

Sikh Pioneers in North America and the Crisis of Leadership

Dr. Amrik Singh

After Sikh pioneers settled in North America, they set up their social, religious and political institutions. The role of Prof. Teja Singh, a Harvard alumnus, in organizing the community according to principles of Sikhism was noted among Punjabi settlers. He prepared them to face extreme discrimination of the racists with determination and urged them to live their lives as true Sikhs. As an authority on Sikhism, Teja Singh took no recourse to racial theories prevalent at that time. The very principle of race (Aryan) and caste becomes antithetical to the Sikh principle and the Ideal Indian Nationalism. But when Professor Teja Singh left the scene, Sikhs of North America got in trap of 'race diplomats,' who used them for continuous financial support for a cause that was evidently pro-Aryan and anti-Sikh. Race diplomats in subtle hands of the British became 'reciprocal rebels, or freedom fighters.' Without the tacit patronage of the British rulers, the Indian National Congress, Arya Samaj, and Singh Sabha movements could not have flourished. The British encouraged them to certain defined limits of conduct, so that reciprocal rebels could create Alternative Indian Nationalism under the overall supervision of the British Empire.

The history of Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society recorded campaigns of reciprocal 'freedom fighters' who mostly used the rhetoric to deceive Sikhs both financially and ideologically. Sikhs' organizations on the Pacific coast appropriated the Khalsa legacy and made their mark in the agricultural economy of the US. As they were guided by Cambridge and Harvard educated Sant Teja Singh, they flourished socially and religiously. But as he left the scene, the race diplomats came in and impressed upon Sikhs to adopt race paradigm for their personal and social growth. It not only made them a living contradiction of their glorious legacy, but also rendered them helpless victims in hands of reciprocal freedom fighters.

Nico Slate, in his book, *Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India*, records:

"The phrase "pure-blood Hindus" was linked to caste by Akhay Kumar Mozumdar, the first Indian to gain naturalization on the West Coast. While obliquely referring to the same racial arguments that had bolstered the claims of Dolla and Balsara, Mozumdar relied more heavily on the racial purity of his ancestral caste-based lineage, implying that such purity made him "more white" than most other Indians in the United States. Mozumdar stated, "I am a high-caste, or ruling caste." He distinguished himself from other Indians in America on the basis of caste, class, and religion. Mozumdar argued, "The great bulk of the Hindus in this country are not high-caste Hindus, but are what are called sikhs, [sic] and are of mixed blood." Emphasizing the class, and religious differences between him and the "mixed blood" Sikhs, Mozumdar stated, "The laboring class, those who do the rough manual labor, are not high-caste Hindus at all, but are in an entirely separate class, having quite a different religion and a different ancestry." He concluded, "The high-caste Hindus always consider themselves to be members of

the Aryan race.” Largely accepting his claim to racial purity and thus superiority, the court granted Mozumdar citizenship.”¹

When Punjabi Pioneers started coming to the West, Punjab was a very active center not only for the Great Game of the British, but also for Christian missionaries, Hindu sects, Sikh heretics and secret lodges of freemasons and theosophical society. The object of all these societies was to create imaginary profiles of Sikhs for the consumption of the general Indian public and to a large extent of the western world. The purpose was to disable Sikhs’ political leadership and strengthen imaginary religious identity for the obvious consumption of the Sikh soldier. Right at the time when migration started, Kooka movement and Dalip Singh’s rebellion had occupied British leadership from top to the bottom. The persecution of Kooka activists had again started the course of Sikh martyrdom. Dalip Singh’s attempts to unify all fronts of Indian Public against the British, had wide-ranging effects on the British to pioneer a political movement that could shock absorb the rising nationalistic energy. The British used services and expertise of the secret societies to start alternative freedom movement. Theosophical Society with the active funding from Maharaja of Kashmir, took up an active role at the international level to start series of actions the purpose of which was to exhaust, isolate, and malign any movement that would follow the path of Ideal Indian Nationalism. Therefore, all reform movements and political campaigns in India started with the establishment of Theosophical Societies all over the world.

Madam Helene Blavatsky, a close confidante of Gulab Singh Dogra, the ruler of newly carved Kashmir State, and favorite friend of his son, Ranbir Singh moved to India, after being naturalized as American citizen, in 1879. Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907), the son of Presbyterian parents, accompanied her to Bombay. Maharaja of Kashmir, Ranbir Singh had already set up contacts, programs, plans for launching secret missions at the global level. They set up Society’s International Headquarters at Adyar, a suburb of Madras, where it has been still functioning. They visited Sri Lanka and defined Buddhism in their own way to Sri Lankans.

Theosophical Society got worldwide support from high-ranking officials of the British Empire, European establishments, and American political institutions. Along with secretive support of American and European leaders, the society also promoted its interests among journalists, intellectuals, artists and social scientists, spiritualists, anthropologists, rebels, anarchists, and harbingers of a universal government for the entire planet. Its specialization, in identifying the role of the Aryan race, in running the world, intrigued people across diverse interests. Theosophists’ work among the Irish rebels, Russian lefts, and Indian activists ranged from high recognition to unending controversies. The society is credited with not only creating alternative political movements in different countries, but also pioneering alternative religious movements

¹ Nico Slate, Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle For Freedom in the United States and India (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012) 30

mainly among South Asian religions. Its quick rise invited attention worldwide. When Punjabi pioneers came, theosophical societies already had created imaginary profile of turban wearing people among journalists and intellectuals. They regarded them only as Hindus, an Aryan outlook on all people of South Asia, the future subjects of the British-Hindu Empire.

