

# Ghadar Movement: Role of Media and Literature

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## Abstract:

Regardless of the nature of activities, the survival and success of a movement is dependent on its aims and objects and their dissemination through media and literature. Ghadar Movement launched for the Independence of India against the British rule relied heavily on journalism and literature. It is well known that the social and political movement of this scope and nature needs mass media attention to disseminate its message and achievements. Realizing the importance of media and press, Ghadar Movement published about 22 news papers in Punjabi, Urdu, Gujarati and English from America and Canada. They established the most effective centers for conducting their activities in these countries and brought out a number of news papers and pamphlets. Among them the *Ghadar* news paper played a significant role in preaching and nurturing the message of the mutiny. Its title page always contained the heading, "The exposure of the British Government" and followed with fourteen counts of injustices meted by the British Government towards the Indian nation. One of them was, "56 years have elapsed since the last mutiny of 1857, another one is due". The language of the paper was bitter, pungent and vitriolic.

Whereas social and political media played a pivotal role in focusing the cause and response of the movement, Poetry was an integral part of Ghadar movement and played a frontal role in conveying the message of the revolt. The message was vehemently preached through popular versification by employing images and motifs relating to heroes and martyrs of the movement. Its dominant theme was exposure of exploitation of natural resources of lands under the colonial rule, and oppression and suppression of the people with the force of guns and the threat of gallows. Profoundly patriotic nature of Ghadar poetry became a crucial source and force of inspiration for extreme sacrifices. There is no doubt that this corpus in verse held out a great appeal to activists of the movement and the public, in general. Its patriotic theme inspired a dream of future democratic Indian Republic based on liberty, equality and fraternity; free from corruption and discrimination of any caste, creed, and religion.

This article seeks to discuss how the Ghadar movement was characterized by the media coverage, how it helped framing the issues and goals of the struggle for national freedom, and what kind of response it received from the general public. The structural part of the analysis will focus on the power and reliability of media, and the emotional part will be presented as communicated by the Ghadar poets. My formulations is meant to hold how the presentation of independent struggle through the press affected

the outcome and how the strategy adopted by the leadership succeeded in framing the cause and effect of the Ghadar movement.

## **Introduction**

Early nineteenth century witnessed an economic downturn in India which led to a high level of emigration to North America. Many Punjabis as well as a few people from other parts of India landed in Canada during the first decade of 20th century. A greater number of immigrants were Sikhs who were either retirees from the British army or farmers rendered poor by the selfish land laws of the British government. The Sikhs being a crucial loyal force for the British Empire, expected equal treatment and Human rights from the British and Commonwealth governments as extended to British and white immigrants. But the white Canadian community took it as an invasion on their "color conscious culture". The Canadian government decided to delimit this influx and enacted laws primarily aimed at the entry of new Indian immigrants and curtailing the political rights of those already in the country. These laws led to a discontent, therefore, protests and anti-colonial sentiments within the Indian community. Facing this unwanted and unlawful discrimination and communal attitude, the community started organizing political groups. Facing the discriminatory situation in Canada, many Punjabis moved to the United States, unaware of the fact that they might face a similar situation in another country ruled by white people. Initially, they experienced relatively less discriminating in US. But as the jobs became scarce, they were labeled as unwanted "job snatcher" Hindu minority. This resulted in communal hatred and, of times, led to scuffles and physical harms.

When the social and political environment became harsh and unbearable in North America, survival for Indian migrants became a serious problem. To survive in such an environment, three things are important: organize, politicize and publicize. That is exactly what the Ghadrates did, established a Ghadar party with head quarter at San Francisco, initiated publications of newspapers, pamphlets, and propagated their message through literature, especially poetry. Verse is a powerful medium of expression of thoughts and emotions. Some members of Ghadar movement were natural born poets and others cultivated poetic art for expressions of their experiences they faced in real life. They wrote patriotic poems and songs emotionally charged and embedded with the message of obtaining independence of India from the British Rule. This paper deals with the role played by media and literature in the independence movement of Ghadrates against the British Rule in India.

## **Media: Historical Background**

The people of Indian origin founded a party namely, "The Ghadar Party", in 1913 in the state of Oregon, USA. Initially called the *Pacific Coast Hindustan Association*, was formed under the leadership of

Sohan Singh Bhakna as its president and Lala Har Dayal as its general secretary. The members of the party were largely from Punjab and some of them were students at the University of California, Berkeley, including Kartar Singh Sarabha, Har Dayal, Tarak Nath Das, Maulavi Barkatullah, and V.G. Pingle. The party quickly gained support from Indian expatriates, especially in the United States, Canada and Asia mainly through news papers and pamphlets published from America, Canada and some other countries (Darshan Singh Tatla, 2003). A chronological list of newspaper with necessary information is given below. (Table 1).

<b>Publication</b>	<b>Script</b>	<b>Editor</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Place</b>
1.Circular-i-Azadi	Urdu	Ram Nath Puri	1907	America
2.Free Hindustan	English	Tarakh Nath	1908	America
3.Pardesi Khalsa	Punjabi	Hira Singh	1010	Canada
4. Sudesh Sewak	Punjabi	Guru Datt Kumar, Babu Harnam Singh	1909	Canada
5.Khalsa Herald	English	Kartar Singh	1911	Canada
6.The Aryan	English	Sundar Singh	1911	Canada
7. Sansaar	Punjabi	Kartar Singh Hundal, Dr. Sundar Singh	1912	Canada
8. Gaddar	Indian langs.	Hardyal, Ram Chandra	1913	America
9.Hindustan Ghadar-1	Indian langs.	Bhagwan S. Pritam	1914	America
10.Hindustani Ghadar-2	Indian Langs.	Ram Chandar Pashauria	1917	America
11.Yugantar	Punjabi/	Ratan Singh etc.	1917	America

