

Encyclopedia of Indian History 20th Century, Vol 2

Johnny Cunningham



**ENCYCLOPEDIA OF
INDIAN HISTORY
20TH CENTURY, VOL 2**

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by Johnny Cunningham

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Chapter 12

Ghadar Mutiny and Provisional Government of India

Ghadar Mutiny

- The **Ghadar Mutiny** also known as the **Ghadar Conspiracy**, was a plan to initiate a pan-Indian mutiny in the British Indian Army in February 1915 to end the British Raj in India. The plot originated at the onset of World War I, between the Ghadar Party in the United States, the Berlin Committee in Germany, the Indian revolutionary underground in British India and the German Foreign Office through the consulate in San Francisco. The incident derives its name from the North American Ghadar Party, whose members of the Punjabi community in Canada and the United States were among the most prominent participants in the plan. It was the most prominent amongst a number of plans of the much larger Hindu-German Mutiny, formulated between 1914 and 1917 to initiate a Pan-Indian rebellion against the British Raj during World War I. The mutiny was planned to start in the key state of Punjab, followed by mutinies in Bengal and rest of India. Indian units as far as Singapore were planned to participate in the rebellion. The plans were thwarted through a coordinated intelligence and police response. British intelligence infiltrated the

Ghadarite movement in Canada and in India, and last-minute intelligence from a spy helped crush the planned uprising in Punjab before it started. Key figures were arrested, and mutinies in smaller units and garrisons within India were also crushed.

Intelligence about the threat of the mutiny led to a number of important war-time measures introduced in India, including the passages of the Foreigners Ordinance, 1914, the Ingress into India Ordinance, 1914, and the Defence of India Act 1915. The conspiracy was followed by the First Lahore Conspiracy Trial and Benares Conspiracy Trial which saw death sentences awarded to a number of Indian revolutionaries, and the exile of a number of others. After the end of the war, fear of a second Ghadarite uprising led to the passage of the Rowlatt Act, followed by the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

Background

World War I began with an unprecedented outpouring of loyalty and goodwill towards the United Kingdom from within the mainstream political leadership. Contrary to initial British fears of an Indian revolt, India contributed massively to the British war effort by providing men and resources. About 1.3 million Indian soldiers and labourers served in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, while both the Indian government and the princes sent large supplies of food, money, and ammunition.

However, Bengal and Punjab remained hotbeds of anti colonial activities. Militancy in Bengal, increasingly closely linked with the unrest in Punjab, was significant enough to nearly paralyse the regional administration. Also, from the beginning of the

war, an expatriate Indian population, notably from the United States, Canada, and Germany, headed by the Berlin Committee and the Ghadar Party, attempted to trigger insurrections in India along the lines of the 1857 uprising with Irish Republican, German and Turkish help in a massive conspiracy that has since come to be called the Hindu–German Mutiny. This conspiracy also attempted to rally Afghanistan against British India.

A number of failed attempts were made at mutiny, of which the February mutiny plan and the Singapore Mutiny remain most notable. This movement was suppressed by means of a massive international counter-intelligence operation and draconian political acts (including the Defence of India Act 1915) that lasted nearly ten years.

Indian nationalism in US

Early works towards Indian nationalism in the United States dates back to the first decade of the 20th century, when, following the example of London's India House, similar organisations were opened in the United States and in Japan through the efforts of the then growing Indian student population in the country. Shyamji Krishna Varma, the founder of India House, had built close contacts with the Irish Republican movement. The first of the nationalist organisations was the Pan-Aryan Association, modelled after Krishna Varma's Indian Home Rule Society, opened in 1906 through the joint Indo-Irish efforts of S.L. Joshi and George Freeman.

The American branch of the association also invited Madame Cama—who at the time was close to the works of Krishna Varma—to give a series of lectures in the United States. An "India House" was founded in Manhattan in New York in January 1908 with funds from a wealthy lawyer of Irish descent called Myron Phelps. Phelps admired Swami Vivekananda, and the *Vedanta Society* (established by the Swami) in New York was at the time under Swami Abhedananda, who was considered "seditionist" by the British. In New York, Indian students and ex-residents of London India House took advantage of liberal press laws to circulate *The Indian Sociologist* and other nationalist literature. New York increasingly became an important centre for the global Indian movement, such that *Free Hindustan*, a political revolutionary journal published by Tarak Nath Das closely mirroring *The Indian Sociologist*, moved from Vancouver and Seattle to New York in 1908. Das collaborated extensively with the *Gaelic American* with help from George Freeman before *Free Hindustan* was proscribed in 1910 under British diplomatic pressure. After 1910, the American east coast activities began to decline and gradually shifted to San Francisco. The arrival of Har Dayal around this time bridged the gap between the intellectual agitators and the predominantly Punjabi labour workers and migrants, laying the foundations of the Ghadar movement.

Ghadar party

The Pacific coast of North America saw large scale Indian immigration in the 1900s, especially from Punjab which was facing an economic depression. The Canadian government met

this influx with a series of legislations aimed at limiting the entry of South Asians into Canada, and restricting the political rights of those already in the country. The Punjabi community had hitherto been an important loyal force for the British Empire and the Commonwealth, and the community had expected, to honour its commitment, equal welcome and rights from the British and Commonwealth governments as extended to British and white immigrants. These legislations fed growing discontent, protests and anti-colonial sentiments within the community. Faced with increasingly difficult situations, the community began organising itself into political groups. A large number of Punjabis also moved to the United States, but they encountered similar political and social problems.

Meanwhile, nationalist work among Indians on the east coast began to gain momentum from around 1908 when Indian students of the likes of P S Khankhoje, Kanshi Ram, and Tarak Nath Das founded the Indian Independence League in Portland, Oregon. Khankhoje's works also brought him close to Indian nationalists in the United States at the time, including Tarak Nath Das. In the years preceding World War I, Khankhoje was one of the founding members of the Pacific Coast Hindustan Association, and subsequently founded the Ghadar Party. He was at the time one of the most influential members of the party. He met Lala Har Dayal in 1911. He also enrolled at one point in a West Coast military academy.

The Ghadar Party, initially the Pacific Coast Hindustan Association, was formed in 1913 in the United States under the leadership of Har Dayal, with Sohan Singh Bhakna as its president. It drew members from Indian immigrants, largely from Punjab. Many of its members were also from the

University of California at Berkeley including Dayal, Tarak Nath Das, Kartar Singh Sarabha and V. G. Pingle. The party quickly gained support from Indian expatriates, especially in the United States, Canada, and Asia. Ghadar meetings were held in Los Angeles, Oxford, Vienna, Washington, D.C., and Shanghai.

Ghadar's ultimate goal was to overthrow British colonial authority in India by means of an armed revolution. It viewed the Congress-led mainstream movement for dominion status as modest and the latter's constitutional methods as soft. Ghadar's foremost strategy was to entice Indian soldiers to revolt. To that end, in November 1913 Ghadar established the *Yugantar Ashram* press in San Francisco. The press produced the *Hindustan Ghadar* newspaper and other nationalist literature.