“After, his two major co-founders departed for India in late 1878 to establish the international headquarters of the Society in Adyar, India, young attorney William Quan Judge diligently carried on the work of advancing interest in Theosophy within the United States. By 1886 he had established an American Section of the international Society comprised of branches in fourteen cities. Rapid growth took place under his guidance, so that by 1895 there were 102 American branches with nearly six thousand members.”²

It is pertinent to mention here that Theosophical Society in 1885 played a crucial role in deflating Maharaja Dalip Singh’s rebellion against the Raj on the one hand, and creating a model of Alternative Indian Nationalism in the shape of Indian National Congress and the Arya Samaj. The use of occult, Mahatma, and the prophecy of the World Guru were all attempts to drain Punjab of Nankian dictum ‘brotherhood of mankind’ and, hoist all its universal principles on the British Empire. It was a new knowledge that the British obtained by promoting Anglo-Vedic Aryan sensibility, and over the course of time, it dismantled brick by brick what the Sikh soldier had achieved for Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Annie Besant, president of Theosophical Society after Blavatsky, had a founding influence on M.K.Gandhi ever since she met him for the first time in England. Besant became the President of Indian National Congress in 1917. She quite often hinted at a World government and a World Guru in her addresses. “...we cannot in the Society permit any to be excluded, and the very moment that our General National Society excluded from its membership those who hold a particular belief, the belief in the near coming of a World Teacher, it was impossible that that National Society should continue to represent the Theosophical Society in Germany.”³

Dr. H.N. Stokes summing up views of Mrs. Annie Besant demarcates how Christian ideals are coterminous with Vedic religions, and how the archetype of Great Teacher will establish lost authority for Hindus, and will provide spiritual and temporal power to the British Empire. He states: “As Mrs. Besant says, we are confronted with the alternatives of self-sacrifice or revolution. The situation is wholly unique. We must either drift into intellectual and social anarchy or all of these forces must be whipped into line; they must be united into one harmonious movement for the realization of Theosophical—and that means Christian—ideals. And now a new idea comes to the front—that of a Great Teacher or Leader who shall extract the kernel from all of these different schools; who shall point out, in language which cannot be misunderstood, the simple underlying principles of all and their practical application; who shall

² The official website of Theosophical Society in America. <https://www.theosophical.org/about-us/1040> Retrieved on June 17, 2012. an

³ Annie Besant, *Super-Human Men in History and Religion* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 1996) 131.

possess the force, the genius, the personal magnetism which will make him heard, respected and, if possible, obeyed.”⁴

Stokes reiterates Besant’s apprehension of a metaphysical threat to Christian ideals. The situation is, according to him, very grievous requiring either radical action or acceptance of self-annihilation. He interprets it as a theosophical test in which the inaction is merely ‘intellectual and social anarchy,’ whereas declaring a war on antithetical forces is one of the choices. Physical force will bring these in line with a harmonious Theosophical worldview. A Great Teacher, according to Besant, was coming who would have a magnetic personality possessing the force and genius to have power over the whole world. To achieve the power Besant gives a theosophical interpretation to the Anglo-Vedic religions. The imaginary theorization results in an archetype of a World Teacher who is both ‘Christ in Christendom and Krshna in India’. Besant writes: “They cannot understand how these strange likenesses to Christianity appear in a pre-Christian form of worship. They do not dream that the secret lies in the fact that it was the same World-Teacher who is the central Object of devotion in both, who is worshipped under the name of Krshna in India as He is worshipped under the name of Christ in Christendom. His great mission as the Christ was to the fifth sub-race of the Aryan people, those who spread over northern and Western Europe, and these fourth and fifth sub-races intermingle one with the other, and you find the great faith of Christianity dominating them both.”⁵

The ruling principle of Besant’s Indian Nation is Aryan hegemony. All other religions, nationalities, ethnicities and races should conform to the Anglo-Vedic Empire. She asserts that she dreams of a time when India will help to build the Empire with that genius for statesmanship and clear insight which are found from time to time in great Indian ministers. These qualities will be utilized, according to her, for the good of the Empire for the good of the mighty whole of which India is a part. “The times are gone by for small nations, for petty States, and for little peoples. The tendency now is towards raising a vast realm, united by common aims and common love. India should aid to build such an Empire, should help to bear its burdens and share its responsibilities. I dream of a time when India, England, Australasia and Canada will all join hands in the making of a common Empire, when India’s children will bring their priceless treasures to the enriching of the Empire.”⁶

Besant’s Empire is a ‘mighty whole’ in which India will seek its destiny not as an independent nation, but a part of the British Empire. Writings of Gandhi and Nehru use theosophical rhetoric to express their views of Indian nation. While they talk about ‘Sawraj,’ glory of the Hindu past, and the birth of a new India, they strictly observe boundaries set by Western theosophists.

⁴ Dr. H.N.Stokes, “Moses and Prophets” in American Theosophist Magazine October 1913 to March 1914.(Kessinger publishing, 2003) 30-31

⁵ Annie Besant, *Theosophist Magazine*, July 1913-September 1913(Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2003)849.