	Urdu			
12.Independent Hindustan	English	Gadar Party	1920	America
13. United States of India	English	Gadar Party	1923	America
14.Hindustan Ghadar	Punjabi	Gadar Party	1925	America
15.Hindustan, San Francisco	Indian	Dissident Group ( Gandhian )	1927	America
16.Ghadar Dhandora	Punjabi/ Chinese	Gadar Party	1930	America/ China
17.Sansar Sangh	Punjabi/ Urdu	Gadar Party	1932	America/ China
18.India and Canada	Punjabi/ English	Kartar S. Hundal	1930	Canada
19.Social Sudhar	Punjabi	Gadar Party	1942	Canada
20.India's Voice	English	Gadar Party	1943	America
21.Nawan Yug	Punjabi	Giani Bhagwan Singh	1950	America
22.The Gadarite	English	Ved Parkash Vatuk	1998	America

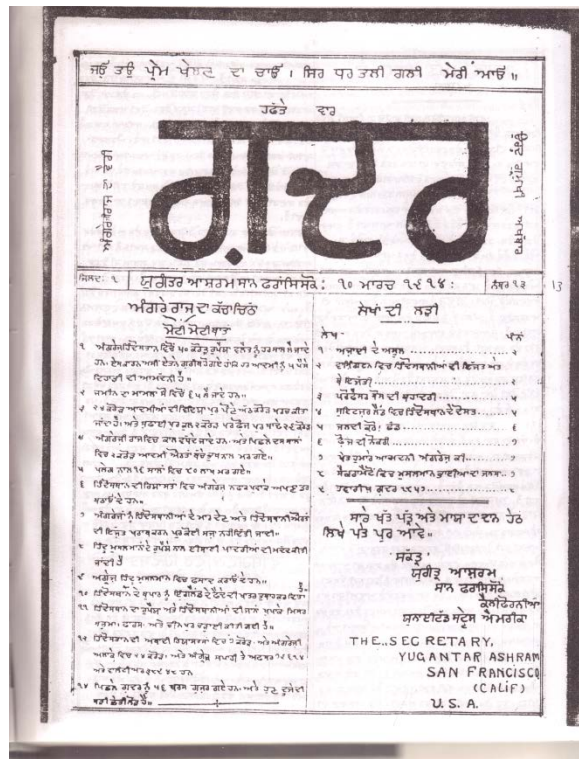
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**Table-1: Newspapers published by the Ghadar Party from America and Canada.**

Among them "**Ghadar**" (mutiny, rebellion, revolt, uprising) was the first prominent newspaper published under the leadership of official Ghadar Party from San Francisco. It was a weekly newspaper initiated from the official head quarter of the party, "Yugantar Ashram". The name "Yugantar" was borrowed from a revolutionary Bengali paper. The first issue was in Urdu released on November 1, 1913 (See picture) followed by Punjabi issue in December, 9, 1913 (See picture) and Gujrati version in May 10, 1914. It is stated that 2,200 and 2,500 copies of Ghadar were printed weekly in Urdu and Punjabi languages, respectively. Former Professor, Ved Vatak, of Berkley, has collected all the original issue of "Ghadar" published in Punjabi published during 1913-1914, and Xeroxed them as such and put them together in a book form (Ved Vatak, 2010).



Urdu Newspaper



Punjabi Newspaper-1

On the top of the title page of the Punjabi version of "Ghadar", a line from Guru Nanak's Shabad, ਜਦੋਂ ਤੂੰ ਖੇਲਣ ਵਾ ਚਾਉਂਦਾ ਹੈਂ ਸਿਰ ਧਰਿ ਤਲੀ ਗਲੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਉਂਦੀ (Should thou seek to play the game of love, step into my path with thy head on thy palm). ਜਦੋਂ ਤੂੰ was modified to ਜੇ ਚਿਤ in first few issues and was corrected in the 12th. issue of the 1st. volume. Table of contents starts with: ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਰਾਜ ਦਾ ਕੱਚਾ ਚਿਠਾ (A

balance sheet of English Rule) followed by a list of 14 topics on the left side of the paper depicting the "Ills" that were brought upon the Indians. These points refer to sending of Indian wealth to England thereby, making Indians poor. Average per capita daily income of Indians, including farmers, is only 5 paise, whereas, land tax is 65 percent. Spending only 97.5 million rupees on 240 million people and 290 million on military. 800,000 people died of plague and 20 million died of famine during the last 10 years. The English are never punished for murder of Indians, and insulting women. Many years have elapsed since the Mutiny of 1857, now there is an urgent need for a new one.

On the right side of the page under the heading, " Our Work, Our Name, " it was declared:

'Today on November 1, 1913, a new calendar is launched in the history of India. From now onward, a war against the British Rule is initiated from a foreign land in our native languages. It is an auspicious occasion that a paper in Urdu and Gurmukhi is launched to uproot the British evils from India.'

In the editorial section challenging questions were raised and answered therein:

- What is our name? Mutiny.
- What is our work? Mutiny
- Where will the mutiny take place? In India
- When? In a few years

Why? Because the people can no longer bear the tyranny and oppression of the British rule and are anxious to fight and die for freedom.

"Ghadar" newspaper, from time to time, printed the following advertisement in its "wanted Columns"

- Wanted -- Heroic and enthusiastic soldiers for mutiny
- Remuneration -- Death
- Reward -- Martyrdom
- Pension -- Freedom
- Field of work -- Hindustan

The first issue of Ghadar newspaper was released in Shattuck hotel in Berkley in the presence of a large audience which included Punjabi farmers, students, laborers and intellectuals. Some American politicians, economic professors, writers and editors of English newspapers also attended the meeting.

Lala Hardyal was the editor of the first issue and the Urdu translation was done by Vishveshwar Parsad of U.P. In his inaugural Address, Har Dyal said:

'In the history of today's India, a new era is set in motion. The power of 'PEN' will explode like a ball of cannon. This newspaper is the staunch enemy of the English Empire, and a bugle of challenge for the Indian youth. Wake up, take up the arms and fight for the independence of India.'

Right from the beginning the paper was violently ant-British in nature expressing views that were pungent and revolutionary every which way. It carried articles, notes, news and especially poems openly expressing discontent against the British Rule in India. Every sentence of articles and lines of verse preached mutiny and open revolt and urged all Indians to go back with the intention of committing murders, if need be. Inciting revolution and dislodging the British Government by any means possible, and holding responsible every seditionist and murderers who had attained notoriety (Isemonger and Slattery, 1998).