Ghadar conspiracy

Har Dayal's contacts with erstwhile members of India House in Paris and in Berlin allowed early concepts of Indo-German collaboration to take shape. Towards the end of 1913, the party established contact with prominent revolutionaries in India, including Rash Behari Bose. An Indian edition of the *Hindustan Ghadar* essentially espoused the philosophies of anarchism and revolutionary terrorism against British interests in India. Political discontent and violence mounted in Punjab, and Ghadarite publications that reached Bombay from California were deemed seditious and banned by the Raj. These events, compounded by evidence of prior Ghadarite incitement in the Delhi-Lahore Conspiracy of 1912, led the British government to pressure the American State Department to

suppress Indian revolutionary activities and Ghadarite literature, which emanated mostly from San Francisco.

1914

During World War I, the British Indian Army contributed significantly to the British war effort. Consequently, a reduced force, estimated to have been as low as 15,000 troops in late 1914, was stationed in India. It was in this scenario that concrete plans for organising uprisings in India were made.

In September 1913, Mathra Singh, a Ghadarite, visited Shanghai and promoted the Ghadarite cause within the Indian community there. In January 1914, Singh visited India and circulated Ghadar literature amongst Indian soldiers through clandestine sources before leaving for Hong Kong. Singh reported that the situation in India was favourable for a revolution.

In May 1914, the Canadian government refused to allow the 400 Indian passengers of the ship *Komagata Maru* to disembark at Vancouver. The voyage had been planned as an attempt to circumvent Canadian exclusion laws that effectively prevented Indian immigration. Before the ship reached Vancouver, its approach was announced on German radio, and British Columbian authorities were prepared to prevent the passengers from entering Canada. The incident became a focal point for the Indian community in Canada which rallied in support of the passengers and against the government's policies. After a 2-month legal battle, 24 of them were allowed to immigrate. The ship was escorted out of Vancouver by the protected cruiser HMCS *Rainbow* and returned to India. On

reaching Calcutta, the passengers were detained under the Defence of India Act at Budge Budge by the British Indian government, which made efforts to forcibly transport them to Punjab. This caused rioting at Budge Budge and resulted in fatalities on both sides. A number of Ghadar leaders, like Barkatullah and Tarak Nath Das, used the inflammatory passions surrounding the Komagata Maru incident as a rallying point and successfully brought many disaffected Indians in North America into the party's fold.

Outlines of mutiny

By October 1914, a large number of Ghadarites had returned to India and were assigned tasks like contacting Indian revolutionaries and organisations, spreading propaganda and literature, and arranging to get arms into the country that were being arranged to be shipped in from United States with German help. The first group of 60 Ghadarites led by Jawala Singh, left San Francisco for Canton aboard the steamship *Korea* on 29 August. They were to sail on to India, where they would be provided with arms to organise a revolt. At Canton, more Indians joined, and the group, now numbering about 150, sailed for Calcutta on a Japanese vessel. They were to be joined by more Indians arriving in smaller groups. During the September–October time period, about 300 Indians left for India in various ships like *SS Siberia*, *Chinyo Maru*, *China*, *Manchuria*, *SS Tenyo Maru*, *SS Mongolia* and *SS Shinyo Maru*. The *SS Korea's* party was uncovered and arrested on arrival at Calcutta. In spite of this, a successful underground network was established between the United States and India, through Shanghai, Swatow, and Siam. Tehl Singh, the Ghadar operative

in Shanghai, is believed to have spent \$30,000 for helping the revolutionaries to get into India.

Amongst those who returned were Vishnu Ganesh Pingle, Kartar Singh, Santokh Singh, Pandit Kanshi Ram, Bhai Bhagwan Singh, who ranked amongst the higher leadership of the Ghadar Party. Pingle had known Satyen Bhushan Sen (Jatin Mukherjee's emissary) in the company of Ghadar members (such as Kartar Singh Sarabha) at the University of Berkeley. Tasked to consolidate contact with the Indian revolutionary movement, as part of the Ghadar Conspiracy, Satyen Bhushan Sen, Kartar Singh Sarabha, Vishnu Ganesh Pingle and a batch of Sikh militants sailed from America by the SS *Salamin* in the second half of October 1914. Satyen and Pingle halted in China for a few days to meet the Ghadar leaders (mainly Tahal Singh) for future plans. They met Dr Sun Yat-sen for co-operation. Dr. Sun was not prepared to displease the British. After Satyen and party left for India, Tahal sent Atmaram Kapur, Santosh Singh and Shiv Dayal Kapur to Bangkok for necessary arrangements. In November, 1914, Pingle, Kartar Singh and Satyen Sen arrived in Calcutta. Satyen introduced Pingle and Kartar Singh to Jatin Mukherjee. "Pingle had long talks with Jatin Mukherjee, who sent them to Rash Behari" in Benares with necessary information during the third week of December. Satyen remained in Calcutta at 159 Bow Bazar [Street]. Tegart was informed of an attempt to tamper with some Sikh troops at the Dakshineswar gunpowder magazine. "A reference to the Military authorities shows that the troops in question were the 93rd Burmans" sent to Mesopotamia. Jatin Mukherjee and Satyen Bhushan Sen were seen interviewing these Sikhs. The Ghadarites rapidly established contact with the Indian revolutionary underground,

notably that in Bengal, and the plans began to be consolidated by Rash Behari Bose and Jatin Mukherjee and the Ghadarites for a coordinated general uprising.

Early attempts

Indian revolutionaries under Lokamanya Tilak's inspiration, had turned Benares into a centre for sedition since the 1900s. Sundar Lal (b. 1885, son of Tota Ram, Muzaffarnagar) had given a very objectionable speech in 1907 on Shivaji Festival in Benares. Follower of Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai and Sri Aurobindo, in 1908 this man had accompanied Lala in his UP lecture tour. His organ, the *Swarajya* of Allahabad, was warned in April 1908 against sedition. On 22 August 1909, Sundar Lal and Sri Aurobindo delivered "mischievous speeches" in College Square, Calcutta. The *Karmayogi* in Hindi was issued in Allahabad since September 1909: controlled by Sri Aurobindo, the Calcutta *Karmagogin* was edited by Amarendra Chatterjee who had introduced Rash Behari to Sundar Lal. In 1915, Pingle will be received in Allahabad by the *Swarajya* group. Rash Behari Bose had been in Benares since early 1914. Large number of outrages were committed there between October 1914 and September 1915, 45 of them before February was over. On 18 November 1914, while examining two bomb caps, he and Sachin Sanyal had been injured. They shifted to a house in Bangalitola, where Pingle visited him with a letter from Jatin Mukherjee and reported that some 4000 Sikhs of the Gadhar had already reached Calcutta. 15.000 more were waiting to join the rebellion. Rash Behari sent Pingle and Sachin to Amritsar, to discuss with Mula Singh who had arrived from Shanghai. Behari's man of confidence, Pingle, led a hectic life in UP and Punjab for several weeks.

