashed a chain of revolutionary movements in Punjab. The agrarian unrest awakened the Punjab and the Punjabis, particularly the peasants from now onward were in the forefront of the freedom movement.

These were main events during the II<sup>nd</sup> half of 19<sup>th</sup> century and first decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The resentment in the whole country awakened the Punjab and Punjabis, particularly the peasants against the British Government. They were in forefront of the anti-British movements like Gadar movement, Satyagraha movement, Gurdwara Reform movement, Babbar Akali movement and Kirti Kisan movement. The Movements shall be referred to in detail and one by one. It must be stressed that these movements against the Britishers have not been studied collectively so far. These movements had made the 1920's and the 1930's as an important period in the political and social life of Punjab. No history of Punjab or India's freedom movement will be complete without their knowledge. Each movement played an important role to get India free.



## **CHAPTER – II**

### **THE GADAR MOVEMENT**

Gadar movement was a movement of those Punjabi immigrants who went to America and Canada in search of job opportunities but they faced many problems for settling down in those countries. Even the Government of India did not provide any help to protect them. They felt a pang of slavery that dawned upon their consciousness and they choose to act for liberating their enslaved motherland.

After the conquest of India, The Britishers used its fertile land, natural resources and human energy for the development of England rather than that of India herself. The new regime destroyed old Indian economic system and laid down a new capitalist system. The strategy which the British Government pursued for the development of agriculture increased exploitation of the small and middle peasantry in north India. Britishers took over Punjab in 1849. So Punjab could not escape from this transformation and exploitation. The economic condition of Punjab peasant had completely pitiable during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century because of enhancement of land revenue, heavy indirect

taxes, money lenders debts and fragmentation of land holdings.<sup>50</sup> The prices of land increased. Moreover, commercialization led to the transfer of land from peasants to the moneylenders. For example, 4 Lakh 13 thousand acres land stood sold during the years from 1901 to 1909 while approximately more than 2.5 crore acre land had been mortgaged.<sup>51</sup> In 1901, Government had to pass the Land Alienation Act (1901) to stop overtaking the land by non-cultivators but this law could not stop the exploitation of the peasantry.

The same century also witnessed diseases like plague, small pox, and cholera. In fact nature's fury against the inequities of the legal and economic struck the poor very badly. During the period between 1850 and 1900 twenty five famines occurred in India.<sup>52</sup>

The main reason for the wave of Indian immigration from rural areas of central Punjab to abroad started under the economic distress at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Large numbers of districts like Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur had earlier found their way to other foreign lands in search of employment.<sup>53</sup> In the beginning, the

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<sup>50</sup> Sohan Singh, Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1977, p. 33.

<sup>51</sup> Gurcharn Singh, Sainsara, *Gadar Party Da Itihas*, Desh Bhagat Yadgar Committee, Jalandhar, 1961, p.14.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, p.12.

<sup>53</sup> *Census Report of Punjab*, 1901, p. 14; quoted in H.K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 1983, p.17.

Punjabi peasants went to abroad, who formed the largest part of Indian immigrants in Canada and America. Those going outsiders were under the debt. The British Government wanted to economically satisfy the peasants. Because the Sikh soldiers had been given great credit for the suppression of the revolt of 1857 and for their bravery in several imperial wars. For this, British Government preferred to recruit the Punjabis in Indian Army. Approximately two fifths of all Indian troops during the year 1907 were drawn from the Punjab and Sikhs alone constituted 24% of the total strength.<sup>54</sup> Recruiting in army was a main income source of that time though the salary was comprised of Rs 7 to 9 per month only. Punjabis were recruited in the British army and taken to Malaya, Singapore, Penang by the British officers.<sup>55</sup> Some British imperialists took some Indians on Islands of East Indies, Burma and China to watch their business and homes by making them as the police man, watch man and gatekeeper etc.<sup>56</sup> In the Ports of Singapore, Malaya, Penang and Shanghai passengers and sailors from Canada and America were used to talk about the prosperity of their own countries. The attraction of earning more money and

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<sup>54</sup> N.G., Barrier, *Punjab Politics and the Disturbances of 1907*, Microfilm, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, pp. 60-61.

<sup>55</sup> Sohan Singh, Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p.41.

<sup>56</sup> Gurcharn Singh, Sainsara, *Gadar Party Da Itihas*, p. 17.

improve their lives drew them to Canada and America. They heard accounts of high wages paid in Canada and America and it lured the Punjabis for re-migration to those countries.

Another factor contributing to this emigratory movement was the visiting of two eminent Indians, namely Swami Vivekanand and Swami Ram Tirath to U.S.A. According to Gurcharan Singh Sainsara, Swami Vivekanand visited to U.S.A. in 1902 and Swami Ram Tirath in 1904. On their return to India they exhorted Indians to go to America for a study of American life, particularly their educational methods and policies.<sup>57</sup> Another factor which affected the immigrants was trade hostility between England and America. In the first decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century some American industrialists were attracted to the Indian market, they condemned the British policies for keeping Indian industries in backwardness and its inaction towards illiteracy in India. They started giving expression of sympathy with Indian people and invited them to visit their country for observing life in America, and Indians accepted this.<sup>58</sup> After it the New York Barrister, Myron H. Phelps, established an "Indo-American National Association" in America on September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1907. The objects of the Society were to aid Indians in securing the

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<sup>57</sup> Gurdev Singh, Deol, *The Role of The Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, Sterling Publishers, Jalandhar, 1969, pp. 39-40.

<sup>58</sup> *Proceedings Home Political (B)* November, 1910, No. 45-47 (N.A.I.).

best technical and industrial training in America, to awaken American interest in India through the press, to encourage the people of India through the press to persist in their efforts, to re-establish their industrial and economic independence and to secure self-Government; to impress upon them the necessity of unity and to arrange for entertaining and procuring traveling facilities for Indians visiting America.<sup>59</sup>

These were main reasons that inspired many Indians who went to America and Canada. When did the first Indian emigrant or emigrants reach in those countries?<sup>60</sup> According to Mackenzie King's report submitted to Dominion parliament in 1908 the first of the Indians to come were induced by the agents of Canadian Pacific Company.<sup>61</sup> Some Sikh soldiers went to England in 1897 to participate in Diamond Jubilee celebrations and passed through Canada while returning back. Some of them, however, choose to stay back. They were attracted by the progress and natural beauty of those lands. Soon, a number of Punjabis went to Canada and

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<sup>59</sup> *Proceedings Home Political (B)* October, 1907, No. 80-87 (N.A.I.).

<sup>60</sup> According to an official estimate of America and Canada the first batch of Indian immigrants arrived at an American island 'between 1895 and 1900'. According to S.A. Waiz, "An enterprising Sikh, who was of an adventurous nature and who had been to Australia, was one of the first Indian settlers to cross the pacific. He was in Hong Kong early in the 20th century and heard about Canada as the land of opportunity which fired his imagination to go and see for himself. See for detail Jagjit Singh, *Gadar Party Lehar*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 1956, p.15 and S. A. Waiz, *Indians Abroad*, Imperial Indian Citizenship Association, Bombay, II Edition, (1927) p.647.

<sup>61</sup> H.K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, p. 17.

America from Malaya, Singapore, Hong Kong and other ports like Philippines, Australia, Newzeland and Fizi etc. Large groups of these immigrants came mainly from the five central districts like Amritsar, Lahore, Jalandhar, Ludhiana and Ferozepur; the largest number was from Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur.<sup>62</sup> Over 75% of them were Sikhs and of them around 50% were ex-soldiers who had served in the British army.<sup>63</sup> In the beginning a number of immigrants Indians in Canada were less but it soon picked up.<sup>64</sup>

Mostly Indians went to abroad between 1906 and 1910. Largely, they were from Punjab. At that time, the Punjab was in a state of ferment. During this time the Land Alienation Act, the Colonization act and the Bari Doab Canal agitation were prevailing against the British rule. One led by urban Politicians was a protest against the amendment to Land Alienation Act and prosecution of the magazine Punjabee; Zamindar's fight against Colonization Bill

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<sup>62</sup> See, S.A. Waiz, *Indians Abroad*, p. 648; H.K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, p.18.

<sup>63</sup> Sohan Singh, Josh, *Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna: Life of the Founder of Gadar Party*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, p. 14.

<sup>64</sup> The first notice was in 1905 when their number was reached at 45. Then the number swelled as 387 had reached there in 1906, but in a big leap this number went up to 2124 in the following year and 2623 in 1908. Indians were physically well built but mostly unskilled workers and could take up any job offered to them. Most of them began to work in lumber mills, cleared the wild land, railway construction works, clearing of land and repair of tram lines, dairying, fruit packing and other kinds of framing. In the beginning Indian immigrants settle down in British Columbia because the climate of British Columbia was like that of Punjab with the only difference that it was less hot there. Therefore, they did not find it difficult to make themselves at homes and settle down there. In starting the Indian immigrants preferred to settle down in Canada than America because Canada was British colony and they themselves were British subjects. See for further detail, Rajni Kanta, Das, *Hindustani Workers on the Pacific Coast*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 1923, pp. 4-5.

was another; and third one aimed at the overthrow of the British rule was led by Ajit Singh.<sup>65</sup> So result of these events was a great awakening and resentment against the Britishers in India when the peasants were going outside.

With the increasing number of Indians entering Canada, an Indian had become the cynosure in Canadian eyes and there arose a demand to put restrictions on their entry. The slogan of "Canada as a whitemen's land" came into existence, the elements of racial hatred and labor competition were produced, and used as weapons to achieve this objective. However, Canadian employers were eager to engage Punjabis because they were willing to work for less and for long hours, they were also not members of trade unions. Addition to this, the Canadian fear was a certain jealousy aroused by the economic success of these stout and hard work people. According to Nand Singh Sihra there may not have been a single Indian who did not own any landed property and possess seven to eight thousand rupees.<sup>66</sup> Together the Indians living in Canada, had 'seven and a half million dollars invested in real estate and business in Canada alone.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> N.G. Barrier, *Punjab Politics and Disturbances of 1907*, pp. IV-V; H.K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, p.19.

<sup>66</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 48.

<sup>67</sup> *His interview with a correspondent, The Tribune*, 11 July 1913, and selection from the Indian Newspapers published in Punjab, Vol. XXVI, No. 28, p. 617 (N.A.I.).

White workers for equally good reasons resented the immigration of Sikhs, and began to mobilize public opinion against admitting them into Canada. Against the Chinese and Japanese they had already created anti-Asian feelings among the white Canadians. These feelings were diverted against the Indians who looked more separate from the other Asians with their turbans and beards. As a result, agitations were organized in Canada for exclusion of Indian labor and ban on their further entry to these countries was imposed. A mass meeting was held in Vancouver town hall on October 18, 1906 at which a resolution was passed against further immigration of Indians.<sup>68</sup> As a result in 1907, W.L. Mackenzie King, Deputy Minister of labor was sent to England to discuss the question of Indians in Canada with the British Government.<sup>69</sup> On the basis of his visit to England, Canadian Privy council passed the order in council No. 920. This was issued on 9 May 1907.<sup>70</sup> "According to this, the landing in Canada of immigrants who came otherwise than by a continuous journey from the country of which they were natives or citizens was prohibited through tickets purchased in that country".<sup>71</sup> In addition, by a further order-in-council of 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1908, Asiatic immigrants were required to have in their possession at least 200 dollars on

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<sup>68</sup> *His interview with a correspondent, The Tribune*, 11 July 1913, and selection from the Indian Newspapers published in Punjab, Vol. XXVI, No. 28, p. 3 (N.A.I.).

<sup>69</sup> Gurdev Singh Deol, *The Role of The Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, p. 51.

<sup>70</sup> Jagjit Singh, *Gadar Party Lehar*, p. 31.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted from Baba Gurdit Singh, *Voyage of Kamagata Maru*, First Edition, Calcutta, (n.d), p. 9.



arrival.<sup>72</sup> Both provisions of the order-in-council affected the Indians most. Because there was not any direct ship service to Canada from India at that time. The Chinese and Japanese were exempted from the 11nd provision requiring 200 dollar because under the pressure of those Governments Canadian Government had entered into special agreements.

Apart from restricting the entry of new emigrations into Canada, attempts were made to expel those Indians who had already settled down in Canada. In 1908, the Canadian Government has purposed that the Indians living in Canada should be sent Honduras Island. The Canadian Government offered them to pay their expenses and gave logic that there were better prospects for them and climate also was more suitable. And it recommended that some representatives of Indians should first be allowed to visit that colony and see things of themselves.<sup>73</sup> The Ottawa Government sent an officer Mr. W. C. Hopkinsin to Vancouver for this purpose. The purpose of the official scheme was simply to get rid of the Indians.

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<sup>72</sup> Lord Minto to Lord Morley, Calcutta, 11 March 1909, in further correspondence on '*Treatment of Asiantics*, Colonial office Records, 886/2, Quoted in H.K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, p. 34.

<sup>73</sup> J.B. Harkin to superintendent of immigration Ottawa, 20 July 1908 in India, *Commerce and industry, Emigration A, Proceedings*, May 1909, No. 13, quoted in H.K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, p. 40.

Indians accepted Government's proposal and two Indian representatives Sham Singh and Nagar Singh went to Honduras on 15 October 1908, with Mr. W. C. Hopkinsin, who was as an interpreter to study the situation there.<sup>74</sup> They returned disgusted and reported that the Honduras was full of malaria and the climate was very bad. The Indians there were bonded labourers. Hearing his report Indians refused to leave Canada and go to Honduras.<sup>75</sup> Reasons of the exclusion of Indians were first political than racial because other Asian races were not excluded, Chinese and Japanese were entering Canada in large number.

As the terms and conditions of stay in Canada worsened, the flow of immigration increased towards the U.S.A. Indians began migrating to U.S.A. at about the same time as they did to Canada. The first Indian arrived in the year 1904.<sup>76</sup> But after the Canadian authority's reaction, in 1907-08 Indians invariably preferred to go to America instead of Canada. Even the number of Indians in Canada shifted to America. Although there was less demand for labour in America. However, there was an increased racial discrimination in Canada and the weather of Pacific Ocean was more suitable for them, so Indians began to go to America instead

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<sup>74</sup> *Modren Review* August 1913, p. 142, quoted in Jagjit Singh, *Gadar Party Lehar*, p. 33.

<sup>75</sup> Chain Singh Chain (ed.) *Gadar Lehar Di Kahani Gadari Babyan Di Zubani*, Desh Bhagat Yadgar Hall, Jalandhar, 2002, p. 85.

<sup>76</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 59.

of Canada. In 1907, 1072 Indians emigrants were admitted, against 271 in 1906. In 1908 the number admitted increased to 1710.<sup>77</sup> But it is not possible to guess the number of total Indians who went to America. According to American's census report in 1913 the total number of Indians was 5000.<sup>78</sup> The officially recorded number of these Indians immigrants, who entered U.S.A. between 1899 and 1913 was 6,656.<sup>79</sup> According to Sikander Singh in 1913, there were 6700 Indians living in America,<sup>80</sup> largely in California. A few of them were students and belonged to all parts of country, but 90% of them were Punjabi Sikh farmers who worked in agriculture fields and factories.<sup>81</sup>

Soon after their arrival, however, these Indian labourers became victims of anti-oriental feelings. The Indians did not conform to the Euro- American culture. With their turbans, breads, dark complexion and different personal and social habits, they

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<sup>77</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 60.

<sup>78</sup> Jagjit Singh, *Gadar Party Lehar*, p. 16.

<sup>79</sup> Rajni Kanta, Dass *Hindustani Workers on the Pacific Coast*, p. 17.

<sup>80</sup> Sikander Singh, *Udham Singh, A Great Patriot and Martyr*, Chattar Singh and Jiwan Singh, Amritsar, 1998, p. 63.

<sup>81</sup> Indian students who went to America belonged to low middle class families. To meet their overhead expenses, they did physical work. In the U.S. they largely formed land taken on lease from American owners or workers as farm laborers picking fruits, berries or beetroot or worked as railroad laborers making or laying tracks or as labors in lumber mills. The free environment of America influenced the Indians. They were much influenced by the Irish patriots, who were also the enemies of Britishers. The Indian immigrants working in Oregon, California and Washington were beginning to develop political consciousness. See for detail, *Proceedings Home political (A)* October, 1912, No. 91. (N.A.I.), Report of Daddy's Burjor, official 'Hindu' interpreter of the U.S. Immigration Department, Government of India, Commerce and Industry Department, Emigration A, Proceedings No. 54.

somewhat naturally aroused the curiosity of the white people.<sup>82</sup> Other main accusation against Indians was that they were the cause of their reduced wages. But according to Lala Lajpat Rai there were three types of prejudices against the Indians in U.S. First there is colour prejudice, secondly there is the race prejudice; thirdly, there is the prejudice of religion.<sup>83</sup> Whenever, America faced economic crisis, her Government blamed Indians for the crisis. In 1908, a body known as the Asiatic Exclusion League organized progreames against the oriental's.<sup>84</sup> During the economic crisis (1907-08) intensified these causes and the white workers began to be attacked, looted and beaten the Asian workers. Indians faced taunting witticism everywhere as they were not free. American people particularly children passed remarks against Indian workers in the streets. They were accosted as "*Hello Hindu Slave*" in the hotels, tramcars, rail coaches, resorts and cinemas and were held in ridicule and contempt visibly and openly.<sup>85</sup>

All these incidents gave a strong jerk to Indians. They joined together for their independence. Hundred of Indians showed their willingness to work for the liberation of the motherland whole

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<sup>82</sup> According to Tundilat, while those coming from the army had taken to the European dress, the rural (sic) Punjabis generally were their own dress, some of them would go to bazaar dressed in Dhoti, H.K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, p. 25.

<sup>83</sup> Lala Lajpat Rai, *The United States of America*, Calcutta, 1919, p. 459.

<sup>84</sup> Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikhs, Vol. II*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1966, p. 174.

<sup>85</sup> Kisan Singh, *Amar Shaheed Banta Singh Shangwal*, n.p., Jalandhar, 1998, p. 62.

heartedly. They prepared themselves to sacrifice their all goods for the cause of country.<sup>86</sup>

In the beginning there were three big centers in America where Indians lived and worked. These were at California's state Sanfrancisco and around it, 2<sup>nd</sup> at the river Columbia between the states of Organ and Washington and cities of Saint John, Portland, Seattle, Astoria and the third one was at Vancouver, Victoria of Columbia and West Manchester city and the adjoining areas.<sup>87</sup>

According to Government reports in 1906, those who went to America in the end of year, Tarakh Nath Das and Ram Nath Puri (Khemkarn) had published a pamphlet '*Circular-e-Azadi*' in July 1907, which asked the Indians to boycott the English goods and leave the jobs of British police and army<sup>88</sup> and created feelings of hatred and contempt for the British rule in India.<sup>89</sup> The periodical was banned in India. In 1907, '*Khalsa*' pamphlets published in Gurmukhi, which was distributed on 10 May 1907 at the anniversary of revolt of 1857 which was celebrated at Kakstan hall in London and it propogated to the Indians to organize themselves

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<sup>86</sup> Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna, *Jeewan Sangram*, Yuvak Kendar Parkashan, Jalandhar, 1967, p. 27.

<sup>87</sup> Gurcharn Singh Sainsara, *Gadar Party Da Itihas*, p. 26.

<sup>88</sup> *Proceedings Home Political (Deposit)* November, 1908, No. 6 (N.A.I.); *Ibid*, p. 33.

<sup>89</sup> James Campbell Ker, *Political trouble in India, 1907-1917*, Government of India, Reprinted, Oriental Publishers, Delhi, 1973, pp. 227-28; Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p.70.

against the British Government to get free India.<sup>90</sup> In 1909, another pamphlet was published named under '*Maro Frangi Ko*' and was distributed. It was sent it to India.<sup>91</sup> After that another pamphlet '*Bhai Band*' was published which touched upon the racial discrimination with Indians in Canada and America. All these papers called upon the Indians to organize and fight for their democratic and civic rights and dignity of mankind. In California at Stockton, Bhai Jawala Singh, Santokh Singh, Washaka Singh and Hazara Singh jointly took Hotelwill farm at lease. Here, they gave jobs or works to Indians in distress and helped them in that way. It became the main and famous centre of the Indian immigrants.

A large number of Indian labourers in America and Canada were Sikhs. Approximately among the immigrants, 90% were Sikhs<sup>92</sup> and many of them were influenced by the Singh Sabha movement. They were used to meet together every Sunday for congregational prayers, so the earliest organization was set up to build Gurdwaras.<sup>93</sup> Bhai Arjan Singh a 'venerated soul' established the first Gurdwara near Port Moody.<sup>94</sup> In 1907, 'Khalsa Diwan Society' was established in Vancouver with branches at Victoria,

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<sup>90</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (A) February, 1909, No. 204 (N.A.I.).*

<sup>91</sup> Gurcharn Singh Sainsara, *Gadar Party Da Itihas*, p. 33.

<sup>92</sup> *Proceedings Home Political (A) October, 1912 No. 91 (N.A.I.).*

<sup>93</sup> Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikhs, Vol. II*, p.174.

<sup>94</sup> H. K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, p. 44.

Abbotsford, New Westminster, Fraser mill, Duncan Coombs and Ocean Falls.<sup>95</sup> This society built a Gurdwara in Vancouver by spending nearly 25,000 dollars.<sup>96</sup> It was also a time when Sh. Jawala Singh and Sant Washaka Singh established the 'Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society' in America and built a Gurdwara in Stockton. Though these societies were established by the Sikhs yet Hindus and Muslims were also part of these organizations. They discussed their grievances and problems in these meetings. These Gurdwaras became the center of religious activities of the Indians but soon it became centers for political work as well.

A few of the other revolutionary youths happened to be in Vancouver at the end of 1907, made a centre of their activity. Among them Tarak Nath Das, Surendre Bose, G.D. Kumar and Harnam Singh Sahri were the main. Tarak Nath Das was a Bengali who was a student at one of the colleges in Seattle and had come to Vancouver at the end of 1907 as an interpreter in the U.S. immigration office.<sup>97</sup> On a protest from Canada Government about his attack on 'British Prestige' Das was dismissed from his job in April 1908.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikhs, Vol. II*, p. 174.

<sup>96</sup> Jagjit Singh, *Gadar Party Lehar*, p. 18.

<sup>97</sup> H.K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, p. 47

<sup>98</sup> See also *A Reassessment : Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. XLVIII, No. 1 (February, 1979) p. 71 quoted in *Ibid*.

Tarak Nath Das had started publishing from April 1908, a few days before he was dismissed from his job, an eight page periodical, '*Free Hindustan*' in English language first from Vancouver later from Seattle and New York (U.S.).<sup>99</sup> This paper aimed at political education for a revolution among Indians. Tarak Nath Das left for Seattle continuing the publication of his paper from there. In 1909, the Hindustan Association was formed at Vancouver. Bhai Bhag Singh was the president of this Association, G.D. Kumar was the secretary and Bhai Balwant Singh was the treasurer.<sup>100</sup>

The rise of the political struggle of Indians in the American islands and in Canada took place. The real cause of this struggle was race or discrimination based on colour of skin. But it also expressed itself through other forms.

The Indians decided to seek help from India and England. A deputation to the Government of Canada, England and India was sent to make the Governments and people aware of their problems.

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<sup>99</sup> *Proceedings Home political (B)* November, 1908 No. 63-70, and (B) January, 1915, No. 278-82 (N.A.I.); also H.K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, p.48

<sup>100</sup> The association worked in close liaison with the Khalsa Diwan Society. Following the pettren of Shyamji Krikan Varma's 'India House' at Highgate in London, Kumar set up a 'Swadesh Sewak Home' in Vancouver and started publishing in 1910 a Gurmukhi paper Swadesh Sewak. Its editor was G.D. Kumar. But in May 1911, this society split into many a part due to internal conflicts among its leaders. Soon after these incidents, Kumar left Canada which meant the closure of Swadesh Sewak home and end of his paper, and the Hindustan Association. After leaving Canada, Kumar joined Tarak Nath Das at Seattle and 'United India House' was set up there in the last of 1910 with Das as its secretary. It reported that about 25 laborers met at the United India House every Sunday where lectures were given by Das and other Bengali students. For further details see, *Proceedings Home Political (B)* July 1910, No. 196-97, (B) April 1912, No. 82 and (B) August 1910, No. 10-17 (N.A.I.) and Gurcharan Singh Sainsara, *Gadar Party Da Itihas*, pp.67-68.



The Gurdwara of Vancouver became a centre of movement. In December 1911, United India League was established by replacing Hindustan Association to make the movement free from communal aspects. Hussan Rahim was its president and Raja Singh was its secretary. In England, this league published the paper 'Hindustan'.<sup>101</sup> On 14 June 1913 another newspaper named '*Sansar*' came out. Its editor was Dr. Sunder Singh.<sup>102</sup> The center of United India League was also Gurdwara of Vancouver. Khalsa Diwan Society and United India League came close and co-operated with each other. Their activities were related to agitation against the practical ban imposed on the entry of fresh Indians and unifying the families of those who were already residents in Canada. Besides propaganda papers, public meetings were held to collect funds for the struggle against the ban on the entry of Indians in Canada.

During the progress of political awareness among the immigrants, many incidents took place that condemned the British exploitation of India. As a consequence, the executive committee of the Sikh Temple of Vancouver held a meeting on 3 October 1909. In the assembly of many Sikh devotees one Sardar Natha Singh

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<sup>101</sup> Gurcharan Singh Sainsara, *Gadar Party Da Itihas*, p. 68.

<sup>102</sup> Jagjit Singh, *Gadar Party Lehar*, p. 34.

stood up and started to explain the miserable condition of Indians in the homeland and abroad countries and condemned the British exploitation of India and resolved; "No member of the executive committee of the Sikh temple should wear any kind of medals, buttons, uniforms which may signify that the position of the party wearing the article is nothing but of a slave to the British supremacy".<sup>103</sup>

By way of consolidating their position the Indians decided to bring their families to Canada under the leadership of Khalsa Diwan Society and United India League (Hindustan Association). Keeping this purpose in focus the president of Khalsa Diwan society, Bhai Bhag Singh and Bhai Balwant Singh granthi went to Punjab to bring their families in Canada. On 17 May 1911 Bhai Bhag Singh and Bhai Balwant Singh while in Calcutta sent a telegram to the Viceroy of India complaining that the shipping company of Calcutta was not issuing them the direct tickets to Canada. In reply, the Indian Government expressed their helplessness and gave a suggestion that they should seek permission directly from the Canadian Government.<sup>104</sup> But the Canadian Government also did not give any positive response to

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<sup>103</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (B)* February, 1910, No. 120-27 (N.A.I.) and see also *Hindustan*, September- October, 1909.

<sup>104</sup> Gurcharan Singh Sainsara, *Gadar Party Da Itihas*, p. 43.

their telegram and they went to Hong Kong and from where they traveled in a ship which was going to San Francisco through Canada. But when they arrived at Vancouver authorities did not allow their families to enter in Canada. Indians tried every legal way to acquire entrance to Canada but the Canadian Government was not ready to grant any permission. Finally, the issue was temporarily settled when the Indian families were allowed to enter Canada by giving the security and they also went to the court to legalize their claim. After it Khalsa Diwan Society and United India League met together and decided to send a deputation to Ottawa Government on 15 December 1911 to get their grievance redressed.<sup>105</sup> They elected four delegates for this purpose. They were Professor Teja Singh, Rev. L. W. Hall, a missionary, and a great friend of the Indian cause, S. Raja Singh and Dr. Sunder Singh.<sup>106</sup> The demands made by this deputation was that the Indians should be permitted to bring their families in Canada and the terms and conditions to enter in Canada should be equal for all irrespective of the nationality<sup>107</sup>. The representation was very important as it expressed complete loyalty to British rule and reminded the Ottawa Government of the promises made by Queen

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<sup>105</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 96.

<sup>106</sup> Gurcharan Singh Sainsara, *Gadar Party Da Itihas*, p. 54.

<sup>107</sup> *Proceedings Home political (B)* June, 1913, No. 5-17 (N.A.I.).

Victoria, King Edward and King George that India "is an integral part of our empire, that all their subjects shall be treated alike".<sup>108</sup> In spite of all this the whole move proved to be a failure.

Waiting for more than a year the Indians of Canada got together under the leadership of the Khalsa Diwan Society and United India League in a meeting which was held in the Dominion Hall in February 1913 <sup>109</sup> and in which it was decided that one more deputation would be sent to meet the Colonial secretary in London and the Viceroy of India in Delhi. The delegation consisting of both the Canadian and American immigrants' interests, because Nand Singh Sihra was taken on the delegation on the recommendation of Bhai Jawala Singh to represent Indians in America. Bhai Balwant Singh, the head priest and Narain Singh another official of Vancouver Gurdwara were elected two representatives from Canadian immigrants.<sup>110</sup>

On 14 March 1913 the deputation left for England<sup>111</sup> and reached London in the first week of April.<sup>112</sup> After the arrival of this deputation in England, it requested permission to Colonial secretary Mr. Lawis Harcourt but he refused to meet the

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<sup>108</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 96.

<sup>109</sup> H.K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, p. 55

<sup>110</sup> Gurcharan Singh Sainsara, *Gadar Party Da Itihas*, p. 59.

<sup>111</sup> Bhagat Singh Bilga, *Gadar Lehar De Unfole Varke*, Desh Bhagat Yadgar Hall, Jalandar, 1989, p.25.

<sup>112</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p.116.

deputation.<sup>113</sup> Nevertheless they held public meetings in Cambridge and London and explained the difficulties encountered by them in their host Countries. In England the deputation had personally meetings with Sir William Vnderburn, Sir Henry Kotten, Sir Manchar Ji Bhawnagri, Sir K.G. Gupta, another minister of Colonial department and some members of parliament in England.<sup>114</sup> In these meetings many resolutions supporting the deputationists were passed and were sent to various newspapers. They waited in vain for more than a month in London for a meeting with the Colonial Secretary and then proceeded to India.<sup>115</sup> After this the deputation came back to India. On reaching India it sought the support of the India Press and Political organizations and met the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab and Governor- General of India.<sup>116</sup> The deputation met O' Dwyer the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab and Lord Harding, the viceroy of India. The delegation toured most of Northern India and addressed mass meetings in big cities. A big meeting was held in Bradlaugh Hall on 18 August. Nand Singh Sihra and Balwant Singh placed the grievances of the Indian immigrants in Canada before the audience in moving terms.

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<sup>113</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna; Life of the founder of Gadar Party*, p.21.

<sup>114</sup> Jagjit Singh, *Gadar Party Lehar*, p.35.

<sup>115</sup> F.C. Isomonger and J. Slattery, *An Account of the Gadar Conspiracy Report 1913-15*, Superintendent of Government Printing press, Lahore, 1919, p.3.

<sup>116</sup> H.K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, p.56.

Sir P.C. Chatterjee proposed a resolution requesting the Indian Government to remove the grievances of their nationals in Canada. The Muslim League also joined for these demands. But the efforts made by this deputation went in vain as it exercised no influence over the attitude of British Government. Finally, this deputation went back with misplaced hopes about their support and their roles in fighting against the British subsequent events were to show otherwise.<sup>117</sup> But even being a failure it made the people of India aware about the struggle that was going on in other Countries.

The situation was ripe now to take the next step. Everybody was feeling the necessity of it. For this purpose Indian immigrants were forming various organizations and propagating against the British Government. The arrival of Gyani Bhagwan Singh in Vancouver in the end of 1912 or in the beginning of 1913 gave a real spurt to a revolutionary political movement in Canada. He had been a Sikh (granthi) priest in the Gurdwara at Perak in the Federated Malaya states and at Hong Kong and was an orator of great merit.<sup>118</sup> At the same time Lala Har Dayal reached Sanfrancisco as he had arrived in U.S.A in February 1911.<sup>119</sup> He

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<sup>117</sup> Ram Singh Majitha, *Hindustan Di Azadi Di Larai Wich Punjab*, Punjab State Freedom Fighter Organization, Moga, n.d., p. 106.

<sup>118</sup> H.K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, p. 58.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*, p.62.

had seen many countries before his arrival in America. In February 1912 he was appointed professor of Indian Philosophy and Sanskrit at Leyland Stanford University. But in September of the same year he resigned his post and returned to Barkeley to take up revolutionary work.<sup>120</sup> After arriving at Sanfrancisco he delivered lectures on atheism and organized the Indians.

Already, there were groups of Indians who were working on different lines in different parts of America and Canada. Soon St. John (Near Portland, Oregon) and Seattle (Washington) became centers of political activities. At St. John, Pandit Kanshi Ram was working as a mate of group of about twenty Indian workers in a lumber mill. Bhai Harnam Singh Tundilat, Bhai Udham Singh, Shri Ram Rakha and Bhai Isher Singh were similarly employed in other lumber mills.<sup>121</sup> They held meetings and discussion every Sunday on Indians in abroad. In July 1912, the Indian workers in different saw mills met in Portland and decided to set up an organization called the 'Pacific Coast Hindi Association'. To open its office in a rented house in Portland Bhai Sohan Singh Bhakna was elected its president, Babu G.D. Kumar its general secretary and Pandit

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<sup>120</sup> James Campbell Ker, *Political trouble in India 1907-1917*, Oriental Publishers, Delhi, 1973, p. 107; Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p.165.

<sup>121</sup> Gurdev Singh Deol, *The Role of The Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, p.54.

Kanshi Ram its treasurer.<sup>122</sup> It was also decided to start a weekly newspaper named '*Hindustan*' in Urdu.

In the winter of 1912 the Monarak mill got closed down for a month. Bhai Sohan Singh Bhakna and Udham Singh Kasel went to Bhai Kesar Singh Thatgarh in Astoria. Afterwards the 'Pacific Coast of Hindi Association' was established there. Bhai Kesar Singh was elected as the president, Munshi Ram was as a treasure, this organization was made branch of Portland Association.<sup>123</sup>

On every Sunday, the meetings of 'Pacific Coast of Hindi Association' were being held. After forth or fifth meeting, Sh. G.D.Kumar got ill and it led to a discontinuity in the publication of the '*Hindustan*' and holding of meetings. In these days, Lala Thakur Das was in Portland and he advised the president of the 'Pacific Coast Hindi Association', Sohan Singh Bhakna that he should send for Lala Hardayal from California.<sup>124</sup> Lala Hardayal proposed that a

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<sup>122</sup> *Statement of Bhai Harnam Singh Kotlanaudh Singh in Punjabi*, (unpublished), pp.19-20, quoted in Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 158.

<sup>123</sup> Gurdev Singh Deol, *The Role of The Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, p. 56-57 and *statements of Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna and Harnam Singh Tundilat Unpublished Account of Gadar Party*; answer to questions raised by the Secretary of the Gadar Party History Committee.

<sup>124</sup> He wrote a letter to Lala Hardayal and he agreed to come along with Bhai Parmanand Lahori, who was a self-exiled Arya missionary from Lahore. They reached St. John on 25th March 1913. On 25 March 1913 at about 9 p.m. some Indians worker gathered at Pandit Kanshi Ram's house and met Lala Hardayal and Bhai Parmanand. According to 'Bhakna' and 'Tundilat', Parmanand suggested that students should be invited from India by offering scholarships and sent back trained fully in political work because India could not attain freedom without the help of educated people. But the proposal was rejected. Lala Hardayal gave advice to the people present in the meeting that it should work on revolutionary lines to make India free. For further details see, Sohan Singh Josh, *Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna: Life of the Founder of the Gadar Party*, p. 26 ;H.K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, p. 69 and Bhai Parmanand, *The Story of my life* (English rendering), the central Hindu Yuvak Sabha, Lahore (1934), p.62, quoted in Gurdev Singh Deol, *The Role of The Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, p. 57



weekly paper named "Gadar" in Urdu as well as in Punjabi be started to preach revolutionary ideas among Indians in order to make preparation for freeing India from British imperialism. The headquarter of the Gadar party was to be called "Yuganter Ashram" which was to be established at Sanfrancisco.<sup>125</sup> The proposal of Hardayal was accepted by the other members.

It was planned also that centers of Indian workers along the river Columbia be visited and organized for accomplishing the purpose. For the establishment of central organization several meetings were held at various places. At each of these places, the whole scheme was explained by Lala Hardayal and three office-bearers were elected- president, secretary and treasurer. For this purpose, on 21<sup>st</sup> April 1913 a meeting was held at the centre of Bhai Kesar Singh's lumber mill in Astoria. In which leaders of other branches also participated.<sup>126</sup> The meeting was addressed by Lala Hardayal and other prominent leaders. By this meeting it was decided to set up an organization. The organization was named as "Hindi Association of the Pacific Coast" in short the 'Hindi Pacific Association'.<sup>127</sup> A building was acquired in Wood Street and named

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<sup>125</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 159.

<sup>126</sup> Gurcharan Singh Sainsara, *Gadar Party Da Itihas*, p. 90 ; F.C. Isomonger and J. Slattery, *An Account of the Gadar Conspiracy Report 1913-15*, p. 90 and see also Brown, Emily C. Hardayal, *Hindu Revolutionary and Rationalist*, Monohar Book Service, New Delhi, 1975, pp. 138-39.

<sup>127</sup> Gurdev Singh Deol, *The Role of The Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, p. 60.

the 'Yuganter Ashram'.<sup>128</sup> The association decided to issue a weekly paper "the Gadar" which would be published in Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi and other languages. Later this association came to be known as the Hindustan Gadar Party. Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna was the first president of this organization, Lala Hardayal was its secretary; Kesar Singh Thathgarh was vice-president, Pandit Kanshi Ram was treasurer and Harnam Singh assistant treasurer.<sup>129</sup> Sohan Singh Bhakna, Hardayal and Kanshi Ram were elected members of the commission to carry on confidential and secret work of the party.<sup>130</sup>

In various countries branches were opened by Hindi Association of Pacific Coast. In the countries, other than the British ruled, they were working openly but in the British ruled countries, these were working underground. Asian Headquarter was at Thailand (Bangkok). Other branches were at Panama, Argentina, Brazil, Manila, Shanghai, Japan, Italy, France, Germany,

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<sup>128</sup> Khushwant Singh and Satinder Singh, *Gadar 1915- India's First Armed Revolution*, RandK Publishing House, New Delhi, New Delhi, 1966, p. 19

<sup>129</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 161

<sup>130</sup> It was further decided that the members of the Party should work with a sense of sacrifice and economy. The party workers working in the office were to be without pay only to be given free clothes and food. The objectives of the Gadar movement was to make India free from Britishers, by violent means, to establish a system of self Government in India based on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity and to work for a social order securing the greatest good of the greatest number. The slogan of this organization was "Bande Matram" See for details, *Proceedings Home Political*, (A) June 1914, No. 43-45 (N.A.I.); Bhagat Singh Bilga, *Gadar Lehar De Unfole Varke*, p. 29 and Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 161.

Afghanistan, South Africa, London, Canada, Australia, Ethiopia, Singapore, and Hong Kong.<sup>131</sup>

After the party was formed, the work did not start immediately. The workers went back to their jobs and Lala Hardayal left for California. For some time the paper was also not published. Sohan Singh Bhakna wrote to secretary (Lala Hardayal) asking for reasons of delay in publishing the paper. He replied that he was not keeping good health and a new man may be elected in his place.<sup>132</sup>

The first issue of the paper *Gadar* stated the objectives of the party in the following terms

*"Today, there begins in foreign lands, but in our country's language, a war against the British Raj... What is our name? Gadar. What is our work? Gadar. Where will Gadar break out? in India. The time will soon come when rifles and blood will take the place of pen and ink."*<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Wadhawa Singh, *Introduction to the Sikh Temple*, 1983, p. 89.

<sup>132</sup> Ultimately, the first issue of the Urdu *Gadar* Newspaper published on 1 November 1913 and later many other languages the largest issue was in Gurmukhi. Lala Hardayal was its editor. It was cyclostyled by Kartar Singh Sarabha and Raghbar Dayal Gupta. After some time Harnam Singh, Pandit Jagat Ram, Prithvi Singh, Amer Singh, Pooran Singh, Sohan Lal Pathak Ram Chand etc. joined the press and *Gadar* staff. The starting of *Gadar* Newspaper was a big event in the history of freedom struggle in India. It was a clarion call for revolution. See in details, *Proceedings Home Political*, (A), January 1914, No. 42-43.(N.A.I.); *Lahore Conspiracy Case No. 7*, Judgement dated the 13th September 1915 Part III, A (1) The Beginning of Conspiracy and war p.4; *Proceedings Home political*, (A), October 1915, No. 91 (N.A.I.); and Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 161.

<sup>133</sup> *Proceedings Home Political (Deposit)* October, 1915, No. 43 (N.A.I.) and *Gadar*, November 1, 1913; quoted in Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikhs, Vol. II*, p. 177.

The paper was being sent free of charge to anybody who wanted it. The newspaper was being sent in bundles among Indian settlers in Canada, Japan, the Philippines, Hong Kong, China the Malaya States, Singapore, British Guiana, Trinidad, the Honduras, South and East Africa- infact in every country in the world where there were Indians. Thousands of copies were also sent to India.<sup>134</sup>

The newspaper read in groups and by individuals and whenever, it was received and read, there arose skeleton organizations and spontaneous work began for the freedom movement of India. Before the starting of Gadar Newspaper, other papers outside India were also carrying an agitation and their readers were doing organizational work openly or secretly on a small scale. The main purpose of Gadar paper was to appeal to the Indian people and soldiers of the British Army whenever they were and influence them to revolt against the British rule.<sup>135</sup>

Wherever, this paper reached it brought a revolutionary transformation in the minds of overseas Indians. This instilled a revolutionary spirit in Indians abroad and prepared them for armed national revolution for achieving independence. The demand for Gadar increased every day.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (A) Secret, September, 1914, No. 210 (N.A.I.)* and Khushwant Singh and Satinder Singh, *Ghadar 1915- India's First Armed Revolution*, p. 20.

<sup>135</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p.170.

<sup>136</sup> Gurcharan Singh Sainsara, *Gadar Party Da Itihas*, p.97.

The Gadar spread the ideas among Indian immigrants and they started to organize themselves under the flag of the Gadar. Gurdwaras in Canada, U.S.A. Shanghai, Hong Kong and Singapore became the centers where Gadar poems were recited and discussions were held on political problems after the evening prayers.<sup>137</sup> The Government was seizing the copies under the sea customs act and confiscating them not only in India but in all its colonies. But Government did not get success completely in this even in India up to January 1914.<sup>138</sup> Apart from the Gadar, Hindi Association published some other literature in the form of booklets that had been issued from time to time.<sup>139</sup>

The Gadar Party (Hindi association of Pacific coast) progressed very well during the little period and its political influence was increasing day by day. More and more workers were joining the Gadar Movement and contributing liberally towards its funds to advance the revolutionary cause. The revolutionary awakening among the Indians disturbed the British authority very much. The authority thought the real man behind these

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<sup>137</sup> Khushwant Singh, and Satinder Singh, *Ghadar 1915- India's First Armed Revolution*, p.21

<sup>138</sup> F.C. Isomonger and J. Slattery, *An Account of the Gadar Conspiracy Report 1913-15*, p. 17; Jagjit Singh, *Gadar Party Lehar*, p.59.

<sup>139</sup> The Yugantar Ashram published a certain number of pamphlets and leaflets. The most important of these were; (I) *Gadar di Goonj*, (II) *Ilan-I-Jang*, (III) *Naya Zamana*, (VI) *The Balance Sheet of British Rule in India*. For details see, F.C. Isomonger and J. Slattery, *An Account of the Gadar Conspiracy Report 1913 -15*, p.33

revolutionary activities was only Hardayal who was running the party. If he was removed from the scene, things would settle down to normally they thought. "Take off the head and the body will fall to the ground" that was its philosophy they maintained.<sup>140</sup> For this purpose the British authorities pressurized the American authorities to issue a warrant against Hardayal to deport him from U.S.A. The blame on Hardayal was that he delivered a lecture against the Russian tsar about three years ago that was dug up by the authorities to blame under the U.S.A. law.<sup>141</sup> On the base of this blame Lala Hardayal was arrested by the U.S. authorities on 25 March<sup>142</sup> and then was released on a bail of \$ 1000 and ordered to appear before a court on 10 April 1914.<sup>143</sup>

Leaders of Hindi association called a meeting and discussed the Hardayal's case. They all advised that Hardayal should leave America as there might be possibility of his deportation or handing him over to the British Government. The central committee of the party directed that he should jump bail and go to Switzerland.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 178.

<sup>141</sup> Gurcharan Singh Sainsara, *Gadar Party Da Itihas*, p. 104.

<sup>142</sup> H.K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, p. 86.

<sup>143</sup> *Harnam Singh Kotla's Statement*, quoted in Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 181.

<sup>144</sup> *Hindustani*- April 1914, edition I, Paper No, 4, p.2 ; quoted in Gurcharan Singh Sainsara, *Gadar Party Da Itihas*, p. 104.