The **Ghadar** newspaper became a needle in the butt for the British Government, therefore, it became an integral part of judgments pronounced against the Ghadarite by the Special Tribunal in the "Lahore Conspiracy Case" of September 13, 1915. The judgment included that:

"We have not only pursued the portions of this newspaper marked as exhibits but we have taken a survey of all issues from the first one of 1st November, 1913 to that of the 15th September, 1914. The day of its issue was changed in December 1913 to Tuesday, the *Mangal* of the Hindus, the name of Mars, the proverbial god of war, with a remark that some of the readers know the reason why. Below the name of the paper appears the word 'Ghadr, enemy of the British Government-a weekly Urdu and Gurumukhi newspaper. The first page opens with the heading 'The exposure of the British Government' and fourteen counts of calumnies, needless to detail, are recited, the last count being '56 years have elapsed since the last mutiny of 1857', another one is urgently needed."

"Its salient features are:--

1. Perversion of figures and statistics on various subjects, e.g., settlements, railways, canals, exportations of wheat, epidemics, &c., &c., calculations to bring into disrepute and contempt the British Government of India.
2. Accounts of revolts, revolutions, past and present in various countries of the world, to serve as models for emulation by Indian subjects.
3. Translation in Urdu of Savarkar's history of the Indian Mutiny issued in installments in every issue.
4. Appreciative notes ref Tilak, Arbindo Ghosh, Ajit Singh &c., the so called 'martyrs'.

5. Appreciative notes of political murders and political dacoities in India.
6. Sympathy and admiration for Germans.
7. Incitement to Indian subjects to rebel as promptly as possible; and exhortations to Indians in America to return to India quickly for revolution.
8. Wholesale condemnation in the foulest language of every paper, every institution and every individual that has, or had, the misfortune to differ from the views of the Ghadr party.
9. The language employed throughout is either vitriolic or disgustingly abusive, and, looking to the class of people for whose consumption it is meant, perhaps it is designedly so.
10. Announcements of members of the Ghadr Party, and accounts of proceedings thereof from time to time. In short, its exclusive *raison d'être* is to bring about a rebellion in India. No stone is left unturned to achieve the object. Its columns are the best of its power, imputing all the basest motives to the English, even to ascribing plague and famine to them. They are described as drainers of the wealth of India, desecrations of religious places and bent upon extirpating Indians like aborigines in other countries." (Isemonger and Slattery, 1998).

The judgment also referred to particular issues of the paper which carried special appreciations of the events that happened in India against the British Government. e.g. political dacoities in Bengal (November 13, 1913), throwing of bombs and looting for revolution (December, 23, 1913), Incitement of Indian soldiers (February 17, 1914), letter of Ajit Singh urging 'patriots' to rise against British during the war between Germany and Britain (July 28, 1914). In the issue of the 15th November, 1913 it is expressed that, " The Germans have great sympathy with our movement for liberty because they and ourselves have a common enemy (the English).

The Sedition Committee noted that ... a newspaper called Ghadr...was printed in more than one Indian languages. It was widely distributed among Indians in America and was forwarded to India. It was of a violent anti-British nature, playing on every sentence, and urging all Indians to go to India with the express object of committing murders, causing revolution and expelling the British Government by any and every means. (Sedition Committee Report, 1918).

In addition to regular papers, many pamphlets in Punjabi and Urdu languages were also published from time to time from the San Francisco office. A list of these is given below.



## **Pamphlets**

- 1.. Shabash (Urdu, 1913): Written by Har Dyal, the title means " Bravo!" . On the front page it says, " a present on the anniversary of the Bomb". Then it has a picture of " the tree of liberty", and below the tree is written, "price per copy the head of an Englishman."
2. Nim Hakim Khatra Jan, Navan Zamana de Naveen Adarsha (Punjabi, 1914): It includes five essays written by Lala Har Dyal translated from his English articles.
3. Zulam Zulam! Gore Shahi Zulam (Punjabi, 1914): It depicts and strongly condemns the deportation of Bhagwan Singh from Canada and urges Indian to bear arms to kill the 'white people.'
4. Ailan-i-jung (Urdu/Punjabi,1915) : It contained an appeal for Indian to revolt against the British rule.
5. Angan di gavahi, angrezi raj vich praja de dukh di kahani (Punjabi, 1915): This is the issue number 3 of Ghadar party books.
6. Rusi Ghadrian de Samachar, arthaat Rus di Ghadar Parti de Bir te Birnian dein Kahanian ( Punjabi, 1916): It contains the heroic deeds of Russian revolutionaries. It evaluate the impact of the Russian revolution and narrates the dramatic events of Bloody Sunday when men and women overthrew the century-old Russian monarchy.
- 7.Gulami da zahir: Ik tavarikhi lekh (Punjabi, 1918): It is a translation of Har Dyal's article , 'The Poison of Slavery.'
- 8.Gulami da zahar: Ik tavarikhi lekh (Punjabi/Urdu, 1918): It was originally written in English by Har Dayal and translated in Punjabi/Urdu. It blames religion associated traditions in India that fostered values of a feudalistic society that predispose for easy acceptance of enslavement under colonial rule.
9. Wartman Zamana ( Urdu, 1919): It depicts an account of imperialist atrocities of Jallianwala Bagh tragedy and strongly urges Indians to gain freedom at any cost.
10. Hindusatan Ghadar Parti da Kansatitushan-1 ( Punjabi, 1920): This pamphlet contains a charter list of thirty three 'by-laws' and one amendment.
11. Hind Vich Ghadar (Punjabi, 1920): This contains anti-imperialist tract which praises the Russian revolution with an appeal to Indians for a similar uprising against the foreign rule.
12. Inqilab-i-Hind: Hindustan mein Angrezi Raj ka Khaka aur Duniya kya kar rahi hai (Urdu, 1920): It contain two essays describing miserable economic , social and political conditions in India due to British Rule.