During the *Komagata Maru* affray in Budge Budge, near Calcutta, on 29 September 1914, Baba Gurmukh Singh had contacted Atulkrishna Ghosh and Satish Chakravarti, two eminent associates of Jatin Mukherjee, who actively assisted them. Since then, angry letters from US-based Indians had reached India expressing hopes for a German victory; one of the emigrant leaders warned that his associates were in touch with the Bengal revolutionary party. It was at this juncture, in December 1914, that Pingle arrived in the Punjab, promising Bengali co-operation to the malcontent emigrants. A meeting demanded revolution, plundering of Government treasuries, seduction of Indian troops, collection of arms, preparation of bombs and the commission of dacoities. Rash Behari planned collecting gangs of villagers for the rebellion. Simultaneous outbreaks at Lahore, Ferozepore & Rawalpindi were organised while risings at Dacca, Benares, and Jubbalpur would be further extended.

Preparing bombs was a definite part of the Ghadar programme. The Sikh conspirators – knowing very little about it – decided to call in a Bengali expert, as they had known in California Professor Surendra Bose, associate of Taraknath Das. Towards the end of December 1914, at a meeting at Kapurthala, Pingle announced that a Bengali *babu* was ready to co-operate with them. On 3 January 1915, Pingle and Sachindra in Amritsar received Rs 500 from the Ghadar, and returned to Benares.

Coordination

Pingle returned to Calcutta with Rash Behari's invitation to the Jugantar leaders to meet him at Benares for co-ordinating and finalising their plans. Jatin Mukherjee, Atulkrishna Ghosh,

Naren Bhattacharya left for Benares (early January 1915). In a very important meeting, Rash Behari announced the rebellion, proclaiming: "Die for their country." Though through Havildar Mansha Singh, the 16th Rajput Rifles at Fort William was successfully approached, Jatin Mukherjee wanted two months for the army revolt, synchronising with the arrival of the German arms. He modified the plan according to the impatience of the Gadhar militants to rush to action. Rash Behari and Pingle went to Lahore. Sachin tampered with the 7th Rajputs (Benares) and the 89th Punjabis at Dinapore. Damodar Sarup [Seth] went to Allahabad. Vinayak Rao Kapile conveyed bombs from Bengal to Punjab. Bibhuti [Haldar, approver] and Priyo Nath [Bhattacharya?] seduced the troops at Benares; Nalini [Mukherjee] at Jabalpur. On 14 February, Kapile carried from Benares to Lahore a parcel containing materials for 18 bombs.

By the middle of January, Pingle was back in Amritsar with "the fat babu" (Rash Behari); to avoid too many visitors, Rash Behari moved to Lahore after a fortnight. In both the places he collected materials for making bombs and ordered for 80 bomb cases to a foundry at Lahore. Its owner out of suspicion refused to execute the order. Instead, inkpots were used as cases in several of the dacoities. Completed bombs were found during house searches, while Rash Behari escaped. "By then effective contact had been established between the returned Gadharites and the revolutionaries led by Rash Behari, and a large section of soldiers in the NW were obviously disaffected." "It was expected that as soon as the signal was received there would be mutinies and popular risings from Punjab to Bengal." "48 out of the 81 accused in the Lahore conspiracy case, including Rash Behari's close associates like Pingle, Mathura

Singh & Kartar Singh Sarabha, recently arrived from North America."

Along with Rash Behari Bose, Sachin Sanyal and Kartar Singh, Pingle became one of the main coordinators of the attempted mutiny in February 1915. Under Rash Behari, Pingle issued intensive propaganda for revolution from December 1914, sometimes disguised as Shyamlal, a Bengali; sometimes Ganpat Singh, a Punjabi.

Setting a date

Confident of being able to rally the Indian sepoy, the plot for the mutiny took its final shape. The 23rd Cavalry in Punjab was to seize weapons and kill their officers while on roll call on 21 February. This was to be followed by mutiny in the 26th Punjab, which was to be the signal for the uprising to begin, resulting in an advance on Delhi and Lahore. The Bengal revolutionaries contacted the Sikh troops stationed at Dacca through letters of introduction sent by Sikh soldiers of Lahore, and succeeded in winning them over. The Bengal cell was to look for the *Punjab Mail* entering the Howrah Station the next day (which would have been cancelled if Punjab was seized) and was to strike immediately.

1915 Indian mutiny

By the start of 1915, a large number of Ghadarites (nearly 8,000 in the Punjab province alone by some estimates) had returned to India. However, they were not assigned a central leadership and begun their work on an *ad hoc* basis. Although some were rounded up by the police on suspicion, many

remained at large and began establishing contacts with garrisons in major cities like Lahore, Ferozpur and Rawalpindi. Various plans had been made to attack the military arsenal at Mian Meer, near Lahore and initiate a general uprising on 15 November 1914. In another plan, a group of Sikh soldiers, the *manjha jatha*, planned to start a mutiny in the 23rd Cavalry at the Lahore cantonment on 26 November. A further plan called for a mutiny to start on 30 November from Ferozpur under Nidham Singh. In Bengal, the Jugantar, through Jatin Mukherjee, established contacts with the garrison at Fort William in Calcutta. In August 1914, Mukherjee's group had seized a large consignment of guns and ammunition from the Rodda company, a major gun manufacturing firm in India. In December, a number of politically motivated armed robberies to obtain funds were carried out in Calcutta. Mukherjee kept in touch with Rash Behari Bose through Kartar Singh and V.G. Pingle. These rebellious acts, which were until then organised separately by different groups, were brought into a common umbrella under the leadership of Rash Behari Bose in North India, V. G. Pingle in Maharashtra, and Sachindranath Sanyal in Benares. A plan was made for a unified general uprising, with the date set for 21 February 1915.

February 1915

In India, confident of being able to rally the Indian sepoy, the plot for the mutiny took its final shape. Under the plans, the 23rd Cavalry in Punjab was to seize weapons and kill their officers while on roll call on 21 February. This was to be followed by mutiny in the 26th Punjab, which was to be the signal for the uprising to begin, resulting in an advance on

Delhi and Lahore. The Bengal cell was to look for the *Punjab Mail* entering the Howrah Station the next day (which would have been cancelled if Punjab was seized) and was to strike immediately.

However, the Punjab CID successfully infiltrated the conspiracy at the last moment through Kirpal Singh: a cousin of the trooper Balwant Singh (23rd Cavalry), US-returned Kirpal, a spy, visited Rash Behari's Lahore headquarters near the Mochi Gate, where over a dozen leaders including Pingle met on 15 February 1915. Kirpal informed the police. Sensing that their plans had been compromised, the D-day was brought forward to 19 February, but even these plans found their way to the Punjab CID. Plans for revolt by the 130th Baluchi Regiment at Rangoon on 21 February were thwarted. On 15 February, the 5th Light Infantry stationed at Singapore was among the few units to actually rebel. About half of the eight hundred and fifty troops comprising the regiment mutinied on the afternoon of the 15th, along with nearly a hundred men of the Malay States Guides. This mutiny lasted almost seven days, and resulted in the deaths of forty-seven British soldiers and local civilians. The mutineers also released the interned crew of the SMS *Emden*. The mutiny was only put down after French, Russian and Japanese ships arrived with reinforcements. Of nearly two hundred tried at Singapore, forty-seven were shot in a public execution,. Most of the rest were deported for life or given jail terms ranging between seven and twenty years. Some historians, including Hew Strachan, argue that although Ghadar agents operated within the Singapore unit, the mutiny was isolated and not linked to the conspiracy. Others deem this as instigated by the Silk Letter Movement which became intricately related to the Ghadarite