⁶ Annie W. Besant, *The birth of new India* (Adyar, India: Theosophical Publishing House) 106

Alternative Indian Nationalism, promoted by Theosophical Society, had initially no place for Muslims. Indian National Congress, since its inception in the lap of Theosophy in 1885, enrolled for the first time any Muslim member in 1906. Their enrolment was more for striking strategic alliance than for blending them in mosaic of emerging nationalism. Punjab remained disturbed because it couldn't find outlines of the Ideal Indian Nationalism that could make Sikhs integral part of national life. Memories of cultural integration of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs in Sovereign Punjab had not completely erased from their memories. Sikhs could pose a threat by genuinely uniting Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists into a nation that would give them freedom to practice their faith without fear of conforming to the 'mighty whole.' In one of the reports from commissioners, inspectors and other authority figures of the British Raj, the official identifies the regulation of the Sikh factor, an essential component of the British Empire:

The North Western Front Province and the Punjab divide India from Afghanistan and Central Asia. The Punjab has for year been ground for the Indian Army and to-day enjoys the same period of eminence. Of its population, 55 percent, is Muslim, 33 percent, Hindu, and 11 percent, is Sikh. But the most martial section is the Sikh., which during the present war, with less than one/100th of the population, has supplied about one-sixth of the fighting forces of the Indian Empire. The Punjab, however, has by no means escaped revolutionary contagion, and our brief narrative must commence with the early months of year 1907 when as was noted at the time, by Sir Denzil Ibbetson, the Lieutenant Governor, everywhere people were sensible of a change, of a "new air" which was blowing through men's minds and were waiting to what would come of it. It will be remembered that at this time the Jugantar and similar publications were pouring forth their poison among thousands in Bengal, while Alipore and Dacca conspirators were laying their plans, recruiting their ranks and collecting their weapons. It is not surprising that simultaneously new ideas should be fermenting elsewhere in India.⁷

There was a great discontentment in Punjab especially among the peasants who were deprived of their lands and means of subsistence. They looked for new pastures due to rising economic strain, stifling religious censoring, and disturbing stereotyping. As has been pointed out before, their overrepresentation in the Indian military compelled the British to design policies in which they could leave no aspect of Sikhs' life unregulated. Since Arya Samaj had generated a lot of heat in the past decades against them, there was no dearth of anti- Sikh volunteers to proliferate in their private and public life. There was always a voice that appealed to their religious, social and political consciousness. The universal unity of all people always intrigued them, as the very principle is inalienably rooted in the Sikh scriptures. Calls to fight for rights of others can easily hook them even to stake their lives. British benefited greatly from such a character of the Sikh soldier. The Battle of Saragarhi epitomizes the unflinching courage of Sikhs against all odds. The Hindu leaders of newly born 'freedom struggle' from 1885-1947, instead of benefiting from

⁷ Reports from Commissioners, Inspectors, and Others, Great Britain, Parliament, House of Commons Session 12 Feb. 1918- 21 Nov. 1918 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1918) viii, 60.

sacrifices of the militant Sikhs, only used it for raising their (Hindus') bargaining power at the doorsteps of the British Raj for a flawed and fractured nationalism. From the role of Dogras in Anglo-Sikh wars to Hindu nationalists of Gadhar and Gandhian movements, they flattered the Sikh militant only to an extent where the cause of Hindu nationalism is espoused, and the militant agent is destroyed within. The patterns that emerge from such a process are typical and trendy. The Hindu nationalist operates in two domains to achieve his illegitimate goals. He will either act as an *agent provocateur* or a *reciprocal rebel*. The role of the first is to lend violent energy to the targeted movement. The objectives of the provocateur are to take the movement to a premature climax, and then get out of its direct and destructive trajectory. The moment the provocateur leaves, the reciprocal rebel gets in with all pretensions to statesmanship.

The age of reciprocal rebel starts with Ram Mohan Roy and Dwarkanath Tagore in the beginning of the nineteenth century. They visualized a royal role for themselves in manipulating secret desires of both the British and Muslim elites. Therefore, they offered their services to bring down the last hurdle in British's way, the sovereign Panjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. They carve a role for themselves of reciprocal rebels.

“The most articulate advocate of European colonization was Rammohun Roy, who, with Dwarkanath in agreement, viewed the question in the broad context of India's history and future place in International society....Rammohun expected the most recent among the conquerors, the British, to follow the pattern and foresaw, in time, an India that was Christian (if not in the formal sense, at least in an ethical sense), modernized, prosperous, and, in some measure, associated with England. The Indian Empire of the future was to be a realm of British-Indian partnership in all spheres—political, economic, and cultural.”⁸

The British at the beginning of their rule had many ambitious plans. The foremost was to learn classical and vernacular languages, and then ameliorate the lot of millions of Untouchables who had suffered centuries of brutal treatment at the unjust hands of high caste Brahmins and their collaborators (both foreign and domestic). The British brought best vernacular teachers for teaching Europeans Indian languages and cultures. But Ram Mohan Roy and Dwarkanath Tagore found it unsavory for their future alliance with Europeans. If the trend wasn't checked, India would have leadership from oppressed classes collaborating with Europeans. It was not only detrimental to hegemony of the upper-castes, but considered a threat to the Vedic language and culture. Roy and Tagore used the current circumstances to their advantage. They knew the British's secret desire to colonize Punjab was ruling their consciousness in 1800's. They found a very welcoming entry into British rulers' mind. The second entry they made was to lobbying for opening English schools in a big way. The Europeans who offered themselves to be taught vernacular, now were asked to teach Indians English and western cultures. The core of this alliance remained dominant ever since 1820 to the current times.