13. Pahli Navambar: Ghadar da Janam Din (Punjabi/Urdu, 1920): This is a commemorative pamphlet celebrating the anniversary of the Ghadar Party and the first issue of Ghadar magazine published on November 1, 1913.
14. Hindustan Ghadar Parti da Kansatitushan-2 ( Punjabi, 1928): A reorganized Ghadar party evolved with modified charter of its functions. It notes that there were 1500 members out of total Indian population of 6,000 in California. The aim of the party was reexamined and set goals such as, (a) To encourage the establishment of a system of government in India which shall be free from all foreign control, and which shall have its aim in the greatest good for the greatest number, and which shall guarantee freedom of thought, speech, press and organization, and ensure the minimum necessities of life to all. (b) To publish a periodical review of political, economic, social and intellectual conditions in India by voluntary contributions and without sale.
15. Khudgarzi Phasaad Khare Kardi Hae (Punjabi,1930): It was written by J.K. Basi who extends his analysis to include colonialism and war, and notes with irony that selfishness divided subjugated people and make them fight among themselves rather than against their exploiters.
16. Ghadari Ailan ( Urdu, 1930): Ghadar party announces to prepare for impending revolution in India. It invites the brave and fearless Ghadrites to prepare for training to fly airplane and other methods of revolution.
17. Brabri da Arth (Punjabi,1931): It is translated from English and explains the values of equality in a caste ridden society.
18. Hamari Khana Jangi: Is ka Sabbab aur Ilaj (Urdu, ?): It brings out the state of division among Indians, based on religion, class and castes. It calls for unity for the sake of combined struggle against the British Rule.
19. Hindustanion ke Naam Khulli Chitti: Hindustan ke mazhabi jhagron kaa sabbab (Urdu, ?): This was an open letter to all Indians making a strong appeal for unity for the sake of freedom-fight. It condemns the divisions on the basis of religion and asks to rise above the narrow sectarian goals.
20. Pardesi Hindustanion ki Bharat Nivasion ke Nam par Khulli Chitti (Urdu, ?): An open letter from foreign Indians to their Indian counterparts with an appeal to join the struggle for freedom. It assure them that the Ghadar Party is fully committed to the cause of freedom of India from foreign rule.
21. Rajsi Mantar Yad Rakhan Valian Batan (Punjabi/Urdu,?): This pamphlet takes a critical look at the political situation in British India. It lists 110 unacceptable conditions and calls upon Indian patriots to remember and recite them daily like a prayer so that you feel the agony of British Rule.

22. Angon ki Gawahi Angrezi Raj Mein Praja ke Dukh ki Kahani-Angrezi Rapoton ki Zabani: (Hindi, 191?): It gives an account of the story of the suffering of subjects under British Rule based on figures collected from various books and official records.

### **Some reports in English published by the San Francisco Office of Ghadar party.**

1. British Rule in India by Bryan, William Jennings (1906): Mr. Bryan was a secretary to American President, Woodrow Wilson. He visited India in 1906 and gave a lecture namely, "The British Rule in India" after his return. Based on his observations he denounced the policy of British Rule toward India. Its translation was published in the **Ghadar** newspaper.

2. India in America (1911): This pamphlet contains Lala Har Dyal's first article after coming to US. In this he discusses the first meeting with California Ghadriles. He explores the possibility of Indian students with nationalistic feeling to become spies. But decides against it because Indians are too outspoken and would easily become the target of British intelligence agency. Nevertheless, he himself became the target of Mr. Hopkins, a Canadian agent working for British Government. Mr. Hopkins was eventually killed by Sardar Mewa Singh in Vancouver.

3. Yugantar Circular (1913): The subject of this pamphlet is the attempted murder of Lord Harding on December 23, 1912. About the murder attempt it proclaims that "One may say that it is one of the sweetest and loveliest bomb that has exploded in India ...Who can describe the moral power of the bomb? It is a concentrated moral dynamite. When the strong and the cunning in the pride of their power parade their glory before their helpless victims, when the rich and the haughty set themselves on a pedestal and ask their slaves to fall down before them and worship them, when the wicked ones of the earth seem exalted to the sky and nothing appears to withstand their might, then, in that dark hour, for the glory of humanity, comes the bomb, which lays the tyrant in the dust..."

4. Publication of Indian National Party. (1914): Indian National Party was established by C. Pillai in Berlin whose members were Har Dyal, Taraknath Das, M. Barkatulla, Chandra Chakarborty, Heramba Lal Gupta. A similar organization was floated by Taraknath Das in New York. The aim was to write petitions/ letters to various governments, organizations and officials seeking assurance for Indians who were under threat of deportation after the conclusion of San Francisco trial of 1917.. Agnes Smedley, an American journalist, offered to post hundreds of these letters.



Agnes Smedley (1832-1950)

5. Manifesto of the Indian National Party. (1915): It denounced the British imperialism and declared state of war until the freedom is achieved.

6. The method of Indian Police in the 20th Century (1915): Fredrick Mackarness of US wrote letters in support of Indian freedom struggle against British Rule which were published in 1910. They were reprinted by the office of Ghadar party in 1915. The letters tell stories of police brutality in India and their repression by an indifferent British judiciary and administration.

7. Why India is in revolt against British Rule? (1916): This pamphlet predicts that Britain will lose the first world war against Germany and hopes that Indian nationalist and Ghadriles will inevitably gain freedom

8. Exclusion of Hindus from America due to British influence. 1916: This booklet contains newspaper articles, letters and other materials put together by Ram Chandra, then editor of **Ghadar**. The letters were mainly written by Ram Chandra to various American newspapers against the proposed new legislation directed towards the exclusion of Hindu immigrants. He argues that the American policies were guided by the British government. In one letter written to New York Times dated August 13, 1916 Ram Chandra wrote:

"Congress is planning to pass a new Oriental exclusion law in which the Hindus are included. The Japanese Ambassador protested vigorously against the terms of the sect concerning Japanese and secured important changes, satisfactory to the Japanese Government. There is no hope that the British Ambassador will make any protest on behalf of the Hindus, because the British Government itself does not want Hindus to come here. They might become imbued with pestiferous ideas of political freedom!"

"It is claimed that the Hindu is an undesirable immigrant, I would like to ask what kind of immigrant American legislators would consider to be desirable (Immigrant)? The Hindus who have come to this country have certainly proved themselves to be law-abiding and faithful workers. ..."