conspiracy. Plans for revolt in the 26th Punjab, 7th Rajput, 24th Jat Artillery and other regiments did not go beyond the conspiracy stage. Planned mutinies in Ferozpur, Lahore, and Agra were also suppressed and many key leaders of the conspiracy were arrested, although some managed to escape or evade arrest. A last-ditch attempt was made by Kartar Singh and Pingle to trigger a mutiny in the 12th Cavalry regiment at Meerut. Kartar Singh escaped from Lahore, but was arrested in Benares, and V. G. Pingle was apprehended from the lines of the 12th Cavalry at Meerut, in the night of 23 March 1915. He carried "ten bombs of the pattern used in the attempt to assassinate Lord Hardinge in Delhi," according to Bombay police report. It is said that it was enough to blow up an entire regiment. Mass arrests followed as the Ghadarites were rounded up in Punjab and the Central Provinces. Rash Behari Bose escaped from Lahore and in May 1915 fled to Japan. Other leaders, including Giani Pritam Singh, Swami Satyananda Puri and others fled to Thailand or other sympathetic nations.

Later efforts

Other related events include the 1915 Singapore Mutiny, the Annie Larsen arms plot, Christmas Day Plot, events leading up to the death of Bagha Jatin, as well as the German mission to Kabul, the mutiny of the Connaught Rangers in India, as well as, by some accounts, the Black Tom explosion in 1916. The Indo-Irish-German alliance and the conspiracy were the target of a worldwide British intelligence effort, which was successful in preventing further attempts. American intelligence agencies arrested key figures in the aftermath of the Annie Larsen affair

in 1917. The conspiracy led to criminal conspiracy trials like the Lahore Conspiracy Case trial in India and the Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial in the United States, the latter being the longest and most expensive trial in the country at that date.

Trials

The conspiracy led to a number of trials in India, most famous among them being the Lahore Conspiracy Case trial, which opened in Lahore in April 1915 in the aftermath of the failed February mutiny. Other trials included the Benares, Simla, Delhi, and Ferozpur conspiracy cases, and the trials of those arrested at Budge Budge. At Lahore, a special tribunal was constituted under the Defence of India Act 1915 and a total of 291 conspirators were put on trial. Of these 42 were awarded the death sentence, 114 transported for life, and 93 awarded varying terms of imprisonment. A number of these were sent to the Cellular Jail in the Andaman. Forty-two defendants in the trial were acquitted. The Lahore trial directly linked the plans made in United States and the February mutiny plot. Following the conclusion of the trial, diplomatic effort to destroy the Indian revolutionary movement in the United States and to bring its members to trial increased considerably.

Impact

The Hindu-German Conspiracy as a whole, as well as the intrigues of the Ghadar Party in Punjab during the war, were among the main stimuli for the enactment of the Defence of India Act, appointment of the Rowlatt Committee, and the

enactment of the Rowlatt Acts. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre is also linked intimately with the Raj's fears of a Ghadarite uprising in India especially Punjab in 1919.

Provisional Government of India

The **Provisional Government of India** was a provisional government-in-exile established in Kabul, Afghanistan on December 1, 1915 by the Indian Independence Committee during World War I with support from the Central Powers. Its purpose was to enrol support from the Afghan Emir as well as Tsarist (and later Bolshevik) Russia, China, and Japan for the Indian Movement. Established at the conclusion of the Kabul Mission composed of members of the Berlin Committee, German and Turkish delegates, the provisional government was composed of Mahendra Pratap as President, Maulana Barkatullah as Prime Minister, Deobandi Maulavi Ubaidullah Sindhi as Home Minister, Deobandi Maulavi Bashir as War Minister, and Champakraman Pillai as Foreign Affairs Minister. The provisional government found significant support from the internal administration of the Afghan government, although the Emir refused to declare open support, and ultimately, under British pressure it was forced to withdraw from Afghanistan in 1919.

Background

During World War I, Indian nationalists in Germany and United States, as well as the Indian revolutionary underground and Pan-Islamists from India attempted to further the Indian cause with German finance and aid. The Berlin-Indian

committee (which became the *Indian Independence Committee* after 1915) sent an Indo-German-Turkish mission to the Indo-Iranian border to encourage the tribes to strike against British interests. The Berlin committee was also at this time in touch with the Khairi brothers (Abdul Jabbar Khairi and Abdul Sattar Khairi), who had at the onset of the war, settled at Constantinople and later in 1917 proposed to the Kaiser a plan to lead tribes in Kashmir and North-West Frontier Province against British interests. Another group led by the Deobandi Maulana Ubaid Allah Sindhi and Mahmud al Hasan (principle of the Darul Uloom Deoband) had proceeded to Kabul in October 1915 with plans to initiate a Muslim insurrection in the tribal belt of India. For this purpose, Ubaid Allah was to propose that the Amir of Afghanistan declares war against Britain while Mahmud al Hasan sought German and Turkish help. Hasan proceeded to Hijaz. Ubaid Allah, in the meantime, was able to establish friendly relations with Amir. At Kabul, Ubaid Allah, along with some students who had preceded him to make way to Turkey to join the Caliph's "*Jihad*" against Britain, decided that the pan-Islamic cause was to be best served by focussing on the Indian Freedom Movement.

The Mission to Kabul

Ubaid Allah's group was met by the Indo-German-Turkish mission to Kabul in December 1915. Led by Oskar von Niedermayer and nominally headed by Raja Mahendra Pratap, it included in its members Werner Otto von Hentig, the German diplomatic representative to Kabul, as well as, Barkatullah, Champak Raman Pillai and other prominent nationalists from the Berlin group. The mission, along with bringing members of

the Indian movement right to India's border, also brought messages from the Kaiser, Enver Pasha and the displaced Khedive of Egypt, Abbas Hilmi expressing support for Pratap's mission and inviting the Amir to move against India. The mission's immediate aim was to rally the Amir against British India and to obtain from the Afghan Government a right of free passage.

Although the Amir refused to commit for or against the proposals at the time, it found support amongst the Amir's immediate and close political and religious advisory group, including his brother Nasrullah Khan, his sons Inayatullah Khan and Amanullah Khan, religious leaders and tribesmen. It also found support in one of Afghanistan's then most influential newspaper, the *Siraj al-Akhbar*, whose editor Mahmud Tarzi took Barkatullah as an officiating editor in early 1916. In a series of articles, Tarzi published a number of inflammatory articles by Raja Mahendra Pratap, as well as publishing increasingly anti-British and pro-Central articles and propaganda. By May 1916 the tone in the paper was deemed serious enough for The Raj to intercept the copies. A further effort resulted in the establishment in 1916 of the Provisional Government of India in Kabul.

Formation of Provisional Government

Although hopes of the Amir's support were more or less non-existent, the Provisional Government of India was formed in early 1916 to emphasise the seriousness of intention and purpose. The government had Raja Mahendra Pratap as

President, Barkatullah as Prime Minister and Ubaid al Sindhi as the Minister for India, Maulavi Bashir as War Minister and Champakaran Pillai as Foreign Minister. It attempted to obtain support from Tsarist Russia, Republican China, Japan. Support was also obtained from Galib Pasha, proclaiming *Jihad* against Britain.