After the departure of Lala Hardayal, Bhai Santokh Singh took his place. He was appointed as the General Secretary of the party. He was an intelligent, educated and a great revolutionary. Through him the Gadar Party took on a real revolutionary role. The commission of three members was also reformed by Sohan Singh Bhakna consisting of himself Santokh Singh and Kanshi Ram. Kanshi Ram was posted as incharge of Gadar press. Harnam Singh Kotla, Kartar Singh Sarabha, Student Niranjn Das were appointed on the editorial board of the Gadar weekly.<sup>145</sup> They did not feel any difficulty at the work and felt no vacuum in the leadership. The work of the party began with a new speed and sweep.<sup>146</sup> According to the Baba Sohan Singh, leadership became more collective and democratic after Hardayal's disappearance.

The absence of Hardayal from Sanfrancisco did not affect the work of party. Instead, the arrest and deportation of Hardayal gave fresh incentive to the revolutionary movement. A message of defiance to the British Government which was believed to have been primary concern in the matter was published in the next issue of the Gadar.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> *Harnam Singh's Statement*, pp. 61-63, quoted in Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p.183.

<sup>146</sup> Heritage No. 4, p.29, Harnam Singh's statement, pp. 62-63.

<sup>147</sup> F.C. Isomonger and J. Slattery, *An Account of the Gadar Conspiracy Report 1913-15*, p. 49.

Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna gave up his job and came to devote his whole time for the party work at centre. Maulvi Barkatuallh from Japan and Bhagwan Singh from Phillippines also came to join the Ashram, Sham Lal Pathak, Pritihvi Singh, Kartar Singh Sarabha, Harnam Singh and other inmates worked zealously in the press and carried on other activities of the Ashram.<sup>148</sup> For the realization of their objectives, the Gadrities started activities. The Gadar party decided upon a programme of giving military training to Indian immigrants in the U.S.A. especially Indian students. The role marked out for the students in the plans of the Gadar party was considered quite important.<sup>149</sup> The party sends the students to join military courses and learnt the skill and tactics of war. For this Jatindra Nath Lahori went to Chicago University for learning the technique of bomb making and to destroy the roads, railway lines and bridges. D. Chenchiah joined the college of agriculture, Logan, where he joined the cadre course and learnt the art of guerrilla war.<sup>150</sup>

Bhai Balwant Singh the second and Banta Singh Sanghwal were sent to Punjab to provide information about the circumstances of Punjab for starting the work there. Kartar Singh

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<sup>148</sup> Bhagat Singh Bilga, *Gadar Lehar De Unfole Varke*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>149</sup> Gurdev Singh Deol, *The Role of The Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, p. 79.

<sup>150</sup> Gurcharan Singh Sainsara, *Gadar Party Da Itihas*, p.110.



Sarabha was sent to East Coast of America to learn the flying of planes. He entered in a company of aeroplanes of New York. He finished his work.<sup>151</sup> Master Udham Singh Kasel, who had worked in the artillery side in Hong Kong army and learnt the art of using artillery, was fixed to teach a group in the use of different kinds of weapons.<sup>152</sup> Baba Harnam Singh of Kotla Naudh Singh village began to learn how to make a bomb from a British friend. While he was doing this, a bomb burst in his hand and he lost one of his arms and after that he comes to be known as Tundilat.<sup>153</sup> These trained youth were to be sent India where they were to work among the troops, preparing them for revolt up to the outbreak of the world war. At the end of 1913, fifty students and intellectuals had been sent by Hardayal and his comrades to work and lay the base for future activity in India.<sup>154</sup> The main objectives of them were the seduction of Indian troops of young students and villagers, the founding of secret societies, the propagation of seditious literature, and union with foreign enemies of the British, the procuring of arms, the manufacture of bombs etc.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> *Statement of Baba Harnam Singh Tundilat and Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna*, quoted in Gurcharan Singh Sainsara, *Gadar Party Da Itihas*, p. 110.

<sup>152</sup> S.N.Aggarwal, *Heroes of Cellular Jail*, Punjabi University Patiala, 1995, p. 127.

<sup>153</sup> *Statements of Baba Harnam Singh Tundilat and Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna*, quoted in Gurcharan Singh Sainsara, *Gadar Party Da Itihas*, p.111.

<sup>154</sup> Bhagat Singh Bilga, *Gadar Lehar De Unfole Varke*, p. 49.

<sup>155</sup> Gurdev Singh Deol, *The Role of The Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, p.81.

The Gadar Party progressed very well day by day. Then an incident took place which drew the attention of the world to the plight of Indian immigrants in Canada; this was the arrival of the Kamagata Maru ship in Canadian waters.

Although, the voyage of the Kamagata Maru was not indirect relationship with Gadar movement. But Komagata Maru voyage was a continuation of the struggle of the Indian residents in America and Canada to travel to and reside in any part of the British Empire. Because immigration laws were passed by the Canadian Government to prevent Asiatics from entering Canada which affected the Indians most. The situation took a more serious turn, when on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 1913 fifty six Indians arrived at Victoria on S.S. Panama Maru ship of the Osaka Shosen Kaisha (Victoria). Investigation by the immigration officials was made in Camera on board of the Panama Maru. Only seventeen were allowed to land, though all of them had come by the most direct route. Again 39 deportations were issued.<sup>156</sup> To fulfill the immigration restriction of Canadian Government, a ship took on charter (lease) by Gurdit Singh, which was named as the Kamagata Maru. Gurdit Singh thought of jumping the restriction of

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<sup>156</sup> Gurdev Singh Deol, *The Role of The Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, p. 86.

continuous journey clause by chartering a special ship that would take Indian emigrants from Calcutta to Vancouver by direct tickets. His stated objective was to help his compatriots, for 'I could not bear the troubles of those peoples' and to serve what he described as his 'trade interests' as well.

The Komagata Maru Ship was hired on a time-charter and started off from Hong Kong on 4 April 1914 with 105 passengers on board. During the journey other passengers joined at Shanghai, Moje and Yokohama.<sup>157</sup> When it reached Victoria on 23 May, it had on board 376 passengers. Except for 21 Punjabi Muslims, practically all of them were Sikhs.<sup>158</sup> During the journey few leading revolutionaries of Gadar orientation met Gurdit Singh. On the way they were supplied with copies of the Gadar at various ports. Among these revolutionaries were Bhagwan Singh, Maulvi Barkatuallah and Balwant Singh, they were active members of Gadar movement.<sup>159</sup> When the ship arrived in Vancouver, where a whirlwind campaign was already afoot to deport them back to Hong Kong.<sup>160</sup> No Punjabi or Sikh was allowed to go near the Komagata Maru or to talk to the passengers abroad and enquire of them if they could be helped in any way.

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<sup>157</sup> Gurdev Singh Deol, *The Role of The Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>158</sup> F.C. Isomonger and J. Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadar Conspiracy Report 1913-15*, p. 36.

<sup>159</sup> Gurdev Singh Deol, *The Role of The Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, p. 89.

<sup>160</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party, A Short History*, p. 131.

Leading Indians in Vancouver formed a 'Shore committee', with Hussain Rahim, Sohan Lal Pathak and Balwant Singh as leaders for the protection of passengers. Funds were raised and protest meetings held both in Canada and the U.S.A. Sikh labourers in Canada raised \$ 22,000 to pay for the charter. They appealed to the Canadian people and Government for justice, sent telegrams to India and England. At one of the meetings held at Dominion Hall in Vancouver, it was resolved that if the passengers of ship were not allowed to land they should follow them to India and start the rebellion with their help.<sup>161</sup>

The "Shore Committee" of Vancouver Sikhs took the case of the Kamagata Maru to court. Strict watch was kept by the Government boats all around the ship. By name Even Bird, the lawyer of Indians was not allowed to see and take counsel with his clients. On 7<sup>th</sup> July the full bench of the Supreme Court gave its judgment that the new order in council had no authority to interfere with the decisions of the immigration department.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (B)* May 1917, No. 342- 343, p. 149 (N.A.I.).

<sup>162</sup> That finished their fond hopes of entry to the land of their dreams. The next step was to order the Kamagata Maru to clear itself out of Canadian waters. But the angry passengers took control of the ship from its Japanese captain and after some time they agreed to leave on the condition that they should be supplied with provisions for the return journey. But according to Government order, an armed Canadian police force of 120 men, accompanied by Mr. Stevens, M.P., aboard the tug-boat Sea Lion tried to take over the Kamagata Maru. The passengers beat back the police men by rock coal and Staves made out of driftwood. After its failure on the night of July 21, the Rainbow 'worship' with one hundred and fifty blue jackets on the board slipped into the Burrard inlet and dropped anchor alongside the Kamagata Maru. Next morning when the passengers woke up, they found the Rainbow's two six inch and six 4 inch guns trained on them. See for details also, Gurdit Singh, *Zulmi Katha*, Gurmukhi, Bhai Rai Singh, Calcutta, n.d., pp. 80-105; Khushwant Singh and Satinder Singh, *Ghadar 1915- India's First Armed Revolution*, p. 28 and Gurdit Singh, *Voyage of Kamagata Maru*, First edition, Calcutta, n.d., p. 107.

The commander of the force sent a message, "Leave our Shore, you uninvited Indians or we fire". The reply of the passengers was "if Canada Government will allow us to provisions the ship then we will go, otherwise fire we prefer death than on the high Seas".<sup>163</sup> The situation in the city of Vancouver was very tense and distraught. There was great excitement and tension between the Hindus on one side and the white Canadians on the other. During these circumstances Canadian Indian assembled in Gurdwara at Vancouver on the evening of the 21st July, 1914, passed a resolution and took a solemn vow, that if the ship was fired at, they would set fire to the city of Vancouver.<sup>164</sup> No passengers were allowed to land at places from where they had boarded it earlier. The Indian Government felt that 'this temper had been greatly aggravated by direct revolutionary influences'.<sup>165</sup> The Indians at Vancouver had made great efforts to supply them with some pistols and ammunition abroad. But their efforts had not

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<sup>163</sup> Gurdit Singh, *Voyage of Kamagata Maru*, First edition, Calcutta, n.d., p. 108

<sup>164</sup> After this decision of the Indians, the Canadian Government and officials changed their mind and approached the Hindus on shore to get their help to persuade the Kamagata Maru passengers to leave the harbor peacefully and go back. On the 22nd of July, the steamer was fully provisioned. After remaining for two months in Canadian waters the Kamagata Maru started on its return Voyage on the morning of 23 July 1914. Its passengers were by this time in a bad temper as most of them had staked all their possessions on this venture. The Ship had not yet touched Yokohama when the world war broke out, and the British Government of India had passed the ingress 'ordinance empowering itself to restrict the liberty of anyone entering India after September 5, 1914'. For further details see, *Proceedings Home Political, (A)*, November, 1914, No. 97-177 (N.A.I.); Gurdev Singh Deol, *The Role of The Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, p. 93 and Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 152.

<sup>165</sup> *Sedition Committee Report*, p. 4; H.K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, p. 92.

succeeded. Gyani Bhagwan Singh states that he had brought 270 pistols with 500 cartridges each from the U.S.A. in order to deliver to members of the party traveling by the Kamagata Maru in Japan. The pistols were delivered through Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna at Yokohama.<sup>166</sup> In Yokohama, Gurdit Singh received a letter from Hong Kong's Government that no passengers were allowed to land at Hong Kong and Singapore. The ship reached Kobe on 21 August where it got fresh provisions for the passenger. Here Gurdit Singh warned his passengers not to have anything's objectionable on them. He urged upon them to throw overboard any revolutionary literature or weapons they were carrying with them because searches were likely to be made in Calcutta and they should be prepared.<sup>167</sup> The ship left Kobe and reached Calcutta via Singapore, where it reached on the night of 29<sup>th</sup> September. The police searched the ship and the passengers but found no arms. From here the passengers were ordered to board a train which was to carry them to Punjab. The Sikhs refused to obey and left the ship in a procession, carrying the 'Guru Granth' in their midst. Provocation by the police resulted in fracas at Budge-Budge and

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<sup>166</sup> *Interview by the writer with Gyani Bhagwan Singh of village and post office Wrang District Amritsar, Punjab dated the 18th March, 1961, quoted in Gurdev Singh Deol, The Role of The Ghadar Party in the National Movement, p. 93.*

<sup>167</sup> *Sohan Singh Josh, Hindustan Ghadar Party, A Short History, p. 153.*

then troops opened fire. In the result 2 Europeans police officers, 2 Punjab police officers, 2 Indian residents of Budge-Budge and 20 Sikhs were killed and 6 Europeans and 5 Punjab police officers, 1 villager, together with 22 Sikhs and 1 Mohammedan from among the Ships were injured. In connection with this occurrence 211 persons were arrested, while 28 (including the leader Gurdit Singh) escaped.<sup>168</sup>

This incident helped the Gadar movement in yet another way also. Some of the passengers of the ship turned Gadrities after the incident, among whom was specially Baba Gurmukh Singh who worked in the Gadar Party in India in later years.

When the Kamagata Maru was between Canada and India then the First World War broke out on 28<sup>th</sup> July 1914, while the Kamagata Maru was still on the way to India.<sup>169</sup> Leaders of the Gadar Party had prepared themselves for the war in Europe. Hardayal had long before perceived that war between Germany and England was bound to come and that would provide a great opportunity for Indians in foreign lands to strike for India's freedom. After the starting of war, the Gadaritities started making preparations for a homeward move through mass meetings and the

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<sup>168</sup> *Proceedings Home political, (B) January, 1915, No.211-214 and (B) March, 1915, No.1-13 (N.A.I.).*

<sup>169</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 200.

Gadar paper. Several meetings which were held on the Pacific Coast side of the U.S.A. were addressed by professor Barkatuallh, Gyani Bhagwan Singh and Ramchand editor of Gadar weekly<sup>170</sup>. The most important ones were those held at Fresno and Sacramento.<sup>171</sup> In these meetings main resolution was passed to rouse the Indian settlers to give up their jobs and return to India to liberate their motherland.<sup>172</sup> Men were exhorted to volunteer for revolutionary service and funds were collected to pay off their passage and arms.<sup>173</sup> To fulfill these objects, various men immigrants enlisted rushed to catch boats leaving for India. A large number of them gathered at the Yunganter Ashram to know about the future course of the Gadar party. (A few among them secured passages immediately and proceeded to India in advance) Kartar Singh Sarabha was one of those who left early by the Nippon- Maru and arrived in Coloumbo on 15 or 16 September and Sohan Singh Bhakna had followed the Kamagata Maru to India.<sup>174</sup> In their absence, the control of the party in California fell to Ram Chandra.

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<sup>170</sup> *Proceedings Home political, (B)*, December, 1914, No. 218-22 (N.A.I.).

<sup>171</sup> Gurdev Singh Deol, *The Role of The Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, p. 99.

<sup>172</sup> The main objects of Gadrities were as the sedition of Indian troops, the massacre of all loyal subjects and officials, the setting up of a revolutionary flag, the breaking of jails, the looting of treasuries, the sedition of youths, the propagation of seditions literature, union with foreign enemies, the commission of *docaities*, the procuring of arms, the manufacture of bombs, the foundation of secret societies, the looting of *thanas*, the destruction of railways and telegraphs and the seduction of villagers. See for details, *Proceedings Home political, (A)* October, 1915, No. 91 (N.A.I.).

<sup>173</sup> Khushwnat Singh and Satinder Singh, *Ghadar 1915- India's First Armed Revolution*, p. 35.

<sup>174</sup> Jagjit Singh, *Gadar Party Lehar*, p. 79.



And the British Columbia Indians were not lagging behind their American brothers. S.S. Mexico Maru left Victoria about the same time with a number of Indians for Hong Kong and S.S. Canada Maru took 30 to 40 Gadrities from Vancouver on its way to India.<sup>175</sup>

The first group of the 60 to 70 revolutionaries sailed from San Francisco on 29 August by the S.S. Korea. Ram Chandra, Bhagwan Singh and Santokh Singh came to see off the emigrants. Ram Chandra addressed them in the following words; "your duty is clear. Go to India. Stir up rebellion in every corner of the country. Rob the wealthy and show mercy to the poor. In this way gain universal sympathy. Arms will be provided for you on arrival in India. Failing this, you must run sack the police stations for rifles. Obey without hesitation the commands of your leaders".<sup>176</sup>

Thus the revolutionists returned to India by the ships named Kut Sang, Mansang, Lama, Nippon Marru, Tosha Maru, Lai Sang, Korea and Moshima Marru<sup>177</sup>, Yet Sang, Nam Sang, Foo Shing, Kwang Sang, Hang Sang<sup>178</sup> in order to get India liberated.

On their way, a large number of Gadrities coming from Canada, the U.S.A., Hong Kong, Shanghai, China, Straits

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<sup>175</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 203.

<sup>176</sup> F.C. Isomonger and J. Slattery, *An Account of the Gadar Conspiracy Report 1913-15*, pp. 44-45; Gurdev Singh Deol, *The Role of The Gadar Party in the National Movement*, p.102.

<sup>177</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, (A) May, 1917, No. 342-43 (N.A.I.).

<sup>178</sup> *Proceedings Home political* , (A) June, 1915, No.345-59 (N.A.I.).

settlement, Borneo, Japan and Philippines to India, and they made it a point to make contacts with any Indian troops that happened to be serving abroad.<sup>179</sup> Some of them tried to secure arms from the ports where their ships touched. At Yokohama, Rama Rakha and Amer Singh left the ship and tried to get arms.<sup>180</sup> They spent most of their time to read the 'Gadar literature'. Thus, at Hong Kong contacts was made with the 26<sup>th</sup> Punjabis regiment at Singapore, with the Malaya States Guides and at Penang, with the unit of Sikh Sepoys.<sup>181</sup>

The exact number of the Gadrities who returned to India, there were different of opinions and even Government records are not complete in this regard. Because up to October 1914, the Government had no check on the entry of Indians via Ceylon. But according to the trail court of the Second Lahore Conspiracy case since the Kamagata Maru incident till 1915, not less than 6000 Indians returned to India.<sup>182</sup> According to O' Dwyer, during the first two years of the war the number of Indians who returned to India was eight thousand.<sup>183</sup> The Government of India was prepared for them. On the basis of this communication an ingress ordinance

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<sup>179</sup> Khushwant Singh and Satinder Singh, *Ghadar 1915- India's First Armed Revolution*, p. 37.

<sup>180</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 202.

<sup>181</sup> Khushwant Singh and Satinder Singh, *Ghadar 1915- India's First Armed Revolution*, p. 37.

<sup>182</sup> *Lahore Conspiracy Case No. II, Judgement, dated 30th march, 1916*, page 27; Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 197.

<sup>183</sup> Micheal O' Dyer, *India as I Knew It: 1885-1925*, Constable and Co., London, 1925, p. 196.

India was issued on 5<sup>th</sup> September 1914, which empowered the Government to restrict the movement of persons entering India whether by sea or land in order to protect the state from danger of anything prejudicial to its safety, interests or tranquility.<sup>184</sup>

Almost all leaders of Gadrities were arrested. Sohan Singh Bhakna, Bhai Jawala Singh, Kesar Singh, Harnam Singh, Jagat Ram and many other detained on landing. Some Gadrites such as Kartar Singh Sarabha, Kanshi Ram and V.G. Pingle had escaped the Government's dragnet.<sup>185</sup> According to the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, out of 3125 emigrants who had passed through the hands of the police at Calcutta and Ludhiana up to the end of February 1915, among them 189 had been interned and 704 restricted to their villages<sup>186</sup> and the remaining were discharged. According to Sir Michael O' Dwyer "out of eight thousand, who returned in the first two years of the war some four hundred who interned in jail two thousand five hundred were restricted to their villages".<sup>187</sup>

On their arrival in India the Gadrities found that political situation was not suitable for revolutionary activities, because the

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<sup>184</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (A)*, September, 1914, No. 211-224, p. 17 (N.A.I.).

<sup>185</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 204.

<sup>186</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (B)* December, 1914, No. 278-82 (N.A.I.).

<sup>187</sup> Micheal O' Dwyer, *India as I knew It: 1885-1925*, p. 196.

political movement in India was at the lowest ebb. Whatever political, social or religious activity was there it came to stop due to the start of the world war. The political climate in the country was marked by professions of loyalty, all out effort in the service of the empire, and a stoic indifference to political ideas. Their fellowmen in Punjab considered the Gadrites to be crazy.<sup>188</sup> Gadrites wanted to find the vast majority of people of India for revolution, but in India all people fully supported the Government, completely satisfied in spite of the unhappy situation of country and there was the no spirit of revolt anywhere. Mahatma Gandhi and even radicals such as B.G. Tilak and other political leaders were giving full support to the British in the war.<sup>189</sup> They began to pray to God shamelessly in temples, mosques and Gurdwaras to shower victory on the British enslavers by the Pandits, Mullahs and Sikh priests. The Chief Khalsa Diwan, which was the prominent party of Sikhs declared that the Gadar revolutionaries were not Sikhs at all, they were apostates or (*thugs*), thus throwing them outside the pale of Sikhism.<sup>190</sup> This was the real situation and climate in Punjab when the Gadrites returned from America, Canada and other countries.

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<sup>188</sup> Introduction by Trilochan Singh in *autobiography of Bhai Randhir Singh*, pp. XLI-XLIX, quoted in H.K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, p.98.

<sup>189</sup> Khushwant Singh, *History of Sikhs, Vol. II*, p. 183.

<sup>190</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 206.

They could not hope to get much response from the people and leaders.

Despite the best efforts of the Government, their security measures were not always successful and one thousand of these by the end of December 1914 managed to reach the Punjab undetected.<sup>191</sup> They were like Kartar Singh Sarabha, Nidhan Singh Chugha, Harnam Singh Tundilat, Bhagat Singh alias Ganda Singh Kacharbhan, Parmanand Jhansi, Arur Singh, Jagat Ram Hariana, Prithvi Singh Lalru, Gajjan Singh Bhikhiwind, Jagat Singh and Prem Singh village Sur Singh, Hafiz Abdullah of Jagraon, Jewan Singh Daulesinghwala, Jawand Singh, Bir Singh Bahowa, Pandit Kanshi Ram and V.G. Pingley.<sup>192</sup> After reaching the Punjab, they set themselves to act. In the beginning a committee was formed. Kartar Singh Sarabha, Bhai Nidhan Singh Chugha, Pandit Jagat Ram, Bhai Prithvi Singh Lalru, Bhai Banta Singh Sangwal, Bhai Rur Singh Churchak were the prominent member of this committee. After some time Pandit Kanshi Ram and V.G. Pingley were involved in it.<sup>193</sup> The plans of the Gadar Party were to murder the of Government officials and their stooges; braking open jails to

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<sup>191</sup> Parm Bakhshish, Singh and Devinder Kumar Verma, *Punjab and the Freedom Struggle*, Publication Bureau, Punjabi University Patiala, 1998, p. 24.

<sup>192</sup> Master Hari Singh, *Punjab Peasants in Freedom Struggle Vol. II*, People's Publishers, New Delhi, 1984, p. 52.

<sup>193</sup> *Proceedings Home political*, (A) June, 1915, No. 345-68 (N.A.I.).

free the political prisoners and others; making of a revolutionary flag; looting of treasuries and police ports and getting money through *dacoities*; setting up a Gadar type press and paper; procuring of arms and manufacturing bombs; destroying railway and telegraph lines; getting people, especially the youth to participate in the revolution etc.<sup>194</sup> In the starting, meetings were held at different places for chalking out the plan for revolution. The important meeting held at the annual Sikh Fair at Khasa (Amritsar) was attended by several workers of party. In this, meeting the decision was taken that a general out break should take place on the 15<sup>th</sup> November 1914.<sup>195</sup> For this Gadrities expected arms from abroad. But arms did not arrive, then the expected the outbreak was postponed.

After that a plan was made to attack the military arsenal at Mian Mir with the help of soldiers and for a general rising. Subsequently another plan was made by what was described as the Majha Jatha, Consisted of affecting a mutiny in the 23<sup>rd</sup> cavalry at Lahore cantonment and the declaration of a rebellion on 26 November.<sup>196</sup> But these plans did not get success. During this period, the Gadrities made contacts with Bengal Revolutionaries

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<sup>194</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 212.

<sup>195</sup> F.C. Isomonger and J. Slattery, *An Account of the Gadar Conspiracy Report 1913-15*, p. 71.

<sup>196</sup> H.K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, p. 99.

and terrorist organizations in the other parts of the country. According to police report on the internal situation for the month of March, 1915, he acted as a link between the Bengali anarchists and the Punjabi agitators.<sup>197</sup> In the beginning Saynal was sent to Punjab from Rash Behari Bose for giving information about of Punjab's circumstances. On his arrival he made a favorable report to Rash Behari Bose. In January 1915, Rash Behari Bose arrived at Amritsar and took over the general direction of the revolutionaries. Their chief liaison with the Punjabis was through the youthful Kartar Singh Sarabha. After spending a fortnight in Amritsar he shifted his headquarters to Lahore.<sup>198</sup>

Soon after Bose's arrival at Amritsar, he organized the work of the Gadar Party and brought it under centralized control. He decided to concentrate all the power of Gadrities in the Punjab. He established the controls headquarter of party at Lahore and the party propaganda was henceforth directed from here. Besides this local centers were also established, as in Majha Dadehar, Jhar Sahib and Sur Singh, in Malwa Lohatwadi and Dhudike and in Doaba Sangewal and Binjhu Singh Dera near Pindori Ladha Singh. And also Bhai Parmanand's shop at Lahore and for meeting Army

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<sup>197</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (B), April, 1915, No. 412-15, (N.A.I.).*

<sup>198</sup> Khushwant Singh and Satinder Singh, *Ghadar 1915- India's First Armed Revolution*, p. 42.

Jawan Madan Singh's carpentry shop in Mianmeer was prominent centers.<sup>199</sup> The emissaries sent by Bose to a number of Indian army units from Bannu in North-West to Lucknow and Faizabad in united provinces reported back by 11 February 1915.<sup>200</sup> He pinned his hopes on the defection of the troops, of which some men of the 23<sup>rd</sup> cavalry posted at Mian Mir cantonment, 26<sup>th</sup> Punjabis posted at Ferozepur and 28<sup>th</sup> pioneers and the 12<sup>th</sup> cavalry posted at Meerut had agreed to mutiny.<sup>201</sup>

Meanwhile Gadrities had also taken to commission of *dacoities* for the purpose of raising money for the purchase of arms for themselves. Formation of the commission of *dacoities* was not a part of the programme of Gadar Party in the beginning. But we should not forget that any and every weapon is moral and lawful in the struggle against slavery. When the promises of arms and ammunition did not come from America, then the Gadrities decided to commit *dacoities* to get money to carry on the struggle against slavery. For this purpose their target was big money-lenders and loyal agents of the British Government, who were enemies of the poor people.<sup>202</sup> But first important *dacoity* was committed on 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 1915 at Sahnawal in Ludhiana District. A group of nine

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<sup>199</sup> Gurdev Singh Deol, *The Role of The Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, pp. 117-118.

<sup>200</sup> H.K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, p. 100.

<sup>201</sup> Khushwant Singh and Satinder Singh, *Ghadar 1915- India's First Armed Revolution*, p. 42.

<sup>202</sup> On the 24th and 25th December 1914 *dacoities* were committed at Pharala and Karan (Jallandar District). The Jewellery worth Rs. 100 from Pharala and Jewellery and cash worth Rs. 2000 from Karan were removed. See also, *Proceedings Home Political*, (B) December, 1915, No. 22 (N.A.I.).



or ten persons attacked the place.<sup>203</sup> Second *dacoity* was committed on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1915 at Mansuran village<sup>204</sup>. After it, a *dacoity* at Jhanir was committed in two houses of money-lenders. The silver loot came to some 16 seers (K.g.) and the gold about seven *tolas*. The loot ornaments was estimated at Rs. 1000.<sup>205</sup>

On the night of 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1915, a group of revolutionaries armed with bombs, revolvers and axes attacked the house of a *Shaukar* at Chabba in Amritsar District.<sup>206</sup> Besides these, some minor *dacoities* were also committed. With regard to the *dacoities*, the trial court of the first Lahore conspiracy case stated in detail. In spite of these the activities of Gadrities can be placed under the various categories like the ones among the people and the

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<sup>203</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (A)*, October, 1915, No. 91 (N.A.I.).

<sup>204</sup> A group of Gadrities attacked the house of a wealthy money-lender, with weapons. After looting the house they reached his shop and carried on this process by looting the shop of other money-lenders. A number of villagers assembled to whom Kartar Singh addressed, saying that they were collecting money to turn out the Britishers. The booty with which they made here has been valued at Rs. 22,000. For further detailed see, *Proceedings Home Political, (B)*, April, 1917, No. 53 (N.A.I.) and Jagjit Singh, *Gadar Party Lehar*, p. 105.

156 *Proceedings Home political, (B)*, May 1917, No.342-43 (N.A.I.); Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 215.

<sup>206</sup> The owner of the house was murdered in the attack and ten villagers wounded. The booty in this case amounted to Rs. 18000. But a very ill-planned and crudely operated *dacoity* appeared which upset the plans. Because while leaving they were chased by the villagers. There was a serious hand to hand fight. During this fight two Gadrities, Ram Rakha and Waryam Singh Amli were killed by their own bombs and a few other were injured. Kala Singh was captured by the attacking mob. This event was a great setback to the freedom movement. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 1915 a *dacoity* was committed by Gadrities at Rabbon Unchi in Ludhiana District. The estimated value of *jawellery* taken over was Rs. 3000 and the cash Rs. 1198. See for further details, *Proceedings Home Political, (B)*, April 1917, No. 53 (N.A.I.); Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 216; *Proceedings Home Political, (B)*, May 1917, No. 342-43 (N.A.I.); and T.R. Sarreen,, *Selected Documents on the Gadar Party*, Mounto Publishing House, New Delhi, 1994, p. 79.

students, use of revolutionary literature, collection of arms and ammunition and work outside the Punjab.

Before fixing the date of insurrection and actual implementation of the plan, comprehensive preparations had been made. The troops at several places were sounded about their readiness for action. After this information, on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1915 was initially selected as the date for the rising by the Gadrities. After the date of the uprising had been fixed, messengers were sent to the various cantonments and a declaration was prepared. The Gadrities were to equip themselves with bombs and *handgarnads*. Bomb factories were set up at Amritsar, Jhabewal for the preparation of materials for bombs under the supervision of an ex-chemist Dr. Mathura Singh Kohli. After some time, it was removed to Lohatbadi in Nabha state.<sup>207</sup> The revolutionaries were supplied with instruments to cut telegraph wires and derail railway trains. A tricolour flag was made by the Gadrities and its colours were yellow, red and green,<sup>208</sup> more copies of *Ilan-i-Jung* and *Gadar Sandesha* were published for distribution. These materials were given to *Gadar* workers who were to lead the groups in and outside the Punjab. Some more material was sent to rural assembly

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<sup>207</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (A)*, October, 1915, No. 91 (N.A.I.).

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*

constituencies. The Slogan "Maro Ferangi Ko" (Kill the English) was also decided upon.<sup>209</sup> Now the Gadar Party was all set for the final operation fixed for 21<sup>st</sup> February 1915.

On the other hand, the Government agencies were not in the dark about the matter. At that time, the Punjab police had possessed some clues from Chabba *dacoity* about the doings of the Gadar revolutionaries. K.B. Liaqat Hyat Khan, Deputy Superintendent of police, Amritsar, came to know that Mula Singh was concerned in that *dacoity* and this was the work of revolutionaries. Through Bela Singh Zaildar he engaged a person named Kirpal Singh on the 9<sup>th</sup> February for getting and supplying information of the acts and plans of the Gadrities.<sup>210</sup> Kirpal Singh was a success to enter the inner circle of the Gadrities. He learnt that the rising had been fixed for the 21<sup>st</sup> February<sup>211</sup>. Because he was sent to get men from the 23<sup>rd</sup> cavalry, on 15<sup>th</sup> February for rising to Mian Mir, but he went to railway station to meet the police whom he had that day wired from Amritsar.<sup>212</sup> He was successful in passing on this information to the police at Amritsar. He was there seen by Nidhan Singh and Mathra Singh that led to his being

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<sup>209</sup> Gurdev Singh Deol, *The Role of The Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, p. 140.

<sup>210</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*,(A) October, 1915, No. 93 (N.A.I.); Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 231.

<sup>211</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*,(A) October, 1915, No. 93 (N.A.I).

<sup>212</sup> Jagjit, Singh, *Gadar Party Lehar*, p. 121.

suspected and the date for the rising being advanced to 19<sup>th</sup> February.<sup>213</sup> At a time the success was not in store for Gadar leaders as the traitors like Kirpal Singh had entered into the rank of these devoted patriots. The plan was leaked out in advance by these traitors to the British police which defeated the planned attack and also led to large arrests of Gadar leaders from their hideouts and from secret places of operation.<sup>214</sup>

At 4:30 p.m. on 19<sup>th</sup> February, a raid on the headquarters by the police meant a haul of leading men as also their paper which led to large scale further arrests of other connected with the plans<sup>215</sup>.

According to plan at the appointed time on the 19<sup>th</sup>, the Gadrities under the command of Prem Singh and Jagat Singh assembled near the railway line Lahore. Information of the plot had, however, been received by the officers of the regiment. At seven o' clock in the evening the whole regiment was suddenly ordered to fall-in. Armed British personnel were posted on *sentry*

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<sup>213</sup> Gadrities decided to ante-date the rising to the night of 19th February and sent emissaries to various selected centers to inform the change, but information about this date was conveyed to the authorities by a spy Kirpal Singh. For details see, *Judgement of the First Lahore Case*; Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 232 and Ravi, Dayal, *We Fought Together for Freedom*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1995, p. 74.

<sup>214</sup> S.N. Aggarwal, *Heroes of Cellular Jail*, p. 133.

<sup>215</sup> The seven Gadrities who were arrested from office were: Amar Singh, Hirda Singh Ram Mandi, Balwant Singh Sathiala, Kharak Singh Boparai, and Kala Singh, Jawand Singh, and Gurdit Singh (Sur Singh). See for further details, Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 233.

duties. Seeing the whole regiment fall-in, the assembled Gadrities realized that the plot had been discovered. Consequently they moved away. Eight sepoy of the 26<sup>th</sup> Punjabis on the 18<sup>th</sup> February at Ferozepur, on whom the Gadrities mainly counted, were discharged because of their seditious conduct.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> February some more patriots, having no knowledge of the raid, came to the headquarters and fell into the hands of the police. They were Parmanand Janshi, Gurmukh Singh Lalton, Inder Singh Bhasin and Kirpal Singh Boparai.<sup>216</sup> These raids and arrest of leaders broke the back of the revolution. More and more patriots began to fall into the hands of the police. Now the Gadrities started leaving Lahore in order to escape arrests. The police wanted to arrest the Rash Behari Bose, the master mind of the movement at Lahore, police tried it but he had escaped. Because Kirpal Singh knew only one house, which was at Lahore. He had no knowledge of the other centers. Rash Behari Bose was still in his house in the Gwal Mandi, which was known only to the selected persons. On the 20<sup>th</sup> night he left for Benaras. Bose did not stay long at Benaras and went to Calcutta from where he landed abroad.<sup>217</sup> On the 20<sup>th</sup> February, early in the morning three

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<sup>216</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 233.

<sup>217</sup> Gurdev Singh Deol, *The Role of The Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, p. 147.

Gadrities Arjan Singh Khukhrana, Harnam Singh Sialkot and Banta Singh Sanghwal were going through the Anarkali Bazar on a *tanga*. On the Other side there was Sub inspector Mohammed Musa and head constable Mohsin Ali Shah, who were on special patrol duty.<sup>218</sup> But after some time, in the Anarkali murder case, they were all hanged. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1915, Kartar Singh Sarabha, Jagat Singh of Sur Singhwala and Harnam Singh Tundilat were arrested in Shahpur district, where they had gone to influence the *sawars* at the horse run of the 22<sup>nd</sup> cavalry in which Jagat Singh had himself cooperated with the police.<sup>219</sup> V.G. Pingle who was still planning to lead the 12<sup>th</sup> cavalry into the insurrection and march to Delhi, was captured on the night of the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> March 1915, in the cavalry lines at Meerut with ten bombs.<sup>220</sup> The Government had taken 63 revolutionaries into custody up to that time while many others went into hiding. The large arrests of Gadrities was a big set back to the movement. Kirpal Singh was awarded twenty-five squares of land in Montgomery District by the

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<sup>218</sup> They stopped their *tanga*. Getting suspicious, the sub-Inspector ordered them to lay down whatever they had. Arjan Singh replied: "I give you something," he took out a pistol and fired at the both officers, wounding the sub-Inspector and killing the head constable. The crowd however rushed forward and captured Arjan Singh by a *goonda* while he was quenching his thirst at a water pump. The other two managed to escape. Further detailed see, *Proceedings Home Political*, April, 1917, No. 53, (N.A.I.).

<sup>219</sup> Statement of Baba Harnam Singh, Tundilat, ' *Gadar Sajish di Vithia*', p.114 in *First Lahore Conspiracy Case*, pp.106-7 and Gurcharan Singh Sainsara, *Gadar Party Da Itihas*, p. 198.

<sup>220</sup> *Proceedings Home Political (B)* April, 1915 No. 412-15, (N.A.I.).

Government for the authority's help. But the fruits of treasure were short-lived. He was put to death soon after by the Gadrites in his house.<sup>221</sup>

The Gadar movement was an international movement. It had its branches in Malaya, Shanghai, Indonesia, East-Indies, Philippines, Hong Kong, Singapore, Fiji, Japan, Manila, Burma and other countries. The industrial workers of the world had great sympathy for the Gadar party's aim. So the activities of the Gadar party were not confined to India, various Gadrites were left at Singapore on their way back to India during October, November and December 1914, after the outbreak of the war, Harnam Singh Rasulpur of Amritsar, Hira Singh of Charar, Mujtaba Hussain were main. They were dropped at Singapore to prepare the India troops for Mutiny.<sup>222</sup> By their efforts on the afternoon of February 15, 1915, soldiers of the 5<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry overpower the local reservists, who were on guard duty at the military prison, released the German prisoners who were sailors from the Coal-Tug attached to the Enden and took possession of the fort. The Main leaders of the rebellion were Jamedar Chisti Khan, Subedar Dundey Khan

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<sup>221</sup> Master, Hari Singh, *Punjab Peasants in Freedom Struggle, Vol. II*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1984, p. 62.

<sup>222</sup> *Indian Seditious Committee (1918) Report*, Calcutta (1918) p. 170; Gurdev Singh Deol, *The Role of The Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, p.149.

and Jamedar Abdul Ali.<sup>223</sup> The mutineers divided themselves into three groups.<sup>224</sup> Finally after two days the mutiny was quelled by the joint efforts of the local militia, the police and the arrival of the British troop, the Cadmus. The Martial Law was declared by the authority. Up to the evening of 17<sup>th</sup> February more than four hundred rebels had surrendered and till 18<sup>th</sup> February situation was completely under control.<sup>225</sup>

In the Singapore Gadar eight European officers, one officer's wife, 9 soldiers and sixteen civilians were killed.<sup>226</sup> The casualties of mutineers could not be counted. According to summary of court martial, 37 men were sentenced to death, 41 to transportation for life and other to varying terms of imprisonment. The condemned men were publicly executed outside Outram Road prison at Singapore.<sup>227</sup>

Indians revolutionaries had active propaganda centers in London, Paris and Berlin for at least a decade before the formation of the Gadar Party. As tension in Europe grew and it became obvious that war would see Great Britain and France lined up

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<sup>223</sup> Khushwant Singh and Satinder Singh, *Ghadar 1915- India's First Armed Revolution*, p. 46.

<sup>224</sup> One group was to go to the German internment camp to secure the release of German internals; the second was to assault and capture the house of the colonel; and the third to check and engage any support-force coming from Singapore. See for details Jagjit Singh, *Gadar Party Lehar*, p. 128

<sup>225</sup> Gurdev Singh Deol, *The Role of The Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, p. 153.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>227</sup> Khushwant Singh and Satinder Singh, *Ghadar 1915- India's First Armed Revolution*, p. 47.



against Germany, Berlin became the most important centre in Europe for the revolutionaries. In spring of 1914, Hardayal arrived on the scene and apprised his countrymen of the Gadar organization which had by then nearly 10,000 active members, who were ready for service if they could be provided with arms.<sup>228</sup> The Berlin India committee approached the German Government and succeeded in persuading it to support the Gadar movement. The Germans were planning against the British even prior to 1914 and anticipated that the Indian revolutionaries would join them against the common enemy.

Soon after the beginning of the war, 'Indian Independence committee' under the Virendranath Chattopadhyaya was established in Berlin at the initiative of German foreign office. It was to assist the Germans in making plans and supervising programmes relating in India.<sup>229</sup> The German group, which helped the Gadar Party in its plan, included the personnel of the German consulates other Germans outside their country and American citizens of German origin who were working according to the instructions of the German foreign office. Bengali revolutionaries, Chandra Kant Chakraborty and Hemendra Kishor, Rakshit worked for the revolution through the German consul at Washington. The

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<sup>228</sup> Khushwant Singh and Satinder Singh, *Ghadar 1915- India's First Armed Revolution*, p. 48.

<sup>229</sup> H.K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, p. 102.

German consul at Shanghai was given the general charge of operations in the Far-East, but the active agencies were in Siam, Java and Persia.<sup>230</sup> The participation of the Gadar Party in the German schemes was confined mainly to three projects.<sup>231</sup>

After it, the German planned many other ships to send arms to India, but the failure of the Henry S., the Annie Larsen, the Maverick and conflicts between Indians somewhat cooled them towards the Gadar movement. Their worst experience was, however, yet to come.<sup>232</sup> The German group of revolutionaries did not get success. The ability of the British police and split of the Gadrities became two major factors for the failure of this scheme. Not merely these groups of Gadrities, other groups in Burma, Siam, Egypt, Turkey and Afghanistan had organized different activities for making their motherland free from the British rule. The revolution of the Gadrities was very much international in character. It

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<sup>230</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (B)*, August, 1915, No. 552-56. p. 13 (N.A.I.).

<sup>231</sup> One of these related to shipping of arms to destinations in India, the second to develop a base in Siam for military training of Indians for intervention in India and a third one to the printing of anti-British and Pro-Turkish, Pro-German propaganda material for distribution chiefly among British Indian soldiers stationed outside India. In all these projects the Germans were in command and the Gadar men were treated as enthusiastic errand boys to be financed, advised and ordered about. For the fulfillment of these projects were tried many a time by the German group. The first attempt from the United States into India was to struggle arms at Henry. S. Ship, which sailed from Manila. But the ship was captured by the British. A Japanese national, Dr. Daus Dekker, who had been taken into confidence by the revolutionaries was arrested at Hong Kong and forced to disclose the code used by the Gadrities. For further details see, *Proceeding Home Political,(A)* February 1916, No. 201 (N.A.I.) ; H.K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, p. 105 and Khushwant Singh and Satinder Singh, *Ghadar 1915- India's First Armed Revolution*, p.49.

<sup>232</sup> Khushwant Singh and Satinder Singh, *Ghadar 1915- India's First Armed Revolution*, p. 50.

becomes obvious from the testimony of witnesses in the conspiracy trials and the text of depositions made by the arrested people that the specific aim of the Gadar revolutionaries was to seize the Suez Canal and reach the West border of India through Persia and Afghanistan, and according to the prosecution Lawyer in the trial of Gadar conspirators, use of Manila, China, Japan and Siam as intermediate base for the purpose of attacking India through Burma and also on the coast of Bengal, particularly around Calcutta.<sup>233</sup>

Finally, some Gadrities were still out and carrying out on their work. The Government was arresting people on the least suspicion. But those who escaped arrest were still active and refused to surrender to the enemy and their's final aim was the national freedom.<sup>234</sup> According to Isemonger and Slattery, "some of the more daring conspirators continued their activities –Prem Singh of Sur Singh and Balwant Singh of Sanghwal succeeded some months later in getting together a formidable gang in Jalandhar and Kapurthala".<sup>235</sup> They got together and decided for the next action. Before launching the programme, it was felt that first

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<sup>233</sup> Khushwant Singh and Satinder Singh, *Gadar 1915- India's First Armed Revolution*, p. 50.

<sup>234</sup> These were active Bhai Prem Singh Sur Singhia, Bhai Banta Singh Shaghwal, Nidhan Singh Chugha, Arua Singh Chuharchak, Bhai Jawand Singh Nangal Kalan, Bahi Bir Singh Bahawal, Bhai Ishar Singh, Bhai Bhagata Singh Kacharban, Bhai Uttam Singh Hans, Arur Singh, Bhai Buta Singh Akal Garh. See for details Gurcharan Singh Sainsara, *Gadar Party Da Itihas*, p. 223.