"Is it on account of color? I would reply that the Hindus have the same color as the Spaniards, Mexicans, or Southern Italians. Their features are not inferior to high -class Europeans. So far as color is concerned all physicians who have dissected the human body agree that under the skin all look alike."

Ram Chandra wrote many letters, some in Hindustan Ghadar newspaper namely, "The Appeal of India to the President of the United States (1917), The Balance Sheet of British Rule in India, India Against Britain. A reply to Austin Chamberlain, Lord Harding, Lord Islington and Others 9116)."

9. An open letter to His Excellency, Woodrow Wilson. (1917): It contains an appeal to President of USA for supporting the Indian National Movement against British Rule in India.

10. British Terror in India (1920): This pamphlet is written by Surendra Karr and condemns the callous behavior of British administrator while narrating the tragic circumstances relating to Jallianwala Bagh massacre in April, 1919. It points out towards the sacrifices made by Indians in First World War for the British and how the British Rulers overlooked them. It alleges that the British rulers has no regard for the feelings of Indian people.

11. Collection of Pamphlets on India written for the Hindustan Ghadar Party (1920): These pamphlets are put together by Ed, Gammons and they contain a mixture of news and comments about the plight of India under the British Rule. It contains Gammon's commentary on Punjab events such as imposing martial law in Punjab, Jallianwala Bagh massacre and as a result renunciation of knighthood by Ravinder Nath Tagore. Gammons also wrote the following pamphlets:

a) The Tragedy of India (1919): It discusses the aftermath of San Francisco trial of Ghadrites and their German associates held in 1917. Gammons argues and appeals on behalf of Indians against their deportation. It contains statements of people hostile towards the British Rule in India.

b) India in Revolt (1920): It condemns the firing by police in Amritsar and the findings of Hunter Commission set to look into the tragedy of Jallianwala Bagh.

12. Resolutions of the League against Imperialism in India. (1929): This pamphlet condemns British imperialism, England's Independent Labor Party and Right-wing Indian Nationalist Leaders for undermining efforts to organize workers and peasants and preventing their participation in the international labor movement.

13. India is America's Business, A lecture by Louis Fischer (1943): Mr. Fisher made a speech at the Town Hall Session in San Francisco in which he openly condemned the British oppression in India and defended Indian's right for freedom.

14. India's voice at last: India's reply to British propagandists and Christian missionaries (192?): This pamphlet rebuts some misconceptions about India which are deliberately fed to the media by the British Rulers in order to subjugate Indians.

### **Literature and Ghadar Movement**

Poetry written by Ghadriles, immensely contributed to the independence movement against the British Rule in India. Poems were mainly composed in Punjabi language primarily by Sikh poets. Each issue of the "Ghadar" and other newspapers devoted a sizable portion to poetry. The poems were recited at local meetings and distributed to public through newspapers. Later, *Yugantar Ashsram* produced them in booklet or pamphlet forms and distributed in other countries. Some of them were printed in Urdu and a few in Hindi languages. Anthologies of these poems were named as Ghadar De Goonj (Thunder of Revolution). They were also published in series under the name, Ghadar deaN PustakaN dee Lari No. 1-3 and 4-6 (Punjabi, Urdu and Hindi). Number 5 has not been found and number 7 was published in 1932. Poems became so impressive that they were greatly in demand in Punjabi/Indian Diaspora and in India. Desh Bhagat Yadgaar Commttee, Jullandhar, reproduced the poems under the title of "Desh BhagtaN de Bani :Ghadar dee Goonj" from Lari numbers 1-3 (see picture below).



The impact of these poems was so enormous that the Special Tribunal at Lahore (1915), cited them in their report as "seditious literature especially used to incite Sikh soldiers and peasants to revolt against the British rule in India". The tribunal used the poems against Ghadriles as an evidence of revolt and therefore, imposed rigorous sentences upon them.

### **Ghadar Leha r dee Kavita (Poetry of Ghadar movement)**

The poems of Ghadarite poets were scattered all over in various Ghadar party newspapers and pamphlets. Kesar Singh Noblest of Canada collected them with great labor and effort from various sources and published them in a voluminous book called "Ghadar Lehar dee Kavita" (Poetry of Ghadar Movement: ਗ਼ਦਰ ਲਹਿਰ ਦੀ ਕਵਿਤਾ-). The collection has a long introduction by professor Kesar Singh Kesar of Punjab University and was published by the Punjabi University, Patiala (Kesar Singh and Kesar Sigh,1995). The book has twelve sections and each section represents the newspaper(s) in which the poems were originally published. For example section-1 has poems from monthly newspaper, Swadesh Sewak; section-II has poems from bi-weekly newspaper, *Sansar*; section-III (the longest of all) collected poems from *Ghadar* and *Hindustan Ghadar* and so on. Most of the poems bear no names but some names were identified with the help of Kesar Singh of Canada and Giani Heera Singh Dard. According to them the Poems were mostly written by Munsha Singh Dukhi, Bhai Bishan Singh, Harnam Singh Tundilat, Wasakha Singh, Bhagwan Singh, Mula Singh, Hari Singh Usman, Sohan Lal Pathak, Kartar Singh Sarabha, Kartar Singh Hundal, Kesar Singh Thathgarh, Karam Singh Daulatpur, Sant Singh Nidharak, Banta Singh Sewak etc. Apparently, the message was important, not the names of the poets. This shows the spirit of a unified effort by the Ghadar poets without any consideration of caste, creed, religion and individualism.

### **The Spirit of the Ghadar Poetry**

The spirit of any genre of literature is inherent in the personal experiences of the writer gathered under various set of conditions. Poverty, atrocities of life, ethnicity, sociopolitical atmosphere, religious intolerance, and above all the slavery are the greatest stimuli for a creative mind. India was motherland of Indians ruled by British. To feel like a slave in your own country is an unbearable mental and moral torture. The Ghadar poetry portrays the themes that evolved as a result of continuous struggle for freedom of India from the British Rule. Though a clear-cut demarcation of these themes is not possible, however, the spirit of poetry can be categorized into five phases, such as:

1. Ethnic hatred and Nostalgia.
2. Awakening against the British Rule.
3. Divide and rule policy.
4. Sounds of mutiny.
5. Sikh ideology and Ghadar poetry.