Following the February Revolution in Russia in 1917, Pratap's Government is known to have corresponded with the nascent Soviet Government. In 1918, Mahendra Pratap had met Trotsky in Petrograd before meeting the Kaiser in Berlin, urging both to mobilise against British India. Under pressure from the British, Afghan cooperation was withdrawn and the mission closed down. However, the mission, and the offers and liaisons of the German mission at the time had profound impact on the political and social situation in the country, starting a process of political change that ended with the assassination of Habibullah in 1919 and the transfer of power to Nasrullah and subsequently Amanullah and precipitating the Third Anglo-Afghan War that led to Afghan Independence.

They attempted to establish relations with foreign powers.” (Ker, p305). In Kabul, the *Siraj-ul-Akhbar* in its issue of 4 May 1916 published Raja Mahendra Pratap's version of the Mission and its objective. He mentioned : “...His Imperial Majesty the Kaiser himself granted me an audience. Subsequently, having set right the problem of India and Asia with the Imperial German Government, and having received the necessary credentials, I started towards the East. I had interviews with the Khedive of Egypt and with the Princes and Ministers of Turkey, as well as with the renowned Enver Pasha and His Imperial Majesty the Holy Khalif, Sultan-ul-Muazzim. I settled

the problem of India and the East with the Imperial Ottoman Government, and received the necessary credentials from them as well. German and Turkish officers and Maulvi Barakatullah Sahib were went with me to help me; they are still with me.” Under pressure from the British, the Afghan Government withdrew its help. The Mission was closed down.

Impact

It has been suggested by a number of historians that the threat posed by the Indo-German Conspiracy itself was the key spurring political progression in India. Especially, the presence of Pratap's enterprise in Afghanistan, next to India, and the perceived threats of Bolshevik Russia together with the overtures of Pratap's provisional government seeking Bolshevik help were judged significant threats to stability in British India.

While the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms in 1917 initiated the first rounds of political reform in the Indian subcontinent, a "Sedition Committee" called the Rowlatt committee (chaired by Sydney Rowlatt, an English judge) was instituted in 1918 which evaluated the links between Germany, the Berlin Committee, Pratap's enterprise (termed German agents in Afghanistan) and the militant movement in India, especially in Punjab and Bengal. The committee did not find any evidence of Bolshevik involvement, but concluded that the German link was definite. On the recommendations of the committee, the Rowlatt act, an extension of the Defence of India act of 1915, was enforced in response to the threat in Punjab and Bengal.

In Afghanistan itself, the mission was the catalyst to a rapid radical and progressive political process and reform movement that is culminated in the assassinations of the Emir Habibullah Khan in 1919 and his succession by Amanullah Khan that subsequently precipitated the Third Anglo-Afghan War.

Chapter 13

Frederic Thesiger, 1st Viscount

Chelmsford

Frederic John Napier Thesiger, 1st Viscount Chelmsford, GCSI, GCMG, GCIE, GBE, PC (12 August 1868 – 1 April 1933) was a British statesman who served as Governor of Queensland from 1905 to 1909, Governor of New South Wales from 1909 to 1913, and Viceroy of India from 1916 to 1921, where he was responsible for the creation of the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms. After serving a short time as First Lord of the Admiralty in the government of Ramsay MacDonald, he was appointed the Agent-General for New South Wales by the government of Jack Lang before his retirement.

Early life

Thesiger was born on 12 August 1868 in London, England, the son of the 2nd Baron Chelmsford and Adria Heath. He was educated at Winchester College and Magdalen College, Oxford, graduating from the latter as Bachelor of Arts with first-class honours in law in 1891. Thesiger was elected as a fellow of All Souls College (1892–1899). In 1893 he was called to the Bar of the Inner Temple to practice law. He joined the army volunteer force as an officer in the 1st volunteer battalion in the Dorsetshire Regiment, and was promoted to captain on 13 September 1902.

A keen cricketer, he captained the Oxford XI and also played for Middlesex.

He was member of the London County Council between 1904 and 1905 and again as an alderman from 1913 and 1919.

Governor of Queensland

On 9 April 1905, he succeeded to the title of 3rd Baron Chelmsford of Chelmsford upon his father's death and in July 1905 accepted his appointment as the Governor of Queensland in Australia. He arrived in Brisbane and was sworn in on 20 November. On 29 June 1906, Chelmsford was invested as a Knight Commander of Order of St Michael and St George. His term was dominated by conflict between the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly and the emergence of three evenly divided parties in the lower house.

Following the 1907 election, William Kidston, who had founded his own party, became Premier of Queensland with Labor support. The legislative council, then being an appointed chamber, then refused Kidston's legislative programs on electoral reforms and wage-fixing. Kidston then made a request to Chelmsford to appoint enough members to the Council in order to get his legislation through. Chelmsford refused, on the grounds that he did not have a sufficient mandate from the people to make such demands. Kidston resigned in protest and Chelmsford commissioned the Leader of the Opposition, Robert Philp, who formed a ministry, which was promptly defeated in the assembly. Chelmsford then granted Philp a dissolution, though the parliament was only six months old. Because Supply was denied by Kidston, Chelmsford stepped in and used

the reserve powers to ensure that supply was passed until the election. Kidston was returned to office in the 1908 election. The new assembly passed a motion criticising Chelmsford's action and there was widespread speculation that he would be recalled. However, nothing came of this. Despite the admission that their representative had been mistaken in granting a dissolution, the Colonial Office and the British government remained in his favour. Chelmsford's term expired just after Kidston resigned from the Labor Government and formed a coalition with Philp's Conservatives.

Governor of New South Wales

In May 1909 Chelmsford accepted the appointment as Governor of New South Wales and was sworn in at Government House on 28 May 1909. Unlike in Queensland, his term was comparably stable and was distinguished by good relations with the state government. At the start of his term, Charles Wade, of the Commonwealth Liberal Party, was the Premier. However, following the 1910 election, Wade's Liberals were defeated and the Labor Party under James McGowen was sworn in as the state's first Labor Government. Despite his conservative background, Chelmsford was able to get along well with the Labor Government. Chelmsford became friends with the Attorney General, William Holman, with whom they shared a love of music and as a competent Viola player, Chelmsford encouraged chamber concerts at Government House. He said of the government: "I have never had a body of Ministers with whom it has been a greater pleasure to work. They are quiet, unassuming and industrious, and have won the goodwill and loyalty of their departments." From 21 December 1909 to 27

January 1910 Chelmsford acted as Administrator of the Commonwealth when the Governor-General of Australia, The Earl of Dudley was on leave.