<sup>235</sup> F.C. Isomonger and J. Slattery, *An Account of the Gadar Conspiracy Report 1913-15*, p. 131.

scores should be settled with those responsible for the arrests of the Gadrities. Besides planning the death of Kirpal Singh, they planned to bomb the officers' mess of the 23<sup>rd</sup> cavalry. They also made a scheme to attack the jails in Lahore, Rawalpindi and Multan to free their comrades who were being kept there and were awaiting their transportation to the Andamans. Dr. Arur Singh had been trained by Dr. Mathura Singh, as to how make bombs and dynamites. Banta Singh Sanghwal, Buta Singh Akalgarh, Jawand Singh Nangal Kalan and Ishar Singh shot dead Chanda Singh Zaildar on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1915.<sup>236</sup> Attention was now turned to teach a lesson to the like of Sardar Bahadur Rur Singh, *Sarbrah* of Golden temple. He was the man who declared the Gadar revolutionaries as apostates. Unfortunately, the target was misfired and he escaped. Instead Sardar Bahadur Achhar Singh Jagatpura a staunch loyalist and an associate of Sardar Bahadur Rur Singh was put to death in broad day light by Chanan Singh and Kala Singh. Kapur Singh a Shahukar of Padri Kalan was a police informer. He was the first who gave information to the Government about Jhar Sahib meeting. He was shot dead by Prem Singh Sur Singh and Hardit Singh Dalewal.<sup>237</sup> But all prominent persons of the party were

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<sup>236</sup> Bhagat Singh Bilga, *Gadar Lehar De Unfole Varke*, p. 78.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 79-80.

arrested one after the other. Thus, ended the second attempt to create a revolution in India.

By the summer of 1915, the Gadar uprising had been virtually smashed. The Gadrities were tried in nine batches in Lahore conspiracy and supplementary cases under the defence of India Act.<sup>238</sup> Besides the first Lahore conspiracy case, there were four Lahore supplementary conspiracy cases, two Mandi conspiracy cases, two Burma conspiracy cases, and one Lahore city conspiracy case.<sup>239</sup> Besides these cases, other main cases were the Ferushahr murder Case, Anarkali murder Case, Padhri murder Case, Walla Bridge Case, Jagatpur murder Case, Nangal Kalan murder Case, Thikriwala arms act Case and Chawarian and Srigobindpur dacoity Cases.<sup>240</sup> "Of 291 Gadrities sent up for trial 42 were sentenced to death and hanged, 114 were transported for life, 93 were imprisoned to varying terms and 42 were acquitted".<sup>241</sup> Another court martial sentenced 18 men to death, of them 12 were hanged

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<sup>238</sup> *Sedition Committee Report, 1918*, p. 157; Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 262.

<sup>239</sup> See F.C. Isomonger and J. Slattery, *An Account of the Gadar Conspiracy Report 1913-15, appendices C, D, E, F, G, I, J, N, O, and Q* and Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 263.

<sup>240</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 263.

<sup>241</sup> Prominent Gadrities among the ones who were hanged were Kartar Singh Sarabha-an eighteen years old young man, Vishnu Ganesh Pingley, Jagat Singh Sursingh, Harman Singh Stalkot, Bakshish Singh, Surain Singh junior and Surain Singh senior of Gilwali, Banta Singh Sanghwal, Kala Singh Jagatpur, Chanan Singh Lahore, Bur Singh Lahore, Harnam Singh Amritsar, Atma Singh Amritsar, Buta Singh Akalgarh, Jawand Singh Nangal Kalan and Sajjan Singh Khukhrena. For further detailed see, Khushwant Singh and Satinder Singh, *Ghadar 1915-India's First Armed Revolution*, p. 45 and S.N. Aggarwal, *Heroes of Cellular Jail*, pp. 76-77.

of 23<sup>rd</sup> cavalry.<sup>242</sup> These imprisonments crushed the Gadar movement totally.

There were several factors responsible for the failure of the Gadar movement; the foremost was the organizational weakness of the party. Lack of experience was the main reason of failure of movement. Because it had a life of about one year and its secret commission even lesser when it had to issue a call for the action. Its members had no experience of organizing and running a revolutionary movement. The incapacity of the Gadrites to maintain secrecy was another factor. They had to give the widest publicity to their aim of driving out the British from India. The Gadrites came to India by the beat of drum. They started working among soldiers and villagers without caring to maintain even a shadow of secrecy.<sup>243</sup>

According to Sohan Singh Josh lack of money and arms was another factor of failure because when Gadrites came to India then they had a little money and a few arms. Money and arms were to come from Germany in later through the efforts of Gadrites. But they failed to fulfill their efforts.<sup>244</sup> According to Gurdev Singh Deol, bad leadership was another factor contributing to the failure of the

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<sup>242</sup> Khushwant Singh and Satindert Singh, *Ghadar 1915- India's First Armed Revolution*, p. 45.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>244</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party, A Short History*, p. 270.

movement. The party had few leaders who were capable of running a revolutionary movement. But some of them were arrested immediately on landing on the Indian soil and some of them were sent for working to other countries. After the departure of the original office bearers of the party to India, the charge of party went into the hands of new leaders. These leaders were to provide further guidance, money, arms and ammunition to the Gadrities who had left for India and to keep the organization alive. But they selfishly deviated from the real path.<sup>245</sup> Opposite role of religious organizations, the tension between the Germans and the Gadrities; the efficiency of the British intelligence service which planted spies in the highest councils of the revolutionaries; the stern measures taken by the Government of India; the brutal methods adopted by the Punjab police which compelled many of the leaders to tell on their colleagues and the Government support by the people against the movement contributed to the failure of the Gadar rebellion.<sup>246</sup> Even then this great movement left its impact upon the Punjab polity and Sikh and Muslim community.

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<sup>245</sup> Gurdev Singh Deol, *The Role of The Ghadar Party in the National Movement*, p. 172.

<sup>246</sup> Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikhs, Vol. II*, p. 189.

## **CHAPTER – III**

### **THE SATYAGRAHA MOVEMENT**

In August 1914, England declared war against Germany and there began the epic of First World War in the human history. During and after the war some incidents happened and a few movements emerged that influenced the circumstances of India. Consequently these reasons caused the Satyagraha movement. During the early years of War, the Gadar movement was looked upon by the British as the first serious attempt for an armed revolution against the British Government in India. The Gadar Party was originally founded at Sanfrancisco in the United States of America in April 1913 and its full name was "Hindu Association of the Pacific Coast". However, it got prominence as a Gadar party due to a weekly paper Gadar which was published by the party since 1<sup>st</sup> November 1913. The Gadar movement was secular in character and militant in its operations. The main object of the Gadar party was to get India free from England by violent means. During the World War Gadrities returned to India in order to fulfill their objects. But their plans got collapsed. By August 1915, the Gadar party in the Punjab had been virtually smashed by a Punjab Government armed with extensive powers under the Defense of India Act and the Ingress Ordinance of 15<sup>th</sup> September



1914.<sup>247</sup> The Defense of India Act was passed on March 19, 1915 and it had authorized the Governor General to frame the rule "to improve any civil or military authority to prohibit the entry or residence in any area of a person suspected to be acting in a manner prejudicial to the public safety or to direct the residence of such person in any specified area".<sup>248</sup> Although the Gadar party had not achieved some of its objectives but the Gadrities were almost weak forces from 1915 onwards. True that their brief period of militancy had impressed upon people the fact that the authority of the Government could be challenged also, there was another factor. The Muslims had agitated over Turkey's entry into the World war against the British. For it, they had also a lunched Pan-Islamic movement with it's headquarter at Madina. Their main object was to unite all the powers grounded in Islam. The Turks, the Arabs under the Sheriff of Macca, the Afghans and the Muslims of India united themselves against the forces of British imperialism. End of British rule in India was therefore their major target.<sup>249</sup> Third factor was the Home Rule League that was started by Annie Besant and Bal Gangadhar Tilak. It was on the 25<sup>th</sup> September 1915 that Annie Besant had declared the establishment of the Home Rule League. Her object was to get India free from humiliation of dependency and to carry an

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<sup>247</sup> V.N. Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh*, Lyall Book Depot, Ludhiana, 1969, p. 4.

<sup>248</sup> Khushwant Singh, *History of Sikhs Vol.II*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1966, pp. 182-83.

<sup>249</sup> V.N. Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh*, p. 6.

agitation into every village and every street.<sup>250</sup> After some time Tilak started India Home Rule League on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1916.<sup>251</sup> Tilak's India Home Rule League's aims were akin to that of Annie Besant. These movements stirred the Indian people to a new type of activity which was more suited to the Indian masses of those days. They gave a radical turn to Indian politics during 1916-17. Mrs. Besant published daily news paper named as 'New India' and a weekly newspaper called 'The Commonwealth'.<sup>252</sup> These news papers published articles which were against the British Government. Both the Home Rule Leagues progressed very well day by day and a great number of persons became the followers of the movements. The Government decided to crush the movement and ordered a ban on the entry of Annie Besant in the central provinces and Berar, Bombay and Punjab. Tilak had been exiled from Bombay. Annie Besant was arrested on June 1916.<sup>253</sup> That infuriated the whole country. According to Jawaharlal Nehru this arrest stirred even the older generation, and his father also became her follower.<sup>254</sup> The Home rulers had virtually destroyed the influence of the moderates and the stage was set for a nationwide agitation. As a result the national movement had taken a new turn.

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<sup>250</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (Deposit) April, 1917, No. 17 (N.A.I).*

<sup>251</sup> V.N. Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh*, p. 8.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9.

<sup>254</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, London, 1936, p. 32.

Another factor of resentment among Indians was the army recruitment and the methods adopted in recruiting campaigns by the British military authorities during the war period, particularly in the Punjab. Sir Michael O' Dwyer, Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, had described the Punjab as the 'Shield the Spearhead' and the 'Sword Band of India'.<sup>255</sup> From the beginning of 1917, recruitment came to be done with the help of civil authorities. The war situation had turned serious for British in the middle of the year 1917. This led to the formation of the Central and Provincial Recruiting Boards and district officers were encouraged to outbid each other in recruiting men and raising money. The Central Recruitment Board introduced quota system at divisional, district, *tehsil* and village levels. Villagers and urbanites were threatened alike and they were told that failure to complete the quota voluntarily within specified period would be followed by the use of force.<sup>256</sup> On 29<sup>th</sup> June 1917 a demand was made for the Punjab to provide a monthly total of 14,290 fighting men, 1790 muleteers and 860 non-combatants throughout the year from 1<sup>st</sup> July 1917.<sup>257</sup> Consequently, recruiting *Darbars* were held in various districts. Liberal rewards were offered to local recruiters and

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<sup>255</sup> Micheal, O' Dyer, *India as I Knew it:1885-1925*, Constable & Co., London, 1925, p. 217.

<sup>256</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, (B) February, 1920, No. 373. (N.A.I.).

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*

depots were established for drafting the newly enlisted recruits and a fifty rupees bonus was payable to every recruit.<sup>258</sup> Besides Government officials there would be Khan Bhadurs and Rai Sahibs and all those who wanted to seek favors of one kind or the other from the Government. In fact they began coercing people for enlistment. The failed were deprived from of irrigation rights, because they could not fulfill the quota owing to non-availability of young men.<sup>259</sup> These events enforced the recruitment; and inhuman behavior spread the resentment and discontent among the people of Punjab against the British Government. Unable to bear the humiliation, some villagers actually rose in revolt and murdered officials who came to their village asking for recruits.

Further, the exceptionally unstable political condition of India during the war increased the severe economic strains from which the country was suffering as a result of the contribution it was required to make in the war efforts. The Government of India had undertaken to raise a war loan of £ 100 millions in India. A vigorous door to door publicity campaign was organized by provincial and district war loan committees to achieve the target<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (B)*, February, 1920, No.373 (N.A.I.).

<sup>259</sup> *Evidences taken Before Disorders Inquiry Committee*, Vol. VI (Calcutta 1920), p.226; Raja Ram, *Jallianwala Bagh Massacre*, Panjab University Chandigarh, 1969, p.26.

<sup>260</sup> Rushbrook Williams, *India in the Years 1917-18*, Government of India, Calcutta 1919, pp. 81-82.

and when that failed, income-tax-payers were forced to invest from one fourth to one half of their annual income in the war loans. Income tax law was amended so as to make it possible for income-tax authorities to over assess the income of an assesses and then coerce them to give more subscriptions.<sup>261</sup> The closing months of the World War saw in India an unusual rise in the price level. The lower middle classes because of their fixed income and labour classes were hit extraordinarily hard by the unprecedented rise in the cost of living. Above all due to failure of monsoon during 1918 acute famine conditions developed in many parts of the country and food riots broke out in Calicut, Madras, Mysore, Lyallpur, Karnal and Pathankot. The fury of the mob was so intense in Calicut that it seized 3500 bags of rice.<sup>262</sup> In the second half of January 1919 local recrudescence of *Plague* took a high toll of human life.<sup>263</sup> It was officially given out that one hundred and twenty five million people were affected by the epidemic, and between twelve to thirteen million died of it.<sup>264</sup> During these circumstances when the people needed to be secure and safe the Government rubbed salt into their wounds.

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<sup>261</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (B)*, February, 1920, No. 373. (N.A.I.).

<sup>262</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (Deposit)*, July, 1919 No. 37 (N.A.I.).

<sup>263</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (Deposit)*, March, 1919, No. 17 (N.A.I.).

<sup>264</sup> *Census of India 1921, Part I, Vol. I*, Calcutta, 1924, p. 13.

The people of India particularly Punjab had given so many services to the British Government during the World War. But people got only medals and certificates that had little economic worth. The Defense of India Act which was made only during of the war and it was to end when the war would have come to an end. But the situation being explosive, the Government was not ready to reduce the special powers vested by the Act. The Government of India wanted to replace the Defense of India Rule by a more adequate legislation. In addition to that the English Government adopted a repressive policy. During the war, the Government of India received the alarming news that seditious societies in India are in league with German agents for the overthrow of the British power. Consequently, they arrested persons suspected to such anti-Government activities and interned them for an indefinite period. To the official views the removal of the Defense of India Act was bound to create a critical situation for the Government of India and there was hope of a new 'outburst of anarchical activity'.<sup>265</sup> For suggesting steps in this direction, "on 10 December 1917, a sedition committee was appointed by the Government of India with Mr. Justice S.A.T.

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<sup>265</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (B), July, 1919, No. 69-70 (N.A.I.).*

Rowlatt as a president to report on what were termed as criminal conspiracies connected with revolutionary movements in India"<sup>266</sup> and advise about legislation to deal with them. Other members of Committee were Sir Basil Scoot, the chief justice of Bombay, Dewan Bahadur C.V. Kumarswami Sastri, judge of the high court in Madras, Sir Verney Lovett member of the Board of Revenue of the United Province and Pravesh Chandra Mitter wakil of the High Court Calcutta.<sup>267</sup> It was famous as the 'Rowlatt Committee' after the name of its president, Mr. Justice S.A.T. Rowlatt. The committee sat in Camera and submitted its report on 15 April 1918.<sup>268</sup> Consequently, on the recommendation of sedition committee two bills were prepared. The first of the two bills that was actually passed into law was the Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act 1919. It was passed on 21<sup>st</sup> march 1919.<sup>269</sup> But this act was popularly known as Rowlatt Act. By this act, provisions were made for speedy trial of offences in a special court, consisting of three High Court Judges, with no right of appeal without juries. People could be tried by courts which were

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<sup>266</sup> Ravinder Kumar, *Essays on Gandhian Politics, The Rowlatt Satyagraha of 1919*, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1971, p. 275; S.R., Bakshi, *Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy*, Capital Publishers, New Delhi, 1982, p. 17.

<sup>267</sup> V.N. Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh*, p. 31.

<sup>268</sup> Raja Ram, *Jallianwala Bagh Massacre*, p. 34.

<sup>269</sup> *File No. 357, Jallianwala Bagh Massacre*, by Bakhshish Singh Nijjar, (Ganda Singh Collection, Punjabi University, Patiala), p. 1.

empowered to sit in Camera. The Bill gave power to the executive to place restrictions upon the liberty of persons suspected of complicity in 'anarchical or revolutionary movements'.<sup>270</sup> The provincial Government was empowered to search a place and arrest a suspected person without warrant and keep him in confinement at any place in the country up to one year.<sup>271</sup> The bill provoked of fierce indignation and resentment throughout the Sub-Continent. The act was criticized with a popular cry '*no vakil, no dalil, no appeal*'. It was universally opposed by Indians of all shades of political opinion. The people felt that the Rowlatt Bill was a poor reward for their war services. The Bill was criticized in numerous public meetings by the educated people of India. Surendranath Bannerjea regarded the bill as a great menace to public liberty.<sup>272</sup> Mr. M.A. Jinnah warned that 'by passing the bill you will create in this country from one end to other, a discontent and agitation the like of which you have not witnessed'.<sup>273</sup> According to Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, it was a legislative measure of a 'retrograde and repressive character'.<sup>274</sup> Several

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<sup>270</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (B)*, July, 1919, No. 69-70. (N.A.I.); also see V.N Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh*, p. 32.

<sup>271</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (B)*, July, 1919, No. 69-70. (N.A.I.).

<sup>272</sup> *Proceedings of the Imperial Legislative Council, Vol. VII, April, 1918 - March, 1919*, p. 456 (N.A.I.)

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid*, p. 463.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid*, p. 481.



Indian newspapers leveled severe criticism against the bill. The Hindu wrote, 'the Indian public would read the proposed provisions with shame, indignation and disgust.'<sup>275</sup> *Amrita Bazar Patrika* called it a 'gigantic blunder which would be arose the worst passions of a peaceful law-abiding people.'<sup>276</sup> *The Punjabee* regarded it as 'a barefaced attempt on the part of a bureaucracy which has been demoralized by the exercise of unrestrained power to interfere with liberty.'<sup>277</sup> Protesting against the Rowlatt Act, at this critical juncture Gandhi Ji came to the forefront, and he launched an all-India agitation which India had never seen before. This protest took the shape of Satyagraha Movement. The response to Gandhi's call for Satyagraha was spontaneous and phenomenal. His message for the people of India reached the four corners of the country even though the Congress organization had not become so strong and widespread. On 24<sup>th</sup> Feb. Gandhi was visited at Matheran by a deputation from Bombay including Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Vallabhbhai Patel, Shankar Lal Banker, Umer Subhani and Shrimati Anasuyabeh and the idea of Satyagraha was seriously discussed.<sup>278</sup> At Bombay a Satyagraha Sabha was

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<sup>275</sup> *The Hindu*, 22 January, 1919.

<sup>276</sup> *Amrita Bazar Patrika* 13 January, 1919.

<sup>277</sup> *The Punjabee* 21 January, 1919.

<sup>278</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Autobiography*, Navjivan House, Ahmadabad, 1963, p. 279.

established with Gandhi as its president. Mahatma Gandhi inaugurated the Satyagraha agitation on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1919 and he warned that the fight against the Rowlatt Bill was probably the most momentous in the history of India.<sup>279</sup> The agitation started with a fast, a novel feature in a political struggle and this movement stimulated a chain of strikes and conferences throughout the country. The participation of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims to a great extent showed the success of their movement.

Initially, the date of the strike was fixed for the 30<sup>th</sup> March 1919. But it was subsequently changed to 6 April. On 23 March, Mahatma Gandhi appealed to the People throughout the country to commemorate Sunday, 6 April as a day of 'humiliation and prayer' by observing a hartal, and by keeping a fast.<sup>280</sup> The *Hartal* (Strike) was a unique programme of mass action. It meant that the people would suspend business on that day, observe it as a day of fasting and prayer and the holding of public meetings.<sup>281</sup> There were some places where news of the change of date could not reach in due time and consequently the people observed the hartal on 30<sup>th</sup> March. News about the change of *hartal* reached the Punjab and Delhi too late. A large number of protest meetings

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<sup>279</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (B,)* February, 1920, No. 373 (N.A.I.)

<sup>280</sup> Ravinder Kumar, *Essays on Gandian Politics, The Rowlatt Satyagraha of 1919*, p. 277.

<sup>281</sup> S.R. Bakshi, *Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy*, p.28.

were organized in various parts of the province. The social discontent got wider circulation in Lahore, Amritsar, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bombay, United Provinces, Central Provinces and Calcutta. On the whole, the hartals were untainted by violence before the 10<sup>th</sup> April which was remarkable. Only in Delhi (on 30<sup>th</sup> March) did a Satyagraha demonstration become disorderly-the railway station was damaged, British police officers assaulted and a number of rioters were killed.<sup>282</sup>

The Satyagraha Movement was an all India movement in every sense of the word, but it found its height in the soil of Punjab. The brave Punjabis showed great enthusiasm towards the movement and topped the country in organizing protest meetings against the Rowlatt Act. Amritsar turned out to be an important centre of agitation. Needless to say that Amritsar was the second important city of Punjab just about 33 miles in the east of Lahore. Its population in 1919 was 1, 60,000.<sup>283</sup> Being the prominent sacred and commercial centre in the Punjab, it attracted travelers and visitors from all parts of the province and even from outside. Besides, it was one of the important centers of the Congress organization in the province. In those days Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Kitchlew were most educated and prominent persons of the city.

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<sup>282</sup> V.N. Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh*, p. 45.

<sup>283</sup> *Census of India 1921, Vol. XV, part I*, Lahore 1923, p. 121, population of Amritsar in 1921 was 160, 218.

They were participating actively in all political and social activities of the city. The news of the postponement of hartal, also reached the Punjab and Delhi too late. So against the Rowlatt Act, strike was observed at Amritsar on 30 March and 6 April.

Dr. Satyapal, a medical practitioner, and Dr. Safi-Ud-Din Kitchlew, Bar at law, two prominent leaders of Amritsar<sup>284</sup> had attended the Delhi session of the Congress held in December 1918 and they requested the Congress to hold its next session at Amritsar. Their invitation was gladly accepted by the all-India Congress Committee.<sup>285</sup> This greatly enhanced the prestige of the local Congress committee founded only two years earlier, and Satyapal and Kitchlew soon acquired great influence in the city.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> March a protest meeting against the Rowlatt Act and in support of Gandhi's Satyagraha movement was held in the Bande Mataram Hall,<sup>286</sup> in which a speaker said, "if your hands are cut, let them be cut, let fetters and handcuffs be your ornaments, let prisons be your mosque and temple, then indeed shall freedom kiss your feet."<sup>287</sup> On the 29<sup>th</sup> March, another meeting took place which was presided by Girdhari Lal, where

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<sup>284</sup> S.C. Mittal, *Freedom Movement in Punjab (1905-29)*, Concept Publishers, Delhi, 1977, p.117.

<sup>285</sup> V.N, Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh*, p. 60.

<sup>286</sup> *Proceedings Home political, (Deposit)*, April, 1919, No.49 (N.A.I.)

<sup>287</sup> *Report of Disorders Committee, Vol. VI*, p. 102.

Gandhi's ideas were explained and hartal was decided on for 30<sup>th</sup> March. The Government took its first coercive step at 11 a.m. on 29<sup>th</sup> March and Dr. Satyapal was prohibited speaking from in public under the Defense of India Act.<sup>288</sup>

In the morning of Sunday, the 30<sup>th</sup> March 1919, Amritsar presented a wonderful scene of the spirit of unity. All the shops were closed voluntarily and the entire business came to a standstill. The hartal at Amritsar was complete and people took a fasting, at the instance of Gandhi, as a means of self-purification.<sup>289</sup> In the afternoon, a big meeting of the inhabitants of Amritsar was held in Jallianwala Bagh, where according to official accounts; more than 40000 people were present including a number of women.<sup>290</sup> The meeting began with Nur Hasan Arshi, Faiz and Abdul Wahid reciting moving poems to the repeated applause of the people. Dr. Kitchlew presided the meeting and the speakers like Pandit Kotumal, Swami Anubhavananda and Mr. Dina Nath addressed the audience and emphasized in unequivocal terms the peaceful character of movement. The meeting ended peacefully and people left the meeting place in a most orderly manner. Similarly the other districts of province like Hissar,

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<sup>288</sup> *Proceedings Home political, (Deposit), April, 1919, No.49.(N.A.I.)*

<sup>289</sup> V.N. Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh*, p. 65.

<sup>290</sup> *Amritsar Police Diary and C.I.D. Reports, 1919, Civil Secretariat, Chandigarh, pp. 16-17.*

Rohtak, Gurgaon, Karnal, Ambala observed the complete hartal on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March.<sup>291</sup> In Lahore, one day before the hartal (i.e., 29<sup>th</sup> of March) the kitchens in most of the college hostels were closed and at night students were on fast for twenty four hours.<sup>292</sup> Delhi also observed a big hartal on 30<sup>th</sup> March. But it did not remain as non-violent as Amritsar had been. Some volunteers had gone to Delhi railway station to pursue the contractor of the railway refreshment stall and vendors to join in the hartal. The latter refused and a fight followed. The railway police and staff intervened. As a result thereof, huge excitement spread in the mob at the station and elsewhere. The police opened fire two times, first at the queen's Gardens and then at the Town Hall, killing eight persons and wounding double that number.<sup>293</sup> Next day brought the news of the riots at Delhi. The Delhi incidents spread like wild fire in Punjab.

Swami Satya Dev, a follower of Gandhi ji was sent to Punjab by Gandhi on 3<sup>rd</sup> April and he delivered a special lecture on the superior power and effectiveness of 'Soul-force'.<sup>294</sup> On the 4 April Dr. Kitchlew, Pandit Kotu Mal, Pandit Dina Nath and Swami Anubhavanand were served with orders prohibiting them from

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<sup>291</sup> *Proceedings Home political, (B) February, 1920, No. 373 (N.A.I.)*

<sup>292</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (Deposit) April, 1919, No. 49 (N.A.I.).*

<sup>293</sup> *Disorders Inquiry Committee Report, Delhi 1920, pp. 1-3; Raja Ram, Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, p.73.*

<sup>294</sup> *The Tribune 4 April, 1919.*

addressing at the public meetings similar to that against Dr. Satyapal.<sup>295</sup> On the 5<sup>th</sup> April Mr. Miles Irving Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, invited Honorary Magistrates and number of respectable citizens to his house and he was assured by some leading loyal to the Government that the hartal would not take place on the 6<sup>th</sup> April.<sup>296</sup> In fact, the Congress reception committee had actually passed a resolution to that effect. This news gave a big shock to the younger element in the leadership of Amritsar, to genuine nationalist and to the public at large. But the hartal was decided for the 6<sup>th</sup> April at a private meeting which Kitchlew and Satyapal attended and near about 10 p.m., a small party started a round of the town proclaiming the hartal on the next day by beat of drum.<sup>297</sup>

On the 6<sup>th</sup> April, the hartal was 'as great a success as that of the preceding Sunday (30<sup>th</sup> March). Due to Dr. Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal's efforts, unprecedented unity was showed by the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. Once again, the city of Amritsar saw Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims close their shops on the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup> April. By 8 a.m. the entire business of the city had come to

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<sup>295</sup> *Memorandum on the Disturbances in Punjab*, p. 2, quoted in File No. 357, *The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre*, by Bakshish Singh (Ganda Singh collection, Punjabi University Patiala.)

<sup>296</sup> *Disorders Inquiry Committee, Vol. VI* p.89; V.N. Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh*, p.66.

<sup>297</sup> Raja Ram, *Jallianwala Bagh Massacre*, p. 78.

a standstill at the call of a young man who had formed small parties to make a round of city and request people to close their shops and suspend all kinds of business and work and created a considerable amount of excitement among the people shouting the slogan 'Mahatama Gandhi ki Jai' they moved from Karmon Deori to reach Aitchison Park. The crowd made a round to the main markets with a black flag in front of them and with turbans and caps were taken off. The crowd actually stopped from going to railway station and went to Jallianwala Bagh to attend a public meeting which was fixed for 3:30 p.m. as to avoid unnecessary risk.<sup>298</sup> Badrul Islam Khan presided a meeting which was attended by 50,000 people. In this meeting the prominent leaders of city delivered their speeches and passed three resolutions in the meeting. "First, the order against Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Kitchlew be rescinded, second, the Rowlatt Act be repealed and the last, eulogized the Satyagraha Movement and recommended the formation of Satyagraha Sabha".<sup>299</sup> After it the meeting ended and crowd dispersed peacefully.

The 9<sup>th</sup> April was Ram Naumi Day, a Hindu religious festival. The people of Amritsar decided to celebrate it as a national

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<sup>298</sup> Raja Ram, *Jallianwala Bagh Massacre*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>299</sup> *The Tribune*, 9 April, 1919.



solidarity day. A large number of Muslims, Hindu and Sikhs participated in the festival. People of different communities vied with each other in drinking water out of the same cups publicly.<sup>300</sup> Dr. Hafiz Muhammad Bashir, a medical-practitioner, was leading the procession through the town.<sup>301</sup> People were shouting "Gandhi Ji Maharaj Ki Jai, Kitchlew Ji ki Jai, Satyapal Ji ki Jai and Hindu-Muslim ki Jai". On the 9<sup>th</sup> April *Ram Naumi* was celebrated in Lahore also as political rather than a religious event, for which purpose leader of movement had invited the Muslims of the city to join hands with the Hindus in celebrations.<sup>302</sup> The Hindu Muslim unity was headache for the authorities. By and large the crowd was under control and showed a degree of discipline hitherto unknown on such occasions.

On the evening of 9<sup>th</sup> April, Gandhi was stopped at Palwal, a small station in the southern Punjab. An order under rule 3 (B) of the Defence of India Act banning his entry into the Punjab was served on him and he was escorted back to the Bombay presidency.<sup>303</sup> Micheal O' Dwyer immediately wanted to take action against Dr. Satyapal and Dr.Kitchlew. For this O' Dwyer

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<sup>300</sup> *File No. 1217, The Disorders of 1919 (political events) (Ganda Singh collection, Punjabi University, Patiala), p.11.*

<sup>301</sup> *Report of the Disorders Inquiry Committee, Vol. III, p.179.*

<sup>302</sup> Ravinder Kumar, *Essays on Gandhian Politics, The Rowlatt Satyagraha of 1919*, p. 281.

<sup>303</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (A) February, 1920, No. 421-31 (N.A.I.); V.N. Datta, Jallianwala Bagh, p 70; The Tribune, 11 April, 1919 and K.S. Ghosh, The Role of Honour, Vidya Bharati, Calcutta, 1965, p.336.*

sent an order to Irving (the Deputy Commission Amritser) to arrest Dr. Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal and sent them under escort to Dharmsala.<sup>304</sup>

Subsequently, on April 10, Dr. Satyapal and Kitchlew were called upon to report themselves at the Deputy Commissioner's residence, and they were shown the order of deportation received from the provincial Government and the two were bundled off to Dharmsala in motor cars at 10:30 am with an escort, in charge of Mr. Rehill, Superintendent of police.<sup>305</sup> When people became aware of it, complete hartal was observed in the city. The people had already incensed by the news of Gandhi's arrest. After some time ardent followers of the deportees urged people to close their shops and by 11:00 a.m. almost all business of transactions' in the city were suspended and assembled in the Aitchison Park, with the intention of proceeding to the Deputy Commissioner's house and demanding their release<sup>306</sup>. After some time near about 12 p.m. the crowd started their journey to the Deputy Commissioner's residence in order to demand the release of their

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<sup>304</sup> *Proceedings Home Political (Deposit)*, June, 1919, No .23. (N.A.I.)

<sup>305</sup> *Proceedings Home Political (Deposit)*, June, 1919, No. 23 (N.A.I.) *The Tribune* 11 April, 1919, File No. 357, *Jallianwala Bagh Massacre*, p.6, (Ganda Singh collection, Punjabi University Patiala); Bakhshish Singh Nijjer, *Punjab under the British Rule, 1902-32, Vol.II*, K.B. Publications, New Delhi, 1974, p.69.

<sup>306</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (Deposit)*, June, 1919 No.23 (N.A.I.); S.R. Bakshi, *Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy*, pp. 34-35.

respective leaders. The mobs were being led by Ratto and Bugga, Kitchlew's Lieutenant. They were unarmed. The mob passed by the National Bank, the Town Hall and Christian mission Hall. They came across some Europeans, but did not show any sign of violence against them. When they were at the railway level crossing, the police stopped them and fired at them and half a dozen of them were killed and others wounded over 30.<sup>307</sup>

This tragedy greatly incensed the mob. By 1 p.m. The crowd had armed itself with sticks and *lathis*. This position becomes extremely tense. The angry crowd rushed to the city and perpetrated a 'series of brutal acts of violence'. The National Bank of India was attacked and its Manager, Mr. Stewart and his assistant Scott were brutally beaten to death.<sup>308</sup> The office furniture was heaped on the bodies and set on fire and the building was set on fire too and the store *godowns* were burst open and their contents looted. The Alliance Bank, close to the Queen Victoria statue was attacked next. G.M. Thompson, the manager, fired through a crevice in the door and killed one of the attackers. He then ran up the steps to the top of the roof, but he

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<sup>307</sup> *The figure of Casualties in congress Punjab Inquiry Report was 20 dead and many wounded p.48, quoted in Khushwant Singh, History of the Sikhs, Vol. II, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1966, p. 163.*

<sup>308</sup> *Proceedings Home Political (Deposit) June, 1919, No. 23 (N.A.I.)*

was caught, beaten and murdered<sup>309</sup> and his body burnt. The Chartered Bank in the neighborhood of the National Bank was also attacked. But its manager, J.W. Thompson, and his assistant, Ross, who were hiding at the top of a staircase but the two were saved by a party of police from the kotwali.<sup>310</sup> The dead bodies and the wounded were carried through the bazaars. Sergeant Rowlands, the electrician to the Military works, had gone into the city. Hearing that disturbances had broken out, he endeavored to make his way back to the fort. But he was attacked near the Rego Bridge and murdered.<sup>311</sup> Several buildings including banks, telephone exchange, Town Hall, Religious Book's Society Depot and the Indian Christian Church were attacked and set on fire.<sup>312</sup> The Sub-post office at the Golden Temple, Majitha Mandi and Dhab Basti Ram were ransacked and looted.<sup>313</sup> By 2 p.m. all railway telegraph wires were cut off and the railway line was also damaged. The station buildings of Bhagatan Wala and Chharta were burnt down and the goods shed and a wagon were looted.<sup>314</sup> Besides Miss Sherwood, a lady missionary was pursued by an angry crowd when she was going on her way to one of her schools.

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<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>310</sup> *Proceedings Home Political (Deposit)* June, 1919, No. 23 (N.A.I.).

<sup>311</sup> Raja Ram, *Jallianwala Bagh Massacre*, p. 100.

<sup>312</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (Deposit)*, June, 1919, No. 23 (N.A.I.).

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>314</sup> V.N. Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh*, p. 80.

She was intercepted and beaten with shoes and Sticks till she fell unconscious and was taken to be dead. Later she was picked up by some Hindus who revived her and gave her first aid.<sup>315</sup> The *Zenana* hospital was attacked and every effort was made by the mob to find the lady doctor, Mrs. Easdon, who was hiding up stairs. Had she been found she would have most certainly lost her life<sup>316</sup>. The looting, although it soon became sporadic, was to continue late into the night and property worth million of rupees were stolen from the *godowans*.

In view of the events of the day of 10<sup>th</sup> April the deportation of Dr. Kitchlew and Satyapal, appears to have been a disastrous measure. If Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Kitchlew had not been arrested, there would have led the masses on the correct path. Before the 10<sup>th</sup> April demonstrations in Amritsar were peaceful and there was no any conflict between the police and people. It was only from the 10<sup>th</sup> April that events set to take sinister character. The crowd had not any intention of getting violent with the Deputy Commissioner or with any other European. According to the officials report of the 10<sup>th</sup> April, the number of those killed was twelve and number of wounded between twenty to thirty<sup>317</sup> but Maqbool Mahmood

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<sup>315</sup> *Proceedings Home political, (Deposit), June, 1919, No. 23 (N.A.I.)*

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>317</sup> *Disorders Inquiry Committee, Vol. III, p.19; V.N. Datta, Jallianwala Bagh, p. 83*

believed that the number of the killed to be between twenty and thirty.<sup>318</sup> On this day five Europeans were killed.

At 4:15 the Deputy Commissioner sent a wireless message managed to the Lieutenant Governor to launch expiate for crushing the protest by enforcing immediate reinforcements- infantry, gunners and plane. He described the situation very serious. At about 3:00 p.m. a train conveying 270 Gurkhas to Peshawar was detained and 100 of them were armed with weapons from the fort and deployed to reinforce the existing pickets on the railway station and the civil lines.<sup>319</sup> Later after 10 p.m. 300 troops from Lahore came down to Amritsar under the command of Major Macdonald. He took over the command of the army at Amritsar from Captain Massey, an officer of junior rank.<sup>320</sup> At 5:00 a.m. in the morning of 11<sup>th</sup>, approximately 350 men arrived from Jullundur. Two aero plans flew over Amritsar at 7 p.m. An armored train with two British Officers and 34 men arrived from Lahore at 9:00 p.m. and a party of one British officer and 20 gunners reached the city at 10:30 the following morning.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> V.N.Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh*, p. 69.

<sup>319</sup> V.N. Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh*, p.84.

<sup>320</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (B)*, February, 1920, No. 373 (N.A.I.)

<sup>321</sup> V.N. Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh*, p.85.

Shortly after noon on 10<sup>th</sup> April the citizens of Lahore also learnt that Mahatama Gandhi had been arrested at Paliwal and learnt about the unfortunate happening in Amritsar. After it, within an hour of the dissemination of the News of arrest the people and merchants of Lahore declared the hartal, and closed the shops. Inside the walled city groups of individuals poured out from the *Mohallas* into the bazaars, their indignation of Gandhi's arrest, and at the outrages perpetrated in Amritsar.<sup>322</sup>

On the 11<sup>th</sup> morning, the Deputy Commissioner sent for Mr. Yasin and Mr. Maqbool Mohmood at the railways station, and gave them an order to be conveyed to the people that the city was under the military control; and that not more than four persons would be allowed to go with a corpse.<sup>323</sup> Mr. Moqbool then returned to the city and read out the order of Mr. Irving to a big crowd inside the Hall Gate; "The troops have orders to restore order in Amritsar, and to use all the force necessary. No gathering of persons, no procession of any sort will be allowed. All the gatherings will be fired on. Any person leaving the city, or persons gathering in groups of more than four, will be fired on.

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<sup>322</sup> Ravinder Kumar, *Essays on Gandian Politics, The Rowlatt Satyagraha of 1919*, p. 282.  
<sup>323</sup> Alfred Draper, *Amritsar The Massacre that ended the Raj*, Macmillan India Ltd., 1981, pp.75-77.

Respectable persons should keep indoors until order is restored."<sup>324</sup>

The people were not satisfied with the order. During these days, Amritsar looked like an army camp. Because on 11<sup>th</sup> April, many troops of the British army had arrived at Amritsar from other cities.

Against the Gandhi's arrest, and later due to the outbreak at Amritsar, shops were immediately closed in Lahore on April 10<sup>th</sup>. Crowd moved within the city in excitement. The army pickets at the Government buildings and European Hotels. A huge procession with a black flag, shouting Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai and proceeded through Anarkali Bazar to the Mall. Mr. Fyson, the District Magistrate, ordered the police to fire for the dispersal of crowd. As a result of firing one man was killed and about seven were wounded. After it, Lahori gate came under fire in which 18 persons were wounded. From 11 to 18 April a complete hartal was observed in Lahore. On April 11 and 12 meetings were held in Badshahi Mosque<sup>325</sup>. In Kasur, against the deportation of Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Kitchlew and Gandhi's arrest strikes were called

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<sup>324</sup> *Report of the Commissioners appointed by the Punjab Sub-Committee of the Indian National Congress, Vol. II, Lahore 1920, PP. 32,54; Statement No. 19 and 5., quoted in Raja Ram, Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, p. 105.*

<sup>325</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, February, 1920, No. 421-31 (N.A.I.)*



on April 11 and 12. Nadir Ali Shah, a leader of crowd delivered a fiery speech. As a result, the telegraph office was destroyed, the furniture set was to fire, booking office ransacked and disordered, an oil shed burnt, the telegraph wires cut off and all the goods inside the station building were looted or destroyed by the mob. Another place was Gujranwala, where the news of the events of 10<sup>th</sup> April at Amritsar inspired the people of Gujranwala to hold a hartal.

To improve the fast deteriorating situation at Amritsar, in the evening, of 11<sup>th</sup> April Reginold Edward Harry (R.E.H.) Dyer, the commander of Jullundur Brigade, received a message from Lahore to proceed at Amritsar and take charge there. After it Dyer left Jullundur by a car on the 11<sup>th</sup> April at 6:00 p.m. accompanied by Captain F.C. Briggs, Brigade Major of the 45 Infantry Brigade. He arrived at Amritsar 9:00 p.m. and took over the charge from Macdonald.<sup>326</sup> Soon after his arrival at Amritsar, he halted at the railway station where he called a meeting of the District Magistrate and superintendent of police. He was apprised of the earlier events in the city. After it, Dyer shifted his headquarters from railway station to Ram Bagh.

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<sup>326</sup> *File No. 1166, Disorder inquiry Committee Report, 1920, p. 27, (Ganda Singh Collection, Punjabi University Patiala)*

Next day i.e., on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April, at about 10 a.m. Dyer, along with an escort force of 125 British and 310 Indian troops marched through the city. During the day, some important person's arrest was made by the police, which included Bugga and Dina Nath.<sup>327</sup> Dyer issued a prohibitory order stating that if the inhabitants of Amritsar made any kind of mischief tantamount to the breach of law and caused damage to the Government property, the offenders will be punished according to military law and all meetings are hereby prohibited.<sup>328</sup> In the afternoon of 12<sup>th</sup> April by 4 p.m. a meeting was arranged in the campus of the Hindu Sabha School at Amritsar with the initiative of Hans Raj.<sup>329</sup> According to Raja Ram, Hans Raj was an active in Amritsar.<sup>330</sup> According to Pearay Mohan in his comprehensive work on *An Imaginary Republic* opined that Hans Raj was a secret agent of the local police and that he was instrumental in collecting people at one place so that it might have been easy for General Dyer to deal them.<sup>331</sup> He announced that a meeting would be convened the next day in Jallianwala Bagh under the president ship of Lala Kanheya Lal, an esteemed resident of the town. The resolution

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<sup>327</sup> V.N. Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh*, p. 93.

<sup>328</sup> S.R. Bakshi., *Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy*, p. 37.

<sup>329</sup> *Disorders Inquiry Committee, Vol. III*, pp. 85-112.

<sup>330</sup> Raja Ram, *Jallianwala Bagh Massacre*, p. 107.

<sup>331</sup> Pearay Mohan, *An Imaginary Rebellion and How it was Suppressed*, Khosla Brothers, Lahore, 1920, pp. 17

was passed that a statement from Dr. Kitchlew would be read by his wife before the assembly of the people.<sup>332</sup> This decision received a wide publicity in the whole city. In those days, Government buildings as railways station itself looked like a military post. There was neither porter nor conveyance of any kind. At every step outside the city one could see nothing but military or police at short distances with rifles and bayonets.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> April was Sunday and the day of Baisakhi festival. In the Punjab, the harvest of Baisakhi is celebrated with great enthusiasm. It was the New Year Day of Hindus. For the Sikhs it is the day on which they founded the Khalsa, an organization of the 'Pure and Faithful' decided to the service of humanity by the great Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Peasants from all parts of state assemble in towns and cities. From time immemorial, Baisakhi had been celebrated at Amritsar the city was a sacred place for Sikhs and Hindus alike. From all over the district, thousands of people used to come to Amritsar for taking a dip in the holy tank on this day. The public meeting at Jallianwala Bagh had been arranged hastily and the Bagh being so near to Golden Temple so it was expected a meeting place that people in very large numbers would attend the meeting.

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<sup>332</sup> *Disorders Inquiry Committee, Vol. III, pp. 85-112.*

According to V.N. Datta, Jallianwala Bagh was the property of Bhai Hamit Singh Jallawalia, a courtier of Raja Jaswant Singh of Nabha, who had been a vakil in the service of Ranjit Singh. Jalla was his Sur name and Bagh means garden.<sup>333</sup> According to Raja Ram its original owner was 'Pandit Jalla, after whose name the garden came to be famous known as Jallianwala Bagh.<sup>334</sup> The Bagh was situated in the middle of the town and surrounded by narrow, mazy lanes. Long before 1919, houses had been built all around the Bagh with their back walls towards it. There was a small stretch of low boundary wall, about five feet high. The Bagh contained one small (tomb) Smadh towards the southern side and open well of quite a big circumference towards its eastern boundary. The main entrance gate was hardly three or four feet wide.