## 1. Ethnic hatred and Nostalgia

In a foreign land the first shock one experiences is the feeling of alienation and ethnic hatred in the foreign land. Especially when you are unwanted, you are like a 'weed' and the indigenous people try to weed you out with sickles of religious hatred and social slurs. This aspect is vividly expressed in many poems. A sample is quoted here.

ਘਰ ਤੋਂ ਵਗੈਰੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੱਜਦੇ, (We have no prestige without our motherland)

ਕੁਲੀ ਕੁਲੀ ਅਸੀਂ ਸਾਰੇ ਜੱਗ ਵੱਜਦੇ। (Over the whole world coolie we are called)

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ਘਰ ਸੋਹਰਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਢੇਈ ਮਿਲਦੀ, (We are not horned in alien land)

ਨਹੀਂ ਪੇਕਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਸਾਨ ਥਾਨ ਕਧਰੇ। (No place for us in the mother land)

ਦੇਸ਼ੋਂ ਪੈਣ ਧੱਕੇ ਬਾਹਰ ਮਿਲੇ ਢੇਈ ਨਾ, (Driven out from motherland and shunned from the alien land)

ਸਾਡਾ ਪਰਦੇਸੀਆਂ ਦਾ ਦੇਸ ਕੋਈ ਨਾ। (We the aliens have no place to live)

Word 'ਸੋਹਰੇ' means foreign country and the 'ਪੇਕੇ' means motherland. Implicit in these couplets are the feelings of a rejected and disgusted individual who has no land to live and no hut to hide. The essence of the poems do not portray a 'cry' but a 'mutter' that have the potential to explode into an uncontrolled anger and rage infused with patriotism. Especially, these couplets paint the thematic tension of freedom-slavery milieu.

In North America, Indians became the most undesirable class of laborers, therefore, victims of racial hatred and pungent slurs. They were made to live under unhygienic conditions with no facilities for bathing and bashing, and for answering the 'call of nature'. The most deplorable situation was that they have no place to cremate their dead. The overall daily environment became so hateful and venomous that it became unbearable for them to exist. Under such conditions, one either commits suicide or becomes a rebel. Laborers, who were mostly Sikhs with valiant spirit, refused to yield to undue, unreasonable and uncalled for atrocities. A spirit of honor sprung up to stand against the prevailing undue circumstances. A poem depicting this spirit in an ironical manner is given below.

ਅਜ ਰਹਿ ਗਏ ਅਸੀਂ ਬੇਅਣਖ ਕਾਇਰ, ( We are taken as cowards without respect )

ਗਏ ਸੂਰਮੋਂ ਹਿੰਦ ਦੀ ਜਾਨ ਕਿੱਥੇ। (No where are to be seen men of honor)



ਕਾਲਾ ਲੋਕ ਡਰਟੀ ਅੱਜ ਕਹਿਣ ਸਾਨੂੰ, (We are labeled dirty slaves)

ਗਏ ਹਿੰਦ ਦੇ ਉਹ ਅਦਬੋ-ਸ਼ਾਨ ਕਿੱਥੋ। (Gone are glory and prestige of India)

ਆਉ ਬੀਜ ਪੈਲੀ ਝੁੱਗੀ ਪਾ ਲਈਏ, (Let's assert and claim her as our own..)

ਕਰਕੇ ਟਾਕਰੇ ਸੱਚ ਸੁਣਾ ਦੇਈਏ। (and through fight show our mettle )

Ghadrites experienced the same fate in Canada and America. Pangs of strenuous labor, scolds of white people, agony of ethnic hatred, taunts of black color and disgrace of slavery are the most fertile field for a poetic mind. Poetry provides solace for releasing mantle tension and is a great medium of relaxation, as is depicted in the following poem.

ਪੈਸੇ ਜੁੜੇ ਨਾ ਨਾਲ ਮਜ਼ਦੂਰੀਆਂ ਦੇ, (nothing to gain through labor)

ਝਿੜਕਾਂ ਖਾਂਦਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਕਈ ਸਾਲ ਹੋ ਗਏ। (for years we have suffered rebukes)

ਕੀ ਕੁਝ ਖੱਟਿਆ ਜੇ ਮਿਰਕਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਆ ਕੇ, (We have earned nothing in America?)

ਦੇਸ ਛੱਡਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਕਈ ਸਾਲ ਹੋ ਗਏ। (Though years have passed since we left mother land)

ਕੁਲੀ ਕੁਲੀ ਕਹਿ ਕੇ ਦੁਨੀਆਂ ਨੱਕ ਚਾਹੜੇ, (World over we are snubbed as coolies)

ਵੀਰੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਬੇਸ਼ਰਮ ਕਮਾਲ ਹੋ ਗਏ। (O brothers! shameless we have become.)

ਹੋਵੇ ਅਣਖ ਤੇ ਸਮਝੀਏ ਝੱਟ ਸੈਨਤ, (Only by taking its notice can we regain honor.)

ਡੰਡੇ ਖਾਂਦਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਢੁੱਡਰ ਲਾਲ ਹੋ ਗਏ। (Beatings have turned our backs red)

## 2. Awakening against the British Rule

When the Ghadrites saw the plundering of their motherland, a sense of awakening sprung up against the British Rule. A few couplets depicting this sense are given below.