⁸ Blair B. Kling, *Partner in Empire: Dwarkanath Tagore and the Age of Enterprise in Eastern India*(Berkeley: University of California Press,1976) p.25

The British not only recognized Roy and Tagore as partners in the rising Empire, but also allowed them freedom to publically criticize the Europeans so that they could become popular among unsuspecting masses. Tagore performed this role much better than Roy, and that is why succeeding generations of Tagores had been benefitting on both fronts (the white ruler and the masse leader). This reciprocity existed behind the scenes, and that is why India in spite of experiencing great bouts of insurgencies, couldn't transform the radical energy into a new political system like Russia did in 1917 after the world war one and China did after the Second World War in 1949.

The British developed multiple profiles of the 'Reciprocal Rebel,' and found it a very ingenious way to control mass consciousness. Reciprocal rebel replicates in all fields: anarchism, extremism, and communism, all varieties of nationalisms, sectarianism, and pacifism. The political scene may create illusion of great uprising, but the ruler remains confident of his directorial role, both in creating the movement and suppressing the movement. The age of the Reciprocal Rebel starts with Roy and Tagore and it is at its height of glory today.

Despite his leadership of the loyal opposition and his impassioned criticism of the administration, the Government of India encouraged Dwarkanath's civic activities and accorded him special honors. For one reason, British rule over the subcontinent was still incomplete. The Marathas had only recently been conquered, the Sikhs were strong and independent and the Russians were threatening the vulnerable northwestern frontier. Bengal, led by its loyal, reliable zamindars, was, in this period, the pillar of the Raj. Dwarkanath, the representative zamindar, might criticize the government, but he did so as an insider, a confidant of governors-general, a man whose social position and fortune depended on the British...In the age of evangelical humanitarianism it was necessary to clothe colonial activities with morality and to justify the East India Company as an agent of civilization. Dwarkanath was the symbol of the success of the company's government...He must be encourage in every way, held up for emulation as a man who would lead his people in the paths of westernization and loyalty.⁹

Reciprocal rebel, also a theosophist overtly or covertly, is a trained revolutionary who is skilled in matters of civil rights, freedom, liberty and fraternity. He theorizes on these issues and can easily pass for a genius. Lala Lajpat Rai's stay in America from the beginning of the Ghadr in 1914 to the times after Jallianwala massacre in 1919 makes a very interesting study of his activities. He was idolized by *the New York Times* twice. But after America's participation in World War I, he becomes controversial. Theosophical circles give him prominence which even talented Americans couldn't have had dreams of. On his return to India, Rai presides over the Calcutta session of the Congress and supports Gandhi's non-cooperation movement. The theatre of his deportation changed to nationalism of Gandhi's dreams. His staunch revolutionary friend,

⁹ Blair B. Kling, *Partner in Empire: Dwarkanath Tagore and the Age of Enterprise in Eastern India*(Berkeley: University of California Press,1976) p.167

Ajit Singh could not adapt to the reciprocity, therefore, was forgotten and thrown out of the memory.

Erez Manela in his book, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*, points out that Lajpat Rai set to work immediately upon arrival, traveling the country from Boston to New Orleans to Chicago to San Francisco. “Armed with letters of introduction from the British social reformer Sidney Webb, Lajpat Rai visited with progressive intellectuals at Columbia, Harvard, Stanford, and the University of California, Berkeley, as well as with Indian ‘emigres in each locale. Lajpat reported his impressions of the United States to readers in India in a book entitled *The United States of America: A Hindu’s Impressions and a Study*, which was published in Calcutta in 1916.”¹⁰

It is interesting to note how the rise of Woodrow Wilson in America in 1912 polarized major players of the Indian politics. Theosophists provided the central stage to deal with Wilsonian impact in the international politics. Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920), Annie Besant and Lala Lajpat Rai adopted the extremist line as a ploy to attract genuine freedom fighters into their circle of influence. On the other hand, Gandhi continued working on the pacifistic line of actions. Both groups controlled almost 85% of the popular opinion of the masses. The effort of all groups was to save India for Anglo-Aryan trilogy against any empowerment of Shudra as it had taken place in the rise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Lucknow pact.

As Erez Manela has suggested, Tilak started organizing movement for Indian home rule in 1916, by incorporating Home Rule League with branches across the country. Annie Besant, who though not a native Indian served in 1917 as the INC president, also established a home rule league of her own, which sometimes collaborated and sometimes competed with Tilak’s as it also set out to enlist grassroots support for self-government. But Besant stopped short of advocating Indian independence, asking only that India be a “Free Nation within the British Empire, under the Imperial Crown of His Majesty the King-Emperor George V and His successors.”¹¹

British’s missive to the U.S. authorities on Besant’s support for Indian Home Rule was characterized as a mere ploy to trap imagination of freedom-loving Indians. The same could be said about two groups: pacifists and extremists, in the National Congress and Hindu Mahasabha. Since Theosophical Society coordinated movements of all leaders, it made sure that no leader should cross the line by genuinely demanding complete freedom. Tilak’s “Sawraj is my birthright,” only meant some civil rights within the British Empire.