On the morning of 13<sup>th</sup> April at 9:00 a.m., General Dyer again marched through the streets of Amritsar and issued another proclamation and decided to see the imposition proclamation on personally in the city. Dyer went along with city Inspector Ashraf Khan and Sub-Inspector Obeidulla. They led the way on horse back. Behind them came Malik Fateh Khan, the

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<sup>333</sup> V.N. Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh*, p. 96.

<sup>334</sup> Raja Ram, *Jallianwala Bagh Massacre*, p.115.

Naib Tehsildar seated in a bamboo cart (Motorcycle) with a man beside him beating a drum. The order, in Urdu and Panjabi, was read out by the town crier at various places and whole process took two or three hours.<sup>335</sup> Starting from the Ram Bagh headquarters, the procession crossed the railway line at Hall Bridge, passed through Hall gate and came down to Hall Bazar. The procession passed through various streets and *chowks* and halted at 18 or 19 places.

The original version of proclamation read as follows:

"It is hereby proclaimed to all whom it may concern that no person residing in the city is permitted or allowed to leave the city in his own or hired conveyance or on foot without a pass. No person residing in Amritsar city is permitted to leave his house after 8:00 p.m. Any persons found in the streets after 8:00 p.m. are liable to be shot. No procession of any kind is permitted to parade the streets in the city or any part of the city or outside of it any time. Any such processions or any gathering of four men would be looked upon and treated as an unlawful assembly and dispersed by force of arms, if necessary."

Dyer returned to Ram Bagh at 1:30 p.m. According to Dyer, people were laughing while the proclamation was being read out.

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<sup>335</sup> V.N. Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh*, p.95.

People were saying 'this is all bluff'.<sup>336</sup> Soon after this proclamation a counter- proclamation was made by the leaders of the mass that a meeting would be held at Jallianwala Bagh at 4:30 p.m. Guru Ditta, a *Bania* and Balo *Halwai* were announcing in the city by beating an empty oil container, that a meeting would be held at Jallianwala Bagh which Kanhya Lal (a respectable citizen of Amritsar) would preside and give valuable advice to the people.<sup>337</sup> In fact no instructions had, however, been issued about the meeting by a Congress Committee and Lala Kanhya Lal knew nothing about it.<sup>338</sup>

At about 12:45 p.m. General Dyer received the news that a huge meeting was to be held at Jallianwala Bagh at 4:30 p.m. on the same day. People had started pouring into the Bagh after 2 p.m. At 4 p.m. he received definite information from Rehill (Superintendent of Police) that a crowd of 1,000 had assembled at Bagh. Thereafter, the news was confirmed by Mr. Leiwis, Manager of Crown *Cinema*.<sup>339</sup> Dyer thought it as a challenge to his authority. Dyer at once gave orders to his striking force to fall in. He took two armored cars arrayed with machine guns along with him. Dyer

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<sup>336</sup> Raja Ram, *Jallianwala Bagh Massacre*, p. 112; V.N. Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh*, pp. 94-95.

<sup>337</sup> *Disorders Inquiry Committee, Vol. III*, p. 116.

<sup>338</sup> *Disorders Inquiry Committee, Vol. III*. P.189; S.C. Mittal *Freedom Movement in Punjab (1905-1929)*, p. 126.

<sup>339</sup> *The Tribune*, 13 April, 1966 .

with the company of his favorite officers Briggs and Anderson, fifty rifle men, forty Gurkhas armed with their traditional weapons, the Kukris,<sup>340</sup> marched towards the Jallianwala Bagh. His force consisted of 25 rifles from the 1-9<sup>th</sup> Gurkhas, 25 rifles from the 54<sup>th</sup> Sikhs, the F.F. and 59<sup>th</sup> Sikhs, the 40 Gurkhas and two armored cars<sup>341</sup> and a police car with Rehill and Polmer. After entering the *Bazar*, they found that a very narrow passage led from there into the Bagh. Because the entrance of the Bagh was narrow, therefore, the armored cars were parked outside of the Bagh. At about 4:00 p.m. an aero plane displaying a flag circled low over the Bagh. The people panicked and began to move away but Hans Raj announced in the audience not to be afraid.

Dyer entered in Bagh between 5 and 5:15 p.m. He saw a vast crowd gathered there. The meeting was, at that time, being addressed by a man standing on a platform. Before the arrival of Dyer seven speakers had already addressed the gathering, including Hans Raj, Abdul Aziz, Gurbaksh Rai, Ram Singh, Dhan Singh, Abdul Majid and Brij Gopinath.<sup>342</sup> A picture of Kitchlew had been displayed and it was symbolized the president ship of

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<sup>340</sup> *Command. Papers, 771(1920), Report of Captain F.C. Briggs Appendix A to Statement by Dyer; V.N.Datta, Jallianwala Bagh, pp. 97-98.*

<sup>341</sup> *V.N. Datta, Jallianwala Bagh, p. 97.*

<sup>342</sup> *S.C. Mittal, Freedom Movement in Punjab (1905-1929), p.127.*

the meeting. The meeting was running on in a perfectly peaceful and orderly manner. The meeting had passed two resolutions, the first calling for the repeal of the Rowlatt Act and the second in connection with the firing of the 10<sup>th</sup> April.<sup>343</sup>

General Dyer had nothing to wait for. He had gone to the Bagh with a fixed mind and an iron determination. According to Briggs "it was very hard to estimate the size of the crowd. The General asked me what I thought the numbers were and I said about 5,000 or so but I believe it has been estimated at more like 25,000"<sup>344</sup> Dyer, standing on a raised platform inside the entrance, was struck by the diverse nature of the crowd. Dyer did not think it necessary to give any warning to the people. Dyer deployed his troops, 25 the *Gurkhas* riflemen on the left and 25 the *Baluchis* on the right. All this happened within thirty seconds. The ground on which the soldiers stood was at a higher level than the rest of the area. The General then instantly ordered them to open fire.<sup>345</sup> Immediately, the crowd shouted but authority uttered no need to worry; the troops were firing blanks. But they quickly lost their illusions, however, as people began to crumple and fall.

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<sup>343</sup> S.R. Bakshi, *Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy*, p.39.

<sup>344</sup> *Command. Papers, 771 (1920), Report of Captain Briggs Appendix A to statement by Dyer*, quoted in V.N. Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh*, p. 97.

<sup>345</sup> V.N. Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh*, p.99.



The firing continued for ten minutes and in that time 1650 rounds of 303 marks, VI ammunition were fired i.e. 33 rounds per rifle per man.<sup>346</sup> The firing ceased only after the ammunition ran out.

When the firing ceased, nothing expected dead bodies was visible in each and every corner of the Bagh. The Bagh was full of dead bodies. Hundred persons were badly wounded and they were crying for help. Some dead bodies were lying outside the Bagh. It so happened that the wounded persons who tried to run, could not survive and fell dead after a vain attempt to save themselves. According to Dyer's statement on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1919 to the General staff, he stated, "I fired and continued to fire until the crowd dispersed"<sup>347</sup> there was nobody to give them water. No medical aid was available for the people. Even those residents of Amritsar whose relatives had come to Bagh did not dare to enter the Bagh for quite some time to search for them. The Bagh thus looked like a mini battle-field which was full of numerous corpses and wounded persons. General Dyer left the Bagh, along with his force, at about 5:30 p.m. leaving behind a scene which was like a hell on earth. According to Girdhari Lal, who saw the scene closely:-

"I saw hundreds of persons killed on the spot. The worst part of the whole thing was that firing was

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<sup>346</sup> Alfred Draper, *The Massacre, That Ended the Raj*, p. 90.

<sup>347</sup> *Disorders Inquiry Committee, Vol. III* p. 203.

directed towards the gates through which people were running out. There were small outlets, four or five in all, and bullets actually rained over the people at all these gates....and many got trampled under the feet of rushing crowds and thus lost their lives....blood was pouring in profusion.....even those who lay flat on the ground were shot.....some had their heads cut open, other had eyes shot and nose, chest, arms and legs shattered".<sup>348</sup>

Everyone was in hurry because they knew about the order of Dyer that after 8:00 pm. nobody was to remain out of his house. So after 8:00 pm. there was no body in search of their near and dear ones. All searching parties had left the Bagh and the remaining lay wounded on the mercy of Dyer and God.

Different versions are given about the number of people assembled in the Bagh. In his statement to the Army Council, Dyer thought the crowd between 15,000 and 20,000. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya gave out the figure that varies among 16,000 to 20,000. According to Dr. Gurbax Rai, who is living at present, the crowd was not less then 15,000.<sup>349</sup>

There had been no agreement and it is rather difficult to know the exact number of those killed in Jallianwala Bagh. Dyer's

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<sup>348</sup> *Report and Evidence of the Sub-Committee of the Indian National Congress* (1920), p.55.  
<sup>349</sup> Jagjiwan Mohan Walia, *History of the Punjab 1799-1947*, Kalyani Publishers, Ludhiana, 1992, p.227.

estimate between 200 and 300 persons were killed, which he sent to the Lieutenant Governor. This estimate was based on the experience in France, where one man had been killed for every six shots fired.<sup>350</sup> To Dyer, the battle fields of France and Amritsar were the same. On the basis of J.B. Thompson's calculation, who was the chief Secretary, Punjab Government, it was estimated that not more than 291 people died in the Bagh.<sup>351</sup> According to the Government official Figures, 379 were killed and over 1200 were wounded.<sup>352</sup> However, the official figures seem to be very much on the lower side and the numbers of casualties were much higher. According to V.N. Tivraj, Honorary Secretary of Sewa Smati, the total number about 530 lost their lives.<sup>353</sup> Its figures based on a house to house Survey. In a letter to Gandhi, Swami Shradhanand wrote that, 'on the 13<sup>th</sup> in Amritsar not less than, 1500 persons must have been killed.<sup>354</sup> At the meeting of Imperial Legislative Council held on September 12, 1919, Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya said that the figure of 1,000 killed was near to truth by the official assertion.<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (Deposit)*, September, 1919, No.23 and (A) February 1920, No. 347-58 and K.W. (N.A.I.)

<sup>351</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (Deposit)*, September, 1919, No. 23.(N.A.I.)

<sup>352</sup> V.N. Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh*, p. 104.

<sup>353</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (Deposit)*, October, 1919, No. 31.(N.A.I.)

<sup>354</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (Deposit)*, September, 1919, No. 23, (N.A.I.); *The Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 7<sup>th</sup> August 1919, Calcutta.

<sup>355</sup> *Imperial Legislative Council Proceedings*, April, 1919 – March 1920, Vol. LVIII, p. 148.

Hasan Imam, a Bihar leader stated that he had collected details of 941 corpses left on the ground at Amritsar.<sup>356</sup> Lala Girdhari Lal who visited the Bagh after the firing, said 'I think it must have been above one thousand dead bodies in the garden.'<sup>357</sup>

At 10:00 p.m. Dyer, accompanied by a small force, visited his pickets and marched through the city in order to make sure that his orders were being obeyed. He found that it was absolutely quiet and not a soul was to be seen. A number of people who were present at meeting on that day or who visited the Bagh after firing was over to search their relatives, later narrated the tale of horror before the Congress Enquiry Committee. The statement of a one of them is reproduced below and draw up a picture of the ghastly scene.

Shrimati Attar Kaur, hearing that firing had taken place in the Bagh, went there in search of her husband, Bagh Mal, she entered by the side of Darbar Sahib and found the dead body of her husband lying with hundreds of others with the help of a few relatives, she managed with great difficulty to remove the dead body on a cot to her house at about 9:00.<sup>358</sup> According to Dyer

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<sup>356</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (Deposit), August, 1919, No. 51.(N.A.I.)*

<sup>357</sup> *Report of the Congress Inquiry Sub-Committee Evidence, p.1; S.C. Mittal, Freedom movement in Punjab (1905-1929), p. 128.*

<sup>358</sup> *The Tribune, 13 April, 1961.*

there were no children and women in the Bagh. But in his evidence Lala Girdhari Lal referred to the dead bodies of groups of people and young boys also. He did it to the Congress Committee and M.R. Jayakar noted that a number of children had died in the Bagh<sup>359</sup>

After the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, the Punjab Government proclaimed Martial Law at Amritsar and later on extended it to other districts like Lahore, Gujranwala, Lyallpur and Gujrat. Though the idea of Martial Law was advocated by Lord Kitchner as early as in 1909, it had not given a concrete form.<sup>360</sup> But on 13<sup>th</sup> April 1919, in consultation with the general officer commanding of the 16<sup>th</sup> division and the chief justice, of the High Court, O' Dwyer requested the Government of India to direct him to suspend the functioning of ordinary criminal courts in Amritsar and Lahore districts, to impose Martial Law therein and to direct trials of offenders, under the regulation of 1804, by Court Martial.<sup>361</sup> After discussion Government proclaimed a Martial Law in Lahore and Amritsar on April 15, and it was extended to Gujranwala, on the 16<sup>th</sup>, to Gujrat on 19<sup>th</sup> and Lyallpur on the 24<sup>th</sup>.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> V.N. Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh*, pp. 105-06.

<sup>360</sup> *Proceedings Home Political (B)*, May, 1919, No. 551-605 (N.A.I.)

<sup>361</sup> *Proceedings Home Political (B)*, May, 1919, No. 551-605 (N.A.I.); *Report of the Disorders Inquiry Committee*, p.104.

<sup>362</sup> S.C. Mittal, *Freedom Movement in Punjab (1905-1929)*, p. 129.

Later O' Dwyer offered several reasons in *Defence* of the continuance of Martial Law in Punjab. The main reasons given by him views were limited number of European troops in Punjab, reduced military efficiency of Indian troops, presence of demobilized men, attempts to undermine the loyalty of Indian troops, signs of revolutionary movement, Turkish problem, railway strikes and deplorable economic condition of Punjab.<sup>363</sup> Indian Government seemed more inclined to relax the restrictions imposed by the Martial Law in province. On May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1919 the Government of India enquired the Punjab Government about the early abrogation of Martial Law. But in reply, the Punjab Government argued that the relaxation of the restrictions should be gradual. Finally Martial Law was maintained for a considerably longer period on railway lines. On June 7 at Amritsar, Sir Edward Douglas Maclagan, the Lieutenant Governor, announced that except on the railway, Martial Law would be discontinued at midnight on the 9<sup>th</sup> in the districts of Amritsar, Gujranwala and Lyallpur and at midnight of the 11<sup>th</sup> at Lahore. It was finally withdrawn from railway lines on August 25.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> *Proceedings Home Political (B)*, May, 1919, No. 551-605 (N.A.I.).

<sup>364</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (A)*, February, 1920, No. 421-31 and *Proceedings Home Political, (A)*, September, 1919, No. 108 (N.A.I.).

During the period of Martial Law General Dwyer's actions were atrocious. In Amritsar, he had cut off the city's water and electric supply, lawyers were compulsorily recruited as special constables and made to patrol the streets and carry furniture like colliers. All the residents were ordered to *Salaam* every Englishman whom they saw and those who refused were brought to this lane for creeping with their bellies. Whosoever disobeyed was arrested and kept in the lock-up. Some were ordered to stand up in the sun. One of the most astounding inventions of Dyer's fertile brain was the 'crawling order'. He issued order on April 19 that the lane in which Miss Sherwood had been assaulted was set apart for flogging people and for making those who passed through it to crawl on their bellies. Pickets were placed at certain points in the street to force obedience to this order.<sup>365</sup> "298 persons were tried before the Martial Law commissioners on Major charges. Of these 218 were convicted; 51 were sentenced to death, 46 to transportation of life, 2 to imprisonment for ten years, 79 for seven years, 10 for five years, 13 for three years and 11 for lesser periods.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> *Report of the Disorder Inquiry Committee*, p. 204.

<sup>366</sup> R.C. Majumdar, *Struggle for Freedom: the History and Culture of the Indian People*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, second edition, Bombay 1978, p. 307.

The administration of Martial Law was harsher at Lahore than any city in the province. The curfew was imposed and the people who went out after 8:00 p.m. were likely to be shot, flogged, fined or imprisoned. The army administration ordered shopkeepers to open their shops on pain of being shot and having their stores distributed free to the public. The educated classes especially students were the main victims of Martial Law. It was ordered that the students of D.A.V. college, Dyal Singh college and of King Edward Medical college should attend roll call four times a day for a period of nearly three weeks from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> April onwards. In order to present themselves for roll-call, a large number of students were compelled to cover 16 miles every day in the hot May sun of Lahore. Motor cars and motor cycles belonging to the Indians were commandeered for the use of authorities. Public conveyances were ordered to report themselves daily at appointed places. 300 *tonga* drivers were commandeered.<sup>367</sup> Under the Martial Law administration, important newspapers were prosecuted.

Four commissions were set-up in Lahore. These commissions were set up for the purpose of trying offences under the Regulation of 1804. These four commissions tried 114 cases

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<sup>367</sup> Jagjiwan Mohan Walia, *History of the Punjab (1799-1947)*, p. 278.



involving 852 accused. Out of these 581 were convicted, 108 persons were sentenced to death, 265 were given transportation for life, and 5 were awarded imprisonment for 10 years, 85 for seven years and 104 for shorter periods. Substantial changes were made by the local Government in these sentences.<sup>368</sup> In Lahore also the whipping posts were set up. According to the Minority Report of the Disorders Inquiry Committee there were 80 ordinary cases of flogging and whipping.<sup>369</sup>

In Gujranwala district, the administration of Martial Law was carried on in a 'most brutal and inhuman form'. Gujranwala was selected to bombing and machine-gunning from the air. Major Carbiery dropped bombs on the Khalsa High School and on people in two villages Chukharkhana and Mahnianwala without knowing reason of their gathering.<sup>370</sup> Travelling was also banned for some time. In order to compel people to open their shops, an order was passed that those shop-keepers, who would be found disobeying the order of the police, would be liable to be punished by flogging and the people were ordered to *salaam* all British men. Similarly other places like Kasur, Wazirabad, Nizamabad, Akalgarh, Ram

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<sup>368</sup> *Report of the Disorders Inquiry Committee*, p.106; *Imperial Legislative Council, Proceedings, 10<sup>th</sup> September 1919*; Supplementary-I, p. 1-46, quoted in S.C. Mittal, *Freedom Movement in Punjab (1905-1929)*, p.133.

<sup>369</sup> *Report of the Disorders Inquiry Committee (Minority Report)*, p. 232.

<sup>370</sup> S.C. Mittal, *Freedom Movement in Punjab (1905-1929)*, p. 33.

Nagar, Hafizabad, Sheikhupura, Sangla, Moman, Nawanpind, Jalapur Jattan (a Sikh village) Malakwal, Lyallpur, Gojra and Chak No. 149 (colonized by Sikh Jats) and Gujrat also suffered indignities due to the Martial Law.<sup>371</sup> In the period of Martial Law nearly 1,200 persons were killed and at least 3,600 wounded.

When the news of the tragic incident percolated out of Punjab, India was convulsed and there was an outbreak of criticism and condemnation and a serious expression of sense of discontent and fury against the British rule for its failure to maintain perfect law and order without using illegal, vastly questionable, heartless, treacherous and horrible means. Dyer's action was criticized in various meetings and conferences. Brutal and strong punishments were called for General Dyer and other administrators of Martial Law and the urgent release of political and other prisoners' arrests and convicted before and during the Martial Law. But the press in England also supported Dyer's action. Prominent Indians showed the great resentment against the British Government. Rabindranath Tagore renounced his knighthood and wrote to the Viceroy: 'The time has come when badges of honor make our shame glaring in their incongruous

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<sup>371</sup> Khushwant Singh, *History of Sikhs Vol. II*, pp. 165-66.

context of humiliation and I for my part wish to stand shorn of all special distinctions by the side of my country'.<sup>372</sup> C.F. Andrews called the Jallianwala Bagh massacre butchery, adding, 'English honor has departed'.<sup>373</sup> Mrs. Annie Besant visited Jallianwala Bagh in December 1919. She remained there for half an hour without saying a word, tears flowing from her eyes.<sup>374</sup> Pandit Motilal Nehru had visited the Jallianwala Bagh and described it as a most gruesome sight, corpses still decomposing in the big well. Shooting practice on 25,000 natives from a raised platform, walls pierced with bullets.<sup>375</sup> Mahatma Gandhi also visited Amritsar. According to Andrews C.F. "Gandhi's visit to Amritsar on 4 November 1919, broke effectively the evil spell of terror in Amritsar. It was a day of universal rejoicing, women with children marched with devotion"<sup>376</sup> and Gandhi called the Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy as an 'unexampled act of barbarity'. According to M.A. Jinnah's views the Jallianwala Bagh event as a 'physical butchery'.<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> *The Statesman*, 5 June, 1919.

<sup>373</sup> *The Statesman*, 18 June, 1919.

<sup>374</sup> S. Gopal, *Selected works of Jawahar Lal Nehru 1903-24, Vol. I*, New Delhi, 1972-79, p 130.

<sup>375</sup> *Note Book No.II (pencil notes)*, Motilal Nehru private paper (N.M.M.L).

<sup>376</sup> *The Tribune*, 7 November, 1919.

<sup>377</sup> Micheal Edward, *The last days of British Rule*, London 1963, p. 49, quoted in S.C. Mittal, *Freedom Movement In Punjab (1905-1929)*, p. 143.

The tragedy infuriated whole country and was criticized by whole country. When the Jallianwala Bagh massacre was being criticized in all country then for the inquiry of this event a Committee was established. The main impulse for initiating an enquiry into the recent disturbances came from Montagu, the Secretary of the State for India. In his telegram to the Viceroy on 18<sup>th</sup> June, 1919 he reiterated his stand: 'you cannot have disturbances of this magnitude without an enquiry into their causes'.<sup>378</sup> In the beginning the Government of India rejected Montagu's proposal. Because the Government of India believed, such an enquiry, was bound to revive 'old bitterness' and result in a 'regular indictment of the Government of India'.<sup>379</sup> But in later, Government agreed for this. Government stated that the objective of enquiry ought to be to find out, 'who organized the disorders and to inquiry into original occurrences'. The Governments of Bengal, Bombay, Delhi and Punjab were opposed to it. Finally, on 18<sup>th</sup> July Montagu informed the Viceroy that he is making a statement in parliament to the effect that you are going to appoint a committee and have asked me to select a chairman..... it would sooth the delegation here.<sup>380</sup> The viceroy had no alternative but to

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<sup>378</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (A)*, October, 1919, No. 421-24. (N.A.I.).

<sup>379</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (A)*, February, 1920, No. 465-81 and K&W (N.A.I.).

<sup>380</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (A)*, October, 1919, No. 421-24 and see also (A) August 1919, No. 1-16 & K.W. (N.A.I.).

yield and his telegram to Montagu on 23<sup>rd</sup> July communicated his acceptance of enquiry.<sup>381</sup> The Government of India opposed the committee of enquiry. Finally, on 14 October 1919 the Governor-General-in-Council, with the approval of the Secretary of State for India decided to appoint a committee to investigate the disturbances in Punjab, Delhi and Bombay and pin point their causes and measures taken to cope with them. The Disorders Inquiry Committee famous as the Hunter Committee from the name of its chairman. Lord William Hunter was ex-Solicitor-General and the Senator of the college of Justice in Scotland. Other members of the Committee were G.C. Rankin Judge of High Court Calcutta; W.F. Rice, additional secretary to the Government of India, Home Department; Major General George Barrow, commander the Peshawar Division; Pandit Jagat Narayan, Thomas Smith, both members of the Legislative Council United Provinces; Chimanlal Harilal Setalvad, advocate High Court Bombay; and Sardar Sahibzada Sultan Ahmed Khan, Muntazim-ud-Doula, member for appeals, Gwalior state. The Secretary of the committee was H.G. Stokes, Secretary to the Government of Madras.<sup>382</sup> The budget estimate for the enquiry was Rs.212, 000. The Committee began its hearings on the 29<sup>th</sup> October and sat for

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<sup>381</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (A)*, October, 1919, No. 421-24 (N.A.I.).

<sup>382</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (A)*, October, 1919, No. 187-197 (N.A.I.); S.R. Bakshi, *Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy*, p. 83.

a total of forty six days, eight of them in Delhi, twenty nine in Lahore, Six in Ahmadabad and three in Bombay.<sup>383</sup> The majority report dealt with the occurrences in Delhi, Bombay presidency, Punjab, declaration of Martial Law and the Kind of administration in these provinces.<sup>384</sup>

The Hunter Committee prepared a report which was drafted mainly in Agra. Minority of three Indian members dissented from the European Majority on some issues and produced separate report. In their final findings, the members of the committee were not unanimous in their opinions obviously the report, although published in one volume, had two phases-the first dealing with the majority report agreed upon by William Hunter, G.C. Rankin, W.F. Rice, George Barrow and Thomas Smith and the second dealing with the minority report signed by Jagat Narayan, C.H. Setalvad and Sultan Ahmed.<sup>385</sup>

Both the European and Indian members of Committee discussed Dyer's action and criticized him in two respects. First that he started firing without giving the people who had assembled a chance to disperse and second that the continued firing for a substantial period of time after the crowd had

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<sup>383</sup> *Proceedings Home Political,(A)* June, 1920, No. 235-79 (N.A.I.)

<sup>384</sup> *Proceedings Home Political,(A)* October, 1919, No. 187-197. (N.A.I.)

<sup>385</sup> *Disorders Inquiry Committee Report, pp. 1-142 and 145-236.*

commenced to disperse.<sup>386</sup> Except of these criticism both Indian and the European members justified the firing resorted to by the police and the military<sup>387</sup>. The Indian leaders, on their part, saw the Hunter Committee as a child of the ruling authority. The Congress boycotted the committee. As a consequence of the boycott it was decided to set up a parallel non-official Inquiry Committee of which Gandhi, C.R. Dass, Abbas S. Tayabji, M.R. Jayakar and K. Santanam would be members. Santanam acted as its secretary.<sup>388</sup> In the Punjab, the Committee was assisted by C.F. Andrews, Sarla Devi and Dewan Nirjan Parshad in collecting evidence. The Congress published its report on 26 March 1929. The Government described it as a 'monstrously mysterious exparte'<sup>389</sup> document which took no account of the opposite view. But precisely the same charge had been made against the Hunter Report by its Indian critics.

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<sup>386</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (Deposit)*, April, 1920, No. 91 (N.A.I.) V.N Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh*, p.119.

<sup>387</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (Deposit)*, April, 1920 No. 91 (N.A.I.)

<sup>388</sup> V.N. Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh*, p.123.

<sup>389</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, (Deposit)*, October, 1919, No, 62SSS (N.A.I.).

## CHAPTER – IV

### GURDWARA REFORM MOVEMENT

The establishment of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and Shiromani Akali Dal in December 1920 heralded a new era in the history of Punjab politics. The Gurdwara Reform Movement was started by Sikhs to free their Gurdwaras from the control of Mahants (Priests). Gurdwaras are the places for worship for the Sikhs. In the early days Gurdwaras were simple *Dharmshalas*. But with the passage of time these *Dharmshalas* became a centre of Sikh community, where, apart from worship and religious ceremonial activities connected with births, baptisms, betrothals, marriages and obsequies were observed. There was a free kitchen, the *Guru-Ka-Langar*, and also a school (Pathshala) where children learnt the alphabet and their daily Prayer.<sup>390</sup> These *Dharmshalas* were later called Gurdwaras. In other words the *Dharmshalas* or Gurdwaras were the important institution of the Sikhs. According to Sikh tradition the priests in the early days as well as other persons were placed in-charge of various Gurdwaras. It was in tune with the advice of Guru Nanak. Moreover, they

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<sup>390</sup> Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs, Vol. II*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1966, p. 194.



wished to dedicate their life to prayer and service of the community.<sup>391</sup> Further, They did not look upon the offerings as their personal wealth or property. The Gurdwaras had no property in starting. Even some of the priests like Bhai Lakha Singh, Bhagat Singh, and Suba Singh had refused personal jagirs offered to them by the various Sikh chiefs.<sup>392</sup>

But during the period immediately following the death of Banda Singh Bahadur in 1716 and upto the rise of Sikh misals, the Sikhs were under the control of Bahadur Shah, Farrukh Siyyar and their governors in Punjab. During that time a large number of Sikhs along with Sikh Preachers were forced to go into exile and the Sikh shrines passed under the control of *Udasis*.<sup>393</sup> Gradually the Udasis in charge of various Gurdwaras were also well versed in the Sikh scriptures and devoted themselves chiefly to reciting the teachings of the Sikh Gurus.<sup>394</sup> Most of them, who looked to ecclesiastic jobs in different Gurdwara, were not attached to any particular shrine and some who established institutions admitted followers and became heads of their *deras*, *akharas* and Gurdwaras

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<sup>391</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, Dessh Sewak Agency, Jalandhar, 1922, pp. 14-15.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid., pp. 15-16.

<sup>393</sup> Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle : A Retrospect*, Atlantic Publisher & Distributor, New Delhi, 1988, p. 4.

<sup>394</sup> John Caambrell Oman, *The Order of the Udasis*, in the Punjab Past and Present, September, 1969, pp. 190-91.

and came to be known as the Mahants. Under the Sikh misals and thereafter under Maharaja Ranjit Singh and other Sikh rulers assigned large estates to their favorite shrines. Some important Gurdwaras and their *Granthies* had sizeable Jagir of lands. With the introduction of Canal irrigation, the income derived from land of the Gurdwaras assumed princely proportions.<sup>395</sup> After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1839 the Mahant of the Gurdwaras had become negligent in their duties to a certain extent.

But with the establishment of the British Government in Punjab the situation was entirely changed. After the annexation of Punjab in 1849 the administration of the most of the Sikh shrines had gone into the hands of those hereditary mahants (Priests) who were appointed and protected by the British administration and these men always worked in the interests of British Government. They were usually greedy, corrupt and immoral. In other words the religious section of the Sikh community had fallen a prey to a number of social evils. The *Dardar* Sahib at Amritsar and Tarn-Taran gradually passed into the hands of British Government. For a long time, it had been the custom for the Mahants of Golden temple that refused even the baptized Sikhs of the so-called lower

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<sup>395</sup> Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 1951, pp. 20-21.

castes to enter the temple freely. They had become the virtual proprietors of the Gurdwaras and their wealth. In many cases, with the Government officials, the priests got the Gurdwaras property transferred to their own names and became their owners.<sup>396</sup> Moreover, some of them had been leading luxurious life and squandered large earnings of Gurdwaras on wine and women.<sup>397</sup> In August 1906 certain visitors found the priest of Muktsar drunk and holding a music party within the temple.<sup>398</sup> Some priests sold a *bungah* of the temple of Tarn-Taran to Christians. Gurdwara Panja Sahib's priest Mitha Singh got the land attached to the Gurdwara transferred in his own name.<sup>399</sup>

Up to the beginning of Gurdwaras Reform Movement in the early 20th century there had been movements like Nirankari, the Namdhari and the Singh Sabha. In fact the Gurdwara movement was in the making. The Nirankari Movement started by Baba Dyal of Peshawar and Rawalpindi developed between 1854 and 1870. He preached against the idolatry, worship of graves and sought to restore the worship on one formless God (Nirankar) to remove the

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<sup>396</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 17.

<sup>397</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 942/1922 (N.A.I).

<sup>398</sup> Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, p. 74.

<sup>399</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 93.

evils that had slowly crept into the Sikh social and religious life.<sup>400</sup> But this movement could not make a big impact on the Sikhs because they still lacked in modern education and social awareness.

After the Nirankari Movement, there came the Kuka Movement. The movement soon became a powerful force among the Sikhs under the leadership of Baba Ram Singh, a carpenter saint of village Bhaini, District Ludhiana. This happened by 1863. Baba Ram Singh particularly enjoined upon his followers the worship of one God through prayer and meditation. The Kukas had incurred the displeasures of British rulers because they had boycotted English Schools, foreign goods, courts and post office services, preached self reliance and worn homespun Swadeshi clothes.<sup>401</sup> Baba Ram Singh also protested against some social evils like female infanticide, child marriage, and caste-system and dowry system.<sup>402</sup> Rooted in the Khalsa past the teachings of Baba Ram Singh seem to have had a wide appeal to the Sikh masses. With the increasing popularity of the movement, the Government began to take a very serious view of it. In 1871 some of his more fanatic

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<sup>400</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party : A Short History*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1977, p. 14.

<sup>401</sup> Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, p. 12.

<sup>402</sup> G.S. Chhabra, *Advanced History of Punjab, Vol. II*, Parkash Brothers Jalandhar, 1973, p. 448.

followers murdered some Muslim butchers of Amritsar, Raikot and Malerkotla and they were as a punishment, blown off from the mouths of cannon.<sup>403</sup> This event infuriated the whole province and the authority's action against the Kukas as it increased feelings against the British rule in Punjabi people which helped to the prepare ground for the Gurdwara Reform Movement in the early twentieth century.

After the *Namdharis*, Singh Sabha Movement was established by the Sikhs for improving the condition of the Sikhs by 1872 and after it. Due to the annexation of the Punjab, a number of Christian missionaries had moved into the province. So much so that four Sikh students of the mission school at Amritsar announced their intention for conversion into Christianity in 1873. Moreover, by the same time Pandit Shardha Ram Phillauri delivered a speech against Sikh faith at Amritsar in which he distorted the facts of Guru Nanak's life.<sup>404</sup> These events greatly shocked the Sikhs. To safeguard Sikhism a meeting was assembled by the prominent Sikhs at Amritsar. In this meeting they deliberated over the challenges facing the Sikh community and formed an association called Singh Sabha. Thakar Singh Sandhawalia was President of the Sabha and Gyan Singh was

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<sup>403</sup> Mohinder Singh, *The Akali struggle-A Retrospect*, p.7.

<sup>404</sup> G.S. Chhabra, *Advanced History of Punjab, Vol. II*, p. 456.

Secretary.<sup>405</sup> The main objectives of the Sabha were the revival of the teachings of the Sikh Gurus, the production of religious literature in Punjabi, the development of western education, reform and bring back into the Sikh fold the apostates.<sup>406</sup> Another Singh Sabha was established at Lahore in 1879 by a group of educated people. In 1883 these Sabhas met together and set up a general Sabha which was named Khalsa Diwan. With the efforts of Diwan, the Khalsa College, Amritsar was founded in March 5, 1892, by Sir James Lyall. This institution became a degree college in 1899.<sup>407</sup> Although, the Singh Sabha was not politically against the British Government, yet the development of the education among the Sikhs made them conscious of their religion and political disabilities. This movement awoke the Sikhs and prepared the ground for the genesis of Gurdwara Reform Movement directed against the Mahants and other vested interests in Sikh Shrines on the one hand and against the British imperialism in Punjab on the other.

Another factor of estrangement between the Sikhs and the Government was Kamagata Maru Tragedy. In 1907 immigration laws were passed by the Canadian Government to prevent Asiatics from entering Canada, which affected the Indians most. To fulfill the immigrate conditions of the Government of Canada a ship took

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<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>406</sup> Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikhs, Vol. II*, p. 141.

<sup>407</sup> G.S. Chhabra, *Advanced History of Punjab, Vol. II*, p. 461.

on charter by Gurdit Singh, which was named as the Kamagata Maru. The ship was hired on a time charter and started off from Hong-Kong on 4 April 1914 with 105 passengers on board. Other passengers joined at Shanghai, Moje and Yokohamma during the way<sup>408</sup> when the ship reached Vancouver, where a whirlwind campaign was already afoot to deport them back to Hong-Kong.<sup>409</sup> The passengers appealed to the Canadian people and Government for justice and sent telegrams to India and England. But these efforts were unable to yield any positive response. After remaining for two months in Canadian water the Kamagata Maru started on its return voyage on the morning of 23 July 1914.<sup>410</sup> Its passengers were by this time in a bad temper as most of them had staked all their possessions on this venture. The ship arrived at Calcutta on the night of 29th Sept. 1914. At the Budge-Budge *harbour* Calcutta, through the foolishness of some police officer, a tragedy was enacted, where by the Government officer's ordered fire at innocent Punjabis who were returning from Canada.<sup>411</sup> This tragedy infuriated the whole Sikh community. In spite of this the revolutionary Gadar Propaganda made major headway in the Punjab during the First World War. Punjabi immigrants to Canada

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<sup>408</sup> H.K. Puri, *Gardar Movement-Ideology Organization Strategy*, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 1983, pp. 88-89.

<sup>409</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gardar Part-A Short History*, p. 131.

<sup>410</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gardar Part-A Short History*, p. 152.

<sup>411</sup> Sardul Singh Caveeshar,, *The Sikh Studies*, National Publications, Lahore, 1937, p. 188.

and U.S.A. were in the largest component of the Gadar Movement. During the war Gadrities made efforts to develop contacts with Indian soldiers, specially the Sikhs.<sup>412</sup> The mahants of Amritsar Sahib issued the *Hukamnamas* against the Gadrities. They were under the influence of the British Government.

Chronologically, the first incident was the Rikab Ganj affair. Gurdwara Rikab Ganj is in Delhi built on the site where the body of Guru Teg Bahadur, martyred by Aurangzeb, was cremated. After the transfer of the capital from Calcutta to Delhi in 1911, when in the course of the building of the new capital, the Government acquired land attached to Gurdwara Rikab Ganj in Delhi and demolished an old boundary wall.<sup>413</sup> This aroused the resentment of the radical Sikhs against the Government. There was talk of launching a morcha but due to the war, the issue was postponed for some time. But after the end of war, the agitation of Rikab Ganj was further started by the extremist Sikhs.

Another cause of foundation of Gurdwara Reform movement was the Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy. The Sikhs were thrown into the vortex of Martial law as a consequence of agitation against the Rowlatt Act. This martial law gave birth to the tragedy of

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<sup>412</sup> F.C., Isemonger and J., Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadar Conspiracy Report 1913-15*, Superintendent Government Printing Press, Lahore, 1919, p. 11.

<sup>413</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 53.



Jallianwala Bagh massacre. The Darbar Sahib Amritsar was already under the Control of Government. From the Akal Takhat authorities presents were given to General Dyer. Traditionally this *Takhat* was the symbols of Sikh baptismal. General Dyer was the main responsible person for the happening of Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy. The most painful for the victimized Sikhs that General Dyer was declared whitewash by the Golden Temple management and a *Saropas* (Symbols of Respect) was given to him and this was felt as a great insult into the whole Sikh community.<sup>414</sup>

These events and tragedies were main responsible factors for the initiation of the Gurdwara Reform Movement. The Sikhs felt the need to get free their Gurdwaras from the immoral priests. The Gurdwara Reform Movement started by the Sikhs to get free their Gurdwara from priests. When the Government took the side of priests, Sikhs held *morchas* to get free their Gurdwaras.

The Central Sikh League was established on 30 March 1919, in the Bradlaugh Hall, Lahore<sup>415</sup> Its inauguration was backed by a powerful section of the Sikhs for the constitutional reforms in Sikh community after the end of war. After the dissatisfaction of Montague-Chelmsford Reforms, the Central Sikh League got

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<sup>414</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Marchian Da Itihas*, Navyug Publishers, New Delhi, 1972, pp. 39-40; Ruchi Ram Sahni, *Struggle for Reform in Sikh Shrines*, Ganda Singh (Ed.) S.G.P.C., Amritsar, 1965, pp. 60 -61.

<sup>415</sup> *The Tribune*, 29 October, 1919.

involved in the Gurdwara Reform Movement as a result of its earlier interest in the Rikab Ganj affair. The second conference of Central Sikh League held on Oct. 1920 under the Presiding of Sh. Khark Singh.<sup>416</sup> At a subsequent meeting at Lahore the League passed a resolution of non cooperation against the British and decided to send volunteers (Shahidi Jatha) on 1st December to take forcible possession of Rikab Ganj land acquired by the Government and reconstruct the wall.<sup>417</sup> It also demanded that the management of the Khalsa College, Amritsar, be taken out of official control and placed in the hands of a Sikh Committee. The Government realized the seriousness of the situation. Before the Jatha arrived at Delhi, Maharaja Ripudaman Singh of Nabha, intervened in the matter and arranged for the reconstruction of the wall of Rikab Ganj on the behalf of the Government<sup>418</sup> So the first Sikh morcha ended successfully.

The second serious conflict between the Government and the Sikh occurred at Babe-di-Ber at Sialkot.<sup>419</sup> When mahant Harnam

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<sup>416</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas*, p. 26.

<sup>417</sup> Sukhmani Bal, *Politics of the Central Sikh League*, Book N' Book, Delhi, 1990, pp. 79-80.

<sup>418</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p.84; Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas*, p. 27.

<sup>419</sup> During his life time, Guru Nanak had visited Sialkot and sat under a Ber tree, which exist upto this time, the Gurdwara is known as *Babe-di-Ber*. After the annexation this institution was under the priests who were supporter of the British Government. After the death of one Priest his relative became the in charge of shrine. The priests there were mostly immoral. See for more detail, Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 121.

Singh died, his widow had a minor son appointed as successor under the guardianship of one Ganda Singh an Honorary Magistrate.<sup>420</sup> This event infuriated the whole Sikhs and a very strong voice of opposition was raised by the whole Sikhs against this outrage. Various Singh Sabhas sent telegrams to the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and Lieutenant Governor of Punjab. However, E.A.C. the collector ignored all opposition and sanctioned the mutation in favour of the Mahant Gurcharan Singh a minor son of the Mahant. The reformers reached by filing a civil suit in the court of the District Judge who ordered the plaintiffs to pay a court fee of 50,000 by 30 Aug. 1920.<sup>421</sup> The Sikhs had heroically fought their case in the courts, but law had utterly failed to help them. Having thus failed to achieve their object, they decided to help themselves. They formed a Khalsa Sewak Jatha and reformed the Gurdwaras in the city. They began to hold weekly and then daily morning services in the Gurdwara of Bade-di-Ber.<sup>422</sup> Ganda Singh placed many difficulties in the way of Sikh reformers. A party of *gundas* was daily seen visiting the place just at the time when worshippers from the city would come to hold their musical

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<sup>420</sup> Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle-A Retrospect*, p. 20.

<sup>421</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 132.

<sup>422</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian da Itihas*, p. 30; Sukhmani Bal, *Politics of the Central Sikh League*, p. 80.

performance. John Hadow, the son of Mr. Ganda Sihgh, is also said to have shown his pistol in the Gurdwara.<sup>423</sup> As agitation increased against the manager, the Gurdwara began to present a strange spectacle. While Sikh *Sat Sangh* hymns, were being conducted scores of *gundas* hovered about them, ready to pick up a quarrel and create a row. British Government authority was supporting the priests. Warrants were issued against Bhai Bhag Singh, Jawahir Singh, Nanak Singh, Ram Singh and Mahan Singh by Deputy Commissioner under the Section 107.<sup>424</sup> But finally Sikhs succeeded in taking over the control of the shrine. On 5 Oct. 1920, the Sikhs held a big Diwan and elected a permanent committee of 13 members for the control of the Gurdwara.<sup>425</sup> And cases of five Sikhs were withdrawn by the Government. So this agitation was successfully won by the Sikh community.

After the successness of Babe-di-Ber next action of the Sikhs was at Golden Temple, Amritsar. When the British Government annexed the Punjab the administration of the Golden Temple had gone under the control of Government Priests and the *Sarbrah* was appointed by the Government. They spent their time in appropriating the huge wealth of the shrine, and consequently,

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<sup>423</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian da Itihas*, p. 30

<sup>424</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 134.

<sup>425</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p.135.

neglected their daily religious duties. The precincts began to be used by pandits and astrologers and idols were openly worshiped in the holy compound.<sup>426</sup> The priests were corrupt and immoral and worked in the favour of British Government. For a long time, it had been the custom for the mahants of Golden Temple to refuse even the baptized Sikhs of the so called lower castes to enter the temple freely and worship there without any hindrance. During the early days of Gurdwara reform movement, Arur Singh was the Sarbrah (Manager) of the Golden Temple. And Gurdwara Tarn Taran which situated within 15 Kilometers of the City Amritsar had been under the same management as that of Golden Temple. Sarbrab Arur Singh declared that the Kamagata Maru Sikhs had been condemned at the Akal Takhat. During the Martial law regime, after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, General Dyer was given presents of Sikh baptismal symbols from the Akal Takhat authorities, where even Maharaja Ranjit Singh had been once condemned and punished for an un-Sikh like act.<sup>427</sup> This white washing of General Dyer by the Golden Temple management was felt as a great insult offered to the whole Sikh community. In spite of this during the time of Arur Singh, *Akal Takht* Sahib under the

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<sup>426</sup> Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle-A Retrospect*, p. 21.