ਜਦ ਨੀਂਦ ਹਿੰਦ ਨੂੰ ਘੇਰਾਂ ਦੀ, ਤਦ ਫੇਰੀ ਪੈ ਗਈ ਚੇਰਾਂ ਦੀ।

(India was in deep slumber, thieves came in large number)

ਲੁੱਟ ਦੌਲਤ ਕਈ ਕਰੇੜਾਂ ਦੀ, ਹਿੰਦ ਸਮਝੇ ਵਾਂਗਰ ਢੇਰਾਂ ਦੀ।

Looting millions from the motherland, they took us as stupid beings)

ਆ ਜ਼ਾਲਮ ਪਾੜ ਲਗਾਆ ਹੈ, ਹੁਣ ਨਵਾਂ ਜ਼ਮਾਨਾ ਆਇਆ ਹੈ।

Foreigners looted us, but present is the new age)

ਜਦ ਡਿੱਠਾ ਹਿੰਦ ਨਕਾਰੀ ਹੈ, ਵੜੇ ਚੋਰ ਖੋਲ੍ਹ ਕੇ ਬਾਰੀ ਹੈ।

Finding India as helpless, thieves have broken into the house)

ਸੱਭ ਖਾਲੀ ਕਰੀ ਪਟਾਰੀ ਹੈ, ਧਨ ਵਿਚ ਵਲੈਤ ਪੇਚਾਇਆ ਹੈ।

Emptied our treasury, the wealth is taken to England)

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ਹਿੰਦ ਦੇ ਸਪੁੱਤਰੇ ਕਰੇ ਧਿਆਨ ਜੀ, ਲੁਟ ਕੇ ਤੇ ਹਿੰਦ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੈ ਵੈਰਾਨ ਜੀ।

Listen O! the sons of the motherland, they have left her in desolate stage)

ਤੁਸਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਪਾਕੇ ਵੀਰੇ ਖਾਨਾ ਜੰਗੀਆਂ, ਖਾ ਲਿਆ ਮੁਲਕ ਲੁੱਟ ਕੇ ਫਰੰਗੀਆਂ।

Made you to engaged in mutual strife, and the White have looted our land)

ਹਿੰਦੂ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੰਘ ਸੂਰਮੇ, ਕੁਟ ਕੇ ਬਨਾਓ ਵੈਰੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਚੂਰਮੇ।

O Hindu, Muslim and Sikhs heroes , thrash the enemy into pulp)

ਫੜ ਲਓ ਸ਼ਤਾਬੀ ਹੱਥੀਂ ਤੇਗਾਂ ਨੰਗੀਆਂ, ਖਾ ਲਿਆ ਮੁਲਕ ਲੁੱਟ ਕੇ ਫਰੰਗੀਆਂ।

Draw your swords at once, the Whites have looted our country)

ਕਿਉਂ ਨਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਸੂਰਮੇ ਮੈਦਾਨੀ ਗਜਦੇ, ਕਿਉਂ ਨਾ ਪੀਕੇ ਰੱਤ ਗੋਰਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਰਜਦੇ।

Let the brave roar in the battle field, quench your thirst upon the White's blood)

ਗੱਢ ਦਿਓ ਲੜਾਈਆਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਲਾਲ ਝੰਡੀਆਂ, ਖਾ ਲਿਆ ਮੁਲਕ ਲੁੱਟ ਕੇ ਫਰੰਗੀਆਂ।

(Declare the war open, the White have looted our land )

### 3. Divide and rule policy

Where ever the British ruled, they adopted the policy of 'divide and rule'. Basically, it means that you divide the population into manageable chunks so that it becomes impossible for people to join together and revolt against the foreign ruler. British exactly used this policy. A Poems beautifully depicting this aspect is given below.

ਆਪਸ ਵਿਚ ਲੜਾਕੇ ਸਭ ਲੋਕੀ ਮਾਰੇ, ਮੱਲੇ ਮੁਲਕ ਫਰੰਗੀਆਂ ਅਜ ਕਹਿਣ ਹਮਾਰੇ।

Incited people to kill each other, and the English claimed the countries)

ਅਜ ਤਕ ਸਭ ਮਾਨੀਆਂ ਮੌਜਾਂ ਯੁੱਗ ਚਾਰੇ, ਕੀਤੇ ਸੁਗਲ ਕਲੋਲ ਬਹੁ ਧਰ ਤੇਜ ਕਰਾਰੇ।

Had a good time worldwide, had pastime and frolicked with sharp sword)

ਪਹਿਲੇ ਵਕਤੀਂ ਨਿਕਲ ਕੇ ਪਰਦੇਸ ਸਧਾਏ, ਲੋਕੀ ਸੁੱਤੇ ਘਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਸਭ ਆਣ ਜਗਾਏ।

(Entered India in early days, invaded people in their own homes)

#### 4. Sounds of mutiny

The primary purpose to form a Ghadar party in North America was to dislodge the British Rule from India. This would require mutiny at a large scale The apparent signs of rebellion against the British rule in India are obvious in Ghadar poetry.

ਹਿੰਦੋਸਤਾਨ ਦੇ ਬੱਚਿਓ ਕਰੋ ਛੇਤੀ, ਚਲੋ ਦੇਸ਼ ਨੂੰ ਗ਼ਦਰ ਮਚਾਨ ਬਦਲੋ।

(O, the children of India, let us go back to stage mutiny)

ਹੀਰਾ ਹਿੰਦ ਬੇ-ਕੀਮਤੀ ਪਿਯਾ ਰੁਲਦਾ, ਸਸਤਾ ਬੋਹਤ ਜੇ ਮਿਲੇ ਭੀ ਜਾਨ ਬਦਲੋ।

(Priceless jewel of India is neglected, it will be worth buying with life)

ਦੱਸਾਂ ਗੱਲ ਮੈਂ ਗ਼ਦਰ ਦੇ ਪਿਆਰਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ, ਜੇਹੜੇ ਤਿਆਰ ਹਨ ਗ਼ਦਰ ਮਚੇਣ ਬਦਲੋ।

(let me advise who love mutiny, who are ready to incite mutiny)

ਵੇਲਾ ਫੇਰ ਨਾ ਆਵਣਾ ਹੱਥ ਯਾਰੇ, ਚੰਗਾ ਵਕਤ ਹੈ ਜੰਗ ਮਚਾਣ ਬਦਲੋ।

(The time will never wait again, time is ripe to wage a war)

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ਸੁਨੋ ਨੌਜਵਾਨੇ ਕਾਹਨੂੰ ਨੀਵੀਂ ਸੁੱਟੀ ਗੋਡਿਆਂ ਤੇ, ਕਦੋਂ ਫੜ ਤੇਗ ਨੂੰ ਮਦਾਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਓਗੇ।

(Listen o young people, why are you sitting idle, when will you come to battle field with sword)