From April to November 1911, Chelmsford was back in England on overseas leave, thereby avoiding a major political crisis in New South Wales. In July 1911, two Labor Members of the Legislative Assembly resigned in protest over land reforms, thereby leaving McGowen's government in a minority in the assembly. Holman, who had stepped in as acting-Premier following McGowen also taking leave (Both Chelmsford and McGowen were attending the coronation of King George V), asked the Lieutenant Governor of New South Wales, Sir William Cullen, to prorogue the Parliament until the by-elections were held. Cullen declined on the basis that there was no need for him to act as the Government still had the confidence of the House and that the Governor had no discretion in the matter. Holman rejected this and, when Parliament resumed, resigned along with his Ministry and the Speaker. Holman further refused to advise Cullen to ask the Leader of the Opposition, Wade, to form a Government. Cullen did so nonetheless. Wade was wary, aware that if he accepted he too would be in a minority. Wade told Cullen that he would only accept if he was granted a dissolution. Cullen did not accept that condition and Wade refused to accept the commission. Cullen then had no choice but to recommission Holman and grant him a dissolution. Holman held onto Government tenuously as one seat was lost the by-elections. He therefore asked a member of the Opposition Liberals, Henry Willis, to take the Chair as Speaker.

Despite the crisis having been averted, Chelmsford returned to face increasing problems over the balance of power in the appointed New South Wales Legislative Council. The council had only five Labor members in a total of 73 and as a result, 70% of house divisions were lost by the government in its first three years in office, despite a recognised need for cooperation. Chelmsford therefore approved 11 appointments in 1912, leaving Labor with only 13 members out of 59. McGowen was under pressure to ask for more appointments to move for the abolition of the council, but he had no such intention of doing so. In October 1912, Chelmsford announced his intention not to seek a further term as governor, which the Colonial Office reluctantly accepted, describing him as "careful, hardworking and popular". A Freemason, in 1910 he was elected the Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of NSW and held the position until 1913. In 1909 Freemason Lodge Chelmsford 261 was established in New South Wales in his honour. In 1912 he was invested as a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of St Michael and St George, becoming Chancellor of the Order from 1914 to 1916. His term expired and Chelmsford returned to England in March 1913.

Viceroy of India

Upon the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 he rejoined his regiment and was posted to India. On 29 February 1916 he was appointed to the Privy Council (PC). Rising quickly, he was appointed Viceroy in March 1916, succeeding Lord Hardinge. As Viceroy he was invested as Knight Grand Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire and a Knight Grand Commander of the Order of the Star of India in 1916 and was also Grand

Master of the orders. He was invested as a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire on 4 December 1917.

His time as Viceroy was marked with consistent calls for self-government, which Chelmsford agreed to, convincing a preoccupied Foreign Office to send the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Samuel Montagu, to discuss the potential for reform. Together they oversaw the implementation of the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms, which gave greater authority to local Indian representative bodies and paved the way for a free India. Trying to tread a fine line between reform and maintaining the British hold over India, Chelmsford passed repressive anti-terrorism laws to widespread opposition from Indian reformists. The laws sparked unrest in the Punjab, culminating in the implementation of martial law in the region and the Amritsar Massacre by General Reginald Dyer on 13 April 1919. Initially supportive of Dyer and slow to respond to the massacre, following a ruling condemning Dyer's actions, Chelmsford eventually disciplined Dyer. This was however, seen by Indian Nationalists as too little, too late and the Indian National Congress boycotted the first regional elections in 1920. In addition to this, the Third Anglo-Afghan War broke out and Gandhi started his first campaign. On his return to Britain on 15 June 1921, he was elevated to Viscount as **1st Viscount Chelmsford** of Chelmsford, County of Essex.

Later life and legacy

In 1924, despite being a lifelong Conservative, Chelmsford was persuaded to join the Labour government of Ramsay MacDonald in 1924 as First Lord of the Admiralty, due to the fact that Labour had so few peers in the House of Lords. He

never joined the party and only agreed on the condition that the Navy's size be maintained and that he not be expected to attend any cabinet meetings of a political nature. He was duly sworn in by King George V on 23 January 1924 at Buckingham Palace. He was appointed as a Commissioner exercising the office of Lord High Admiral three times on 1 April 15 August 1924 and 9 October 1924. Chelmsford was chairman of the Miners' Welfare Committee under the Mining Industry Act of 1920 and of the royal commission on mining subsidence in 1923–24. After the fall of the government in November 1924, he retired from political life.

In 1926 Chelmsford was appointed as Agent-General for New South Wales in London. The reasoning for this was that during state Attorney-General Edward McTiernan's visit to London to put the Government's case over its disputes with Governor Dudley de Chair's opposition over the abolition of the Legislative Council the Government needed an influential representative in London and Labor Premier, Jack Lang, explained that "it was absolutely necessary that the State should be represented by a gentleman who would be in close touch with the London financial market". He served until 1928.

He was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Law by Birmingham University in 1927, an honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Law by Magdalen College, Oxford University in 1929 and as a Knight of Justice of the Order of St John of Jerusalem. As a fellow of All Souls, Chelmsford became Warden of the College in 1932.

He was a long-standing Freemason, and served as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Queensland and the United

Grand Lodge of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

Family

Lord Chelmsford married Frances Charlotte Guest (22 March 1869 – 24 September 1957), daughter of Ivor Guest, 1st Baron Wimborne, and Lady Cornelia Henrietta Maria Spencer-Churchill, on 27 July 1894 at St. George's Church, St. George Street, Hanover Square, London. They had six children:

- Hon. Joan Frances Vere Thesiger (1 August 1895 – 15 May 1971), married Sir Alan Lascelles in 1920.
- Lt. Hon. Frederic Ivor Thesiger (17 October 1896 – 1 May 1917)
- Hon. Anne Molyneux Thesiger (17 December 1898 – 10 August 1973), married Donough O'Brien, 16th Baron Inchiquin in 1921.
- Hon. Bridget Mary Thesiger (7 August 1900 – 18 June 1983)
- Andrew Charles Gerald Thesiger, 2nd Viscount Chelmsford (25 July 1903 – 27 September 1970)
- Hon. Margaret St. Clair Sidney Thesiger (7 May 1911 – 1 July 1991)

Lady Chelmsford was made a Dame Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire in 1917 and was also invested with the Imperial Order of the Crown of India. Lord Chelmsford died of coronary vascular disease on 1 April 1933, aged 64. He was survived by his younger son and four daughters. His eldest son, Second Lieutenant Frederic Ivor Thesiger of the 87th Brigade Royal Field Artillery, had been killed in action in

Mesopotamia in 1917. On his death the *Brisbane Courier* noted that "*the whole Empire suffers the loss of a man who, above all things, desired to be a true servant of the people.*" He was the first cousin of the actor Ernest Thesiger. In the 1982 film *Gandhi*, the role of Chelmsford was played by Sir John Mills.

In their honour, the New South Wales government launched a new ferry, to be known as the *Lady Chelmsford* in 1910 as a Sydney Harbour Ferry. The *Lady Chelmsford* continued working the harbour until 1971 when she was sold. In Melbourne she operated as a cruising restaurant before being taken out of service and sold in 2005. Again becoming a restaurant, she sank at her moorings in February 2008 and after a protracted battle over insurance, the ship was deemed unsalvageable and broken up underwater in mid-2011.