<sup>427</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 148.

influence of the British Government issued the *Hukamnamas* against the Gadrities. One priest openly said that he would mix tobacco with the sacred food.<sup>428</sup> The Akali news paper criticized the Golden Temple management continuously. The Central Sikh League held a meeting at Amritsar and a resolution was passed that the management of the Golden Temple should be handed over to a representative committee of Sikhs. One day a priest during the holy congregation were abused at the Akal Takhat and refused was the morning service. The Sikhs came to the manager's home and complained. The manager of the temple promised to go himself next day at the morning service and to make the priest beg pardon. But he never came next day.<sup>429</sup> After it there was spread unrest among the Sikhs. Once again they organized public meetings, passed resolutions against the Sarbrah and Priests. The Deputy Commissioner supported the Sarbrah and sent police to disperse a meeting of Sikhs within the presents of the temple.<sup>430</sup> In spite of it the people held a meeting and passed resolution against the manager and authority inspite of the police. The manager was punished and sent on leave for two months. But public wanted his resignation. It was decided to hold a Diwan in Jallianwala Bagh

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<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 148-49.

<sup>430</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchain Da Itihas*, p. 41.

and threatened to take out a mock funeral of the effigy of the Sarbrah in case he failed to resign by 29 Aug. 1920.<sup>431</sup>

The Sikhs held a meeting on Jallianwala Bagh and Sarbrah appeared before the people and begged with folded hands their mercy and announced that he resigned.<sup>432</sup> Sh. Sunder Singh Ramgarhia was appointed the new manager by the deputy commissioner. It was a big achievement of Sikh reformers. After it on 12 Oct. 1920 a good many Akalis with a large number of duly baptized Sikhs from amongst the untouchables with *Karah Parshad* offerings went into the temple. The priests refused to offer prayer in their behalf. The Sikhs insisted on the right of every Sikh to get his prayer made at or by the temple. In the end, the Holy Book was consulted. Luckily, the controversy was settled in favour of the reformers.<sup>433</sup> Everyone, in the audience was visibly affected. The priests, too, were convinced and they agreed to offer prayer and accept the sacred food from the hands of the newly converted lower caste Sikhs. But this compromise by the priests of the Golden Temple was not approved of by the priests of the *Akal Takhat* and they vacated their seats and went away to their homes when the

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<sup>431</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 149.

<sup>432</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchain Da Itihas*, p. 42..

<sup>433</sup> Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, pp. 86-87; Ruchi Ram Sahni, *Struggle for Reform in Sikh Shrines*, p. 62.

whole party was going towards the Akal Takht. The reform party took up the challenge and appointed their own persons to take temporary charge of the sacred institution. After some time on 13 Oct. with the agreement of Deputy Commissioner and *Sarbrah* formed a provisional committee of nine Sikhs with the inclusions of Sardar Sunder Singh Ramgarhia (New Sarbrah) as its head.<sup>434</sup> With the transferred charge of the Golden Temple and Akal Takht, the attached Gurdwaras of Tarn Taran and Baba Atal also automatically under came the charge of Sikhs.

At that time Sikhs had no central organization, although some Sikh Jathas had been formed. For the Gurdwaras reform Sikhs wanted to establish a central organization. So accordingly it was now decided that the Sikhs should have a representative body of their own to manage all the Sikh Gurdwara. At that time *Jathedar* of Akal Takht came to the forefront for this, and a *hukamnama* was issued from the Akal Takht summoning a general assembly of the Sikhs to meet on 15th Nov., 1920, in the Golden Temple for the purpose of electing a representative committee of the Panth to control the Golden Temple and all other Gurdwaras. Invitations were sent by the Jathedar of Akal Takht to the four

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<sup>434</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchain Da Itihas*, pp. 844-45; Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle : A Retrospect*, p. 23.



Takhts, the Gurdwaras, Schools, Colleges, the Sikhs in the Army and other Sikhs organizations to send their representatives to meet in a conference.<sup>435</sup> The meeting was held on 15th and 16th of Nov., 1920, which was attended by over 10,000 Sikh representatives from all over the country.<sup>436</sup> As a result, a committee of one hundred seventy five members was formed to control all the temples of the Sikhs whether in the Punjab or elsewhere. The 36 members of the committee appointed by the Government were also included in this committee and named it as 'The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee' i.e. the S.G.P.C.<sup>437</sup> The inaugural meeting of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee came off at the Akal Takht on Dec. 12, 1920. The committee thus formed elected Sunder Singh Majithia as its first president; Harbans Singh Attari was elected as vice president and Sunder Singh Ramgarhia as Secretary.<sup>438</sup>

The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee was registered on 30th April 1921.<sup>439</sup> After some time Sunder Singh

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<sup>435</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchain Da Itihas*, pp. 46.

<sup>436</sup> Narain Singh Jhabber, *Akali Morche -te- Jhabbar*, Manjeet Printing & Publishing Company, Patiala, 1959, p. 73.

<sup>437</sup> S.C. Mittal, *Freedom Movement in Punjab, 1905-1929*. Concept Publishers, Delhi, 1977, p. 152; Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 164.

<sup>438</sup> Narain Singh Jhabber, *Akali Morche Ate Jhabbar*, p. 74; Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 168; Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchain Da Itihas*, p. 48.

<sup>439</sup> Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, p. 102.

Majithia resigned from the S.G.P.C. and was included in the Punjab politics. A new election of S.G.P.C. was held in July 1921. The new committee elected Sardar Kharak Singh as its President (a professed non-cooperator and a close associate of the Congress, the Central Sikh League and other Nationalist organizations in the country).<sup>440</sup> Sardar Sunder Singh Ramgarhia was vice President and Sardar Bahadur Sardar Mehtab Singh was its secretary. A strong executive committee was also elected.<sup>441</sup> A working committee of 7 members and local committees for the management of Golden Temple and Nankana Sahib were also formed.<sup>442</sup> In spite of these hundreds of local Gurdwara committees affiliated to the central committee and these begun working in different localities.

To achieve the objects of the S.G.P.C., on Dec. 14, 1920, it was decided that the movement should organize and name the organization as Shiromani Akali Dal to work for the reforms in the Gurdwaras, under the direction of the S.G.P.C. Because S.G.P.C. was a religious body of the Sikhs. As the time passed, the Akali Dal

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<sup>440</sup> For a detailed account see *Baba Kharak Singh Abhinandan Granth*, Quoted in Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle : A Retrospect*, p. 97.

<sup>441</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 170.

<sup>442</sup> Prominent members of the Executive Committee were : Teja Singh Samsundri, Amar Singh and Jasant Singh Jhabball, Sardar Dan Singh Vachhoa, Master Tara Singh, Teja Singh of Chuharkhana, Bhagat Jaswant Singh of Rawalpindi, Sarmukh Singh Jhabbal, Bawa Harkisan Singh, Master Sunder Singh Lyallpuri Centre of the Akalis, etc. For further details about the members a see confidential memorandum quoted in Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle : A Retrospect*, p. 97.

started to take interest in the Political Problem of the Sikhs as well, and later on it turned out to be their main political party. The word Akalis, were prepared to risk their all for the protection of their places of religion.<sup>443</sup> In the early days there was no organized system for the enrolment of the Akali volunteers to help of the Gurdwaras. When the Gurdwara reform movement began its momentum a regular system of recruitment of the Akali volunteers was started. Then Akali Jathas had come into existence to carry on reform in their respective areas. During that time a central organization of the Akalis was established, which named as the Shiromani Akali Dal.<sup>444</sup> Sardar Sardul Singh Caveeshar was appointed as the first president of the Shiromani Akali Dal.<sup>445</sup> It was this party which sent *jathas* to the different Gurdwaras and captured them and handed them over to the Shriomani Prabhandhak Committee for management. With the establishment of S.G.P.C. and Shiromani Akali Dal (S.A.D.), Gurdwara Reform Movement became powerful movement and a serious source of tension for the British Government.

When the one side of S.G.P.C. and S.A.D. was establishing itself during this time the other side of reformers was struggling at

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<sup>443</sup> Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle : A Retrospect*, p. 112.

<sup>444</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchain Da Itihas*, p. 51.

<sup>445</sup> Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle : A Retrospect*, p. 113.

Gurdwara Panja Sahib<sup>446</sup>. In the autumn of 1920 a committee of inquiry was formed to investigate into the complaints that were constantly made against its mahant. It was proved that the Mahant was of loose character.<sup>447</sup> When the Gurdwara reform movement was becoming powerful, the Mahant began to terrify with his power. When a Sikh Bhai Amir Singh objected to sacred food (Karah Parshad) being prepared by a smoker then Mahant's Brother took out a pistol and shot him in the thigh, this incident infuriated the whole Sikhs. Mahant Mitha Singh died in Nov. 1920. After the death of priest, the Sikh assembled in Amritsar and they send a Jatha of 25 Akalis under the leadership of Bhai Kartar Singh Jhabber to Panja Sahib to take it under the control of the Sikhs. The Jatha reached Panja Sahib on 18 Nov., 1920.<sup>448</sup> Next day the Jatha performed Kirtan in the temple. During the Kirtan performing, the Mahant Sant Singh stood up and declared in an excited speech that he had got no concern with the temple. The situation grew critical.<sup>449</sup> The assembled Sikhs charged him and declared him as a *Tankhahia*, who was not to be allowed to enter

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<sup>446</sup> Gurdwara Panja Sahib at Hassan Abdal was established by the Sikhs in the memory of Guru Nanak Dev. In 1906 Mahant Mitha Singh was priest of the Gurdwara, who got the Gurdwara land transferred to his own name. The Sikhs were complaining against the priest for his immoral character.

<sup>447</sup> Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, p. 103.

<sup>448</sup> Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle : A Retrospect*, p. 24.

<sup>449</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, pp. 176-77.

the Shrine till he went to the Akal Takht to beg pardon for his acts.<sup>450</sup> The Panja Sahib Gurdwara thus passed into the control of the Sikhs. On the birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, a big meeting assembled at Panja Sahib and a management committee of neighboring district's representative formed to look after it. Under the committee the Gurdwara had improved a great deal.

The Akalis took the charge of other local Gurdwara like Chomala Sahib, Lahore, Khara Sauda, Tham Sahib in village Jhambir Kalan, Lahore district, Kar Sahib Chola Sahib Village Bhaini in Ludhiana District, Shekhupura Gurdwara and Khadur Sahib in Amritsar district were under the control of S.G.P.C.<sup>451</sup> Under pressure of Sikh opinion, backed frequently by demonstrations of strength, the priests began to yield control over the Gurdwara properties to the elected committees and agreed to become paid granthis. Others were compelled to do so when the cases pending in the courts had been decided in favour of the Akalis.<sup>452</sup>

During the early days of 1921, struggle was started by the Akalis against the priest of Gurdwara Tarn Taran, because the Mahants of Gurdwara Tarn Taran became more independent. They

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<sup>450</sup> Narian Singh Jhabbar, *Akali Morche Ate Jhabbar*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>451</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, pp. 181-95.

<sup>452</sup> Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle : A Retrospect*, p. 25.

divided the whole income among themselves.<sup>453</sup> They introduced to the management a neglect able person. They came drunk to the temple many times. They openly called the temple their shops. No women's honor was safe in the temple. Towards the end of 1920 Bhai Lachhman Singh came with the girls of his school to pay his respect at Tarn Taran but he and the girls of his school were not allowed to enter the Gurdwara to sing Shabads.<sup>454</sup> On 11 Jan., 1921, the sewak Jatha of Tarn Taran advised the priests to perform kirtan (*Asa-di-War*) in the temple. But priests beat the Jatha with lathis.<sup>455</sup> The news of misbehaviour of the priests towards the visitors began to reach daily at the Akal Takht Amritsar. On 24th Jan., a woman visitor, before a general meeting of the Sikhs at Akal Takht stood up and to relate the sufferings her family had undergone at the hands of the priests of Tarn-Taran. Her speech created a great sensation, arousing the assembled Akalis to immediately march towards Tarn-Taran to purify the place.<sup>456</sup> Next day a jatha of 40 Akalis reached there, under the leadership of Bhai Teja Singh Bhhuchar. The Jatha reached the temple at about 8.00 a.m, when morning service was going on. Other side approximately

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<sup>453</sup> Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, p. 106.

<sup>454</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 198.

<sup>455</sup> *Life of Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid*, Tarn Taran, p. 369.

<sup>456</sup> Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle : A Retrospect*, p. 26.

70 priests prepared to attack the Akalis. But the latter kept quiet and with the efforts of older priests a clash was avoided through compromise. For the peacefully settlement a small meeting assembled at 4.00 p.m. In this meeting participated the representatives of Sikhs, Priests and some prominent persons of Tarn Taran city.<sup>457</sup> During this time priests decided to prepare themselves for an attack. In meeting five conditions were laid before the priests for acceptance by the Sikhs. The priests even announced their decision to accept the proposals and asked the Akalis to bring a fair copy of the document to be signed by them. When the Akalis were waiting for the document to be signed then it was around 9.00 pm that the dead drunk priests attacked upon the peaceful Akalis. Some Sikhs who were inside the Gurdwara were seriously wounded. The holy place was soon smeared with the blood of the wounded Akalis.<sup>458</sup> The whole attack lasted only for a few minutes, and in all about 17 Jatha men were wounded. When the other Sikhs entered the temple, they saw the holy place full of blood. The priests had already fled. The wounded were carried by Sikh Sangat to the hospital. On receiving this news the Tehsildar and the Police Inspector came at about 10.00 pm, and went to see

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<sup>457</sup> Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, p. 108.

<sup>458</sup> *Jiwan Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid*, p. 372.

what happened.<sup>459</sup> On 26th Jan. the Sikh washed and cleaned the blood stained temple. The temple having thus come into hands of the Sikhs. It was the first time bloodshed in the cause of Gurdwara struggle. After some days Bhai Hazara Singh Aldinpur and Bhai Hukam Singh died to their injuries.<sup>460</sup>

For the inquiry of this event a committee was appointed by the Congress. Dr. Kitchlew and Lala Girdhari Lal were prominent members of the Congress committee. According to them priests publicly confessed their serious crime and they handed over a written apology and placed themselves at the mercy of the Panth.<sup>461</sup> They requested to the Akalis not to sue them in court. After it a provisional managing committee formed under the presidentship of S. Balwant Singh *Subedar*, to control and manage the Gurdwara, pending the appointment of a regular committee by the S.G.P.C.<sup>462</sup> But other side sued by the priests on the Akalis. The district magistrate ordered a case to be started and police took up the investigation. On 9 July, 1921 the judge rejected the petition of the priests. Other cases were running, after a time of several months. In Oct. 1921 charges were framed against 16 priests and 17 Akalis.

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<sup>459</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 205.

<sup>460</sup> Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, p. 110.

<sup>461</sup> Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, p. 110; Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas*, p. 56.

<sup>462</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 208.



On 9th Jan., 1922, 15 Mahants were sentenced each to 3 years rigorous imprisonment and fine 50 Rs per man out of the Akalis ten, while the rest were sentenced each to one year's rigorous imprisonment with a fine of Rs. 50.<sup>463</sup>

Nankana Sahib Tragedy was the most important tragedy of the Gurdwara reform movement, which infuriated the whole Indian people against the priests of Gurdwara and the Government.<sup>464</sup> In the beginning of 20th century, the Gurdwara of Nankana Sahib was being managed by Mahant Sadhu Ram, who was leading irreligious, luxury and licentious life.<sup>465</sup> The priest was a notorious drunkard and adulterer. After his death, Kisan Das became successor of him, but Kisan Das was also no better. He organized a dancing party on his nephew's marriage and invited dancing girls in the party.<sup>466</sup> At the time of Gurdwara reform movement, the Gurdwara was being managed by Udasi Mahant, Narain Das, who was the successor of Kisan Das. He lived in the Gurdwara with a mistress.<sup>467</sup> He had by her two boys and two girls for whom he

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<sup>463</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 211.

<sup>464</sup> Nankana Sahib, birth place of Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, originally called Talwandi. It is most important position among the Sikh places of religious worship. During the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh a large Jagir (land) attached to Nankana Sahib for the built of big kitchen and free distribution of food to the visitors. With the opening of the canal the value and income of land increased enormously and the priests of Gurdwara became corrupt and immoral. For further details see Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, p. 113.

<sup>465</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, pp. 219-20.

<sup>466</sup> Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, p. 113.

<sup>467</sup> Khushwant Singh, *History of Sikhs, Vol. II*, pp. 198-99.

build two houses, one in Ram Gali at Lahore another at Nankana Sahib. In Aug. 1917, he invited dancing girls to the Janam Asthan and permitted perform singing even in the sacred place.<sup>468</sup> This behavior had widely infuriated the whole Sikh community and criticized by the various newspapers.<sup>469</sup>

After these tragedies, early in Oct. 1920, a big diwan held at Dharowal to discuss the pitiable condition of Nankana Sahib Gurdwara.<sup>470</sup> A resolution was passed and called upon the Mahant to reform. But instead of doing anything to remove the grievances of the Sikhs mahant began to recruit a strong force to resist the Gurdwara Reform Movement. He recruited about 400 criminal and desperate men daily from the kots to guard the Gurdwara and engaged several notorious cut throats like Ranjha, Rehana etc.<sup>471</sup> Narain Das collected his friends and Baba Kartar Singh Bedi and decided to arrange a meeting of Mahants at Nankana Sahib which was attended by approximately 60 Mahants. In this meeting a

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<sup>468</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas*, p. 59; Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, p. 114.

<sup>469</sup> The various resolutions passed by the Singh Sabhas against the priest and asking the Government to take many steps against the priest to prevent such action in future. But these resolutions failed to deter the Mahant. In spite of this in 1918 a retired E.A.C of Sind came to visit the Gurdwara Nankana Sahib with his daughter. In the evening, his daughter of 13 years was raped by a priest, when the service of *Rahr* was going on. He asked to Mahant to take action against him but Mahant ignored his request. In the same year six women of the Jaranwala (Lyallpur) came to Gurdwara to make offering on the full moon day. All of these women were raped at night. For a detailed account see, Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, p. 113 and Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 221.

<sup>470</sup> Gurbax Singh Shamsheer, Jhabalia, *Shahidi Jiwan*, Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee Nankana, 1938, p. 74.

<sup>471</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 222.

committee was formed against the S.G.P.C. and decided that the Mahants should not recognise the S.G.P.C. Narain Das was nominated as its president and Mahant Basant Das as the Secretary.<sup>472</sup> It committee decided to start a newspaper Sant Sewak.<sup>473</sup> On the other side, the 23rd of Jan. 1921 and again on the 6th Feb. meetings of the S.G.P.C. were held at which resolution was passed that the whole *Panth* should gather in a diwan at Nankana Sahib on 4th, 5th, and 6th March 1921 and to impress upon the Mahant the need for reform himself.<sup>474</sup> When Mahant came to know the Sikhs decisions he tried to show some signs of negotiation with the Sikhs. He met Kartar Singh Jhabbar and agreed to the appointment of a committee of Management on certain condition. The Mahant was invited to attend some Akali meetings to be held by the Akalis to make some compromise with him but he failed to attend the meetings. But at the same time he started making further proportions for a confrontation.<sup>475</sup> When the plans of the Mahant seen to have been known to the Akali

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<sup>472</sup> Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle : A Retrospect*, p. 29.

<sup>473</sup> After the formed committee against the Akalis they started preparation at large scale to crush the Akalis. After it Narain Das, approached the Maharaja of Patiala for his help but he refused. Mahant approached the commissioner of Lahore, the Commissioner told him that the matter being religious, Government did not want to interfere. See in detail, Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, pp. 223-24 and Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas*, p. 62.

<sup>474</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas*, p. 61; Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, p. 115.

<sup>475</sup> He engaged 28 pathans on Rs. 20 a month each, with ration and armed them with lathis. His nephews also brought a large number of stout men from Manjha. Several desperadoes from Bhai Pheru also came to help the Mahant. For a detail Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 226.

leadership then under the leadership of Kartar Singh Jahhbar and Lachhman Singh Dharowal Akalis decided to go to Nankana before the planned scheme of 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> January, and thus falling into the trap laid by the Mahant.<sup>476</sup> But some prominent Akalis like Sardar Harchand Singh, Teja Singh Samundri, Master Tara Singh, Dalip Singh, Jaswant Singh Jhabal and Master stopped to send the Jathas to Nankana Sahib. They decided to enforce the earlier decision of the Akalis leadership not to send the Jathas to Nankana Sahib.<sup>477</sup> After having informed Jathedar Katar Singh and Dalip Singh, proceeded to Sunderkot to inform Bhai Lachhman Singh not to start for Nankana as planned. But Lachhman Singh in the meanwhile had started late in the evening of the 19<sup>th</sup> February with his Jatha for Nankana Sahib. On the morning of 21 Feb. the Jatha reached near the Gurdwara Nankana Sahib. Here they met a messenger of Bhai Dalip Singh and received a message containing the S.G.P.C.'s instructions not to proceed to the Gurdwara. Bhai Lachhman Singh agreed but he was persuaded by Bhai Tehal Singh, one of the Jatha, to go at least for *darshan*. After it Jatha went to Gurdwara only for *darshan* of Gurdwara. In the early morning hour of February 20, 1921 when the Jatha entered the main gate of Gurdwara the gate of Gurdwara closed at the Signal

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<sup>476</sup> . Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas.*, p. 64.

<sup>477</sup> Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle : A Retrospect*, p. 33.

from the Mahant.<sup>478</sup> The Sikhs raised the usual religious shout of Sat Sri Akal. Bhai Lachhman Singh Sat before Guru Granth Sahib and the Jatha began to sing morning hymns. In a few minutes Narain Das's *Gundas* and *Badmashes* attacked the Jatha with Swords, hatchets and fire arms. According to contemporary accounts, Mahant Narain Das was himself supervising the whole show and urging his men to spare no long haired Sikh in the whole vicinity.<sup>479</sup> One Sardar Dalip Singh of Sargodha was believed to have some relatives at Nankana Sahib. He was the prominent person of area and knew the Mahant very well. He went to Gurdwara and tried to convince the Mahant that Lachhman Singh had come to the Gurdwara only for *darshan* and should not be molested. On reaching Gurdwara, with folded hands Bhai Dalip Singh implored the Mahant to desist. Cease! O Cease! Let this carnage Cease! But the Mahant replied who was drunk: "Are you not a Sikh? Bang went his pistol and the saintly Sikh fell dead on the ground".<sup>480</sup> After wounding and killing all the members of Jatha the Mahant and his men collected the dead bodies and burnt with Kerosene oil. Some of them were even burnt alive. By the time the police and local Sikhs came on the scene, 130 men had been consumed by the

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<sup>478</sup> Statement of Jhanda Singh, *One of the Four Survivors of the Jatha*, quoted in *The Tribune*, 10 July, 1921; *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 942/1922 (N.A.I.).

<sup>479</sup> *The Tribune*, 1 March, 1922; *The Civil and Military Gazette*, 7 August, 1921.

<sup>480</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 237.

flames.<sup>481</sup> Only a boy of 12 years, who had taken refuge under Guru Granth Sahib, was spared. The news of the outrage spread like wildfire. Sardar Uttam Singh wired the terrible news to the Governor, the Commissioner the Deputy Commissioner, the Superintendent of Police and different Sikhs centres.<sup>482</sup> Bands of Akalis from distant towns began to converge on Nankana. The Deputy Commissioner Currie reached Nankana Sahib at 12:30 p.m. he could do nothing without the assistance of Police and saw the bodies of Sikhs burning with his own eyes.<sup>483</sup> In the evening the commissioner of Lahore division Mr. C.M. King, with a military force consisting of 100 Europeans and 100 Indian Soldiers and D.I.G. of Police reached Nankana Sahib by a special Train. Mahant Narain Das with two of his henchmen and 26 Pathans, was arrested and sent to Lahore.<sup>484</sup> The Gurdwara was put under the protection of the military guard. Several Sikh leaders and Sikh Sardars from Amritsar and other places reached Nankana Sahib. A large number of Sikhs tried to reach by train but they were refused tickets for Nankana Sahib. However, a large number of Sikhs reached Nankana Sahib. Kartar Singh Jhabbar along with his Akali

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<sup>481</sup> *The Tribune*, March 3, 1922; King Vs. Narain Das and others Quoted in Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikhs, Vol. II*, p. 199.

<sup>482</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 238.

<sup>483</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>484</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, pp. 238-39; Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas*, p. 71.

Jatha was stationed at Khara Sauda when he heard of the tragedy. Through his initiative a strong force of about 2200 Akalis was soon ready to march to Nankana Sahib and take possession of the Gurdwara from Military.<sup>485</sup> The Jatha was stopped by the police force at the order of Deputy Commissioner. But the Jatha ignored the order of police and it was to march on till they reached Gurdwara. Finally, on the evening of the 21st the Commissioner yielded to a strong pressure put up by the Sikh leaders. After some time the police and the military were withdrawn from the Gurdwara, its management being handed over to the Khalsa Panth. Sardar Harbans Singh of Atari was appointed the president and Sardar Sunder Singh Ramgarhia as the Vice President of the first Parbandhak Committee of Seven Members of the Gurdwara.<sup>486</sup>

The Nankana Sahib tragedy infuriated the whole Sikh panth, the Sikhs of whole country who vehemently condemned the action of Mahant. Resolutions were passed everywhere, demanding the death penalty for the Mahant and his associates.<sup>487</sup> The news papers criticized the Mahant's attack. National Leaders visited the scene of the tragedy and expressed sympathy for the Akalis. On 3rd March, 1921 Mahatma Gandhi and some other leaders' viz.,

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<sup>485</sup> Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle : A Retrospect*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>486</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 241.

<sup>487</sup> *The Akali*, 24 February, 1921; *The Sikhs* 24 February, 1921; M.K., Gandhi, *The Collective Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XIX, pp. 397-98.

Maulana Shaukat Ali, L. Duni Chand, Dr. Kitchlew, Malik Lal Khan, S. Harchand Singh and S. Prem Singh Sodhbans visited in a big Shahidi Diwan. This held at Nankana and delivered lectures.<sup>488</sup> The Mahatma Gandhi made a brief speech in Hindustani in the course of which he said that the news of Nankana was so staggering that they would not believe it without confirmation.<sup>489</sup> The police carried on its enquiry and, inspite of the advice of Mahatma Gandhi, to seek no justice from Government the Sikh committee continued to give assistance, and it was appreciated in the beginning. But after some time the Sikhs, therefore, dissociated them from the enquiry and took no interest in the case. On Oct. 12, 1921, the Session Judge sentenced the Mahant and seven other to death, eight to transportation for life, sixteen Pathans to seven years rigorous imprisonment, and acquitted the remaining sixteen.<sup>490</sup> But the judges of the High Court delivered their judgement on March 3, 1922, held that in view of his failure to secure protection from Government the Mahant was fully justified in taking steps for his own protection by Pathans and other men as guards.<sup>491</sup>

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<sup>488</sup> Ruchi Ram Sahni, *Struggle for Reform in Sikh Shrines*, p. 81.

<sup>489</sup> M.K., Gandhi, *The Collective Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XIX, p. 401.

<sup>490</sup> Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, pp. 124-25.

<sup>491</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 179/II/1922 (N.A.I.)



On this logic his sentence of death was reduced to one of transportation of life. Only three were sentenced of death, i.e. against Hari Nath, Ranjha and Rihana were maintained. Who had been sentenced to transportation of life, only two got their sentences confirmed other was acquitted. This decision created a great resentment among the Sikh people.<sup>492</sup> After the tragedy of Nankana Sahib atmosphere of the days following Jalianwala came again to pervade the Punjab. Resolutions of non cooperation with the Government were passed by several organizations of the province.<sup>493</sup> The great resentment spread among the Sikhs against the Government and priests. Group of radical Sikhs came for front and they organized themselves into a band of violent known as Babbar Akalis. Supporters of the Govt. like members of the Chief Khalsa Diwan were declared as *Jholichuks* (todies) by the Sikhs. After Nankana tragedy and indirect responsibility of the local Government made the higher authorities in Delhi and London think that there was an urgent need to change the earlier policy of non-interference in the religious affairs. After this tragedy Government adopted a new policy of (i) weakening of growing Akali agitation with promises of suitable legislation and (ii) suppressing the

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<sup>492</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 246.

<sup>493</sup> *The Times*, March 11, 1921.

extremists in the Akali leadership under the pretext of maintaining law and order.<sup>494</sup> Which resulted in direct confrontation between the Sikh masses, Akali leadership, the Indian National Congress and other nationalist's forces in country on one side and bureaucracy, supported by the Mahants and other vested interests on the other side.<sup>495</sup>

The Nankana massacre was followed by a period of much unrest. Numerous Sikh shrines were seized in rapid succession. After the Nankana Sahib, Sikhs took charge of many Gurdwaras. On 23rd Feb. the Gurdwara at Lubani in Lahore district was captured. On 25th Feb. a Gurdwara at Her-in-Barki police station jurisdiction of Lahore district was seized by a member of Amritsar Akali Dal. On Feb. 26 the local Akalis took possession of the Sirki Das *dharamshala* in Gujranwala city and Bagicha *dharamshala* with a similar object in view but uncounted considerable opposition from the Hindus and were compelled to abandon this project. On 28th Feb. another shrine at Eminabad in the Gujranwala district was seized. Other Sach Khand Gurdwara of Sheikhupura district and Baba Bater Singh's *dharamshala* Jhabbal Kalam on 5<sup>th</sup> March, Tham *Sahibji* at Jhambar in Lahore district was seized on the 7th

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<sup>494</sup> Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle : A Retrospect*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>495</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

March, Mall Sahib Gurdwara at Kanganpur in Lahore district and Permsati *dharamshala* at Kamalia in Montgomery district, Ram Das Gurdwara in Amritsar district on the 12th March was seized by the Sikhs.<sup>496</sup> According to the C.I.D. reports, the objects underlying the captured of Gurdwaras were not really always their reform but economic gain.<sup>497</sup> But from the whole study it is clear that in the seizure of Gurdwaras Sikhs were inspired with the object of the model for clean and regulated regions life before the Sikh community.

After it occurred the clash between the Sikhs and the Government on the question of holding of keys of treasury of the Golden Temple Amritsar.<sup>498</sup> After the resign of Sunder Singh Majithia, S. Kharak Singh was appointed the president of S.G.P.C. The S.G.P.C. held a meeting on 29th Oct. 1921. In this meeting resolution passed and asked to Sardar Sunder Singh Ramgarhia to hand over the keys to Sardar Kharak Singh.<sup>499</sup> After the resolution, on 7 Nov. Lala Amar Nath (E.A.C) extra Assistant and

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<sup>496</sup> S.C. Mittal, *Freedom Movement in Punjab (1905-1929)*, pp. 154-55.

<sup>497</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 459-II, 1922 (N.A.I.).

<sup>498</sup> The Golden Temple, the Akal Takht and adjoining Gurdwara had passed into the control of the Akalis in Oct. 1920. Sarbrah Sunder Singh Ramgarhia who was appointed by the Government, was holding the office of Secretary of the new committee of management appointed by the S.G.P.C.. He continued in possession of the keys of the temple treasury. The Sikhs felt Government control over the Gurdwara because Sunder Singh Ramgarhia was appointed by the Government.

<sup>499</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas*, p. 108.

Commissioner accompanied by a police party sent to Sardar Sunder Singh Ramgarhia by the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar to collect the keys of the Temple. Sunder Singh Ramgarhia surrendered a bunch of 53 keys to him and obtained a formal receipt.<sup>500</sup> The Government stated that Government refused to accept the S.G.P.C. as a representative body of the Sikhs and took the keys in its own control.<sup>501</sup> The action of Government criticized in various meetings and newspapers. The Akali expressed its resentment in the following manner. On the one hand, the keys of the temple have been taken away and on the other the bureaucracy has crossed all limits in telling lies.<sup>502</sup> During that time the Government appointed Bahadur Singh Ghwind as a Manager of Golden Temple. A hurried meeting of the S.G.P.C. was called at the Akal Takhat, where on 12th November it was resolved not to allow Captain Bahadur Singh, new appointed manager, to interfere in the management in any way.<sup>503</sup> Sikhs started protesting against the keys affair<sup>504</sup>. According to C.I.D. report, by the instructions of the Akali leadership, orders were issued from the Akal Takht to the

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<sup>500</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, No. 459-II, 1922 (N.A.I.).*

<sup>501</sup> Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, p. 131.

<sup>502</sup> *The Akali*, 20 November, 1921.

<sup>503</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 348; *The Civil and Military Gazette*, 22 November, 1921.

<sup>504</sup> Protest meetings were held at Lahore, Gujranwala, Gujar Khan and other place, and resolutions were passed condemning the Government's action. See for detail, *Proceedings Home Political, No. 459/1921-1922 (N.A.I.)*

Sikh soldiers to give up British service and some of them had agreed to abide.<sup>505</sup> On the other side the Deputy Commissioner assembled frequent meetings at his house to explain Government's position. He adopted another method of propoganda against the Sikhs. He went round to different villages and held meetings, in which he misrepresented the position of Sikhs.<sup>506</sup> The Sikhs decided to assemble counter meetings at the same place to contradict the misstatements of the Government officials. News propogated by the Deputy Commissioner said that a meeting held at Ajnala district Amritsar on the 26th Nov. The Sikhs countered it was and was announced by the District Gurdwara Committee that a religions Diwan was assembled by the Akalis on same date and same place.<sup>507</sup> On the 24th Nov. Punjab Government issued an order to prohibited meetings in Lahore, Amritsar, Sheikhupura districts etc. under the Sedition meetings act.

On 26th November there was held a meeting at Ajnala and the Government's position about the key affair, explained by the Deputy Commissioner. In the meeting S. Dan Singh Vachoa and S. Jaswant Singh asked the permission of Deputy Commissioner for

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<sup>505</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>506</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 349.

<sup>507</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas*, p. 116; Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, p. 132.

the exploitation of Sikh's position. But the Deputy Commissioner refused them. After it the Sikhs assembled their own diwan. The Deputy Commissioner reached at the place of diwan and ordered the police to assist S. Dan Singh, S. Jaswant Singh, Pandit Dina Nath, S. Teja Singh Samundri and S. Harnam Singh Zaildar, in holding not the meeting. On 26 Nov. 1921 on the plea that they were discussing a 'political question' which had been prohibited under seditious meetings Act.<sup>508</sup> When the news of arrests reached Amritsar, the session of S.G.P.C. was being held at Akal Takht. After knew news of arrests of leaders the member of S.G.P.C. decided to adjourn the meeting and went to Ajnala to continue the proceedings of Diwan. Under the leadership of Sardar Kharak Singh, President of S.G.P.C. approximately 50 Sikhs reached Ajnala and held a diwan. The authorities declared the diwan illegal and immediately arrested its prominent members like, Sardar Kharak Singh, President of S.G.P.C, S. Mehtab Singh Bar-at-law, Secretary, Sunder Singh Lyallpuri, Manager of the Akali, Bhag Singh and Gurcharan Singh, Pleaders and Hari Singh of Jullundur.<sup>509</sup> But this action of Police made the agitation more violent.<sup>510</sup> The

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<sup>508</sup> *The Akali*, 29 November, 1921; *The Civil and Military Gazette*, 4 December, 1921; Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas*, p. 117; Giani Partarp Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, pp. 134-35.

<sup>509</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas*, p. 117; Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 351.

<sup>510</sup> The S.G.P.C. by a resolution called upon the Sikhs to hold religious diwan every where to explain the facts about the key's affair. A few days latter, S.G.P.C. advised the Sikhs to observe hartal and

Congress and the Khilafat Committee supported the Sikhs. On 27th Nov. a meeting was assembled by the Sikhs at Akal Takht and decided to elect a committee of Sikhs for the protest. Sh. Amar Singh of Jhabal as President, Captain Ram Singh as Vice President and Bhai Tara Singh, B.A. as Secretary of the Committee.<sup>511</sup> After it meetings were held at Ajnala, in front of the Akal Takht and in Guru-ka-Bagh, where the leaders delivered lectures on the key affair and to protest against the high handed action of the Government. Speaker of meetings were arrested by the police. During that time Sardar Amar Singh Jhabal, acting President of S.G.P.C., Master Tara Singh, Jaswant Singh, S. Surmukh Singh, Dr. Gurbakhish Singh, Bhai Tara Singh and Bhai Kartar Singh were arrested.<sup>512</sup> After it soon the agitation was spreading fast to the rural areas of the Sikh districts of Punjab. The Government was in a dilemma and thought to solve the questions of the keys. Other side Sikhs passed a resolution on 6 Dec. 1921 that the no Sikh should agree to any arrangement about the resolution of the keys unless and until all the Sikhs arrested in connection with the keys affairs is released unconditionally.<sup>513</sup> Finally, the Government had

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boycotted, on the day of the arrival of the Prince of Wales on India shores. See in detail, *The Akali*, November 30, 1921; *The Civil and Military Gazette*, 14, October, 1921; Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 353.

<sup>511</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas*, p. 117.

<sup>512</sup> *The Akali*, 2 December, 1921; Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, p. 136.

<sup>513</sup> M.K., Gandhi, *The Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XXII, p. 170.

to withdraw before them. On 17 January 1922, the Sikh leaders were released unconditionally from the jails and on 19th January a diwan was held at Amritsar. In which the keys were handed over to Baba Kharak Singh, President of S.G.P.C. by the district Magistrate, and a gazetted officer of the Punjab Government.<sup>514</sup> When Mahatma Gandhi got this news, he sent a message to Baba Kharak Singh of congratulations, that the Sikhs had won the first decisive battle of India's freedom against the Government.<sup>515</sup>

After the tragedies of Nankana Sahib and key's affair Government adopted a new policy to crush the Gurdwara reform movement because the movement progressed very well day by day. Retired Army persons were recruiting in movement in wide level, and propagating the way of sacrifices for the freedom of Gurdwaras. One side while it was promising support in settling the Gurdwaras and the kirpan question, other side, at the same time it was issuing orders to its officers in all the 13 districts on 6 March to break up the Akali bands who were declared to be disturbing the public tranquility in the Central Punjab.<sup>516</sup> Military force were posted in the central districts in order to support the police in dispersing the

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<sup>514</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 942/1922, (N.A.I).

<sup>515</sup> Ganda Singh, *A Brief Account of the Sikhs*, S.G.P.C., Amritsar (no dated), p. 87.

<sup>516</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas*, p. 140.



Akalis and effecting their asserts. Lists were prepared of all the black turbaned Sikhs and their leaders were marked out for arrest or harassment by the police. Akalis were arrested at Amritsar, Sialkot, Lyallpur, Bughiana, Sarhali, Sukar Chak Verka, Fatehgarh, Marhana, Chabba, Ghawind, Hudiara and Hundreds of other places, mostly from religious diwans. After this action Government thought that the movement had been crushed but other side the whole Sikh Community was expressing its feelings of hatred for foreign rule through its struggle for the reform of Gurdwaras is borne out by the statements of other Akalis leaders.

After the Nankana tragedy, serious conflict between the Akalis and British Government was at Guru-Ka-Bagh. There were two Gurdwaras one sacred to Guru Arjan Dev ji and the other to Guru Teg Bahadur ji, it was a famous place of the Sikh religious worship situated at a distance of thirteen miles from Amritsar in the Ajnala Tehsil.<sup>517</sup> That time an Udasi Sadhu was appointed to take care of the Gurdwara by the Sikh Sangat. After him, his

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<sup>517</sup> The Gurdwara of Guru Arjan Dev ji was setup in the honor of the Guru's visit by Baba Ghuka, after whom its name was changed to Ghukewali. After Ghuka, his descendents continued incharge of the place, then it was Guru-Ka-Raur, when Guru Teg Bahadur Ji came here, then it was again changed into Guru-Ka-Bagh as a garden was planted on the bare, infertile land and its whole outlook was made beautiful. See for more details, *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 914/KW/1922 (N.A.I.); G.A. Sundraram, *Guru-Ka-Bagh, Satyagrah Madras*, 1923, p. IX; Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikhs, Vol. II*, p. 203 and Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, p. 156.

descendents continued as the care taker of the Gurdwara. Mahant Sunder Das was incharge of the Gurdwara. He was an immoral, profligate character and used to indulge in illicit relations. It is alleged that he has been leading an immoral life and kept mistresses.<sup>518</sup> At the objection of the Sikh Sangat, on 31 Jan. 1921, some Sikhs under the leadership of Sardar Dan Singh Wichhoa sent to Guru-Ka-Bagh by the S.G.P.C., with a view to Persuading the Mahant to mend his way. The Mahant agreed to do so and he decided to marry one of his own mistresses and also agreed to work under the supervision of the former body of eleven members appointed by the S.G.P.C..<sup>519</sup> On Feb. 8, 1921, Mahant Sunder Das and his mistress Isro took amrit at the Akal Takht and changed name Sunder Das to Joginder Singh and Isro to Gian Kaur. According to the sikh rites they were married to each others on the same day.<sup>520</sup>

But after the Nankana Sahib tragedy, when large numbers of Akalis began to be, arrested all over the province, by the

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<sup>518</sup> According to an eye witness, the Mahant was keeping two mistresses; Isro and Jagdei, and had illegitimate relations with other women of bad reputation, evidence of Zaildar Harnam Singh, *Akali Te Pardeshi*, 30 October, 1922.

<sup>519</sup> Evidence of Bhaat Jaswant Singh in the case crowns NSB Mehtab Singh and others; *The Civil and Military Gazettee*, 9 September, 1922.

131 Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 397; Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas*, p. 157; Ruchi Ram Sahni, *Struggle for Reform in Sikh Shrines*, p. 117.

Government Sunder Das, like other Mahants encouraged him. He ignored the agreement and began to show a stiff and characterless attitude once again he indulged in the old ways of life. On noticing the change in Mahant's attitude, the S.G.P.C. was obliged to take charge of the Gurdwara in his own hands on 23 Aug., 1921 and Guru-ka-Langar, was started permanently.<sup>521</sup> After it the Mahant therefore, had to re-enter into a compromise with the Sikhs. In Feb. 1922, he agreed to abide by the decision of three arbitrators, Sardar Teja Singh, Sumundri, Sardar Gurcharn Singh, and Sardar Bal Singh about his maintenance. The Mahant was offered the following terms under the new compromise. (i) a Salary of Rs. 120 per month and (ii) a house at Amritsar. Both the terms he accepted.<sup>522</sup> But as a result of the repressive policy of the Government towards the Gurdwara reform movement he went back again on his words.

On August 10, 1922, Mahant Sunder Das lodged a complaint with the Government, that the Sikhs were stealing his property, i.e. Kikar from the land attached to the Gurdwara.<sup>523</sup> It is very surprising to know that a dry Kikar tree was described as 'Property' to enable the Mahant to file a complaint with the local police.

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<sup>521</sup> Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle : A Retrospect*, p. 53.

<sup>522</sup> *Proceedings in the Sikh Leaders*, case quoted in *The Tribune*, 27 September, 1922.

<sup>523</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 914/1922 (N.A.I).

Moreover, even since the occupation of the Gurdwara by the Sikhs, wood from the land attached to it had been used for the community kitchen and Mahant had not previously raised any objection. Five Sikhs Bhai Santokh Singh, Bhai Santa Singh, Bhai Labh Singh, Bhai Labh Singh Mate Nangal and the other one arrested and hurriedly convicted of theft and sentenced to six months rigorous imprisonment with a fine of Rs. 50 each.<sup>524</sup> According to Giani Partap Singh, Josh, Sohan Singh and Teja Singh the Akalis were arrested on the basis of the confidential diary of Bedi Brij Lal, under orders from Mr. Dunnett the Deputy Commissioner, not on the complaint of Mahant.<sup>525</sup>

The arrest and conviction of the Sewadars spread like wild fire throughout the countryside. The S.G.P.C. took up the challenge. The Government action was considered an interference in their religion as the Kikar fire wood was being taken for *Guru-Ka-Bagh langar*. To protest against the official high handedness and to assert their right to chop wood for the *Guru-Ka-langer*, the Jathas of five Akalis each started marching towards the Guru-Ka-Bagh.<sup>526</sup> Other side the Sikh leaders held a meeting at Guru-Ka-Bagh on 22

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<sup>524</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 914/1922 (N.A.I); Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, p. 159.

<sup>525</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 399; Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas*, p. 157; Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, p. 159.

<sup>526</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 914/KW/1922 (N.A.I); Josh, Sohan Singh, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas*, p. 158.

August in contravention of the order under seditions meeting act. The police dispersed the meeting and arrested the leaders including Mehtab Singh and Master Tara Singh.<sup>527</sup> This was a challenge to the committee and its authority and a signal for a serious clash between the Sikhs and the Government.

After it the Sikhs jatha moved in large numbers towards Guru-Ka-Bagh. The Jathas first took an oath at Akal Takht to remain non-violent, and then proceeded towards Guru-Ka-Bagh.<sup>528</sup> A large scale arrest of the Sikhs commenced and by 24th Aug., 180 arrested had been made and on the 25th the total reached 210.<sup>529</sup> When the arrests and long sentences could not overawe the Sikhs and according to official estimates, the number, of Sikhs had swelled to 4000 by 28th August. After it the Government gave up the policy of arrest and adopted a new policy. The Government began to use lathis to disperse the Sikhs.<sup>530</sup> On the very first day of his arrival 100 Sikhs were severely beaten up, their hair pulled and they were thrown into ditches.