Clarifying it further, Manela, underlines how the Indian nationalists tried to negotiate the emergence of the Wilsonian moment, and launched, what he called “concerted efforts to enlist

¹⁰ Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) 87.

¹¹ Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007)

support of “world opinion,” and especially American opinion, on behalf of their cause. Besant’s arrest for circulating copies of Wilson’s war address helped their efforts, since it raised a furor among American theosophists, who launched a public campaign for her release and denounced Britain’s “jailor’s regime” in India.The pro-Besant’s campaign also caused some consternation at the British embassy in Washington, which attempted to neutralize it by telling the U.S. authorities that Besant’s support for Indian Home rule was not genuine, but rather little more than a ploy calculated to attract Indians to the religion of which she was a “high priestess.”¹²

Wilsonian moment made Lala Lajpat Rai to work with African American leader W.E.B Du Bois. Lala’ deep-rooted faith in Aryan superiority was clearly contradictory to the interests of blacks to whom he equated with Dalits. Arya Samaj as a reform movement, turned anti-Sikh; it maligned the founder of Sikhism, Nanak and other saints as illiterate and unfit to question Aryan ideology. Swami became harsher towards Guru Nanak and other saints simply because some of them hailed from ‘Shudra’ (Untouchable) backgrounds. Lajpat Rai’s activism with black leaders in America was, therefore, merely ‘a ploy’ to make an implied statement against ‘Woodrow Wilson’s liberalism, and thus to get accolade from their British masters via theosophical society. Lala Lajpat Rai’s attitude towards Sikh pioneers in the United States was not different, as it was that of his mentor Swami Dayananda. Manela points out that while travelling across the United states, Lajpat Rai also met numerous Indian revolutionaries but found most of them, with a few exceptions, uncouth, misguided, or simply corrupt. He was especially critical of their efforts to establish contacts with German agents, who they hoped would supply them with funds and arms to organize resistance against the British.¹³

Majority of Indian revolutionaries, at that time, were Sikhs. One of the leading Ghadrite Baba Jawala Singh, the founder of Stockton Sikh Temple and provider of Guru Gobind Singh scholarship for students from India belonged to Kumahar caste (one of the untouchable castes of Punjab). Lajpat Rai’s dismissal of Indian revolutionaries as ‘uncouth, misguided, or simply corrupt’ speaks of his hatred for ‘wretched of the earth.’

Ruth Price in her book, The Lives of Agnes Smedley, comments on anti-Sikh prejudice that Agnes Smedley noticed while closely interacting with Lala Har Dayal, Lala Lajpat Rai, many Bengali intellectuals and high caste Punjabis. She writes :

In California, where the majority of America’s two hundred thousand unskilled Asian immigrants lived, the nation’s racist xenophobia was most extreme, and legislation was currently under consideration that would eliminate already tightly restricted Asian immigration entirely. Working-class laborers, middle-class progressive reformers, and even the Socialist Party looked down on California’s Asian community as racially inferior, unassimilable, and a threat to wages. Of all the state’s detested Asian populations, none was more reviled than the “ragheads”—the derisive term

¹² ----ibid, 84.

¹³ -Manela,---ibid, 88-89.

by which the Sikhs, who comprised the overwhelming majority of California's Indian immigrant population, were known. Stigmatized, ridiculed, and bullied for maintaining their customs in America, discriminated against in theaters, restaurants, and hotels, charged higher rents than Caucasians for substandard housing in undesirable sections of town they faced the most limited opportunities for work and the lowest wages of all Asian immigrant groups. Having made greater peace with her racial identity than with the working-class background she still battled to escape, Agnes found it easier to identify with California's beleaguered Asian community than with Bay Area Socialists who wore buttons urging workers of the world to unite while simultaneously advocating Asian exclusion.¹⁴

Lala Lajpat Rai in his role as a reciprocal rebel takes things too far where it becomes hard for him to maintain the facade of a secular nationalist. His seven years stay in the U.S. among score of theosophists was part of the British Empire's international clout through diverse forms of art, literature, and emancipatory ideologies. The most important point is that all Indian nationalists sink their mutual differences when the route to Hindu nationalism started emerging. The Lucknow Pact of Bal Gangadhar Tilak in 1916 and Gandhi's support to Khilafat agitation prepared grounds for post-Jallianwala alliance to rather look for mutually exclusive nationalisms: Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. The understanding might have reached with the British administration through offices of Theosophical Society. The British's identification of the trail left by the Ghadr movement as the model of Ideal Indian Nationalism might have prompted to encourage sectarian interests. Or otherwise why the British Raj would allow Hindu and Muslim elites to own the Jallianwala site, for their mutually agreed flawed Indian Nationalism? Finding it impossible to suppress people of Punjab, the British paved the way for an Alternative Indian Freedom movement to take birth in the blood-soaked and haloed land of Jallianwala Bagh. Nigel Collett in his book, *The Butcher of Amritsar: General Reginald Dyer*, reconstructs all background circumstances to analyze what actually led to the massacre of Jallianwala Bagh.