Styles

- Mr Frederic Thesiger (1868–1878)
- The Hon Frederic Thesiger (1878–1905)
- The Rt Hon The Lord Chelmsford (1905–1916)
- The Rt Hon The Lord Chelmsford PC (1916–1921)
- The Rt Hon The Viscount Chelmsford PC (1921–1933)

Chapter 14

Lucknow Pact

The **Lucknow Pact** was an agreement reached between the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League (AIMLM) at a joint session of both the parties held in Lucknow in December 1916. Through the pact, the two parties agreed to allow representation to religious minorities in the provincial legislatures. The Muslim League leaders agreed to join the Congress movement demanding Indian autonomy. Scholars cite this as an example of a consociational practice in Indian politics. Ambica Charan Mazumdar led the Congress while framing the deal, and A.K. Fazlul Haq (who was part of both Congress and the Muslim League in 1916) and Mahatma Gandhi also participated in this event.

Background

The British had announced under immense pressure from Indian masses, in order to satisfy the Indians, that they will be considering a series of proposals that would lead to at least half of the members of the Executive Council being elected and the Legislative Council having a majority of elected members needed. Both the Congress and the Muslim League supported these. Both had realized that for further concessions to be gained, greater cooperation was required.

Agreements by the Congress

The Congress agreed to separate electorates for Muslims in electing representatives to the Imperial and Provincial Legislative Councils. Although the Muslims were given this right in the Indian Council Act of 1909, the Indian National Congress opposed it. The Congress also agreed to the idea of one-third seats for the Muslims in the Councils despite the fact that the Muslim population represented less than a third. Apart from that, the Congress agreed that no act affecting a community should be passed unless three-quarters of that community's members on the council supported it. After the signing of this pact the rivalry between moderates and extremists was reduced to some extent. There was a significant change in their relation.

Demands presented to the British

Both parties presented some common demands to the British. They demanded:

- The number of elected seats on the councils should be increased.
- Laws/Motions which were passed by large majorities in the councils should be accepted as bindings by the British Government.
- Minorities in the provinces should be protected.
- All provinces should be granted autonomy.
- Separating the executive from the judiciary

- At least half of the members of the Executive Council being elected, the Legislative council having a majority of elected members

Importance

The Lucknow Pact was seen as a beacon of hope to Hindu-Muslim unity. It was the fourth time that the Hindus and Muslims had made a joint demand for political reform to the British. It led to a growing belief in British India that Home Rule (self-government) was a real possibility. The pact also marked the high-water mark of Hindu-Muslim unity. It established cordial relations between the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress. Before the pact, both parties were viewed as rivals who opposed each other and worked in their own interests. However, the pact brought a change in that view.

The Lucknow Pact also helped in establishing cordial relations between the two prominent groups within the Indian National Congress – the 'extremist' faction led by the Lal Bal Pal trio (Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal), and the 'moderate' faction led by Gopal Krishna Gokhale until his death in 1915 and later represented by Gandhi.

Though Jinnah advocated a separate nation for the Muslims 20 years later, in 1916 he was a member of both Congress and Muslim League, was an associate of Tilak, and hailed as 'ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity'.

Chapter 15

Champaran Satyagraha

The **Champaran Satyagraha** of 1917 was the first **Satyagraha** movement led by Gandhi in India and is considered a historically important rebellion in the Indian Freedom Struggle. It was a farmer's uprising that took place in Champaran district of Bihar, India, during the British colonial period. The farmers were protesting against having to grow indigo with barely any payment for it.

When Gandhi returned to India from South Africa in 1915, and saw peasants in northern India oppressed by indigo planters, he tried to use the same methods that he had used in South Africa to organize mass uprisings by people to protest against injustice.

Champaran Satyagraha was the first popular satyagraha movement. The Champaran Satyagraha gave direction to India's youth and freedom struggle, which was tottering between moderates who prescribed Indian participation within the British colonial system, and the extremists from Bengal who advocated the use of violent methods to topple the British colonialists in India.

Under Colonial-era laws, many tenant farmers were forced to grow some indigo on a portion of their land as a condition of their tenancy. This indigo was used to make dye. The Germans had invented a cheaper artificial dye so the demand for indigo fell. Some tenants paid more rent in return for being let off having to grow indigo. However, during the First World War the

German dye ceased to be available and so indigo became profitable again. Thus many tenants were once again forced to grow it on a portion of their land- as was required by their lease. Naturally, this created much anger and resentment.

Background

Neel (Indigo) started being grown commercially in Berar (today Bihar), Awadh (today Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand) and Bengal in 1750. Being a cash crop which needed high amounts of water and which left the soil infertile, local farmers usually opposed its cultivation, instead preferring to grow daily need crops such as rice and pulses. Hence the British colonialists forced farmers to grow indigo, often by making this the condition for providing loans, and through collusion with local kings, nawabs, and landlords. The trade was lucrative and led to the fortunes of several Asian and European traders and companies, including Jardine Matheson, E. Pabaney, Sassoon, Wadias and Swire.

As indigo trade to China was made illegal in the early 1900s and was restricted in the USA in 1910, indigo traders began to put force on indigo planters to increase production. Many tenants alleged that Landlords had used strong-arm tactics to exact illegal cesses and to extort them in other ways. This issue had been highlighted by a number of lawyers/politicians and there had also been a Commission of Inquiry. Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi and Peer Muneesh published the condition of Champaran in their publications because of which they lost their jobs. Raj Kumar Shukla and Sant Raut, a moneylender who owned some land, persuaded Gandhi to go to Champaran and thus, the Champaran Satyagraha began. Gandhi arrived in

Champanan, on 10 April 1917 and stayed at the house of Sant Raut in Amolwa village with a team of eminent lawyers: Brajkishore Prasad, Rajendra Prasad, Maulana Mazharul Haque, Anugrah Narayan Sinha, Babu Gaya Prasad Singh, Ramnavmi Prasad, and others including J. B. Kripalani.

Gandhi established the first-ever basic school at Barharwa Lakhansen village, 30 km east from the district headquarters at Dhaka, East Champaran, on 13 November 1917, organising scores of his veteran supporters and fresh volunteers from the region. His handpicked team of eminent lawyers comprising Rajendra Prasad, Anugrah Narayan Sinha & Babu Brajkishore Prasad organised a detailed study and survey of the villages, accounting the atrocities and terrible episodes of suffering, including the general state of degenerate living.

His main assault came as he was arrested by police on 16 April, on the charge of creating unrest and was ordered to leave the province. When asked by magistrate George Chander at Motihari district court on 18 April, to pay a security of Rs. 100, Gandhi humbly refused to be constrained by the diktat. Hundreds of thousands of people protested and rallied outside the court demanding his release, which the court unwillingly did. The case was subsequently withdrawn by the British Government.

Gandhi led organised protests and strike against the landlords, who with the guidance of the British government, signed an agreement granting more compensation and control over farming for the poor farmers of the region, and cancellation of revenue hikes and collection until the famine ended. It was during this agitation, that first time Gandhi was called "Bapu"

(Father) by Sant Raut and "Mahatma" (Great Soul). Gandhi himself did not like being addressed as "Mahatma", preferring to be called Bapu.