From that time onward, the policy of beating the Sikhs in Guru-Ka-Bagh was followed most vigorously. The Sikhs, too, began

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<sup>527</sup> Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikhs, Vol. II*, p. 203; Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, pp. 161-62.

<sup>528</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 949/1922 (N.A.I).

<sup>529</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>530</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 949/1922 (N.A.I).

to pour in from all directions of the Province at Guru-Ka-Bagh. Police pickets were placed upon the roads leading to Guru-Ka-Bagh to turn back parties as they arrived, and arrangements were also made to stop Jathas travelling to Amritsar by rail or roads. In spite of these restrictions, every day at the Akal Takht, a Jatha of the Sikhs took a solemn vow to go for Sacrifice, and under all circumstances to remain nonviolent in word and deed. Another Jatha, of a Smaller Size, would go everyday from the Gurdwara of Guru-Ka-Bagh to assert their right of chopping wood for the Guru's Kitchen.<sup>531</sup> These Jathas were beaten mercilessly with lathis, Jack-boots, and fists. By an order of Mr. J.M. Dunnet, the District Magistrate of Amritsar, the Akali gatherings at Guru-Ka-Bagh were declared unlawful assemblies.<sup>532</sup> The Administration had got her work, as dragging the Prostrating and injuring Sikhs by their sacred hairs and throw them into muddy ditches or leave them in the fields. The Sikhs with their heads bending forward were singing, "*Waheguru, Waheguru, Waheguru Ji, Satnam, Satnam, Satnam Ji*". The beatings were mostly directed at the Joints, heads backs and private parts, so that the Sikhs might be soon disabled or made unconscious.<sup>533</sup> No Sikh, who went forward to suffer,

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<sup>531</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 40.

<sup>532</sup> Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle : A Retrospect*, p.55.

<sup>533</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 914/1922, (N.A.I.); G.A. Sundaram, *Guru-Ka-Bagh Satyagraha*, The Swadeshimitram Press, Madras, 1923, pp. 41-45.

flinch from a blow when it was struck. The inhuman beating, kicking, dragging, ducking and throwing into the fields went on as usual on every Sikh Jatha. There was no act, no look of defiance. This was the usual practice day after day.

According to Sh. Teja Singh, "out of about 1300 persons, more or less, who received beating, 269 cases of injuries above the trunk have been reported by Col. Gulab Singh, the medical officer, incharge of the hospitals, 300 cases of injuries on the frontal part of the body and 60 cases of injuries of testicles. There were 79 cases of brain injuries, 19 cases of injuries to premium and to teeth. There were 158 Contused wounds, 40 cases of urine trouble, 8 of incised wounds, 2 of Punctured wounds, 9 of fractures and 2 of dislocations, an alarming total of 953 cases."<sup>534</sup>

The various newspapers criticized the brutal policy of the Government, in India and England. The Indian National Congress appointed a committee of enquiry, which landed the Sikhs and censured the police for the atrocities by it.<sup>535</sup> After it every day some 100 men offered themselves for arrest. The number of Sikhs arrested in connection with the Guru-Ka-Bagh, dispute swelled on the rate of same 1000 to fortnight. The events produced a profound

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<sup>534</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p.417.

<sup>535</sup> After 13th September, when the Governor paid a visit to Amritsar and impressed deeply with what he had heard from Mr. C.F. Andrews, the beating of Jathas was stopped and arrests began again. For further detail see, Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas*, p.172.

effect on all Sikhs and non-Sikh people. On two different day's two military pensioners Jathas each consisting of 100 military pensioners went out to court arrest. They were arrested, prosecuted and sentenced to imprisonment. On one day the Nirmala Sadhus contributed 27 of their number to join the Jatha of that day.<sup>536</sup> Besides those arrested at Guru-Ka-Bagh, scores of people were being arrested in the same connection in other parts of the country, so that by 17th Nov. the total number of arrests made amounted to 5605.<sup>537</sup>

Finally, with the efforts of Government on 17 Nov., Sir Ganga Ram, C.I.E., a retired engineer took the land of Gurdawara of Guru-Ka-Bagh on lease from the Mahant and wrote to the Government that he did not require the protection of the police. He decided to allow the Sikhs to cut firewood from the garden. In the result, the Sikhs were allowed to cut wood for the Guru-Ka-Langar from the 18th Nov., 1922 onwards.<sup>538</sup> The arrests ceased on the same day and 170 men, who were on trial, were released. After sometime in April 22, 1923 Government issued a proclamation in which all prisoners were realized.<sup>539</sup>

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<sup>536</sup> G.A. Sundram, *Guru-Ka-Bagh Satyagraha*, pp. XI-XII.

<sup>537</sup> Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening*, p. 436.

<sup>538</sup> G.A. Sundram, *Guru-Ka-Bagh Satyagraha*, p. XII.

<sup>539</sup> Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar*, pp. 275-278



The abdication of Maharaja Ripudaman Singh of Nabha followed soon after the Guru-Ka-Bagh tragedy. The Maharaja of Nabha's dispute was with the Maharaja of Patiala, not with the Govt. of India. Conflicts between the Maharaja Nabha and his Prime Minister, Nar Singh Rao, sympathies with the nationalist and Akali movements were main causes of his abdication. He always sided with the nationalists as a member of the Council of viceroy. He rendered good service in the agitation over the wall of Gurdwara Rikab Ganj.

The British Government appointed Justice Stewart of the Allahabad High Court to inquire into the matter of Nabha-Patiala dispute. According to the official version of the circumstances leading his abdication. On 21 April 1923, submitted proposals to the Government of India to suspend his control over the administration of the state temporarily.<sup>540</sup> On the morning of July 8, Colonel Minchin the A.G.G. (agent of Governor General) and C.M.G.(Chief Magistrate of Government) Ogilvie, I.C.S. who was to act as an administration for two months, arrived at Nabha accompanied by troops and armored cars, he took control of Nabha

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<sup>540</sup> Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle : A Retrospect*, p.67.

administration and sent the Maharaja to Dehra Dun under military escort.<sup>541</sup>

The forced abdication of the 'Akali' Maharaja of Nabha gave great impetus to the Akali movement. The S.G.P.C., the Akali and the nationalist leadership reacted sharply. The Sikh press continued to feel exercised over the virtual deposition of the Maharaja of Nabha. The Akali dated 13 Aug., 1923 wrote: 'The charges levelled against him are serious and it is necessary to rebut them, for silence will be taken to mean that they are well-founded.'<sup>542</sup> Because Maharaja of Nabha had sympathies with the Akalis and Sikhs. The S.G.P.C. pledged full support to the Maharaja. On the 5th Aug., the S.G.P.C. unanimously passed resolutions criticizing the action of the Government and describing it as 'a side attack' on the Akali movement. The Sikhs went to observe the 9th of September 1923, as 'Nabha day'.<sup>543</sup> The Sikhs of Nabha state organized *Akhand Paths* on the occasion. On such Akhand Path was at Gurdwara Gangsar in Jaito. The Nabha police, in their bid to arrest the Akalis, including the one reading the holy Granth Sahib, are alleged to have disrupted the Akhand Path. This

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<sup>541</sup> Diwan Jarmani Dass, *Maharaja Lives and Loves and intrigues of Indian princes*, Allied, Bombay, 1969, p.148; Syngal, Munhalal, *The Patriot Prince*, Doaba House, Ludhiana, 1961, p.126

<sup>542</sup> *The Akali*, 13 August, 1923.

<sup>543</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas*, p.271

incident greatly hurt the Sikhs' sentiments and a new morcha was launched.<sup>544</sup> The S.G.P.C. decided to send daily Jathas to Jaito from the Akal-Takhat at Amritsar. In the starting Jathas of 25 members walked to Jaito every day. They were severely beaten and many of them were imprisoned. According to a contemporary, 'within a period of seven months this happened with no less than 5,000 Akalis pilgrims'.<sup>545</sup> The main aims of the Jathas were to resume the interrupted *Akhand Path* at Gangsar Jaito and to suffer, in meek and humble spirit, all hardships and tortures inflicted by the proud officials, for the sake of establishing among the Sikhs birth-right for free congregation worship in all Sikh Gurdwaras.<sup>546</sup> By an order dated 12 Oct., 1923, the Government of Punjab declared S.G.P.C. and S.A.D as unlawful bodies and 59 Akali leaders were arrested.<sup>547</sup> The atrocities perpetrated on the Akali at Jaito evoked wide-spread sympathy. The Indian National Congress declared its full support to the Akali movement. Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru, K. Santhanam and A.T. Gidwani, who were members of the All India Congress Committee, joined the Akali Jatha. When they arrived at Nabha station, Pt. Nehru and his

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<sup>544</sup> *Proceedings Punjab State Archives*, No. 70 (Nabha Recrads), Patiala.

<sup>545</sup> Ruchi Ram Sahni, *Struggle for Reform in Sikh Shrines*, p.223

<sup>546</sup> *S.G.P.C. Communiqué* No 94, no dated; Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle : A Retrospect*, p.74

<sup>547</sup> Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. II, p. 209

Companions were arrested and sent to Nabha Jail.<sup>548</sup> After it the S.G.P.C. decided to send a bigger Shahidi Jatha of 500 Akalis at Jaito on 21 Feb. 1924 to coincide with the third anniversary of Nankana tragedy.<sup>549</sup>

After making preliminary arrangements, the S.G.P.C. decided to dispatch the Jatha on 9 Feb., 1924. Before its departure a Public meeting attended by about 30,000 people was addressed by Dr. Saif-Ud-Din Kitehlow and Pandit Dina Nath. The Jatha was exhorted by the Jathedar of Akal Takhat 'to remain perfectly non-violent in thought, word and deed'.<sup>550</sup> When the Jatha entered the Nabha territory, it was challenged by the authorities and asked not to move ahead. But the Jatha did not observe the above order and continued to march. Mr. Wilson Johnston, gave the signal to open fire. Firing was opened on it for two minutes, causing 300 casualties including about 90 killed.<sup>551</sup> According to the official report only 14 were killed and 34 wounded.<sup>552</sup> The shooting aroused sympathy for the Akali cause throughout India and action was condemned by people at protect meetings, Passing resolutions and sending telegrams to the Secretary of State for India. Akali-te-

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<sup>548</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas*, pp. 272-73

<sup>549</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>550</sup> Ruchi Ram Sahni, *Struggle for Reform in Sikh Shrines*, p. 223.

<sup>551</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No.180, 1924 (N.A.I.)

<sup>552</sup> *Ibid.*

Pradesi and other Pro-Akali Papers held the Government of India responsible for the incident and demanded the appointment of a Committee to enquire into the facts.<sup>553</sup> But the Government paid no heed to these protests. On the other side this incident did not discourage the Sikhs.<sup>554</sup> Finally the administration of Nabha allowed bands of Pilgrims to proceed for religious worship to the Gangsor Gurdwara under the few conditions and Bhai Jodh Singh arranged with Mr. Wilson Johnston, the administrator of Nabha, for the completion of the Akhand Paths at Jaito. The first Jatha, consisting among others the Udasi and Nirmala Sadhus, left Akal Takhat under the leadership of Bhai Jodh Singh and arrived at Jaito on 21 July 1925.<sup>555</sup> Another Jatha arrived from Delhi the same day. On July 27, 1925, more Jathas reached Jaito after being released from the Nabha bears and other jails. The deadlock finally ended with the Akalis completing their 101 *Akhand Paths* on 6 Aug., 1925.<sup>556</sup> The Akalis won another battle.

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<sup>553</sup> *Akali-te-Pradesi*, 25 February, 1924

<sup>554</sup> They began to pour down in great numbers not only from the Punjab but also from other parts of the Country and even from the lands over-seas. In all seventeen jathas of 500 in the each were sent. After the first jatha, the others were only imprisoned and not fired at apart from the practical difficulties of accommodating the increasing number of Akali prisoners, there were equally important political considerations which compelled the Punjab Government to find a solution to the Jaito Problem. For a detailed account see, *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 67, 1924 (N.A.I.)

<sup>555</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 120/III/1925 (N.A.I)

<sup>556</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 112/IV/1926 (N.A.I.)

During the time of Jaito Marcha, a second front was opened at Bhai Pheru in Lahore, where the Mahant had resiled from an earlier agreement with the Akalis and charged them for trespass.<sup>557</sup> On the 2nd January 1924 the senior superintendent of police and the S.D.M. visited the spot, and arrested the Akalis. The total number arrested was 34.<sup>558</sup> The Sikhs launched a morcha. Troops of 25 Akalis began to present themselves for arrest every day at Bhai Pheru. Everyday Jathas appeared on the scene and demonstrated. The police took prompt action and made large scale arrests and gave long imprisonment. Up to first week of July 1925, 6157 Sikhs were arrested, out of which 2619 were sent to prison<sup>559</sup>. After it S.G.P.C. withdraw the decision and the morcha was ended.

When the movement was at peak attempts were made to solve the problem of management and control of the Gurdwaras and the shrines in various parts of the country in many times. The S.G.P.C. urged the Government to legalize the control of the committee over the Gurdwaras and the Sikh shrines. The Government's policy with

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<sup>557</sup> About the end of the 1922, the Mahant was persuaded to hand over the control of the Gurdwara and its property to the S.G.P.C. who in return guaranteed him a monthly salary 400 Rs. and certain other amenities. In first week of Dec., 1923 the Mahant broke the agreement on Dec. 4, 1923, a room in an upper storey of the building attached to the shrine, which had been occupied by the Mahant was damaged by certain Akalis who removed a quantity of grain from it. The Mahant complained against the Akalis and make a claim at the property of Gurdwara. For further details see, *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 15/I/1924 (N.A.I.) and Sohan Singh Josh,, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas*, p.389

<sup>558</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas*, p. 390.

<sup>559</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 15/I/1924 (N.A.I.)

regard to legislative measures for the control of the Sikh shrines began by starting the Gurdwara Bill presented by the Government but under the some conditions the Sikhs did not accept it. As a result there was the postponement of Gurdwara Bill. Finally, when the British officers had filled all the Jails with Akali agitators, the movement were preceding unabated with no end in sight they had no recourse but to reopen negotiations with the Akalis. At the same time the Akalis, though apparently unaffected, were approaching the limit of their resources and were facing financial and other difficulties, they responded willingly to the official offer to negotiate. Under these circumstances in March 1924, General Sir William Birdwood Commander-in-chief, Northern Command, opened negotiations with the Akali leaders. General Birdwood entered into negotiations between the Akalis and Punjab Government with the help of Bhai Jodh Singh and Sardar Narain Singh<sup>560</sup>. But he could not get success in it. But his efforts bore fruit later, when Sir Malcolm Hailey became Lieutenant Governor in May 1924. Hailey was a skilful operator. He kept up police repression against Akali passive resisters and at the same time opened negotiations with moderate elements among the Sikhs. He instructed the district level officials to organize Sudhar Committees in every district

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<sup>560</sup> Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle : A Retrospect*, p. 139.

containing Sikhs. He encouraged the officially sponsored Sudhar Committees to unite in promoting a Gurdwara Bill and to deprive the Akalis and their supporters of main objective in continuing the agitation.<sup>561</sup>

Under these circumstances the Gurdwara Bill was presented, the detailed provisions of which had been discussed both with the Akali leaders in the Lahore fort Jail and the Government officials in Lahore and Delhi, before its introduction in the Punjab Legislative Council on 7 May 1925.<sup>562</sup> The new measure was referred to a select committee which submitted its report on 20 June 1925.<sup>563</sup> After a great deal of discussion between the Government and the Sikhs consequently the Sikh Gurdwara Bill was introduced in the Punjab Legislative Council, and passed and came into force on the 1st November 1925.<sup>564</sup> The Sikh Gurdwara Act placed the entire control and management of all historical Sikh shrines under the elected body, the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee. The S.G.P.C. became apex power and an autonomous body of the Sikhs in 1925. Akalis had won their bitter struggle against the Mahants and the Government over control of their shrines. Throughout the Sikhs struggle for Gurdwara Reform, the Akalis

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<sup>561</sup> *Latter dated 30 August, 1924, from Hailey to Sir Alexander Muddiman, Quoted in Mohinder Singh, The Akali Struggle : A Retrospect, p. 142.*

<sup>562</sup> Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle : A Retrospect*, p. 143.

<sup>563</sup> *Proceedings Punjab Legislative Council, May, 1925, VIII, A p. 1105;*  
Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle : A Retrospect*, p. 139.

<sup>564</sup> *Proceedings Home Political, No. 120/III, 1925 (N.A.I)*



remained non-violent despite the atrocities perpetrated on them by the Government and the Mahant. In the whole agitation it is estimated the 30,000 Sikhs had gone to jail and about rupees 15 lakh had been collected as fine from the people. About 400 lives were lost and the number of the wounded was about 2,000.<sup>565</sup>

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<sup>565</sup> Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikhs, Vol. II*, p. 213

## CHAPTER - V

### THE BABBAR AKALI LEHAR

A study of the Babbar Akali Lehar's origin, aims and objectives is interesting and revealing. Babbar Akali Lehar has a deep rooted background. It was not a sudden and abrupt outburst, its actors had the bitter memories of the British Government which the Sikhs had been suffering since long. The Babbar Akalis were greatly affected by the incidents which became responsible for the establishment of their Movement. The failure of the Gadar movement (1915) and tyrannous and inhuman actions of the British Government during and after the First World War created the discontentment among the people of Punjab. During the 1st World War, the Gadrities were anxious to take advantage of the difficulties of the British Government but a large number of Indians were anxious to win the British goodwill by co-operating with them in their war efforts. The Sikhs, in the Punjab, went beyond all others. The number of Sikhs in the British War services rose to 1, 00,000 by the end of war, while in 1915 it was about 35,000 only.<sup>566</sup> But after the war, Punjabi's got only certificates and

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<sup>566</sup> M.S. Leigh, *The Punjab and the War*, Government Printing Press, Lahore, 1922, p. 44.

medals, and the English Government adopted a repressive policy. The Government passed Anarchical and Revolutionary Crime Act, on 18 March 1919 (The Rowlatt Act) under the supervision of Defence of India Act. It sanctioned special powers to police. It spread a wave of indignation against these 'Lawless Laws'. Mahatma Gandhi started an agitation against the Act. The people felt that the Revolt Bill were a poor reward for their war services. Mahatma Gandhi gave a call to the Indians for the Satyagraha. We have already referred to it in chapter number three.<sup>567</sup>

Further, it can understand from the development of the Singh Sabha movement. (1872-1901) It is visible from the emergence of Gurdwara Reform Movement also.<sup>568</sup>

The Babbar Akali Movement emerged when the Gurdwara Reform Movement was passing through a crucial stage. While the Gurdwara Reform Movement was progressing peacefully, some incidents took place in 1921 and 1922 such as *Tarn-Taran*, *Nankana Sahib* and *Guru Ka Bagh*. In these incidents were killed many innocent reformers or Akalis. We have already referred to these incidents in chapter number four.

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<sup>567</sup> See our pages from 85 to 132.

<sup>568</sup> See our pages from 133 to 187.

By these events, some Sikhs were more shocked than the others and started the violent movement against the enemies of Panth. These Sikhs afterwards came to be known as Babbar Akalis as they were deadly against the policy of non-violence adopted by the Gurdwara Reform Movement. This was the basic difference of the means between the Akalis and Babbar Akalis. The Akalis believed in non-violent method and Babbar Akalis propagated the aims of armed struggle for bringing about the reforms in the management of the Sikh shrines.<sup>569</sup>

The Babbar Akali Movement came into existence in the year 1921. In Doaba areas it was at its height during the years 1922 and 1923. The migrant Gadrities and retired army personal were also involved in it. In fact the Babbar Akali Movement flourished in the Doaba viz. territory between the Satluj and the Beas, the districts of Jullundhar, Hoshiarpur and the territory of Karputhala State. The most important reason for its flourishing in the Doaba was that these districts were known for the returned emigrant from U.S.A. and Canada<sup>570</sup> who had taken active part in the Gadhar Movement between 1913 and 1915.

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<sup>569</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 1961, p. 39.

<sup>570</sup> Giani Partap Singh, *Gurdwara Sudhar, Arthat Akali Lehar*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 1951, p. 279.

All those Akalis who regarded the policy of courting arrests and undergoing inhuman punishments as cowardice became *Chakarvartis*. They formed the core of the Babbar Akalis.<sup>571</sup> The atrocities perpetrated during the morchas and brutal treatments meted out to the Akalis in Jalis were compelled to adopt this course. "All those Sikhs who were imbued with religious fervor, whether they were ex-Gadrities like S. Karam Singh of Daulatpur, S. Piara Singh of Langeri and S. Karam Singh of Jhingar or Congress workers like S. Chattar Singh of Kandhola and Dhanna Singh of Behbalplur or active soldiers as well as ex-soldiers, like S. Kishan Singh Gargaj and Amar Singh of Dhaliwal, Jumped into the fray."<sup>572</sup> The members of Babbar Akalis who were ex-Gadrities they knew to use of .32 bore revolvers, mauser pistol and cyclostyle. These were the features which resembled the methods employed in 1915.<sup>573</sup> The Babbar Akali Movement was establishment in March 1921 at the Sikh Educational Conference, which was held at Hoshiarpur.<sup>574</sup>

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<sup>571</sup> Gurcharan Singh, *Babbar Akali Movement-A Historical Survey*, Aman Publication, Zira 1993, pp. 41-42.

<sup>572</sup> Vide Interview of Pandit Durga Dass, Editor Urdu Weekly *Paigam-i-Watten*, and Manager, Bari Doab Bank and Eco General Secretary Congress Committee, Hoshiarpur (1921-30) told the writer that Dhanna Singh Behabalpur was the general secretary of his village Congress Committee, quoted in Gurcharan Singh, *Babbar Akali Movement-A Historical Survey*, p. 47.

<sup>573</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 134/II of 1925, p. 25 (N.A.I.).

<sup>574</sup> Bakhsish Singh, Nijjar, *History of the Babbar Akali*, ABS Publications, Jalandhar, 1987 p. 32.

The radical Akalis and nationalists met separately at Hoshiarpur in the above conference. In this meeting Master Tara Singh of Patara, Kishan Singh Bning, Amar Singh of Delhi, Bijla Singh of Patiala, Gurbachan Singh of Ambala, Amar Singh of Kot Bare Khan, Chattar Singh, Bela Singh, Ganda Singh were present.<sup>575</sup> They decided to murder all those who were allegedly responsible for the Nankana Sahib tragedy. According to a C.I.D. report, the following definite programme was agreed upon: "To create a rising in Patiala State, seeking in Bolshevik's help and inciting rebellion on the Frontier. To forment trouble in Central Punjab, to procure weapons and to murder the enemies of the Khalsa Panth".<sup>576</sup> In those days it was said that C.M. King the Commissioner of Lahore division, J.W. Bowring S.P., C.I.D. Mahant Dewa Dass of Nankana and Basant Dass of Manak, Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia as well as Babu Kartar Singh Bedi all were responsible for the Nankana tragedy.<sup>577</sup> The Babbars decided to kill them.

To fulfill this objects the Babbars, collected some arms and ammunition from the North-West Frontier through Tota Singh of

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<sup>575</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 46.

<sup>576</sup> C.I.D. Report in *Proceedings Home Political* No. 268/1922, and 261/1922, (N.A.I.)

<sup>577</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 268/1922, (N.A.I.); Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 46.

Peshawar.<sup>578</sup> Seven revolvers were procured from Ambala Contonment through the Air Force.<sup>579</sup> After it the Babbars sent two of their men Ganda Singh and Bela Singh to murder J.W. Bowring, Superintendent of Police, of Lahore, on 23rd May 1921.<sup>580</sup> The C.I.D. foiled their attempt and they were arrested and their plan was soon discovered. As a result Amar Singh of Kot Bare Khan, Narain Singh, Tota Singh, Chatar Singh, Chanchal Singh, Thakur Singh and Shankar Singh were arrested and warrants were issued to capture Master Mota Singh, Amar Singh Delhi, Vatan Singh, Bijla Singh, Kisan Singh and Gurbachan Singh because they had managed to dodge the police.<sup>581</sup> But in a way, this was a grievous blow to the Babbars.

Kishan Singh Gargaj and Master Mota Singh of Patara were emerging as the prominent members of the Babbars and had been declared as absconders. At that time Kishan Singh Gargaj came in the forefront. He belonged to village Bning, district Jalandhar. Originally, he was Major Hawaldar in 35 Sikh Platoon.<sup>582</sup> During the Martial Law regime in the Punjab, he had started propagating against the British Government in the army. He delivered fiery

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<sup>578</sup> *The Civil and Military Gazette*, 6 June, 1922.

<sup>579</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Iihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>580</sup> Gurcharan Singh, "*Babbar Akali Movement- A Study of Aim and Objects*", in 20th Punjab History Conference 1986, Punjabi University, Patiala, p. 344.

<sup>581</sup> *The Civil and Military Gazette*, 30th August, 1923.

<sup>582</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Iihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p.49.

speeches condemning the British administration of the country and exhorted people to overthrow it by force. As a result he was sentenced to 28 days by the court martial.<sup>583</sup> The result of this discontentment was that he left the military job and involved himself in the Akali Lehar. Soon after he turned against the leaders of Gurdwara Reform Movement as they were preaching non-violence. He wanted to bring an armed revolution in the country with the help of common-man. He became a deserter with the aim of establishing a 'Charkarvarti' Jatha. The Jatha purposed to spread hatred against the Government in order to collect money and weapons and to decrease army especially the Sikh portion of it.<sup>584</sup>

To fulfill these aims, Kishan Singh of Gargaj came to villages for doing propaganda against the British Government. At a Nimani Fair of Mastuana, (Jind State) his first speech recited couplets from Guru Gobind Singh's Zafarnama and disclosed his plan of armed revolution in which he exhorted the audience to wield the sword. But his speech was interrupted by the president of meeting.<sup>585</sup> In November, 1921, he came to Doaba and met Bhai Sunder Singh

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<sup>583</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p 49.

<sup>584</sup> Gurcharan Singh, "*Babbar Akali Movement- A Study of Aim and Objects*", in 20th Punjab History Conference 1986, p. 345.

<sup>585</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 52.



and Karam Singh. They decided to form 'Jathas' for the purpose of demonstration against the British Government and to prepare the people for an armed revolution in the country.<sup>586</sup> These Jathas were named 'Charkarvartis'. In the beginning two Jathas were formed. Kishan Singh Gargaj, Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri and Karam Singh Jhingar formed one Jatha and Karam Singh Daulatpur and Asa Singh formed the second Jatha.<sup>587</sup>

These Jathas followed a very well-organized plan of propaganda. Every day two meetings were held, one at 1 p.m. in one village and second at 9 p.m. in another village. After second meeting they were used to take rest in another village, so that the police might not detect hem. In these meetings Kishan Singh Gargaj used to deliver lecture and Bhai Sunder Singh, recite revolutionary poems. The Jatha of Kishan Singh created an awakening against the British Government in the Jalandhar area and the Jatha of Karam Singh Daulatpur was active in Hoshiarpur.<sup>588</sup> Police was always pursuing them but as they were fully armed and overwhelmingly favoured by public evaded their clash with them. In 1922, the propaganda campaign was intensified, meetings were held in Bullena, Bhojowal, Kotli, Pindori

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<sup>586</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Iihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 57.

<sup>587</sup> *Proceedings Home Political* No. I/X 1924 (N.A.I.).

<sup>588</sup> Gurcharan Singh, *Babbar Akali Movement-A Historical Survey*, p. 56.

Nijjran, Ramgarh Jandala, Mahalpur, Jiani, Bari Kalan, Sirhala, Bedowal, Jassowal, in Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur districts.<sup>589</sup> The sporadic propaganda at Anandpur and Kiratpur brings out one interesting feature of the Babbar Akali Movement. The Babbars never missed an opportunity of using the Congress or the Akali platform for propagating their own radical ideas. In March 1922 at Khurdpur a conference was organized by the Congress for propagating the ideals of non violence and *Charkha* and participated by the Kishan Singh and his companions to exhort the people to shed cowardice and use the revolutionary methods for ejecting the British Government out of India.<sup>590</sup> A conference was held at Kot Fatuhi where all prominent Babbar Akalis like Kishan Singh Gargaj, Sunder Singh, Master Mota Singh, Karam Singh Daulatpur, Karam Singh Jhinger addressed the people. It was a very big meeting as compared to the previous ones and shows the powerful hold of the Babbar Akalis over the masses.<sup>591</sup>

There was no plan of punishing the 'Jholichuks', toadies (Agents of the Government) in the starting. It was only decided when the Government declared rewards for arresting the Babbars. After it the Jholichuks started to inform the Government about the

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<sup>589</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Iihas Babbar Akkali Lehar*, p. 61.

<sup>590</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>591</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 200/1926 (N.A.I.).

activities of the Babbars in order to get rewards. In 1922 the Babbars, for the first time, thought of taking action against Jholichuks. On 19 March 1922 a conference was held at village Sangwal. By this time the Jholichuks had started asking the people not to attend the meeting of the Babbars. The people were really under police and the toadies had become so bold that they created disturbance in diwan and called the police. With the arrival of the police, Babbars escaped to the well. After it Jathedar Kishan Singh, Sunder Singh, Babu Santa Singh, Kartar Singh of Gondpur and Harbans Singh of Sirhala Khurad held a conclave at a well between the villages of Beas and Sangowal.<sup>592</sup> At first they were warned but when they saw that those warnings had no effect only then they decided that they should be deprived of their noses and ears. It was also decided that the Babbars should always keep arms in order to defend themselves.<sup>593</sup> To fulfill these objects razors be purchased by Babu Santa Singh from Jalandhar cantonment for cutting off the ears and noses of the notorious Jholichuks.<sup>594</sup> Some Jholichuks like Sham Singh Zaildar of Talhan, Harnam Singh Sufedposh of Mehdipur were marked for immediate action.

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<sup>592</sup> Gurcharan Singh, *Babbar Akali Movement-A Historical Survey*, p.130.

<sup>593</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, pp. 67-68.

<sup>594</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. I/X 1924 (N.A.I.).

After it, in the first week of May 1922, Kishan Singh, Babu Santa Singh and Bela Singh of Pragpur met the soldiers Kirpal Singh of Malakpur and Partap Singh of Sialkot at the hermitage of Sant Kartar Singh, who were serving in 52 Sikh regiment at Jalandhar. They also met Ganga Singh Naik of the regiment and all were persuaded to spread propaganda of Chakarvarties and procured ammunition for them.<sup>595</sup> After the meeting with soldiers, Kishan Singh and Santa Singh went to Khalsa High School Jalandhar for a meeting with the students. Milkha Singh Pindori got education from here who had already become a sympathizer of the radical Sikhs. Kishan Singh came there and met some more students on his requests. After meeting with the Kishan Singh students offered their services for the mother land, but he said to them to continue their studies till appropriate time.<sup>596</sup> After it the Chakravarti Jathas delivered similar speeches in various other parts of the province and exhorted the people to give up non-violence. During that period on 11 May 1922, Sunder Singh Babbar was arrested by the people of Sundh village. The arrest of Sunder Singh came as a rude shock to the Chakarvartis. The Jatha of

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<sup>595</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>596</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

Kishan Singh had opened its account by attacking Harnam Singh, Zaildar of Mehdiapur to settle scores with the Jholichuks.

In August 1922, was started a paper on the duplicator by Karm Singh Daulatpur which becomes famous as the *Babbar Akali Doaba*. Because the Jatha of Karam Singh Daulatpur robbed Kaka Singh, Lambardar of Bachauri on July 3, 1922, was carrying the Government revenue of Rs. 575. This amount was utilized to purchase some arms and a cyclostyle machine for the publication of the newspaper.<sup>597</sup> Karam Singh Daulatpur was its first editor. Its first two issues portrayed the pitiable plight of India, the tyranny of the British Government and the formation of 'Charkarvarti' Jathas and their aim.<sup>598</sup> After it the Babbar Akali Doaba regularly highlighted the desperate economic condition of the people and their exploitation at the hands of the foreign Government. The first page of its each issue quoted a couplet form Gurbani :

; {pk ; ' gfj ukBhn? i ' bo? dhB e/ j k. .

gpi k gpi k efN wo? epj { Bk Skv/ yk[ .

'Its first few issues bore the name of 'Safari Press' which was later on changed into '*Udaru Press*'.<sup>599</sup> The 'Babbar Akali Doaba'

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<sup>597</sup> Bakhshish Singh Nijjar, *History of the Babbar Akali*, p. 21.

<sup>598</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 65.

<sup>599</sup> Milkha Singh Nijjar, *Babbar Akali Lehar Da Itihas*, Navyug Publishers, Delhi, 1986, p. 132.

was duplicated at Gurdwara Kishanpur, Fatehpur Kotli, Jasowal, Kot Fatuhi and Pindori.<sup>600</sup> The paper was distributed free of charge among those who were either sympathizer with or were terrorized by it. It became a powerful medium for the propoganda of the Babbars.

Till now, the Babbars had no definite organization of their own. They were simply holding meetings and propagating against British Government. Now it was decided to merge the various Jathas and to rename their organization as 'Babbar Akali Jatha' and resolved to elect a committee for making more plans.<sup>601</sup> Subsequently, a meeting of 'Chakarvarti' Jathas of Kishan Singh Gargaj and Karam Singh Daulatpur held at Gajowal in the hermitage of Sant Thakar Singh in the third week of August 1922. In this meeting Karam Singh Daulatpur, Udey Singh Ramghar Jhuggian, jathedar Kishan Singh Gargaj, Karam Singh Jhingar, Assa Singh of Phakarudi, Babu Santa Singh, Master Dalip Singh and Atma Singh of Bika were involved.<sup>602</sup> In this meeting, an organization was established which was named 'Babbar Akali Jatha' and a working committee was elected for making the new

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<sup>600</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 91.

<sup>601</sup> *Proceedings Home Political* No. 134/11/1923 (N.A.I.).

<sup>602</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 87.

programmes of the party and to print the paper and collect arms and ammunition. The office holders were as follows;

Kishan Singh Gargaj- Jathedar

Dalip Singh Gogal- Secretary

Babu Santa Singh - Treasurer

Karam Singh Daulatpur, Karam Singh Jhingar and Uday Singh were assigned to assist them. Thus a definite organization of the Babbar Akalis came into existence.

The ultimate aim of the Babbars was to collect arms and money, to organize the army and especially the Sikhs who involved in Babbar Akali Lehar and to create a feeling of discontent against the British Government. When the circumstances were too ripe and people were to be ready, then there was to be revolution on the similar lines as the mutiny of 1857.<sup>603</sup> The Babbars made the revolutionary propaganda through the medium of Diwans and publication of the articles and leaflets.

After the establishment of the organizations Babbar's intensified the propaganda campaign as meetings were held in various places in the end of 1922. Now the Babbar Akali Doaba was regularly published. At the demand of paper, another duplicator

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<sup>603</sup> *Proceedings Home Political* No. 134/11/1923 (N.A.I.); *Ibid*, p. 39.

was purchased in Rs. 160 by the Jatha. For this work an aid was received from Ram Singh of Dharowal.<sup>604</sup> During that time the Babbars had been collected some weapons from army persons and people. Moreover, The Babbars seem to have attracted a large number of adherents from the Sikh peasantry of the Jalandhar Doab.

When the propaganda crusade of the Babbars was at peak then the Government set up the peace societies at various places to counter the Babbar's propaganda. The organizers of these societies were Government's agents (Jholichuks) and endeavoured to enhance the cooperation by organizing meeting at various places. In these meetings they condemned the Babbar Akalis vigorously and explained the boons bestowed by the British Government. They persuaded the people not to give any support to Babbars.<sup>605</sup> The result was that Khan Bahadur Mir Fazil Imam, Deputy Superintendent Police C.I.D., was sent to Jalandhar by D.I.G. to control the situation. He submitted his report to the Government

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<sup>604</sup> Paper Book, *Babbar Akali Conspiracy Case*, p. 681. It was confirmed by the Statement of Jagjit Singh S/o Hira Singh, Manager, Punjab and Sindh Bank, Amritsar, who told the court that cheque No. 46176 of Rs. 150/- of 8th November, 1922 related to Pass Book of S. Ram Singh of Dharowal and was in favour of Bhai Santa Singh, quoted in Gurcharan Singh *Babbar Akali Movement-A Historical Survey*, p. 149 and Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>605</sup> But these meetings had no effect on the people except on those *Jholichucks*. The Babbar Movement progressed very well day by day. Mr. C.W. Jacob who was the Deputy Commissioner, Jalandhar, saw the situation was out of control. He wrote to D.I.G., C.I.D. that unless some special measures were taken, the Government would loose its grip over Doaba and it would be a fatal blow to its power. See in detail, Paper Book, *Babbar Akali Conspiracy Case*, 1925, (A copy with Milkha Singh Nijjar, A.2, G.T Road, Adarsh Nagar, Delhi), p. 766.



saying that the situation in Doaba was serious. Jholichuks feared the Babbas and did not say anything against them. He requested to the Government that must be done something to tight their control over Doaba.<sup>606</sup> As a result of his report an emergency conference was held on Nov., 1922, at Jalandhar between Mr. C.W. Jacob I.C.S., the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. F.C. Isemonger, C.B.E., D.I.G., C.I.D., Punjab, Khan Bahadur, Mir Fazal Imam D.S. Police, C.I.D. Punjab and Superintendent of Police of Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur district.<sup>607</sup> In this meeting decisions were taken to adopt more strict measures for the suppression of the movement and offer higher rewards for the arrest of prominent Babbars. As a result on 30th Nov., 1922, a declaration of the prizes for the arrest of Babbars was made by the following way:-

Jathedar, Kishan Singh Gargaj	Rs. 2,000
Karam Singh, Daulatpur	Rs. 1,000
Karam Singh, Jhingar	Rs. 500
Dalip Singh, Gohgal	Rs. 500
Assa Singh	Rs. 250. <sup>608</sup>

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<sup>606</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 108.

<sup>607</sup> Bakhshish Singh Nijjar, *History of the Babbar Akali*, p. 86.

<sup>608</sup> Gurcharan Singh, *Babbar Akali Movement-A Historical Survey*, pp. 155-56; Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, pp. 108-09.

The declaration of rewards greatly changed situation. It encouraged the Jholichuks. They set to pass the information of the Government about the programmes, plans and activities of the Babbars. The authority set up a special police station in every village to get information from the toadies easily. For this purpose, the authority was determined to wide her network so that a minuet information could be make accessible. On the other side, the Babbars launched a virulent campaign against the informers of the police and it was decided to exterminate the Jholichuks as their greed was likely to create difficulties in the way of the Babbars.<sup>609</sup>

During that time, the police inserted her agents (Jholichuks) in the villages who informed the Government against the Babbars. Consequently Kishan Singh called another meeting of the various Babbar Jathas on 25 Dec. 1922 at Jassowal. It was attended by all prominent Babbars like Kishan Singh Gargaj, Master Dalip Singh, Karam Singh Jhingar, Babu Santa Singh, Karam Singh Daulatpur, Dhanna Singh, Udey Singh, Buta Singh, Assa Singh etc.<sup>610</sup> In this meeting they decided to follow a programme of 'reforming' the toadies. Within a short time on 30-31 Dec. 1922, another meeting of the general body of the Babbars was called at Jassowal in the

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<sup>609</sup> Gurcharan Singh, *Babbar Akali Movement-A Historical Survey*, p. 156.

<sup>610</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Iihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 96.

*Haveli* of Hari Singh.<sup>611</sup> Here the working committee announced the following important decisions:

- i) Who to whom and when to be murdered, will be decided by the working committee. No member was to initiate any action arbitrarily.
- ii) In case a member comes across a *Jholichuk*, per chance, he should be murdered.
- iii) They were to loot the property of *Jholichuks* and it was strictly ordered that the looted property should be deposited to the working committee so that the amount might be used to purchase arms and meet the expenses of the Babbar Akali Doaba.
- iv) They should not insult their women and children during action against them.
- v) Only those could remain members of the Babbar Jathas who were prepared to execute the orders of the working committee, giving up all other engagements.
- vi) The decision of chopping of the nose and ears was replaced by immediate and instant murder. Because, it took much time, and also to identify them for action by the Government.

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<sup>611</sup> Bakhshish Singh Nijjar, *History of the Babbar Akali*, p. 116.

- vii) Every murder was to be announced in the name of two or three Babbars in a special leaflet.
- viii) While the Babbars were forbidden to loot innocent persons, the property of the Government, Jholichuks and notorious money lenders was considered. Cash or property such acquired will be the right of the party and not of any individual.<sup>612</sup>

After giving detailed rules and chalking out careful plans, the Babbars were asked to start their work of reform. The first in the list was Arjan Singh Patwari of Haripur allegedly responsible for the arrest of Master Mota Singh, but he could never be murdered.<sup>613</sup> After it, on 2 Feb. 1923, the Babbars committed a dacoity in the house and shop of Munshi Ram of Shahukar of Jalda. This attempt did not bring them any worthwhile financial gain. Only, two ornaments fell in their hands. These ornaments were mortgaged by the Babbars for Rs. 180/-. This amount was spent on buying a gun, 25 cartridges and 2 swords from Nahan.<sup>614</sup> Consequently, the first actual victim of the Babbars was Zaildar Bishan Singh of Rani

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<sup>612</sup> C.F. Isemonger's *Evidence in the Babbar Akali cases*, quoted in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, 31 October, 1923; Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, pp. 98-99; Evidence of Amar Singh (P. W. 8) of Kote Bare Khan, Assa Singh Phakrudi (P.W. 25) and Ram Singh (P.W.13) of Muzara Kalan. Trial case no. 2, of 1924, pp. 42-43; quoted in Bakhshish Singh Nijjar, *History of the Babbar Akali*, p. 117.

<sup>613</sup> *Proceedings Home Political* No. 134/11/1923 (N.A.I.).

<sup>614</sup> *Proceedings Home Political* No. K.W./11/245/1926 (N.A.I.); Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 133.

Thua, a retired official of the canal department, who was shot dead on 10 Feb. 1923.<sup>615</sup> His name appeared in the hit list of Jholichuks. He was helping the Government in every possible way of the suppression of the Babbar Akali Movement. The murder of Zaildar Bishan Singh launched a programme of wholesale slaughter of Jholichuks, greatly alarmed the authorities. After three days on 13 Feb. 1923, Diwan Singh Jholichuks of Hayatpur was murdered. He was an uneducated person but a great supporter of the British authority.<sup>616</sup>

The activities of Babbar Akalis were increasing day by day. After the murder of Zaildar Bishan Singh, the police unleashed a wave of repression. The police would arrest the innocent people from villages for no fault of theirs. Every day between five to seven hundred Sikhs were arrested from Doaba area <sup>617</sup> and harshed. On February 22, 1923 a meeting was held in the Haveli (House) of S. Hardit Singh of Jassowal to save the common villagers from police brutalities. It was attended by Kishan Singh Gargaj, Babu Santa Singh, Dhanna Singh of Behbalpur, Udey Singh, Buta Singh of Pindori Nijjaran, Harbakhsh Singh and Hardip Singh Jassowal.<sup>618</sup>

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<sup>615</sup> *Proceedings Home Political* No. 134/11/1923. (N.A.I.)

<sup>616</sup> *Proceedings Home Political* No. K.W./11/245/1926. (N.A.I.)

<sup>617</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, pp. 112-113.

<sup>618</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

In this meeting was decided that two or three Babbars announced the names held responsible for the murder of Zaildar Bishan Singh and henceforth all murders should be owned by them to save the innocent people from police brutalities. But they did not take any final decision, because some prominent Babbars like Karam Singh Daultapur etc., were not present in the meeting.<sup>619</sup>

After the four days of meeting on 26th January, Kishan Singh Gargaj the Jathedar of the Babbars was arrested on information supplied by Kabul Singh Bning an agent of authority. Mr. Mathews, Assistant Superintendent of Police Jallundhar raided at village Pindari Mahal and got Kishan Singh arrested.<sup>620</sup>

Though Kishan Singh Bning was arrested, even then the Babbars continued their activities with the great zeal. Because the movement had taken firm root in the Doaba and his arrest was not sufficient to check the outrages committed by the organization. On the night of 2nd and 3rd March 1923, Babu Santa Singh, Banta Singh of Dhamian, Sadhu Singh and Banta Singh of Pragpur attacked Jamsheer railway station.<sup>621</sup> It is situated on the Jalandhar to Nakodar Railway line. Chanan Ram the station Master and

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<sup>619</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, pp. 113-114.

<sup>620</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>621</sup> *Proceedings Home Political* No. 134/11/1923. (N.A.I.); The viceroy of India Lord Reading writes to the Secretary of state that the incident took place on 4.3.23. The incident took place on 3rd March but F.I.R. seems to have been lodged on 4th March.