“On 14 February 1920 an appeal was launched for a Jallianwala Bagh Memorial Fund, and this was to play a part in Indian consciousness similar to that which the Dyer fund played in the British. “We are glad to inform the public that the Jallianwala Bagh has now been acquired for the nation.’ At a cost of 540,000 rupees, a committee including Gandhi, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Motilal Nehru, Swami Shraddhanand, Harkishan Lal, Kitchlew and Girdhari Lal purchased for the nascent Indian nation a focus of martyrology that would help to light and keep lit the flame of independent nationalism.”¹⁵

One fails to understand that these very leaders had given a call of *hartal* and extended it to coincide with Sikhs' national festival of Vaisakhi, their arrest before the appointed date led to all disturbances, then under what circumstances the British make them custodians of the historical site? Where was the consent of 10 million Sikhs and 70 million Shudras?

¹⁴ Ruth Price, *The Lives of Agnes Smedley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) 44-45.

¹⁵ Nigel Collett, *The Butcher of Amritsar: General Reginald Dyer* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2005) 399.

Lala Lajpat Rai's time spent in the U.S. was for building American opinion in favor of the British rule in comparison to that of the German on the one hand, and in favor of more rights under the overall control of the British administration, on the other. Besant, Tilk and Rai all concurred on getting partial rights for Indian citizens. This brings into focus questions about Rai's strident rhetoric against the British rule in his writings. It may be due to the Aryan trilogy of three seemingly unrelated elements, which actually work in perfect coordination underneath. The three elements, Theosophical Society, Indian National Congress, and the conglomerate of Hindu radicals followed patterns that touched imagination of the majority of the uneducated masses. Inassimilable Sikhs and Muslims were dangled as targets of the Aryan trilogy.

The British made sure the two (Sikhs and Muslims) should never identify with their common language, common belief (Sufism), and their common territory. Instead, hatred was encouraged in such a manner that Hindus might look helpless victims of Muslim fundamentalism. This was to stimulate the historical memory of Sikhs as Hindus' savior during times of Aurangzeb, Nadar Shah, and Ahmad Shah Abdali. In the absence of strong political leader, Sikhs again fell into the trap of hatred during partition in 1947. The natural consequence of their action was more embarrassment to themselves, and the immorality of their acts could neither be sanctified culturally nor religiously.

Coming back to India, Rai presides over the specially convened Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress in 1920. His seven years in the US during World War I, Peace Conference in Paris and Jallianwala Bagh massacre had great significance for starting a new course of action. With the death of Tilk in 1920, Gandhian era started right with the ownership of the Jallianwala Bagh site in Amritsar where in December 1919 Congress annual session was held with great exhibition of Hindu-Muslim political relations. British recognized efforts of national leaders strictly for a limited Swaraj. Without this oblique understanding, the British could never have dared to strike at Jallianwala Bagh.

Jallianwala massacre was more to send symbolic message to the Sikhs of Ghadr movement, and other villagers who were ready to join in any prospective and unregulated revolt. In Punjab, Rai continued to act as a patriot for complete freedom. Punjab was not aware of what he wrote to the US President Woodrow Wilson about granting freedom to India. Manela points out those colonial nationalists were looking for only extra-concessions from their rulers. He writes, "Like other colonial nationalists, Indians also commonly held up U.S. colonial rule in the Philippines at the time not as a blemish on the American record but as a model, which the British would do well to follow. Already in 1916, a review of Lajpat Rai's book on the United States published in Tilk's nationalist weekly, *Mahratta*, recommended that every patriotic Indian, as well as British colonial officials, study the chapter in the book that dealt with U.S. rule in the Philippines as an example of colonial benevolence.... And shortly after the armistice, Lajpat Rai wrote

Wilson that India should be granted “at least such progressive measures of Home Rule as the present administration has established in the Philippines.”¹⁶

Philippines remained a colony of the U.S. from 1898 to 1946. More than 100,000 Filipinos nationalist died to free their islands from the U.S. control. American War lasted until 1902 and an estimated 4,500 Americans died in the conflict. Philippines as the first colony of the U.S. had invited a lot of criticism from both within and without. Rai's example of Philippines, as the perfect model of freedom was not only a setback for Filipino nationalists, but also for Ghadrists who were fighting for total overthrow of the British from India.

Indian National Congress in its Delhi session in December 1918, adopted a resolution that appealed for the application of self-determination to India. “In view of the pronouncements of President Wilson, Mr. Lloyd George, and other British statesmen, that to ensure the future peace of the world, the principle of Self-Determination should be applied to all progressive nations,” the INC demanded that India be recognized by the powers as “one of the progressive nations to whom, the principle of self-determination should be applied.” The congress further urged that elected delegates represent India at the peace table, and it proceeded to nominate Tilak, Gandhi, and the Muslim leader Syed Hasan Imam as its delegates to the conference.”¹⁷

Lala Lajpat Rai, an Arya Samaji, in his typical role of a Reciprocal Rebel, secured the position of a patriot in popular public parlance. But he remained in the United States from 1914-1919 on a very subtle and specific mission. Reciprocity of the British and the Indian National Congress was quite visible when a special session of the party was convened in his honor.

His two other devout followers Lala Hardayal and Bhai Permanand took up the opposite roles. In New York Rai acted as pro-British in the conflict between Great Britain and Germany. His India Home League of America was to show support of his community to the British. Lala Har Dayal, however, acted as pro-German agent, an implacable enemy of the British. With all his posturing, Har Dayal won the trust of the German leaders. Their goal with score of other bodies working simultaneously was to influence American public opinions against the Germans. By capitalizing on the popular discontent of Sikhs, they aroused Sikhs' sentiments against the British and thus provided evidence in shape of German-Hindu Conspiracy for United States to jump in World War I.