ਸ਼ੇਰ ਬੁਆਡਾ ਨਾਓ ਤੇ ਲੁਕੋਂਦੇ ਫਰੇ ਜਾਨ ਕਾਨੂੰ, ਦੱਸੋ ਕਦੋਂ ਸ਼ੇਰ ਵਾਲੀ ਬਾਣ ਉਪਰ ਆਓਗੇ।

(Lion you are called, why are you hiding, when are you going to act like a lion)

ਤਬ ਤਕ ਸੁਖ ਨਾਹੀਂ ਹੋਵਨਾ ਕਦੰਤ ਭਾਈਓ, ਜਿੰਨਾ ਚਿਰ ਜ਼ਾਲਮਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਮਾਰ ਨਾ ਮੁਕਾਓਗੇ।

O brothers, no peace will prevail, until you teach a lesson to the tyrants)

ਬੈਠੇ ਚੁੱਪ ਕੀਤੀ ਅੱਖਾਂ ਮੀਟੀ ਜਿਵੇਂ ਭੰਗ ਪੀਤੀ, ਕਰਕੇ ਗ਼ਦਰ ਕਦੋਂ ਹਿੰਦ ਨੂੰ ਛੁੜਾਓਗੇ।

(Quietly sitting like an opium addict with eyes closed, when will you wage mutiny to free India)

#### 5. Sikh philosophy and Ghadar poetry

Sikh philosophy is vividly portrayed in Ghadar Poetry. Poems relating to the heroic deeds of Guru Gobind Singh and other martyrs like Banda Bahadar, Dip Singh, Hari Singh Naluwa, Akali Phoola Singh are composed to induce spirit of bravery among Indians. Such poems played a definitive role to

reinforce the nature of bravery that Sikhs are known for in the history. Some examples of poems reinforcing the Sikh philosophy are give below.

The heading of one of the poem is 'An appeal to Panth' (ਪੰਥ ਅੱਗੇ ਪੁਕਾਰ) starts with Baba Kabir's Salok,

ਸੂਰਾ ਸੇ ਪਹਿਚਾਨੀਐ ਜੁ ਲਰੇ ਦੀਨ ਕੇ ਹੇਤ॥ ਪੁਰਜਾ ਪੁਰਜਾ ਕਟਿ ਮਰੈ ਕਬਹੂ ਨ ਛਾਡੈ ਖੇਤੁ॥ (He alone is known to be a warrior, who fights for the sake of his religion). Following the Salok, poems depicting the act of valor of Gurus and their Sikhs in the battle fields are, given below.

ਪਰ ਉਪਕਾਰ ਕੀਤਾ ਗੁਰਾਂ ਸਾਜਿਆ ਸੀ, ਹੱਥੀਂ ਕੀਤੇ ਸੀ ਜੰਗ ਕੁਮਾਲ ਸਿੰਘੇ॥

(With guru's blessing we were created, fighting valiantly for the people)

ਭਾਰਤ ਵਰਸ ਤੋਂ ਜੁਲਮ ਹਟਾਇਆ ਸੀ, ਬਹੁਤ ਕਰਕੇ ਜੰਗੇ ਜਮਾਲ ਸਿੰਘੇ॥

(Terror vanished away from India, due to the miraculous fight they gave

ਏਸ ਹਿੰਦ ਦੀ ਰੱਖਿਆ ਕਰਨ ਖਾਤਰ, ਵਾਰ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਸੀ ਜਿਗਰ ਦੇ ਲਾਲ ਸਿੰਘੇ॥

(It was to defend the motherland, that he sacrificed his loving sons)

ਜੰਗ ਵਿੱਚ ਪਾ ਗਏ ਸ਼ਹੀਦੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ, ਜਦੋਂ ਸੱਦਿਆ ਆਪ ਅਕਾਲ ਸਿੰਘੇ॥

(They laid down their lives in the battle field, on the call of almighty)

ਸਿੰਘ ਨਾਮ ਧਰੀਕ ਦੀ ਲਾਜ ਰੱਖੇ, ਭਾਰਤ ਵਰਸ ਤੇ ਖੇਡੇ ਗੁਲਾਲ ਸਿੰਘੇ॥

(Keep up the prestige of being a Singh, and shed your blood for your motherland)

ਛੇਤੀਂ ਗ਼ਦਰ ਮਚੇਣ ਦੀ ਕਰੋ ਤਿਆਰੀ, ਫਤਹ ਦੇਵਸੀ ਤੁਸਾਂ ਅਕਾਲ ਸਿੰਘੇ॥

(Make no delay to cause uprising, and the almighty shall bless you with triumph)

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ਗੁਲਾਮੀ ਦਾ ਅੰਧੇਰਾ ਜੇੜਾ ਛਾਇਆ ਥੋਡੇ ਸੀਸ ਉੱਤੇ, ਕਰੋ ਜਲਦ ਤੇ ਝੜਾਓ ਗ਼ਦਰ ਭਾਨ ਨੂੰ।

The dark that hangs over your head, make no delay in waging war)

ਇਕ ਦੂਜੇ ਓਹਲੇ ਲੁਕ ਬੈਠੇ ਹੋ ਕਉ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਜੀ, ਦੱਸੋ ਲੜਨ ਜਾਊ ਕੌਣ ਜੰਗ ਦੇ ਮੈਦਾਨ ਨੂੰ।

(If you take refuse in each other's arm, who will go to the battle field to fight)

ਆਓ ਜੰਗ ਦੇ ਮੈਦਾਨ ਨਾਹੀਂ ਛੋਡੋ ਸਿੰਘੀ ਨਾਮ ਐਵੇਂ, ਲਾਜ ਕਿਉਂ ਲਗਦੇ ਹੋ ਗੁਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਦੇ ਨਾਮ ਨੂੰ।

(Let's wage war and justify our faith, and shouldn't bring bad name to the Tenth Master)

ਸਿੰਘ ਨਾਮ ਰੱਖ ਕਿਉਂ ਗੁਲਾਮੀ ਵਾਲੀ ਛਟ ਚੁਕੀ, ਗਿੱਦੜਾਂ ਦੇ ਵਾਂਗ ਕਿਉਂ ਲੁਕਦੇ ਫਿਰੇ ਜਾਨ ਨੂੰ।

(With Singh aligned to your name, why to waver, and hide like jackals to save your skin)

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