Sapuran Singh the Gang Jamadar were troubling and misbehave the passengers by charging money through unfair means.<sup>622</sup> They were also doing cooperation with the police against the Babbars. They both were warned with dire consequences but they did not desist. The Babbars entered the booking office and their houses. But the ornaments they could lay their hands were of little value and get Rs. 30/- only from there.<sup>623</sup> Money was taken from them and they were warned to reform behavior in future.

The next target of the Babbars vengeance was Buta Lambardar of Nangal Shamman, who was a great supporter of the authority in the suppression of the Babbars. He was attacked on 11 March 1923, by the Babbars under the leadership of Babu Santa Singh and he and his grandson Surjan Singh were murdered.<sup>624</sup> On 19 March Labh Singh of Garh Shankar, an ex-mistri of the police training school Phillaur was shot dead at the time of Dansival Chhinj. He was suspected for his complicity in the arrest of Jathedar Kishan Singh.<sup>625</sup>

It was strange that the Babbars could not take revenge from traitors who had caused the arrest of Master Mota Singh earlier and

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<sup>622</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 142.

<sup>623</sup> Gurcharan Singh, *Babbar Akali Movement-A Historical Survey*, p. 116.

<sup>624</sup> Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle-A Retrospect*, Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 1988, p. 126.

<sup>625</sup> Gurcharan Singh, *Babbar Akali Movement-A Historical Survey*, p. 168.

Kishan Singh later. "Labh Singh had actually received a reward of 750 for the part which he played in the arrest of Kishan Singh".<sup>626</sup> They made three attempts to kill Labh Singh of Dhadda Fateh Singh and Kabul Singh Bning. The three attempts were made on 14, 17 and 23 March 1923. But under the few difficult circumstances they were escaped every time.

The prominent Babbars held a meeting at hermitage of Sant Thakur Singh Gajowal on March 22 1923, which proved a mile stone in the history of Babbar Akali Movement. In the meeting it was decided that three Babbars would take the responsibility of all the murders. Karam Singh Daulatpur, announced in the meeting that many *Jholichuks* had been killed and the police was trying the best to trace out the culprits. He also told that Babbars should declare the responsibility of all the murders so that people remain intact from the atrocities of the police. It was also decided that no Babbar would offer himself for arrest alive. After it, he himself gave his name and after that Udey Singh and Dhanna Singh Behbalpur offered their names for these murders. Consequently, the first Babbar declaration was published and an open letter was sent to Lieutenant Governor of Punjab. The letter stated that "Bishan

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<sup>626</sup> *Paper Book of Babbar Akali Conspiracy Case*, p. 85.



Singh Zaildar of Rani Thua, Buta Lambardar, his grandson Surjan Singh and Mistri Labh Singh of Garhshankar had been murdered. It was further stated that another person was undergoing imprisonment for life in the Babbar Akali Jail and conspiracy. Having no penal code of their own the Babbar Akalis had devised three modes of awarding punishment namely:

- i) Death
- ii) Mutilation
- iii) Fine"<sup>627</sup>

The letter was signed by S. Karam Singh of Daulatpur, S. Dhanna Singh of Behbalpur and Bhai Udey Singh Ramgarh Jhuggian and copies of this declaration were sent to the Deputy Commissioner, Jalandhar, Diwan Durga Das and Mian Sahib, Minister of Kapurthala State.<sup>628</sup> Its copies were also pasted in Pindori Nijjaran and were sent to many other villages.<sup>629</sup>

After these circumstances the inhabitants of Jalandhar, and Hoshiarpur districts were in a state of nervousness, and fright. Because the five Jholichuks were murdered by the Babbars within one month greatly alarmed the Jholichuks and also the

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<sup>627</sup> *Babbar Akali Conspiracy Case, Judgement* 1925, pp. 4-7; Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 118; Milkha Singh Nijjar, *Babbar Akali Lehar Da Itihas*, p. 228.

<sup>628</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 118

<sup>629</sup> *Proceedings Home Political* No. 134/11/1923, (N.A.I.).

Government. The authority issued them licenses for weapons and decided to throw a wide net and a list of persons was prepared who were suspected of being in touch with the Babbar if not actually active members of the gang. But the Babbar continued their work of reform. Next action of the Babbar was against the Hazara Singh of Behalpur (Jalandhar). Early in the morning of 27 March, Hazara Singh was killed by Dhanna Singh, Karam Singh editor and Uday Singh, and it was announced by the Babbar in Babbar Akali Doaba of April 14, 1923 that Hazara Singh was given a reward of three squares of land (three bullets) on 27th March 1923.<sup>630</sup> On 17 April, ex-Subedar Gainda Singh was shot dead in front of his house in Ghural Village in Jalandhar district for his active assistance to the police in the arrest of certain Babbar.<sup>631</sup> Due to the activities of the Babbar, the Situation in the Doaba became very tense. On the advice of the Deputy Commissioner of Jalandhar the D.I.G. of police deputed Khan Bahadur Sheikh Abdul Aziz, S.P., C.I.D. to work in liaison with the Jalandhar police and help control the situation in the area.<sup>632</sup>

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<sup>630</sup> *Proceedings Home Political* No. 245/K.W./1926, (N.A.I.); Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 156.

<sup>631</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 134/11/1923, (N.A.I.).

<sup>632</sup> Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle-A Retrospect*, p. 127.

During the year of 1923 the arrests of some Babbars like Sardar Karam Singh Jhingar, Master Dalip Singh Gossal, on Jan. 5, 1923, Kishan Singh Gargaj on Feb. 26, 1923, Assa Singh on March 1, 1923 and Amar Singh of Kot Fatuhi on 26 March 1923 were, no doubt, crushing blows to the Babbar Akali Movement.<sup>633</sup> According to Amar Singh Granthi of Kot Fatuhi police raided at Pindori, Kishanpura, Jassowal, Paragpur, Bika, Rajowal Kot Fatuhi and Daulatpur,<sup>634</sup> On 20, 21 and 22 April, 1923. The police arrested some Babbars like Batan Singh, Sadhu Singh and Milkha Singh from Pandori, Hari Singh and Labh Singh from Jassowal, Bela Singh and Sadhu Singh from Pragpur, Ujjagar Singh Birrampur, Sunder Singh Kot Fatuhi, Gurbachan Singh Sadhara, Sant Mit Singh Kishanpura and Nand Singh Ghurial.<sup>635</sup> Consequently, the Government issued another proclamation on 25 April 1923, under the signature of Hari Kishan Kaul Commissioner of Jalandhar Division, declaring that six squares of land would be given to the person, who helping the arrest of all those members of the Babbars, who were involved in the murders of Zaildar Bishan Singh, Buta Singh Lambardar, Labh Singh Mistri, Hazara Singh and Subedar Gainda Singh.<sup>636</sup>

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<sup>633</sup> Gurcharan Singh, *Babbar Akali Movement-A Historical Survey*, p. 173.

<sup>634</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>635</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 201.

<sup>636</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 201-03.

After the arrests of 21 and 22 April the police carried on arresting of Babbars at the information of approvers. On 27 April, Waryam Singh Kot Fatuhi, Shiv Singh Haripur and Amar Singh Pindori Nijjaran were arrested. On 28 April, Dalip Singh Dhamian, on 1st May, Piara Singh Dhamian and on 5 May Sant Thakar Singh Rajowal and Banta Singh Pragpur were arrested. Thakar Singh, Harnam Singh Pandori Nijjran and Atma Singh Bika were arrested, on 6 May and Prem Singh Pragpur was arrested, on 12 May 1923.<sup>637</sup> On 15 May 1923, Mr. Townsend was appointed as a new commissioner. Two squadrons of cavalry and infantry of about 250 men were placed there and an additional police staff was also stationed.<sup>638</sup> On 12 May 1923 Karam Singh Manko was arrested at Jalandhar Railway Station with the help of Anup Singh Manko, informer of the police.<sup>639</sup>

According to the *Akali-te-Pardesi* on 15 May, 1923 twenty one persons were arrested.<sup>640</sup> On the other side, the Babbars once again, delivered a sensational shock to the Punjab Government,

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<sup>637</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p.203.

<sup>638</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 206-07.

<sup>639</sup> *Ibid*, p. 204.

<sup>640</sup> Kartar Singh, Hazara Singh, Atma Singh and Bir Singh from Gondpur, Kartar Singh, Sohan Singh, Puran Singh, Harnam Singh and Inder Singh from Chahalpur, Pritam Singh of Moila, Mehar Singh, Chint Singh, Mohan Singh and Bhaunda Singh of Moranwali, Dasaundha Singh of Banga, Lachhman Singh of Phakrudi, Jawala Singh of Molgarh, Aggar Singh of Tannauli, Ram Singh of Pindori Phagorian and Udham Singh of Kolu Behr and Hazara Singh of Munder. For more detail see, *The Akali-te-Pardesi*, May, 21, 1923.

because they carried on their work of reform of Jholichuks. On 20th May, 1923 Chaudhri Ralla Ram and his brother Ditta were killed in the Kaulgarh village in the Hoshiarpur district.<sup>641</sup> They were attacked by Karam Singh editor, Dhanna Singh of Behbalpur, Udey Singh Ramgarh, Banta Singh and Dalipa of Dhamian, Babu Santa Singh, Anup Singh, Dhanna Singh of Kotli Bawa Das and Bishan Singh of Magat.<sup>642</sup> These two brothers were very thick with each other and they were informers of the C.I.D. and the police. Next action of the Babbars was made against the Subedar Sunder Singh Randhawa. He enrolled his son and other four persons as special constables against the Babbars. But Babbars were not successful in their plan and he escaped. Atta Muhammad Patwari of Nanda Chaur, district Hoshiarpur a notorious Jholichuk was murdered on 6th June 1923.<sup>643</sup> Banta Singh, Dalipa of Dhamian and Dhanna Singh of Kotli Bawa Dass were involved in his murdered. On 15th/16th July 1923 another murderous attack was made on Bishan Singh of Sandhara but after serious injuries he was escaped.<sup>644</sup>

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<sup>641</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 200, 1926 (N.A.I.).

<sup>642</sup> *Paper Book Babbar Akali Conspiracy Case*, p. 153 ; Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 162.

<sup>643</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 165.

<sup>644</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 166-67.

The murders of 'Ralla and Ditta' had created panic in the villages. On the advice of Deputy Commissioner of Jalandhar the D.I.G. of police deputed Khan Bahadur Sheikh Abdul Aziz, superintendent of Police C.I.D. to work in liaison with the Jalandhar police and to help in control the situation in the area. He wrote in his report while commenting on the killing of Ditta and Ralla, "The most surprising fact in the outrage is that while the culprits stayed for about 1½ hours and in the early part of the night when the whole village comprising of about 100 houses was awake, not a single man came forward to the rescue of the victims, the neighbors shutting themselves in the houses."<sup>645</sup>

The S.G.P.C. and national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi did not approve of the Babbar's programmes which were following the policy of non-violent towards the Government. The S.G.P.C. and its members severely criticized the actions of the Babbar Akalis in order to please the Government.

While the Bishan Singh Zaildar was murdered, the Government took hard step to crush the movement by committing inhuman atrocities. The Government did not make any difference between the common Akalis and the Babbar Akalis. This barber

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<sup>645</sup> *Proceedings Home Political* No. 134/11/1923 (N.A.I.).

action shocked the non-violent Sikhs and developed the hatred feelings against the Government.<sup>646</sup> Quickly the Government realized the situation and put intention to make distinction between the Akalis and Babbars. The Government also tried to create such a situation that Akalis might feel that actions were only served against the anti-British and violent Sikhs. The S.G.P.C. leaders made aware the Government that she must change the coercive policy against the common Akalis otherwise Akali movement would be out of control. The Government accorded on the provision that S.G.P.C. must condemn the actions of Babbars openly. The Government further released the 'Guru-ka-Bagh' morcha prisoners on April 25, 1923. On the other hand, on 30th May 1923, S.G.P.C. passed a resolution and advised the Sikhs and Akalis Jathas to dissociate and keep away the Sikhs from those who had taken to violence and forbade helping them.<sup>647</sup> Thus the attitude of the S.G.P.C. turned anti Babbar Akali.

The Government then took certain special measures to meet the Babbar's challenge and to restore confidence among the loyalist in the affected areas. Special staff was deputed to assist the local police in their efforts to arrest the Babbars. All these measures

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<sup>646</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 209.

<sup>647</sup> *Akali Leaders case 1923-25*, p. 2025; *Copy of the Proceedings of S.G.P.C.*, Register No. 3, Gurmata No. 3, P. 53 and Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 211.

made it very difficult for the Babbars to operate in the area. In the second week of June 1923 Babu Santa Singh, Dalipa and Banta Singh of Dhamian, Anup Singh Manko and Dhanna Singh of Kotli Bawa Dass decided to take refuge in the Malwa area. On the 20th June 1923 on the basis of information of Sant Kartar Singh, Babu Santa Singh was arrested by Mr. Fazal Imam at Tapa Railway Station.<sup>648</sup> After his arresting some papers were recovered by him, including a letter addressed to Jawala Singh and Bhagwan Singh of Fatehpur Kothi. In that letter reference had been made about the 'Elam' duplicator "*Uadru Press*".<sup>649</sup> As a result of this information the police raided at Fatehpur Kothi and Bhagwan Singh arrested with duplicator. But Jawala Singh escaped.<sup>650</sup>

Babu Santa Singh surrendered himself to the police turned approver and on the behalf of his information nine Babbars were arrested.<sup>651</sup> The police started giving them hard punishments to the arrested babbars for acquiring information about other Babbars and movement activities. Many types of physical tortures were meted out to the arrested Babbars. As a result, some of them did give information about the Babbars and their movement.

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<sup>648</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 217.

<sup>649</sup> Gurcharan Singh, , *Babbar Akali Movement-A Historical Survey*, p. 189.

<sup>650</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 217.

<sup>651</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.



The next step for the Punjab Government was to apprehend the absconding Babbars. On 8 August 1923, the Government issued the third proclamation regarding the awards for the arrest of the Babbars. The following criminals have been declared as proclaimed absconders. Rewards as mentioned against each name for their arrests were:

Karam Singh of Daulatpur	Rs. 3000/-
Udey Singh of Ramgarh Jhuggian	Rs. 2000/-
Dhanna Singh of Behbalpur	Rs. 2000/-
Banta Singh of Dhamian	Rs. 1000/-
Dalipa of Dhamian	Rs. 1000/-
Waryam Singh of Dhugga	Rs. 1000/-
Dhanna Singh of Kotli Bawa Dass	Rs. 500/-
Anup Singh of Manko	Rs. 500/-
Bishan Singh of Mangat	Rs. 400/-
Buta Singh of Pindori Nijjaran	Rs. 200/- <sup>652</sup>

The Government adopted repressive policy to extract information about the Babbars and established police posts in various villages. On the information of approvers, Buta Singh Pindori was arrested on 14th Aug., 1923. After the Santa Singh's

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<sup>652</sup> *The Tribune*, Lahore, 30 November, 1923, p. 9; Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 227 and *Babbar Akali Conspiracy Case*, Trial No. 2, 1924, p. 732.

confessional statement more Babbar were arrested. Banta Singh Behbalpur arrested on Aug. 28, 1923. On 1st September 1923, Milkha Singh of Moranwali, Besant Singh of Randhawa Masandan, Chhaja Singh of Massanian, Bawa Singh and Udham Singh of Pindori Nijran were arrested. Munsha Singh of Johal on 4th Sept., Amar Singh of Rajowal on 6th Sept., Partap Singh Sialkot on 7 September Wattan Singh of Ganeshpur and Thakar Singh of Bharta were arrested on 9 September 1923. Other Babbars were arrested on 18 September, Kirpal Singh Malakwal, on 19th October, Narain Singh of Chattiwind and on October 26, 1923 Man Singh of Gujranwala.<sup>653</sup>

Tempted by the lure of gold and under the influences of his wife and family Anup Singh Manko who had recently joined the Babbar Akalis betrayed his fellow members. On 31 Aug., 1923, Karam Singh editor, Udey Singh, Bishan Singh, Mohinder Singh of Pindori, Ganga Singh and Anup Singh were travelling from village Domeli to Bubeli and were to stay at the latter till the afternoon.<sup>654</sup> But Anup Singh, who became informer, sent information to the police according to their pre planned scheme. He had managed to destroy the arms and ammunitions of the Babbars except a gun

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<sup>653</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, pp. 227-28.

<sup>654</sup> Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle-A Retrospect*, p. 128.

which Karam Singh carried with him.<sup>655</sup> As the result was that these four Babbars were surrounded by the police in Bubeli village in the morning of 1st September 1923. Mr. Smith, the superintendent of Police who wanted to arrest the Babbars alive, tried to persuade them to surrender, but they refused to do so. The Babbar decided to face the enemy, but as their resources were very limited. Finally, the Babbars rushed to the Gurdwara Chaunta Sahib, across a small stream. The police opened fire and Karam Singh, Udey Singh, Mohinder Singh and Bishan Singh were died in the shooting.<sup>656</sup>

The next blow to the Babbars came in the death of Dhanna Singh. Dhanna Singh was similarly betrayed by one of his associates Jawala Singh, Dhanna Singh went to Jawala Singh after the Bubeli tragedy. Jawala Singh brought Dhanna Singh to Mannanhana village. At the same time, he secretly gave the information to the police. At the night when Dhanna Singh was fast asleep, Jawala Singh damaged his weapons. Mr. Horton Superintendent of Police, Hoshiarpur accompanied by Mr. Jenkin, Assistant Superintendent of Police and a mixed guard numbering

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<sup>655</sup> *Proceedings Home Political* No. 134/11/1923 (N.A.I.).

<sup>656</sup> *Proceedings Home Political* No. 134/11/1923 (N.A.I.).

38 officers and men reached the spot at night of 25 October 1923<sup>657</sup> and Dhanna Singh was arrested. After securing arrest Mr. Horton taunted him saying that he had been arrested alive whereas he used to say that he would never come into the hands of police alive. At that time, he made a violent jerk with his hands and exploded a bomb which he was carrying in his pocket.<sup>658</sup> The result of the explosion of bomb was that five police men and Dhanna Singh died at the spot while Mr. Horton and Jenkim and three other police men were seriously wounded and later on they were also died.

New prominent members of the Babbars were Banta Singh of Dhamian, Dhanna Singh of Kohli Bawa Dass and Waryam Singh Dhugga. With the assistance of new recruits to the movement they carried on their activities. On November 13, 1923, they decided to attack on Jawala Singh and Narain Singh, these two were the notorious money lenders of Kotli Bawa Dass. Narain Singh was robbed of ornaments and his account books were also burnt but his brother Jawala Singh was murdered for his anti Babbar activities.<sup>659</sup>

On Dec. 12, 1923, Waryam Singh Dhugga, Banta Singh Dhamian and Jawala Singh Fatehpur Kothi were staying in the

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<sup>657</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>658</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 192.

<sup>659</sup> *Babbar Akali Case Judgement 1925*, p. 8.

house of Jagat Singh Mander. But he became informer of the police party due to the influence of his relatives and under the threats of the authority. When the Babbars reached his village he informed the police. The Deputy Commissioner Mr. W.C. Jacob along with Deputy Superintendent of Police and 500 policemen raided on the village and the whole village was surrounded.<sup>660</sup> When they saw that their escape was not possible, they decided to face the enemies. In this encounter two of them, Banta Singh and Jawala Singh were died on the spot and Waryam Singh escaped.<sup>661</sup> After a few months, Waryam Singh was also killed in police encounter in Chak no. 54 district Layallpur on 8th June 1924.<sup>662</sup> Thus by mid June 1924 all the important Babbars had either been killed in the police encounters or taken prisoners and the situation in the province was brought under control.<sup>663</sup>

After the arrest of the Babbars, the trial was conducted in the camera in Lahore and was presided over by an English Judge Mr. J.K. Tapp.<sup>664</sup> On the 15 Aug. 1923, the main conspiracy was against 94 men, including 17 approves and 15 absconders and it

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<sup>660</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 194 .

<sup>661</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 134/11/1923 (N.A.I.).

<sup>662</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, pp. 117-18.

<sup>663</sup> For details see '*My Friend the Revolutionary*' *Collective works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 487-89.

<sup>664</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Itihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 237.

were sent up for trial.<sup>665</sup> The total arrests up to that time 226 of whom 104 were present in the court under section 107, Criminal Procedure Code.<sup>666</sup> All the Babbars were brought to Lahore and the Judge asked them to have some *vakil* for the purpose of defending their cases. But some Babbars like Kishan Singh, Sunder Singh, Mukhsuspuri, Dalip Singh Sandhra, Karam Singh, and Babu Santa Singh were refused to have any *Vakil*.<sup>667</sup> The Babbar decided not to co-operate with the Government to participate in the court proceedings. The trial continued for a long period. 447 witnesses were put forth by the Government with an addition of 734 written documents and 228 other things, as evidence.<sup>668</sup> The judgement on the Babbar Akali case was given on 28th Feb. 1925. According to the judgement of Mr. J.K. Tapp Additional Sessions Judge, awarding death sentenced to 5, life imprisonment to 11 and various terms of imprisonment of 38, while 34 were acquitted.<sup>669</sup> But the police appealed to the High Court for revision of the judgement given by the session judge.

The judges of High Court were Boardway and Mr. Harrison. They delivered final judgement on 19 Jan., 1926. According to final

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<sup>665</sup> *Proceedings Home Political* No. 200/1926, (N.A.I.).

<sup>666</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>667</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Iihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, pp. 237-38.

<sup>668</sup> *Ibid* p. 230.

<sup>669</sup> Partap Singh Giani, *Gurdwara Sudhar Arthat Akali Lehar* p. 261.

judgement, six Babbars were sentenced to death and 13 to life Imprisonment. About 29 were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment while 40 were acquitted.<sup>670</sup> Five Babbars passed away during the trial of the case, eight Babbars died bravely in the encounter with the police. One Babbar Mistri Amar Singh could never be arrested.<sup>671</sup>

Kishan Singh Gargaj, Babu Santa Singh, Dalipa Dhamian, Dharam Singh Hayatpur, Karam Singh Manko and Nand Singh Ghurial were hanged on 27th Feb., 1926.<sup>672</sup>

By the middle of 1924 the movement was ruthlessly suppressed but those Babbars acquitted by the court, carried on their work. In 1933, Bela Singh was killed by Babbar Hari Singh and his two friends.<sup>673</sup> In 1936, Anup Singh an approver was done to death by Gurdit Singh, Kartar Singh Kirti and Ujagar Singh, a young lad of sixteen years and on 25th March 1940, Bachitter Singh and Ajaib Singh out short the life of Karam Singh Mananhana.<sup>674</sup>

The aim of Babbar Akali Movement was an armed revolution in the country in cooperation with the army. But the Babbars were

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<sup>670</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Iihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 254.

<sup>671</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Iihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 254.

<sup>672</sup> Gurcharan Singh, *Babbar Akali Movement: A Historical Survey*, pp. 221-22.

<sup>673</sup> Sunder Singh Mukhsuspuri, *Iihas Babbar Akali Lehar*, p. 203.

<sup>674</sup> Param Bakhshish Singh & Devinder Kumar Verma, *Punjab and the Freedom Struggle*, Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala, p. 280.

no more successful in their mission. There were many reasons responsible for their ultimate failure. The main cause was unequal match of strength and resources between the British Government and the Babbars. They had to suffer due to the shortage of money, arms and ammunition. They had tried to keep contact with the army and to procure arms and tried to purchase arms with the robbed money. But it was not sufficient for carrying out their mission. Another cause was, the Babbars were no more successful in keeping of their organization as a secret than the Gadrities. The British C.I.D. did not have much difficulty in infiltrating the Babbar's inner circles. Another cause of failure of Babbars was the role of Jholichuks. Who gave their full cooperation to the Government against the Babbars. Some persons of Babbars became informer of the police after their arrest. This gave a big set back to the Babbars.

In addition to this the other parties like the S.G.P.C. and Indian National Congress though anti-imperialist in their own ways yet disapproved revolutionary methods of the Babbars. However their ideals and mission continued to work even after 1924. The S.G.P.C. radically protested against the activities of the movement and appealed to the people not to give any support to the Babbars.



## CHAPTER-VI

### THE KIRTI KISAN LEHAR

The Kirti Kisan Lehar came into being in 1928. It was based upon Gadar movement which rejuvenated the party by encouraging militant nationalism in Punjab. The Kirti Kisan Party was a mirror of deliberative condition of peasants, landless and suppressed classes of Punjab. Literally, the word 'Kirti' means 'the toiler'. The party defined a Kirti as a person, who does labour physically with his own hands and does not exploit others.<sup>675</sup> The object of the party was to get free the nation from the British imperialism by using every possible method. The approach led to the search for more effective ways to further struggle against imperialism, feudalism and capitalism, which later emerged as an agrarian movement in this province. Although, it was grown out of the Gadar group<sup>676</sup> but its organization and ideology remained more or less restricted to its mentor. The founders of the party were highly

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<sup>675</sup> *The Kirti*, Amritsar, April 1926, Bhai Santokh Singh defined the meaning of the word Kirti, under the title of 'Prachalit Bhulekhe' in Kirti Magazine: He explained that it was the exact meaning of the 'worker' Kirti was a person who had no capital and means of production and earned his living by working for others.

<sup>676</sup> Williamson, H., *India and Communism*, National Archives of India, New Delhi, 1935, p. 271; (Compiled in the intelligence Bureau, Home Department G.O.I., 1933 revised upon 1935.)

impressed by the Russian revolution and organized the party to attain similar aims.

Various factors contributed to the emergence of the Kirti Kisan Party. Among those were: The suspension of Satyagraha movement of February 1922 and severe repression by the Britishers that created an environment of distrust shapelessness among ordinary people and peasantry in the Punjab, Gurdwara Reform Movement and Babbar Akali movement led to the emergence of political consciousness among Punjabis who showed bitter anti-British feelings during the period. The decisive factor that led to formation of the party was Gadrities influence. In the meantime, a large number of Gadrities had been released from the Jails and had settled down in their respective areas.<sup>677</sup> They preached the ideas of socialism and communism that had been the defining characteristics of Gadar movement. So they influenced the Kirti Kisan Lehar ideologically to raise war against the British imperialism and prepared them to make a broader vision towards world working class revolutionary movement in the twenties.<sup>678</sup>

Members of the Gadar movement who became part of the Kirti Kisan Lehar were much impressed from the revolutionary

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<sup>677</sup> Master Hari Singh, *Punjab Peasant in Freedom Struggle, Vol. II*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 163-64.

<sup>678</sup> Satya, M. Rai., *Punjab Heroic Tradition, 1900-47*, Punjabi Univ., Patiala, 2nd ed., 1995, p. 99.

events that took place in Russia and were based upon ideas of socialism and communism. Its prominent members like Santokh Singh and Rattan Singh participated in the 4th Congress of "The Communist International" held in Moscow from November 7 to December 3, 1922, to understand the meaning and scope of communism<sup>679</sup> in theory and practice. The fundamental purpose of the congress was to prepare the ground for the world revolution. The participants got positive motivation and sent as emissaries to India for organizing Indian workers and peasants. While Santokh Singh and Rattan Singh left Moscow for India in May 1923, Santokh Singh was arrested on September 1923 while he was interring in Indian Territory. Later he was released on security on 20 December and confined to his village<sup>680</sup> Dhardeo in Amritsar district. On the other side "According to British informer, five Gadrities Santa Singh Gandiwind, Harjap Singh Mahalpur, Pritam Singh Kasel, Karam Singh Dhoot and fifth one had left for Russia to be trained in communist propaganda."<sup>681</sup> Following this Moscow became an active centre of learning for the Gadrities. They acquired higher education and training in the University for toilers of the

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<sup>679</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab*, (1926-47), Anupama Publication, Delhi, 1979, p. 63; G. Adhikari, *Documents of History the of Communist Party of India, Vol. I*, People's Publishing House, Delhi, 1977, p. 528

<sup>680</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab*, (1926-47) p. 66; Master Hari Singh, *Punjab Peasant in Freedom Struggle, Vol. II*, pp. 165-66.

<sup>681</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, 1926, No. 41. (N.A.I.)

east and maintained their contacts with Kirti in Punjab through their Kabul Centre.<sup>682</sup> The social transformation which occurred in Russia was personally witnessed by Gadrities and received indelible impression in their minds.

In 1927, the tenth anniversary of the Bolsheviks was celebrated. The Gadrities found that within the span of ten years (1917-27), the economic condition of the people had improved enormously in Russia. In this way Bolsheviks infused fresh energy in the poor workers and peasants and raised new hopes in their minds. Russia hoisted the flag of unity and freedom and gave a call to Kirtis (workers) of the world to unite and break the shackles of slavery.<sup>683</sup> The Bolshevik revolution had added a new feature of hope to realize their goal of freedom from the British imperialism on the lines of Russia. Thus, the Indian revolutionaries looked to Russia for inspiration and assistance. The conscious class of workers and peasants viewed Russia as their fertile land because of its sympathetic and optimistic attitude towards the countries which were struggling to establish national and democratic set up by driving away foreign rulers and eradicating the feudal and capitalistic structure.

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<sup>682</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab, (1926-47)*, p. 64.

<sup>683</sup> 'Bolshevikian Di Azadi Di Dasveen Varegandh' (Tenth anniversary) *The Kirti*, November, 1927, pp. 1-5.

The Gadar leaders had clearly envisioned that British rule could be only overthrown through the revolutionary means. They had learnt from their past experiences that armed revolution is indispensable to get rid of British imperialism. They had also inferred that major reason of failure of Gadar movement 1915 was non-cooperation among people and unprepared men towards armed revolution.<sup>684</sup>

Another significant event that played a crucial role in awakening Punjabi workers and peasants was arrival of emigrants (Muhajirs). They wanted to fight Jihad (religious war) against British rule to protect their country from the blind exploitation. In February 1915, under the leadership of Maulvi Obeidullah Sindhi, a group of fifteen Muslim students from various colleges of Lahore left India for Kabul to take on Britishers.<sup>685</sup> In 1915, with the help of some of them 'Maharaja Partap Singh established the "Provisional Government of India" in Kabul'.<sup>686</sup>

Another group of emigrants (Muhajirs) like Mir Abdul Majid, Shaukat Usmani, Rafiq Ahmed, Ghaus Rahman Fazal ILahi Qurban, Ferozuddin Mansoor and Akbar Khan Qureshi arrived

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<sup>684</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab (1926-47)*, p. 56.

<sup>685</sup> Ahmed Muzaffar, *Myself and the Communist party of India*, (1920-29), National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1970, p. 154.

<sup>686</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab (1926-47)*, p. 51.

Tashkand in November 1920.<sup>687</sup> Arriving there, they became members of the Communist party of India, which was formed by the M.N. Roy on October 17, 1920 at Tashkand. In the first instance, they started study at Indian military school at Tashkand later joined the Eastern people's university Moscow. After accomplishing their education, they started to return back to India. On the way some of them were rounded and tried in four successive communist conspiracy cases held between 1921 and 1924 at Peshawar. Of the seven accused who were convicted in the Moscow conspiracy case, Mir Abdul Majid, Ferozuddin Mansoor and Ghaus Rehman later on worked in the communist movement.<sup>688</sup> Abdul Majid participated in the first communist conference held at Kanpur in 1925 and became a member of the executive committee of the Communist party of India. From then onwards he played a prominent role in the organization of the Kirti Lehar Party.<sup>689</sup>

During and after the First World War Punjabis experienced bitter treatment that led to adopt revolutionary ideas. During the war, forceful recruitment was made and unbearable burdens were

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<sup>687</sup> G. Adhikari, *Documents of the History of Communist Party of India, Vol. I*, p. 22.

<sup>688</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab(1926-47)*, p. 52; Bhagat Singh Bilga, *Gadar Lehar De Unfolle Varke*, Desh Bhagat Yadgar Hall, Jalandhar, 1989, p. 152.

<sup>689</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab (1926-47)*, p. 52; Kamlesh Mohan, *Militant Nationalism in Punjab 1919-1935*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1985, p. 103.

placed on the shoulders of the people through coercive methods by the Government. British Government forcefully extracted contribution for funding war. Prices of essential goods had been doubled during war years that worsen the plight of working class than earlier.<sup>690</sup> According to "Bhagwan Josh" at the beginning of the war the strength of the Punjabis in army was 1,00,000. During the war 3,80,000 more were added to it.<sup>691</sup> At the end of the war, Punjabis got only medals and certificates instead of the land and pensions which were promised by the Government earlier.

Another crucial factor which had been held responsible for the formation of the Kirti Kisan Party was 'Kirti' a Monthly Journal. The Gadrites leadership had already realized the need of having independent ideological paper in the Punjabi language which is clear from one of the letters of Rattan Singh from America. He impressed upon Ishar Singh of Kabul centre that there was the need of having a newspaper of their own.<sup>692</sup> For this purpose, it was decided to send Bhai Santokh Singh and Bhai Rattan Singh to India. But in the way, they were arrested in the independent tribal territory of N.W. F.P. Later, they were released on bail at the end of the year. After their release in the last part of the year in 1925,

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<sup>690</sup> Master Hari Singh, *Punjab Peasant in Freedom Struggle, Vol. II*, p. 150.

<sup>691</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab (1926-47)*, p. 25.

<sup>692</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 235/1926 (N.A.I.).

Santokh Singh with the help of two of his Gadar Party companions Bhag Singh Canadian and Karam Singh Cheema started making preparations to launch the monthly magazine "Kirti" in Punjabi.<sup>693</sup> A notification was published in several newspapers in January 1926 as:

*"A monthly Journal called the Kirti will shortly start publication from Amritsar. The Journal will be the voice of Indian workers living in America and Canada and will be dedicated to the sacred memory of those heroes and martyrs who awakened slating India at the time when the value of the service was for higher than it is now, and whose ideal was regarded by our own people as well as by outsiders, as an absolutely vague dream. The Journal will sympathize with all the workers throughout the world, the entire female sex, and the subjugated the weak and oppressed nations and subjugated India."*<sup>694</sup>

The first copy of the magazine was printed in February 1926. Bhai Santokh Singh, who was the prominent leader of Gadar movement, was appointed as the editor of the Journal. The Journal bore on its title page the picture of a Kirti placing a garland of

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<sup>693</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab* (1926-47), p.66.

<sup>694</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 235/1926 (N.A.I.).



flowers on the dead body of a revolutionary hero. In lieu of emphasizing the significance of organized labour, it advocated the revolutionary ideas. It persistently supported the ideas of Gandhians and exalted the Babbar Akalis and patriots who were killed in *Guruka-Bagh* episode, the Budge-Budge riots, the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy and the Jaito Morcha.<sup>695</sup> It encouraged the peasants and workers to participate in the field of freedom struggle actively. Thus, 'Kirti' became the voice of the repressed workers and peasants. As a result, the Kisan agitation spread out to the whole country.

The Kirti disengaged the working class from the illusions of bourgeois ideology by forming a strong organization of labourers and peasants.<sup>696</sup> The Kirti gave a cosmic slogan "Workers of the world unite" you have nothing to lose but your chains of slavery.<sup>697</sup> Now it had been perceived by the Santokh Singh and Kirti group that the organized working class could break the shackles of India and get liberate the country from Britishers. To fulfill this goal, the magazine wrote in detail in the issue of its April 1927 for forming

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<sup>695</sup> Bhagat Singh Bilga, *Gadar Lehar De Unfole Varke*, p. 149.

<sup>696</sup> *The Kirti*, February, 1927; September, 1927.

<sup>697</sup> The Title page of all issues of the Kirti bore the following Slogan:

; t ko Go d/feoshU s/fe; kB' fJÈ fwè j ' i kT[

fJ; ftu sj kvk e'Jh j oi Bj h ò

jK ` sj kvhvk r'pkwhvk dhvk p'khvk eNhhk i kDrhvk.

the 'Kirti Kisan Party' with expressed view.<sup>698</sup> Now they renamed the word 'Kirti' as 'Kirti Kisan' which workers of different profession were included like carpenters, blacksmiths, peasants, cobblers, weavers and others.<sup>699</sup> In fact now the word 'Kirti' was constantly confused with the word 'peasant'. The Kirti popularized the ideas of socialism and communism and played a significant role to organize workers and peasants politically for revolutionary movement. It unfolded the successes of socialist Russia Revolution among the Indians and persuaded the people to stand for the international solidarity of workers and peasants.<sup>700</sup>

It carried on its work while its editor got threats of arrest, confiscation and searches of office. A large number of educated of lower middle class, peasants and workers became the voracious readers of the magazine.<sup>701</sup> After they emphasized of Kirti a Kirti conference was held in Hoshiarpur on October 6 and 7th in 1927 under the presidentship of Sohan Singh Josh. The Kirti informed its readers that the problems of Kirtis would be discussed in this conference.<sup>702</sup> On the other hand, The Sikh League Conference was also to be held on the same date under the supervision of Kharak

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<sup>698</sup> *The Kirti*, June, 1927.

<sup>699</sup> *The Kirti*, May 1927.

<sup>700</sup> Master Hari Singh, *Punjab Peasant in Freedom Struggle, Vol-II*, p. 166.

<sup>701</sup> *The Kirti*, August, 1929.

<sup>702</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *My Tryst with Secularism- An Autobiography*, Patriot Publishers, New Delhi, 1991, p. 116.

Singh. Sohan Josh in his lecture, which delivered in conference, gave a full detail of impoverished conditions of the Punjab peasantry by providing data from M.L. Darling.<sup>703</sup> Some Akali leaders like Darshan Singh Feruman, Jathehar Udham Singh Nagoke and Gurmukh Singh Mussaffir also extended their hands for helping in organizational work of Kirti. The new organization was to establish close links with Indian National Congress and became a part of the anti-imperialist movement.<sup>704</sup> In Punjab, 90% working class was peasantry so it was the organization of peasants.<sup>705</sup> The conference followed the resolution as given below:

- I. "For the freedom of India a strong party of the peasants and workers should be established whose aim would be to achieve the freedom.
- II. Kirti branches should be organized in every district.
- III. Support to the Chinese freedom struggle and Russian revolution should be extended.
- IV. Small holding should be exempted from revenue by the Government.
- V. Eight-hour day should be fixed for the factory workers.

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<sup>703</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab (1926-47)*, p. 91.

<sup>704</sup> *The Kirti*, October, 1927.

<sup>705</sup> *Ibid.*

VI. Sympathy and solidarity with the Cawnpore mill workers who were on strike."<sup>706</sup>

Next conference was called upon in Lyallpur on October 17, 1927, under the president ship of Tara Singh a local peasant activist. Desh Sewak Kirti Sabha was formed and its office bearers were elected.<sup>707</sup> In the beginning of 1928 it was announced that the Kirti Kisan Party would organize the poor.<sup>708</sup> For this purpose on 12 April 1928, a notice was issued under the signature of Bhai Bhag Singh Canadian and Sohan Singh Josh inviting the workers and leaders together at Jallianwala Bagh, to organize the Kirti Kisan Party. From different corners of the India more than 60 persons including Mir Abdul Majid, Gopal Singh Qaumi, Kidarnath Sehgal, Ram Chandra B.A., Master Kabul Singh, Feroz-Din Mansur, Hans Raj and Dr. Satyapal took part actively.<sup>709</sup> It was unanimously resolved that a party named Kirti Kisan should be established to organize the workers and peasants. Participant members were at the party were considered the founder members of the party. Sohan Singh Josh was elected as secretary and M.A. Majid joint secretary. A sub-committee of five members of Kidar Nath Sehgal, M.A. Majid, Sohan Singh Josh, Gopal Singh Qaumi

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<sup>706</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *My Tryst with Secularism- An Autobiography*, pp. 117-118.

<sup>707</sup> *The Kirti*, November, 1927.

<sup>708</sup> *The Kirti*, February, 1928.

<sup>709</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *My Tryst with Secularism- An Autobiography*, p. 117.

and Hira Singh Dard was constituted to enact rules and regulations.<sup>710</sup> Amritsar was fixed as headquarters of the party but there was no provision for change if necessary. The aims and objects of the party were "To secure complete independence from British imperialism by every possible means, to liberate the workers and the peasants from every kind of political, economic and social slavery and to establish a united socialist republic and to organize workers and peasants".<sup>711</sup>

During that time, the leaders of movement worked hard to strengthen the organization of the party and popularized its ideals and objectives. It was obvious that root cause of the misery of the workers was the rule of the capitalists. Membership was open to both genders. A person must be at least 18 years old and had good faith in the ideology of the party with the permission of the executive committee paying subscription a person could become the member of the party.<sup>712</sup> In order to subsidize the Journal, members were being enrolled at the rate of 100 dollars each. A general committee as well as an executive committee was formed. The general committee of the party watched the over-all functioning of the party whereas the executive committee handled the work of management of the party and the implementation of rules and

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<sup>710</sup> *The Kirti*, May 1928; Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab(1926-47)*, pp. 92-93; see also Sohan Singh Josh, *My Tryst with Secularism-An Autobiography*, p. 117.

<sup>711</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *My Tryst with Secularism-An Autobiography*, p. 118.

<sup>712</sup> *Meerut Conspiracy case papers*, Sr. no. 167, Exhibit No. p. 344 (T), p. 771 (N.A.I.).

regulations. Democratic nature of the party empowered the members of the party to access the records concerning the proceedings of its meetings, conferences, activities accounts etc.<sup>713</sup>

The powers and duties of the President, General Secretary and Treasurer were transparently allotted. Meetings and conferences were presided by the president. The General Secretary used to keep an eye activity of the party and held emergency meetings of the party. The Treasurer was to keep accounts of the money received and spent, and sanctioned payments.<sup>714</sup>

The second conference of party was conducted on 28th to 30th September 1928 at Lyallpur City along with the Punjab Provincial Political Conference.<sup>715</sup> In which Spratt, Bradley (British Communist) S.A. Dange and other communist leader Kidar Nath Sehgal and Chabil Das participated.<sup>716</sup> Several issues were raised in the conference like forced labour, lack of irrigation water, reduction

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<sup>713</sup> Kamlesh Mohan, *Militant Nationalism in Punjab:1919-35*, p. 107.

<sup>714</sup> *Meerut Conspiracy case papers*, Sr. no. 167, Exhibit No. p. 344 (T), p. 771 (N.A.I.); Kamlesh Mohan, *Militant Nationalism in Punjab:1919-35*, pp. 107-08.

<sup>715</sup> Philip Spratt played a significant role in uniting the Lahore group of Abdul Majid and the Kirti group, by impressing upon them the need of form a workers' and peasants' party in the Punjab. From June to August 1927, he stayed at Lahore with Chaman Lal held discussions with leaders of all the leftist groups including Bhagat Singh. According to a C.I.D. report: "On the right of 28th November 1927, a secret meeting of the communist party was held in the house of Shaukat Usmani at which both Bradley and Spratt were present and representatives from Bombay, Bengal and Punjab, including two Sikhs, who were alleged to be on the editorial staff of Kirti Amritsar", *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 18/111/1928. (N.A.I.).

<sup>716</sup> Satya, M.Rai, *Punjab Heroic Tradition, 1900-47*, Punjabi University Patiala, 1978, p. 100.

in taxes, land revenue and abolition of *abiana, malia, Chowkidara* and decided to solve it.<sup>717</sup>

Initially, Kirti party decided to boycott Zamindara League of Chhotu Ram and exhorted the peasants to set up a committee of farmers in the newly colonized areas of Sargodha districts.<sup>718</sup> Similar was suggested to the peasants of Amritsar district to form committees which linked with the Kirti Kisan Party.<sup>719</sup> The Lyallpur conference impressed the youth in large extent and they came from far and near to attend it. Demands were made to hold such conference in Sargodha, Rohtak and Rajasthan and other places.

According to Sohan Singh Josh and Bhagwan Josh "The Third Punjab Provincial workers' and Peasants' Party" conference was held at Rohtak on 10 March 1928.<sup>720</sup> Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru was also participated the conference and delivered a lecture. Sohan Singh Josh in his speech at Rohtak stated as: "What we want is that the question of private property should be done away with. All crimes are being committed and cases instituted simply because there is private property and private ownership in the

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<sup>717</sup> *The Kirti*, November, 1928.

<sup>718</sup> *The Kirti*, April, 1929.

<sup>719</sup> *The Kirti*, June, 1929.