But after the end of World War I, the British Empire never before felt as anxious and overwhelmed as when President Woodrow Wilson put forward his 14 points at the peace conference. The empire's wide-ranging influence within America also didn't bear desired fruits. It was primarily because President Wilson, being professor and, then President of Princeton

¹⁶ Manela---92.

¹⁷ ----96.

University, had tremendous capacity to influence others more than to be influenced by them. Later as Governor of New Jersey, Wilson liked furrowing his own row. President Wilson maybe the only president to have given perturbing time to the narcissistic British leaders. Manela states:

British officials were gravely concerned about the effect that U.S. influence at the peace table would be very difficult for the British, Montagu had noted even before the armistice, not to “fall in line” with the U.S. program at the war’s end given Wilson’s preponderant power. “We have been so long accustomed to dictate to the world....our position,” he wrote, that it was “rather galling now that we find ourselves playing second fiddle to the autocratic ruler of the United States.....

They hoped that Wilson’s influence there, and his apparent determination to reconstruct the world according to the principles of self-determination and the equality of nations, would force the hand of the British and other imperialists and compel them to give their colonial possessions, if not complete independence, then at least a much greater measure of self-government. British officials, on the other hand, remained determined to prevent any discussion of issues related to their empire at the peace conference, where the United States and its president could meddle with them.¹⁸

The very idea of sending a delegation to the peace conference was very annoying to the British. Therefore, the British instantly rejected it. Gandhi and his associates right away stopped to flirt with the idea of sending a delegation to the peace conference. Punjab disturbances originated in 1907 and decreased to some extent with the repealing of the Punjab Government’s Land Colonies Act, but it created a lot of awareness in peasants and soldiers of Punjab. It was during these disturbances that Ajit Singh came to the notice of the police. He appealed to Sikh soldiers to openly revolt against the repressive policies of the British. Lala Lajpat Rai, being an associate of Ajit Singh is said to have been deported to Burma. But on his explanation, the British became compliant to his reciprocal rebellious activities.

Arguing about revolutionary movement in the Punjab before World War 1, Lajpat Rai writes in his book, *The Political Future of India* that it was nothing until Ghadr activists came back to Punjab. Rai tries to wash his hands off any involvement with Ajit Singh. Commenting on a report about Ghadr party, he points out to Sikhs of Vancouver’s revolutionary zeal having nothing to do with Hardayal and Barkat Ullah as they were separated from Sikhs by their ‘religions, habits and associations.’ In his judgment, Rai tries to club Hindu-Muslim nationalism opposed to more aggressive nationalism of the Sikhs. “The revolutionary movement in the Punjab amounted to nothing until it was reinforced by the return of the Sikh members of the Ghadr party during the war. The

¹⁸ --97.

committee has failed to answer the question: why did the Sikhs of Vancouver and California readily fall in with the schemes of Har Dayal and Barkat Ullah, the alleged founders of the revolutionary party of California. These latter had nothing in common with the Sikhs. In language, and religion, by habits and associations, they were poles apart from each other. Why did then Har Dayal's propaganda find such a ready soil among the Sikhs of Vancouver, B.C.?¹⁹

Rai, in his compliant tone tries to convince his interlocutors that 'the Indian soil and the Indian atmosphere are not very congenial for revolutionary ideas and revolutionary methods. The people are too docile, gentle, law-abiding and spiritually incline to take to them readily. They are by nature and tradition neither vindictive nor revengeful. Their general spirit is opposed to all kind of violence. They have little faith in the virtues of force. Unless they are provoked, and that too terribly, and are face to face with serious danger they do not like the use of force, even when recourse to it may be legal and morally defensible.'²⁰

Lajpat Rai's conciliatory and reciprocal appeal to the British is quite evident when he suggests them to trust educated leaders working among young radicals. He demands a leeway for mixing with revolutionaries so that intelligence for interests of the British Empire could be gathered. That is exactly a reciprocal rebel wins over amateur radicals to his side so that they could be used/annihilated to further Anglo-Vedic interests. Rai, in an effort to convince the governing classes about his reciprocal role emphasizes, "As to the duty of the educated leaders in the matter of suppressing the growth of the revolutionary movement in future, we beg to point out that all depends on how much faith the governing classes place in the professions of the popular leaders.....It is not likely that the educated leaders will in any way consciously and voluntarily digress from the limits of reasonable criticism of Government policy, nor have they very often done so in the past. What has so far prevented the educated leaders from exercising an effective check on the growth of the revolutionary movement is their inability to associate on terms of friendship with the younger generation."²¹

Commenting on page 61 of the investigation committee report in which Lajpat Rai was charged for providing shelter to certain "Chatarji," he defends himself by referring to the report, "Chatarji's father too had ordered him home on discovering that he was staying with Hardayal in the house of Lajpat Rai." The whole of this statement is absolutely false. I am prepared to swear and to prove that Chatarji did not stay in my house even for a single night. He came there a few time with Hardayal." Talking about Amir Chand, one of the accused in Delhi Conspiracy Case, Lajpat Rai says, "I have no doubt that he was rightly convicted in this case but I have no doubt..... up till 1910 the man had led an absolutely harmless life...His revolutionary career