<sup>720</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *My Tryst With Secularism*, p. 120; Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab:1926-47*, p.93.

world."<sup>721</sup> The change in the name from 'Kirti Kisan Party' to "workers' and peasants' party" was pointed by the group that had developed links with other communist groups in the country and accepted their proposal of forming an all India workers' and peasants' party.<sup>722</sup> Sohan Singh Josh writes that 'It also organized various unions in Amritsar like press workers union, motor drivers union and some other small unions.' This party had its branches at Ludhiana, Rohtak and even at Calcutta.<sup>723</sup> In August 1928, the objectives of the party took a coherent and systemized shape which were reaffirmed in *Desh Sewak* and stated by Sohan Singh Josh.<sup>724</sup> The objectives were detailed as: "To liberate labourers and peasants from every kind of political, economic and social serfdom. It also aimed at organizing labourers and peasants to achieve complete independence from British imperialism and visualized to set up a workers and peasants Government i.e. establishment of a Kirti or Bolshevik type of state which would nationalize land, factories, banks and railways and would cancel all debts."<sup>725</sup> On 13 to 15 October 1928, a conference was held in Meerut under the presidentship of Kidar Nath Seghal of Lahore. This conference held

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<sup>721</sup> *Meerut Conspiracy Case papers*, Sr. no. 149, Exhibit No. p. 1468 (1) p. 742 (N.A.I).

<sup>722</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab : 1926-47*, p. 94.

<sup>723</sup> *Meerut Conspiracy case papers*, Sr. no. 211, Vol. III (1) P. 295 (N.A.I).

<sup>724</sup> *Desh Sewak* was a secular democratic weekly Published from Jalandhar.

<sup>725</sup> Subodh Roy (ed.), *Communism in India: Unpublished Documents (1925-34)*, Ganasahitya Prakash, Calcutta, 1972, p. 240.



a pride in the history of freedom struggle because it became the base of Meerut conspiracy case trial. Abdul Majid and Sohan Singh Josh attended the conference from Punjab and Philip Spratt and Muzaffar Ahmed participated from Bengal.<sup>726</sup> Kidar Nath Sehgal made some elaborations on grave problems faced the country. The workers' and peasants' party was formed in U.P. for the first time. Some delegates of this party were elected for the All India workers' and peasants' party which was going to hold its first conference at Calcutta in December 1928.<sup>727</sup> On December 1928, All India workers' and Peasants' Party held its conference at Calcutta with the help of Philip Spratt and Muzaffar Ahmed and Sohan Singh Josh was elected as the president of the party.<sup>728</sup>

During the years of 1926 and 1929, the Kirtis continued established themselves as daunting enemies of the capital and imperialism and wished to be the workers and peasants' Government in India. To improve the condition of peasantry they demanded that land revenue and other taxes to be curtailed and that land would be confiscated and distributed among cultivators without compensating the landlords so that deplorable plight could be improved. The proposal was suggested to Government to

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<sup>726</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *My Tryst With Secularism-An Autobiography*, p. 121.

<sup>727</sup> Sohan Singh Josh, *My Tryst With Secularism-An Autobiography*, p. 121.

<sup>728</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab:1926-47*, p. 94.

establish co-operative banks and impart scientific technical knowledge to cultivate the land. Beside this, nationalization of public services, fixation of wages and working hours were voiced.<sup>729</sup> The Kirtis pressed for the reorganization of village *Panchayats* and advocated to include the representation of the cultivators and other rural workers. The *Panchayats* must be entrusted with the authority to assess and realize revenue from the peasants.<sup>730</sup> The instant and immediate political demands of Kirti Kisan Party were: universal adult franchise (suffer-age), freedom to bear arms, freedom of the press and the abolition of all distinctions on the basis of race, colour and creed.<sup>731</sup> The organization did not merely raise the problems of the working class and peasantry rather paid substantial heed towards the current communal tensions and conflicts. The basis principle of the Kirti Kisan Party was that the economic interests of all the Kirtis were common and it was hoped that religion, race and caste, which were regarded as barriers in the growth of the Kirti Kisan Movement, would disappear with the spread of new ideas among the workers. To strengthen the party

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<sup>729</sup> *Meerut Conspiracy Case Papers*, Sr. No. 212, Vol. III (2), p. 516. (N.A.I.).

<sup>730</sup> *The Kirti*, February, 1930.

<sup>731</sup> *The Kirti*, April, 1930.

against the evils of capitalism and imperialism was the primary aim of the party.<sup>732</sup>

It was explicit that there was close relation between leaders of the ex-soldiers and the Kirti Kisan Party but some C.I.D. reports indicated that Kirti Kisan Party undermined the loyalty of the soldiers by the third conference.<sup>733</sup> It was felt, because of the economic hardships, certain sections of the peasantry who supplied recruits to the army were being influenced by the Congress propaganda in the rural areas. On January 7, 1929 ex-soldier, Risaldar Anup Singh with eight hundred soldiers arrived at Lahore to articulate their grievances to the governor.<sup>734</sup> They refused to disperse when ordered to do so by the police. Many of them were arrested. In 1917-18 promises of land were made by the civil recruiters but at the end of war it's could not be fulfilled. It had no belief in the declaration of the Government of invalidity of land for distribution. The far-reaching discontentment prevailed among ex-soldiers of Sheikhpura district and villages of Sahad, Natheke, Toria, Mirpur and Dhamke were pensively smitten.<sup>735</sup>

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<sup>732</sup> *The Kirti*, February, 1927.

<sup>733</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 18/III/1929. (N.A.I.)

<sup>734</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 233/1930. (N.A.I.)

<sup>735</sup> *Ibid.*

After having manifested the objectives and aims, the activities commenced to organize the Kirti Kisan Party in 1930's, they now had started to implement and execute the programme of party and strong foot hold had gained in Amritsar, Sheikhpura, Gurdaspur and Jalandhar.<sup>736</sup> A large number of Sikhs including Gadrities poured in India from U.S.A. and Canada and this migration was similar to those Gadar activities of 1915 which they had executed unsuccessfully to dismantle the British Government by an armed revolt.<sup>737</sup> The returned emigrants included many active members of Gadar Party who returned from foreign countries were: Teja Singh Swatantar, Gurmukh Singh, Prithvi Singh, Iqbal Singh Hundal, Harbans Singh Bassi, Chanan Singh and Bhagat Singh Bilga.<sup>738</sup>

At the end of 20's recuperation in the destitute conditions of Punjab peasantry under the impact of depression and the consequent fall in prices, caused many peasants organizations to come into being throughout the control Punjab.<sup>739</sup> Immediate attention was given to the problem of land taxation. The Kirtis held conferences and launched agitations and protests for the

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<sup>736</sup> *The Kirti*, February, 1930.

<sup>737</sup> *The Kirti*, March, 1930.

<sup>738</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 44/79/355/1935. (N.A.I.) Regulation III of 1818 was used against the following Moscow trained Indian Communists in Punjab: Santa Singh, Dasaunda Singh, Gajjan Singh, Karam Singh, Harjap Singh, Ghulam Muhammed Aziz, Ilahi Quran, Abdul Waris, Teja Singh Swatantar and Wasdev Singh.

<sup>739</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab:1926-47*, p. 102.

curtailment of land taxes. They also attempted to extend their links with Zamindar Sabha and Kisan Sabhas to widen the agitation and unite them as a single party.<sup>740</sup> An All Bar Zamindar conference was held at Lyallpur on 20 June 1931 under the presidentship of S. Mangal Singh.<sup>741</sup> In conference following demands were made to Government.

1. "At least 50 percent general remission in the land revenue and *abiana*.
2. Government should declare the purchase of cotton at fixed price.
3. Land revenue should be on the basis of income.
4. Reduction in Abiana, Chahi rate should be abolished.
5. 58 percent of the Punjabi peasants own less than 5 acres, Justice and all fair canons of taxation."

All organizations followed these demands and propagated them but Kirti Kisan Party and radical Akalis were in favour of violent struggle against them.<sup>742</sup> The Kirti Kisan Party held its conferences in 1930 and 1931 in Lahore and Karachi respectively.

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<sup>740</sup> Among them the most active were the Amritsar Zamindar Sabha, Lyallpur Zamindar Sabha, Jalandhar Zamindar Sabha and Hisar Kisan Sabha, See in more details Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab: 1926-47*, pp. 102-104.

<sup>741</sup> *The Tribune*, June, 23, 1931.

<sup>742</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *Punjab Vich Communist Lehar*, Navyug Publishers, New Delhi, 1981, p. 104.

At the beginning of 1931, the Punjab Government was stuffed with imprecise information that hidden plans were being developed for Russian supported invasion of India from the North-West frontier which would lead to wide-spread internal upheaval, especially in the Punjab. It was noted that the Kabul branch of the Gadar Party was constantly making efforts to gather arms, large scale maps of India and her neighboring countries, hatching schemes for mobilization and collecting military information regarding the North-West frontier.<sup>743</sup> From 1929 onward, large batches of Sikhs including members of the Gadar Party came back to India from U.S.A. and Canada. On 22 June police ransacked the office of Kirti Kisan Party to suppress the activities of the party and seized copies of cyclostyled Urdu pamphlet entitled "The programme of the Indian Communist Party".<sup>744</sup>

The Kirti Kisan Party held its conference on 12 and 13 November 1932 at Nanakana Sahib in which approximate 2000 people appeared. The prominent speakers of the party excoriated the Indian National Congress and designated it as "white" bureaucracy by a brown one. They also denounced the idea of bringing independence by spinning yarn. Meetings and processions

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<sup>743</sup> Williamson. H., *India and Communism*, pp. 275-76, quoted in Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab: 1926-47*, p. 107.

<sup>744</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 18/06/1932. (N.A.I.).

were held to protest against the Meerut Conspiracy Case in Lahore and Amritsar.<sup>745</sup> To get released the Rajsi Qaidi Chhuroo Committee (Committee for the release of political prisoners) was constituted on February 10, 1933, for securing the release of the prisoners of 1914-15 (First Lahore Conspiracy Case) and to assist all other political prisoners.<sup>746</sup> Workers of the party were dispatched to the province for seeking support of the people.

Despite severe police restrictions, May-Day was celebrated in 1933 in Amritsar and Lahore.<sup>747</sup> A few conferences were also held in Amritsar and Hoshiarpur districts in the later half of the year 1933. Police confined the leading participants to their respective villages under the Punjab Criminal (Amendment) Act. Thus, police continued its expedition to curb the initiations of agitation.<sup>748</sup> The released prisoners of Meerut conspiracy case: Sohan Singh Josh, Abdul Majid and Kedar Nath Sehgal assisted the party to carry on its resistance. They reshuffled the party programme and strategies and resolved to intensify their work on few particular areas rather than attempting to cover the whole province. The conference and meetings were organized to guide the people for adopting the right

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<sup>745</sup> *The Kirti* December 1932; Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab: 1926-47*, p. 110.

<sup>746</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 18/02/1933. (N.A.I.).

<sup>747</sup> *The Kirti*, June, 1933.

<sup>748</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab: 1926-47*, p. 110.

way to fight against the Government.<sup>749</sup> Now, Anti-imperialist League took the control of the movement. This would deprive its powers from the collective affiliations of the various groups at work in the province. Branches of this league were formed at various places like Nankana Sahib, Lyallpur, Batala and Amritsar.<sup>750</sup>

The British Government was not blind about these developments of Kirti Kisan Party and took stern actions to repel them. In the span of three years, (1933-35) the police intercepted and interrogated eight Moscow trained members and cruelly tortured to extort information about the network of Gadar Party, instructions and training from Moscow which they had brought for their Indian fellows. Till 1935 the police authority had singled out 15 to 20 of the 40 trained communist who had returned to India and were working at different places.<sup>751</sup>

In September 1934, some organizations of Punjab like The Punjab Kirti Kisan Party, The Anti-imperialist League, The Punjab provincial Naujawan Bharat Sabha, The Amritsar District Kisan Sabha and the Punjab Kisan League were declared illegal by the British Government and consequently their activities were

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<sup>749</sup> *The Kirti*, July, 1933.

<sup>750</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement In Punjab:1926-47*, p.111.

<sup>751</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 44/79/355/1935. (N.A.I.); Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab:1926-47*, p. 109.



prohibited.<sup>752</sup> For these reason, the Kirti has to suspend its publication.<sup>753</sup>

Immediately after the announcement of ban, active members of the above given organizations grouped themselves under the banner of "Punjab Kisan Qarza Committee". Its first meeting was called upon at Amritsar on March 3, 1935 and fifty two members were elected in the general committee. The proposal was offered in the meeting that small committee should be set up in rural areas for helping the peasants to obtain as much benefit as possible from the relief provided by the indebtedness Act.<sup>754</sup> A large number of meetings and conferences were assembled. The Jalandhar District Qarza Committee formed its sixty branches at various places.<sup>755</sup> The organizers amalgamated the agrarian agitation with communist propaganda in the rural meetings.<sup>756</sup>

In 1935, the Kirti Magazine shifted to Meerut and renamed as "Kirti Lehar" and made a weekly. Now it was published in Urdu and Gurmukhi. Its editorial board comprised of Harminder Singh Sodhi, Dr. Bhag Singh, Gurcharan Singh Sainsara, Bhart Singh, Mir Dad Khan, Ram Kishan and Ram Singh Dutt.<sup>757</sup> Till 1939, Kirti Lehar was published regularly. According to police estimate its 5,000

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<sup>752</sup> Roy, Subodh (ed.), *Communist in India: Unpublished Documents (1925-34)*, 1972, p. 198.

<sup>753</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>754</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 18/111/1935 (N.A.I.).

<sup>755</sup> *The Kirti*, December, 22, 1935.

<sup>756</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 18/11/1935 (N.A.I.).

<sup>757</sup> Master Hari Singh, *Punjab Peasant in Freedom Struggle, Vol. II*, p. 199; Bhagwan Josh, *Punjab Vich Communist Lehar*, p. 166.

copies per month circulated and hundreds of copies were posted to Gadar contacts in North and South America, Africa, Malaya, China and Fiji.<sup>758</sup> The Punjab Kisan Committee was formed in March 1937 under the supervision of All India Kisan Committee and Baba Jawala Singh elected as its first president. The first annual conference of Punjab Kisan Committee was assembled at Lyallpur in October 1937 and presided over by Sajjad Zaheer, national executive member of the Congress Socialist Party.<sup>759</sup> The working committee of Punjab Kisan Committee represented all bodies as Congress Socialists, Desh Bhagat Qaidi Parwar Sahaik Committee, The Riasti Parja Mandal, The Radical League and institute of agrarian Reform. In first conference Baba Kesar Singh was elected as president, Baba Rur Sing M.L.A. and Bhagat Singh Bilga elected as Vice-president and general secretary respectively.<sup>760</sup> The newly elected body of the Punjab Kisan Committee resolved to intensify the agitation for waiving of the debts, the assessment of land revenue on the basis of income-tax and exclusion of uneconomic holding from taxation. The Kirti had adopted new ideological orientation by the middle of 1938 that helped to develop links with the members of Communist Party of India. The Meerut office of Kirti Lehar became the centre of varying revolutionaries and study

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<sup>758</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 216/40/1939 (N.A.I.).

<sup>759</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab : 1926-47*, p. 118.

<sup>760</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab:1926-47*, p. 118.

circle were constituted to gain schooling with the help of the Moscow trained Gadrities like Harminder Singh Sodhi.<sup>761</sup> In the meantime, the C.P.I. proposed to the Kirti Control Board the setting up of a combined ideological centre. Although the Board denied the proposal but the Kirti Lehar received the much of the propaganda literature directly from the office of communist party of India and came more directly than ever before under the influence of the Communist Party.<sup>762</sup> The Kirti Lehar group enhanced its relations with the serving Indian soldiers from the Meerut cantonment and soldiers attended lectures at the Kirti Lehar Office. Later, the desertions from the Army, by a number of Sepoys were attributed to the insidious influence and pernicious preaching of the Kirti Lehar group.<sup>763</sup>

Meanwhile, the former members of the party raised the current demands of the peasants and decided to launch agitation against exploitation for their natural rights. The peasants were clamorously demanding for increase in water supply for irrigational purposes, abolition of Hasiat tax and reduction in land revenue and water tax.<sup>764</sup> In 1938 agrarian agitation get inflamed and Punjab Kisan Committee played an active role to organize and to a large

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<sup>761</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 216/40/1939 (N.A.I.).

<sup>762</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 216/I/1940. (N.A.I.).

<sup>763</sup> *The Kirti Lehar*, February, 1938.

<sup>764</sup> *The Kirti Lehar*, July, 24, 1938.

extent providing leadership to all the peasant agitation throughout the state.

In some areas of districts of Multan and Montgomery Government used to invite tenders for allotting definite acres of land to the highest bidders and these tender holders divided these lands among the tenants. After the great recession of 1929-30 these tender holders exploited the tenants by adding multiple exactions.<sup>765</sup> In protest, about 25,000 tenants went to strike and denied to pick cotton or sow wheat against the tender holders and this strike took the large content.<sup>766</sup> Similarly in September 1938, the tenants of 20 more villages of Multan district participated and the strike lasted for about a month. Finally, the strike called off when the Government and tender holders were compelled to accept burning demands of the strikes.<sup>767</sup> After that tenants of 15 Chaks in the Khanewal Teshil went on strike under the leadership of Multan and Montgomery districts Kisan Committees. Their strike also against the tender holders and resumed work after 20 days, ultimately settlement was reached.

The agitation of Lyallpur district's peasant's gained considerable momentum on the demands of reduction of land

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<sup>765</sup> Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab:1926-47*, pp. 130-131.

<sup>766</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>767</sup> *National Front*, 27 November, 1938.

revenue and water rates on July 1938, when the irrigation department remolded the canal outlets. On 10 June 1938, 15,000 tenants comprising 90% Sikhs marched to headquarters from various parts of the district.<sup>768</sup> In July 1938, the agreement was made by 164 villages of Rajbaha area to boycott of canal waters in order to compel the Government to increase the water supply.<sup>769</sup> But it was terminated on July 29, 1938 for the consumption of human being and livestock in summer.

In July 1938, Kisan demonstrations at Amritsar had overshadowed all other forms of agrarian agitations. The main demands of peasants were: increasing in water supply for irrigational purposes, abolition of Hasiat tax and reduction in land revenue and water tax. It was decided by the organizers of agitation that on 20 July 1938, a huge demonstration was staged on these issues in civil lines outside the canal and settlement offices. On 10 July to prevent the holding of the demonstration, issued order by the District Magistrate under the Section 144 of criminal procedure code banning assembly of 5 persons or more.<sup>770</sup> Despite this ban, the demonstrators gathered at Jallianwala Bagh on 20 July and marched to the district courts under the leadership of Udham

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<sup>768</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 18/3/1938 (N.A.I.).

<sup>769</sup> *The Kirti Lehar*, 10 July, 1938.

<sup>770</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 18/07/1938. (N.A.I.).

Singh and Sohan Singh Bhakna to present a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner.<sup>771</sup> When demonstrators challenged section 144, the police *lathicharged* to scatter them. As a result, 300 persons were wounded and 145 were arrested.<sup>772</sup> Then, organizers decided to send Jatha of 25 men every day to defy the order of 144 C.P.C. On 21 July the grain and cloth markets were closed in protest against the *lathi-charge*. After the arresting of prominent leaders of Punjab Kisan Committee, movement lost its confidence and mobilization of the peasants became feeble. On 9 August 1938, the authority assured the agitators for fulfilling their demands and agitation come to an end. The ban was lifted.<sup>773</sup>

The Kirtis launched the Lahore Kisan Morcha to fight against the Government for amplifying of land revenue through fresh settlement in the district Lahore before the outbreak of the Second World War. It was the important phase in the struggle of peasants. The enhancement was made at a time when the whole peasantry had been hit badly due to steep fall in the prices of crops and prolonged drought in thirties which had adversely affected the crop

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<sup>771</sup> According to *Kirti Lehar*, 31 July, 1938, about 25000 peasants participated in the Jallianwala Bagh gathering.

<sup>772</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>773</sup> Master Hari Singh, *Punjab Peasants in Freedom Struggle, Vol. II*, pp. 225-26.

output.<sup>774</sup> The worsening condition of the peasantry can be accessed from the facts of 1938-39 when scores *Lambardars* and peasants of Lahore district were arrested for not paying their land revenue in time.<sup>775</sup>

On 23 March, while demonstrated defied the section 144, the 103 demonstrators were arrested on the spot. By the end of the month, 374 persons had been arrested.<sup>776</sup> To challenge the section 144, small Jathas of peasants were formed everyday to send assembly chamber for demonstration. Usually, every Jatha was arrested under the prohibitory orders. Every day Jathas consisting of peasants marched to the defied the arbitrary prohibitory orders. They were jailed sentenced to nine months of rigorous imprisonment, but continued their agitation until the demands were met. The struggle of the Lahore Kisans turned into an All Punjab Morcha when jathas marched on foot to Lahore from Amritsar, Jalandhar, Gurdaspur, Lyallpur, Ferozepur, Hosiarpur and Ambala. All jathas were arrested at Lahore, when they marching from the district were intercepted.<sup>777</sup>

The police also arrested and interrogated those influential persons who delivered speeches to vast gatherings of peasants. Master Hari Singh was one of them and was interrogated and

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<sup>774</sup> *The Kirti Lehar*, 3 September, 1939.

<sup>775</sup> *The Kirti Lehar*, 4 June, 1939.

<sup>776</sup> *Proceedings Home Political*, No. 18/111/1930. (N.A.I.).

<sup>777</sup> Master Hari Singh, *Punjab Peasants in Freedom Struggle, Vol.-II*, p.228.

sentenced to nine months in connection of giving four speeches at Hosiarpur district. Approximate four thousand Kisans were also arrested and jailed in the course of movement. Among important leaders who were imprisoned were: Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna, Bhag Singh Canadian, Tehal Singh Bengali, Teja Singh, Dalip Singh Jauhal, Dalip Singh Tapiala, Chanan Singh Nurpuri and Ram Singh Majitha. Ujagar Singh Bir, with the assistance of socialist worker Abhai Chand of Una in Lahore arranged the food and accommodation of the jathas. Finally, Ujagar Singh was also arrested and sent to jail<sup>778</sup>.

The coercive attitude of the Government could not melt the confidence and spirit of the fighters. The morcha carried on their operations very well for five months till September 4, 1939. The outbreak of Second World War changed the political scenario has changed the perspectives of the revolutionary movement. They realized that instead of sending the jathas to jail, we should make efforts to bring them out of the jails. Under these circumstances, it was a wise political decision to call off the struggle on part of the Kisan Sabha leadership.<sup>779</sup> The party's journal 'The Kirti Lehar' too had to suspend its publication in December 1939 because it was

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<sup>778</sup> *The Kirti Lehar*, 20 August, 1939.

<sup>779</sup> *Ibid.*



not possible to regular it from the open platform in the wake of the outbreak of the World War.

After it the Kirti Kisan Party attempted to make class consciousness an integral part of the freedom movement in the Punjab in the 1930's. A united front of the working class, peasants and bourgeoisie was expected to play a vital role in conducting an effective and decisive fight against injustice, atrocities of the Government, fight against imperialism and capitalism. The leadership of the Kirti Kisan's blamed the Congress for having failed enlisting the support of the masses and convinced that the involvement of the working class and peasants was the pre-condition for the success of any movement.

## **CHAPTER – VII**

### **CONCLUSION**

The 20th century saw many movements against the British Government in India and the Punjab. In this concern important were the Gadar Movement, the Satyagraha Movement, the Gurdwara Reform Movement, the Babbar Akali Movement and the Kirti Kisan Lehar. In order to prepare the balanced sheet or conclusion of the present study it will be appropriate at the very out-set to write in brief about these movements one by one. The chapter number one stands for these movements as a whole.

Our chapter number two deals with the Gadar movement. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, peasants and small farmers in Punjab came into the forefront of public reactions against the British administration because they were under the debt. Repressive policies of the Government towards people in general were also the main reason for their protest. To improve their conditions some of them had gone to other countries, like U.S.A. and Canada and the countries of South East Asia. They engaged themselves as labour or agriculturists there wherever it was possible for them to do so. Their conditions were fraught with

serious difficulties, because Indians were not treated cordially in the Western countries and discrimination was faced by them on the basis of creed, colour and religion. It was not easy for them to settle down there. Another difficulty was the feeling of superiority among white man which had emanated to a large degree from a heritage of aggressive colonialism. The struggle of Punjabi immigrants in Canada and America against the immigration acts simultaneously became a struggle against the colonial rule in India. The British Government had not provided any protection and surety to the Indian immigrants to U.S.A. and Canada. It resulted in distrust and unsatisfaction spread against the Government in India between 1907 and 1913. They started organizing themselves for the freedom of India and for their own protection and prestige. For this purpose they established an organization in 1913 under the name of 'Hindustan Association of Pacific Coast' in Astoria of U.S.A. Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna was the first president of this new organization, Lala Hardial was its secretary and Pandit Kanshi Ram as the treasurer. This organization started a newspaper on 1 Nov. 1913. It was the famous, 'Gadar' newspaper. One of the main objectives of this organization was to make India free from the British by violent means and set up a democratic system on the

basis of equality and liberty in India. To fulfill this objective the workers of Gadar movement came to India for performing revolutionary activities against British rule during the First World War (1914-1918). The first batch of the revolutionaries started from San Francisco in Aug. 1914. During the 1914-15 many ships carrying Gadar revolutionaries arrived in India and started the revolutionary activities against the British Government. But Kirpal Singh entered the party and he was an agent of British Government. He disclosed the secrets of this party to the police. Significantly, the party stood named as the Gadar party of Hindustan. The spy Kirpal Singh made the movement unsuccessful. There were many more reasons of or for its failure such as inability of the revolutionaries to keep secrets, lack of their experience, lack of arms and the efficiency of the British intelligence services throughout the empire. Despite efforts, this movement could not succeed in its real aims.

In spite of these limitations nevertheless, the movement had been of considerable importance. It was the first purely secular movement which aimed to liberate India by the violent means. For example, United India League was established (1911) and Hussan Rahim was its president. It may be added that the majority of the

Gadar Party members were Sikh, its literature was published in Gurmukhi its and meetings were held in the Gurdwaras. But Gadar movement had its leaders from all the other religions also. There were Hindus like Lala Hardyal and Ram Chandra and Muslims like Barkatuallah and Huassan Rahim. The party attracted and influenced other revolutionary groups in the country such as Satyagarha workers and Babbars to shed their religious biases while acting in politics.

The Gadrities did not fight in vain. Their movement was not a total failure. It deepened the national consciousness, evolved new strategies and methods of struggle, created new traditions of resistance, and the ideals such as democracy and human equality. After it there came a big radical change in the politics of Sikh community by 1918. It marked the end of the era of loyalty of the Sikhs to the British Empire or regime. Before it there were Singh Sabha Lehar and Chief Khalsa Diwan the two Sikh organizations that were loyal to the British Empire since the years 1872 and 1901. Although the Gadar was suppressed and submerged in the enthusiasm generated by the war, it continued to ferment and erupted a few years later during the Gurdwara Reform Movement which started in late 1920 and continued up to 1925. It had the

flavor of Gandhian and revolutionary politics. Although the Akali leadership had resolved to remain non-violent throughout their struggle, yet they could not keep the movement immune to revolutionary or national spirit between 1922 and 1925.

After the Gadar Movement there came the Babbar Akali Movement that was started in the year 1922. The Babbars were largely recruited from the ranks of the Gadar Party to avenge the excess perpetrated on the Punjab Sikhs. By preaching sedition and spreading disaffection the Babbars went about from place to place especially in Doaba. The Government took stringent measures to suppress the Babbars. After it (1923) some Gandhians organized themselves into the Kirti Kisan Party. It is because of the revolutionary zeal and politics of Gandhians that the Kirti Kisan Party represented the poor peasants, landless laborers and depressed classes of the Punjab, by their ideology and demands.

Finally, we can say, no organization in the region remained untouched by the revolutionary politics and revolutionary ideology of the Gadar movement, because every movement had some kind of anti-colonial feeling or understanding. Nevertheless the Gandhians remained ahead of others in context of valor, sacrifice and consistency.

Our third chapter deals with the Satyagraha Movement. The people of Punjab had given many services to the British during the World War (1914-18). But Punjabis got in return only medals and certificates that had little economic worth. During the war, the Government of India had armed itself with the Defence of India Act to watch and suppress revolutionary activities in the country. The Defence of the India Act was made only for the duration of the war and it was to end when the war would come to a close. But the situation being explosive, the Government was not ready to reduce the special powers vested in it by this act. In addition to that the Punjab Government adopted a repressive policy. The British Government decided to deal with violent activities of Gandhites and other revolutionary elements. For suggesting steps in this direction, a sedition committee was appointed by the Government of India with Justice S.A.T. Rowal as the president to make the report on what were termed as the criminal conspiracies connected with revolutionary movement in India. On the proposal of this committee the Government passed an Act on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1919. This act was called the Anarchical and Revolutionary Crime Act. By this act, police and magistrates got unlimited powers to suppress the revolutionary activities. They could arrest the nationalists from

their homes or force them to leave themselves for particular places, and even they could arrest them without any crime being made by them. Further, the Rowlatt Act had provoked feelings of fierce indignation and resentment throughout the sub-continent.

Mahatma Gandhi decided to protest against this official act. This protest of Gandhi took the shape of Satyagraha Movement. Mahatma Gandhi initiated the movement in 1919 by a hunger strike and this movement stimulated a chain of strikes and conferences through out the country. The Punjab was one of the main centers of this agitation. The participation of Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims to a great extent showed the success of his movement. One such conference was held at Jallianwala Bagh Amritsar on 13 April 1919. To suppress it General Dyer marched with his army. He occupied the only entrance and exit to the garden and, without giving any warning to the people to disperse, opened fire on the meeting. He killed 379 and wounded over 2,000 Indians. He imposed a martial law in the city and returned to his camp leaving the dying with the dead without any possibility of help reaching them. This event infuriated the whole country and resulted in a great awakening, resentment and anti- British literature.



The impact of the Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy was far-reaching. The character of Indian political milieu was completely changed quickly by the Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy for the event proved to be a turning point in the history Indian National Movement. It gave impetus to the struggle for India's freedom because people could no longer afford to be content. This Tragedy inspired the radical and revolutionary movements all over in India and particularly in Punjab like Babbar Movement and later Hindustan Republic Association and Nau-Jawan Bharat Sabha (1928). Thousands of previously uncommitted Indians were drawn into the arena of political activism. After it, the Indian National Congress emerged as one of the strongest political parties in the Indian politics and various Indian nationalist elements and forces gathered around the flag of Congress and fought against the British rule during the 1930's. Mahatma Gandhi had come forward with better zeal against the British carnage and emerged as a powerful national leader or accepted by various communities as their leader. The Gurdwara Reform movement also got motion from the prevailing anti-British temper of the people and loyal section of the Sikhs became powerless because after the tragedy this section had baptized General Dyer as a Sikh and presented

him a *Saropa* through the Darbar Sahib Amritsar. The unity among the members of the communities (Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims) unnerved the Punjab administration once again.

Finally it can be safely said that Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy undoubtedly marked a turning point in the History of freedom movement in India. This massacre infuriated and jolted the conscience of the Indian patriotic people. Never before had the people of India acted together on such a vast scale against British Rule since the day of 1857. After this tragedy the Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims had joined together and generated a strong spirit of communal harmony. It was a way for the future of national integration of India or the national unity on the secular bases.

Gurdwara Reform Movement had been described through the forth chapter. The establishment of Shriomani Akali Dal in 1920 marked a new turn in the Punjab politics. The Akalis were the product of the Gurdwara Reform Movement. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century the administration of the Gurdwaras including Golden Temple had gone into the hands of priests (mahants), who were appointed or patronized by the Government. They always worked in the interests of British Government. They were usually corrupt and immoral. They had become the virtual proprietors of the Gurdwaras. In many cases, with the help of Government officials the mahants could get

the Gurdwara's property transferred in their own names. Moreover, some of them had been leading luxurious life, and squandered large earnings of Gurdwaras on wine and women. Social and religious ideas of Singh Sabha Lehar had made a big impact on the Sikhs. The Chief Khalsa Diwan felt the need to get free their Gurdwaras from the hands of immoral priests but it could not succeed between 1902 and 1918. The Gurdwara Reform Movement was started by the Akalis to free the Sikh Gurdwaras from priests. They adopted the policy of non-violence to free their shrines. The Movement gave birth to new organization and ideas by 1919-20. Initially a conference was held at Akal Takhat in 1920 which resulted in the formation of S.G.P.C. (Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee) with the purpose of controlling and improving the administrative aspect of the Gurdwaras according to the Sikh code of conduct. Already the Central Sikh League was active since 1918. When Government took the side of priests, Akalis held morchas to get free the Gurdwaras. The *Guru-Ka-Bagh*, Morcha and the police interruption of Akhand Path at *Jaito* were the main events in this movement. Akalis faced many difficulties at the hands of Government and priests particularly during the *Jaito Ka Morcha* (1923).

Finally, the Government presented a bill called Sikh

Gurdwara Bill in Punjab legislative assembly in 1925. The bill was passed by the Assembly and gave Akalis the right of administration of Gurdwaras in 1925. Gradually the S.G.P.C. became an autonomous body of Sikhs by 1925. In the entire agitation, thousands of Sikhs sent to jail and 15 lakhs of rupees were collected as fine. About 400 lives were lost and the number of the wounded was about 2000.

The religio-political struggle of the Akalis was a direct action against the priests, Mahants and other vested interests in the Sikh shrines and consequently against the British imperialism. In fact, it was one of the most powerful and popular movement in modern India. Further the Gurdwara Reform movement was indirectly responsible for the political awakening in the princely states. The traditional concept of the Sikh loyalty on which O' Dwyer had waxed eloquence had lost its force. The implicit faith of the English in the traditional loyalty of the Sikhs also received a rude shock. After the settlement of disputes over the Gurdwaras the Akalis from princely states began to agitate against the autocratic misuse of power by the maharajas.

The reform movement provided the Sikh community with a new type of middle-class national leadership, consisting of

barristers, *vakils*, school teachers and retired military officers. During the movement the leadership of two different kinds came closer to each other as the Sikhs became inextricably involved in Congress activities, and the Gurdwara Reform movement became a part of the national movement. It was truly speaking main gestations of the Congress programme of non-cooperation at the provincial level that received an active sympathy and support from the Congress leadership as well as the people against the Government. After it the Sikhs could and did secure active sympathy and support of the Indian National Congress and other nationalist movements for their own struggle against British imperialism in Punjab. Gandhi visited Amritsar more than once between 1919 and 1947.

In fifth chapter we have narrated the Babbar Akali Movement. The Babbar Akali movement emerged when the Gurdwara Reform movement was passing through a critical stage of its own. While the Gurdwara Reform movement was prevailing peacefully up to February. 1921, the mahant of Nanakana Sahib had killed many innocent Akalis. After this event, Sikhs were much shocked and some zealot Sikhs started the violent movement against the enemies of Panth. It came to be known as the famous Babbar Akali Movement. The Babbar Akali Movement was organized in 1921. In

Doaba areas, the movement was at its height during 1922-23. The migrant Gadrises and retired army personal were involved in it. In fact, Babbar Akali movement was founded in March 1921 at a Sikh educational conference in Hosiarpur. The ultimate objective of Babbar Akali movement was to throw British out by the violent means. Campaign for the spread of the aims and programs of the Babbar Akali movement in August 1922 was to start a paper on the duplicator by Karam Singh Daulatpur which became famous as the 'Babbar Akali Doaba'. Kisan Singh Gargaj, Master Mota Singh, Narain Singh, Dalip Singh, Bela Singh were prominent and early leaders of the Babbar Akali movement. The movement progressed very well day by day. The Punjab Government found the situation out of control and adopted special measures to suppress the movement. The British Government did succeed in rounding up the Babbars. Total arrests by this time had numbered '226 of whom 104 were prosecuted under section 107, criminal procedure code. The arrested six Babbars Kishan Singh Gargaj, Babu Santa Singh, Dalipa Dhamian, Dharam Singh Hayatpur, Karam Singh Manko and Nand Singh Ghurial were sentenced to death and hanged to death on 27th Feb., 1926; other thirteen were sentenced to transportation for life. Thirteen to different terms of imprisonment and forty were declared innocent and released. Despite sacrifices

this movement could not achieve its objectives. Its main cause was unequal match of strength and resources between the Government and the Babbars.

The aim of Babbar Akali movement was an armed revolution in the country in cooperation with the noble army. But the Babbars were no more successful in their mission. There were many reasons responsible for their ultimate failure. The main cause was unequal match of strength and resources between the British Government and the Babbars. They had to suffer due to the shortage of money, arms and ammunition. They had tried to keep contract with the army and to procure arms and tried to purchase arms with the robbed money. But it was not sufficient for carrying out their mission. Another cause was that the Babbars were no more successful in keeping of their organization as a more secret than that of the Gadrities. The British C.I.D. did not have much difficulty in infiltrating the Babbar's inner circles. Another cause of failure of Babbars was the role of Jholichuks. Who gave their full cooperation to the Government against the Babbars. Some persons of Babbars became informer of the police after their arrest. This gave a big set back to the Babbars.

In addition to this the other parties like the S.G.P.C. and

Indian National Congress though anti-imperialist in their own ways yet disapproved revolutionary methods of the Babbars. However their ideals and mission continued to work even after 1924. The S.G.P.C. radically protested against the activities of the movement and appealed to the people not to give any support to the Babbars. In spite of these reasons, the Babbar Akali Movement encouraged the national awakening and infusion of new spirit among the freedom fighters. Conclusively people realized their natural rights and started efforts to remove their imposed problems. Babbars drew their encouragement from the revolt of 1857 and Gadar Movement. But their movement also influenced greatly the later movements like Nau-Jawan Sabha and Kirti Kisan Party. Subsequently, they played progressive role in the freedom struggle of India by giving it a secular or non-communal touch.

We have dealt with the Kirti Kisan Lehar in sixth chapter. The Babbar Akali movement gave birth to the Kirti Kisan Lehar that made a big contribution to anti-British activities. The Kirti Kisan Lehar represented the poor peasants and landless labourers in the Punjab. Literally, the word 'Kirti' means the toiler. The party defined a Kirti as a person who performed his work with his hand and did not exploit other. With the origin of Kirti, a monthly, Kirti



Lehar came into being in Punjab. In Feb. 1926 the first issue of the Kirti was published. Bhai Santokh Singh was prominent among the founding members of this paper. He was also an active member of Gadar party from 1914 to 1922. Santokh Singh felt that an organization for the working class was desperately needed. The Kirti emphasized the importance of organization of workers, because workers faced many problems in those days under the British Government. Accordingly, Kirti conferences were held in Hoshiarpur and Lyallpur in Oct. 1927. The conferences announced that the Kirti would start the work of organizing its poor brothers in the beginning of the year 1928.

On the invitation of Sohan Singh Josh and Bhag Singh Canadian a meeting was held at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar on April 12, 1928 to organize the Kirti Kisan party. It was decided to organize peasants and labourers simultaneously. In this meeting ordinary peasants, leaders of Gadar lehar and Communist group also participated. It was unanimously resolved to name the organization as "Kirti Kisan Party". Sohan Singh Josh was its secretary and M.A. Majid was its joint secretary. Kirti Kisan party criticized the Government through the Kirti newspaper for its anti-Kisan policies. It demanded Government to reduce the land

revenue and to provide them necessary facilities. Many of the peasants became members of Kirti Kisan party. Government enacted repressive policy to suppress Kirti Kisan party and gave some facilities to peasants. Gradually, many leaders of Kirti Kisan Lehar were involved in the Communist Movement and Kisan Sabhas during the 1930's.

After it the Kirti Kisan Party attempted to make class consciousness an integral part of the freedom movement in the Punjab in the 1930's. A united front of the working class, peasants and bourgeoisie was expected to play a vital role in conducting an effective and decisive fight against injustice, atrocities of the Government, and the fight against imperialism and capitalism. The leadership of the Kirti Kisan's blamed the Congress for having failed enlisting the support of the masses and convinced that the involvement of the working class and peasants was the pre-condition for the success of any movement.

These movements such as the Gadar Movement, the Satyagraha Movement, the Gurdwara Reform Movement, the Babbar Akali Movement and the Kirti Kisan Party against the British have not been studied collectively so far. These movements had made the 1920's and the 1930's an important period in the

political and social life of Punjab. No historical account of Punjab or India's freedom movement and its concerns is complete without their knowledge. Each movement played an important role to get India free.

These movements had many things in common although the differences among them were also significant. For example the Gadar Movement was as anti-British as the Satyagraha Movement was but these two movements were quite different in their origin, approach and method. Further, the Gurdwara Reform Movement and the Babbar Akali Movement had many common things such as their concern for the Gurdwaras and other interests of Sikh community. But the methods of Babbars were closer to the ones adopted by the Gadrities. Likewise the Kirti Kisan Lehar shared many things with the Communist movement yet the two remained distinct and worked parallel to each other for most of the time.

However, these movements as a whole display many drastically similar features. These were all anti-British, for the ultimate aim of them was to get India free from British by every possible way. To this extent they strengthen the freedom movement in India. Secondly, they were also anti-Colonial. The similarity among all these movements is conspicuous in their ideological

propaganda. They primarily confined themselves to the religious congregations, places like Gurdwaras or *Dharamshalas* of their villages for spreading their views among the masses. All the prominent leaders of all these movements propagated their ideological stances and objectives by using almost similar methods. Although these movements were active across the country but inarguably Punjab remained the epicenter of all these movements. The cause behind the genesis of these movements was primarily the oppressive policies of the British Government towards the Indians at all levels. All these movements attempted to influence the educated section of the society. For example members of the Gadar Party and Babbar Akalis tried to establish contact with the army by working in it. The involvement of the members of Gadar Party in all these movements reveals the ideological compatibility among them. As the member of Gadar Party Baba Bhagwan Singh Dusanj brought a *Shahidi Jatha* from Canada to the "*morcha of Jaito*" which took place during the Gurdwara Reform movement. Similarly the prominent Gadrities such as Karam Singh Daulatpur, Pyara Singh Langeri and Karam Singh Jingar worked for Babbar Akali movement. Moreover the Kirti Kisan Party was established by the Gadrities who survived even after the suppression of the party

by the British Government and came under the influence of communism.

Besides the above mentioned similarities they also differ to a considerable extent. For example Gadar party adopted violent means to achieve their objectives. However Satyagraha movement was in a radical contrast to the Gadrities, opposed to violence and had adopted the path of non-violence. Such a contrast is also quite evident in between the Gurdwara Reform movement and the Babbar Akali movement. These movements also differ in terms of their geographical bases. The Gadar Movement was an international movement. Its international character leads to its spread and establishment of its branches across the globe. This movement not only performed revolutionary activities in India but also shook the British Empire with its anti-British radicalism at the international level. The anti- British, anti-colonial movements in other countries exerted a formidable influence upon the ideology and functioning of this movement. The geographical spread of the Satyagraha movement embraces the entire India. Moreover the Satyagraha movement differs from other movements as only in this movement the primary membership of Congress played a leading role in spreading its influence.

The Gurdwara Reform movement under the leadership of S.G.P.C. made the entire Punjab the epicenter of its activities. The influence of the Babbar Akali movement was primarily confined only to the Doaba area. The Kirti Kisan Lehar not only had relations with the other labour movements in India, but also maintained intimate relations with the movements active across the abroad. Most of the members of this movement are from outside India. This is why it is termed as the reincarnation of the Gadar party. The Russian revolution exerted a formidable influence upon the ideological stance of this movement.

These movements mutually also influence each other to a great extent. For example the secular character of the Satyagraha movement was greatly indebted to the secular ideology of the Gadar Movement. Under the influence of Gadar movement Satyagraha movement brought the people of various communities closer to each other against the British Government. Prior to the emergence Gadar movement the movements within the Sikh community had shown loyalties towards the British Government. But under the influence of the Gadar party the Gurdwara Reform movement became anti-British in character. Gurdwara Reform movement followed the path of non-violence under the inspiration of the Satyagraha movement under Gandhi, M.K. Similarly the Babbar

movement adopted the Gadrities violent ideology under the influence of Gadar party, Babbar Akali decided to teach a lesson to the '*jholichuks*', because the remaining members of the Gadar party killed the Kirpal Singh the main culprit responsible for the demise of Gadar movement. These movements mutually necessitated the emergence of each other. For example Rowlatt Act was formulated to suppress the activities of the Gadrities who had survived even after the collapse of Gadar movement. The Satyagraha movement emerged in opposition to this inhuman act committed by the British. Similarly, the Satyagraha movement influenced the Gurdwara Reformation movement. The *Sarbrah* of Golden Temple Amritsar Arur Singh gave *Saropa* to the culprit of the Jalanwala Bagh tragedy. This created an atmosphere of distrust among the Sikh community. This resulted in the formation of the Gurdwara Reform movement. Immediately after this movement Babbar Akali movement came into existence which emerged as a reaction to the tragedy of Nankana Sahib.

It is quite evident from the above discussion that these movements reciprocally necessitated the emergence of each other and both collectively and individually contributed to the demise of British Empire in India.



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