¹⁹ Rai, Lajpat (Lala), *The Political Future of India* (New York: B.W. Huebsch, Inc., 1919) p166

²⁰ Ibid., 184

²¹ Ibid, 185

began in 1908. Before that he could not and would not have tolerated even the killing of an ant, much less that of human beings.”²²

Gopal K. Gokhale’s intervention to get Rai released speaks more of his Arya Samaj’s solidarity with the Raj than with the national movement of which Ajit Singh was a part. Gokhale’s stress on ‘monstrous injustice’ refers to ineptness of the British administration in ‘bracketing’ the two on the same plane. Gokhale is using Rai’s reciprocity as the valid ground for his release. His statement implies that Ajit Singh belongs to a different ‘cult’ of which Rai has nothing to do with it. S.C. Mittal in *Freedom Movement in Punjab* describes that Gopal Krishan Gokhale personally intervened for the release of Lajpat Rai, and wrote a letter to Mr. Dunlop Smith, the Private Secretary to Viceroy, pleading that Lajpat Rai’s arrest was unjustified: “To bracket Ajit Singh with Lajpat Rai is monstrous injustice to the latter. When I was in Lahore in February last Ajit Singh had already begun to denounce Lajpat Rai as a coward, and a pro-government man because Lajpat Rai would have nothing to do with Ajit Singh’s propaganda.”²³

Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society 1912

The history of Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society, Stockton California is a fascinating account of trials and toils of Punjabis on the western coast. It also reveals how the British Empire weaved an intricate web just to deal with insignificant number of natives of India. The British not only used racial connections and the propaganda of the highest order to deprive Punjabi peasants of the Pacific Coast of any decent life, but also treated them inhumanly for a highly complex international plot. They survived organized criminal conspiracies against them through sheer community wisdom that they had brought with them from India. The peasants, who started coming at a time when their exiled King had died in 1893 after suffering indignities at the hands of usurpers of his Kingdom. The Britain regulated his life in collaboration with shrewd Brahmins and by influencing political ambitions of Muslim elites.

The epic struggle that started from the Pacific Coast laid the foundation of freedom struggle of India, and also had international implications in World War I. In order to keep the Empire through criminal conspiracies and impact the mind of world leaders, the British disguised their intentions in writings of poets, novelists and students and swamis. It had well laid out plan to involve United States in World War I and also had a very subtle posturing to get information of Germans through exploiting revolutionary activities. It had also preemptive design to push genuine freedom lovers to the gallows with or without trials. The design appears to have been laid to quarantine Sikh soldiers in the British army for deterring rebellious elements. The British after Anglo-Sikh Wars and the 1857 mutiny were so shaken that they knew their survival was due to Sikh soldiers’ relentless encounters with the mutineers. Sikh soldiers’ aggressiveness was

²² Ibid., 165

²³ S.C. Mittal, *Freedom Movement in Punjab* (Concept Publishing Company, 1977) 55

more due to their humiliation at the hands of the Raj's Sepoy and the treachery of Dogras in control of the Sikh Raj. The design of the British in Anglo-Sikh wars of 1845-1849 was to provoke the Sepoy against the Sikh Soldier of the Sovereign Punjab; and in the same way the leaderless Sikh soldier of the annexed Punjab was incited against the mutineer Sepoy in 1857.

The British collaboration hinged on promises of ushering Hindus and Muslims to have their respective nations at the cost of other minorities. The deft collaboration continued in deceptive forms until promises were fulfilled even by supporting one of worst carnages in the modern history of the world. The matter didn't end there. The newly born nations kept up their bloody politics to deny civil liberties to their citizens. The attempt to control public opinion of the world leaders is continuing uninterrupted. The politics of crime in the name of civilized world is still occupying their mind. No lessons have been learned. Instead the same impoverished minorities are continuously being targeted to deny them their fundamental rights in their home countries and abroad.

The documents that have been maintained at Stockton Gurdwara reveal valuable information not only from the point of view of the Sikhs, but also of the history of colonialism, wars and genocides. The documents reveal how pioneers' hard earned dollar was marked for supporting liberty both in their home and adopted countries. The contours of Ideal Indian Nationalism already hovered in their consciousness; therefore, it didn't take much time to work their energies towards its goal. In America, they saw the prototype of Ideal Indian Nationalism in American Revolution; they fantasized of making India just the "United States of India." The twin purposes of getting civil rights through legitimate ways in the land they toiled day and night, and also putting their sincerest efforts to liberate the country of their birth from parasites of humanity. They tried to be in the forefront of talks of unity of a nation that only remained divided in the known history of mankind. The dream they saw on the pacific coast was strong and it could have turned the table, had they been little more careful of the intentions of their agent provocateurs.

Disguised in robes of patriotism and religious piety, agent provocateurs aimed at their imaginary nation that would follow the mythical route to Manu Samriti and Chankayan politics of unethical means. Aims of collaborators and agent provocateurs could be achieved only through the agency of the theatrical and covert event management. The stage and equipment was meant for worldwide stage. The players too were of diverse backgrounds, but united integrally in defining the world in their own way. They succeeded in having enormous sway, but felt deprived of knowledge that was required to keep their gifts.