Champaran movement concluded with the introduction of 'Champaran Agrarian Bill' by W Maude, Member of Executive Council, Government of Bihar and Orissa, "consisting of almost all recommendations Gandhi Mission had made and it became the Champaran Agrarian Law (1918: Bihar and Orissa Act I)." This was for the first time that civil disobedience in India made the British adjust their "solipsistic attitude". While the British Government had crushed the Indian Rebellion of 1857, Satyagraha with its nonviolent communication confused the colonial government into believing that it would be unsuccessful. One of Gandhi's biographers, David Arnold, writes that Gandhi "confused, angered and divided the British in almost equal measure"; the British thus were "unsure whether he was, in their terms, a loyalist or a rebel." It was Gandhi's "moral superiority" that played a crucial role in the success of Satyagraha and Gandhi's final mission of India's independence.

The Tinkathia System which had been in existence for about a century was thus abolished and with it the planters' raj came to an end. The riots, who had all along remained crushed, now somewhat came to their own, and the superstition that the stain of indigo could never be washed out was exploded.

- —□ *M K Gandhi*

Building on confidence of villagers, Gandhi began leading the clean-up of villages, building of schools and hospitals and encouraging the village leaders to undo *purdah*, untouchability

and the suppression of women. Gandhi set up two more basic schools at Bhitiharwa with the help of Sant Raut in West Champaran and Madhuban in this district.

Centenary celebrations

The series of celebration began on 10 April 2017 with a National Conclave (*Rashtritya Vimarsh*) where eminent Gandhian thinkers, philosophers, and scholars participated. The event was organised by Education Department and Directorate of Mass Education being the nodal office. On 13 May 2017, Indian Postal Department Issued three commemorative postage stamps and a miniature sheet on Champaran Satyagraha Centenary.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 10 April 2018 attended the concluding ceremony of the Champaran Satyagraha's centenary celebrations at Motihari in Champaran district of Bihar. PM Modi's key initiatives, including Swachh Bharat Mission attempt to re-interpret the theme of Champaran Satyagraha as Swachhagraha, thus to "re-emphasise the spirit of cleanliness – or Swachhta – which was close to Mahatma Gandhi's heart, and was also a key element of the Champaran movement."

Chapter 16

Justice Party (India)

The **Justice Party**, officially the **South Indian Liberal Federation**, was a political party in the Madras Presidency of British India. It was established on 20 November 1916 in Victoria Memorial Hall in Madras by Dr C. Natesa Mudaliar and co-founded by T. M. Nair and P. Theagaraya Chetty as a result of a series of non-Brahmin conferences and meetings in the presidency. Communal division between Brahmins and non-Brahmins began in the presidency during the late-19th and early-20th century, mainly due to caste prejudices and disproportionate Brahminical representation in government jobs. The Justice Party's foundation marked the culmination of several efforts to establish an organisation to represent the non-Brahmins in Madras and is seen as the start of the Dravidian Movement.

During its early years, the party was involved in petitioning the imperial administrative bodies and British politicians demanding more representation for non-Brahmins in government. When a diarchial system of administration was established due to the 1919 Montagu–Chelmsford reforms, the Justice Party took part in presidential governance. In 1920, it won the first direct elections in the presidency and formed the government. For the next seventeen years, it formed four out of the five ministries and was in power for thirteen years. It was the main political alternative to the nationalist Indian National Congress in Madras. After it lost to the Congress in the 1937 election, it never recovered. It came under the leadership of Periyar E. V. Ramaswamy and his Self-Respect Movement. In

1944, Periyar transformed the Justice Party into the social organisation Dravidar Kazhagam and withdrew it from electoral politics. A rebel faction that called itself the original Justice Party, survived to contest one final election, in 1952.

The Justice Party was isolated in contemporary Indian politics by its many controversial activities. It opposed Brahmins in civil service and politics, and this anti-Brahmin attitude shaped many of its ideas and policies. It opposed Annie Besant and her Home rule movement, because it believed home rule would benefit the Brahmins. The party also campaigned against the non-cooperation movement in the presidency. It was at odds with M. K. Gandhi, primarily due to his praise for Brahminism. Its mistrust of the "Brahmin-dominated" Congress led it to adopt a hostile stance toward the Indian independence movement. The Justice Party's period in power is remembered for the introduction of caste-based reservations, and educational and religious reform. In opposition it is remembered for participating in the anti-Hindi agitations of 1937–40. The party had a role in creation of Andhra and Annamalai universities and for developing the area around present-day Theagaroya Nagar in Madras city. The Justice Party and the Dravidar Kazhagam are the ideological predecessors of present-day Dravidian parties like the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and the All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, which have ruled Tamil Nadu (one of the successor states to Madras Presidency) continuously since 1967.

Background

Brahmin/non-Brahmin divide

- The Brahmins in Madras Presidency enjoyed a higher position in India's social hierarchy. By the 1850s, Telugu and Tamil Brahmins comprising only 3.2% of the population began to increase their political power by filling most of the jobs which were open to Indian men at that time. They dominated the administrative services and the newly created urban professions in the 19th and early 20th century. The higher literacy and English language proficiency among Brahmins were instrumental in this ascendancy. The political, social, and economical divide between Brahmins and non-Brahmins became more apparent in the beginning of the 20th century. This breach was further exaggerated by Annie Besant and her Home Rule for India movement. The following table shows the distribution of selected jobs among different caste groups in 1912 in Madras Presidency.

The dominance of Brahmins was also evident in the membership of the Madras Legislative Council. During 1910–20, eight out of the nine official members (appointed by the Governor of Madras) were Brahmins. Apart from the appointed members, Brahmins also formed the majority of the members elected to the council from the district boards and municipalities. During this period the Madras Province Congress Committee (regional branch of the Indian National

Congress) was also dominated by Brahmins. Of the 11 major newspapers and magazines in the presidency, two (*The Madras Mail* and *Madras Times*) were run by Europeans sympathetic to the crown, three were evangelical non-political periodicals, four (*The Hindu*, *Indian Review*, *Swadesamithran* and *Andhra Pathrika*) were published by Brahmins while *New India*, run by Annie Besant was sympathetic to the Brahmins. This dominance was denounced by the non-Brahmin leaders in the form of pamphlets and open letters written to the Madras Governor. The earliest examples of such pamphlets are the ones authored by the pseudonymous author calling himself "fair play" in 1895. By the second decade of the 20th century, the Brahmins of the presidency were themselves divided into three factions. These were the Mylapore faction comprising Chetpet Iyers and Vembakkam Iyengars, the Egmore faction led by the editor of *The Hindu*, Kasturi Ranga Iyengar and the Salem nationalists led by C. Rajagopalachari. A fourth non-Brahmin faction rose to compete with them and became the Justice party.

British policies

Historians differ about the extent of British influence in the evolution of the non-Brahmin movement. Kathleen Gough argues that although England played a role, the Dravidian movement had a bigger influence in South India. Eugene F. Irschick (in *Political and Social Conflict in South India; The non-Brahmin movement and Tamil Separatism, 1916-1929*) holds the view that British officials sought to instigate the growth of non-Brahminism, but does not characterise it as simply a product of that policy. David. A. Washbrook disagrees with Irschick in *The Emergence of Provincial Politics: The Madras*

Presidency 1870–1920, and states "Non-Brahminism became for a time synonymous with anti-nationalism—a fact which surely indicates its origins as a product of government policy." Washbrook's portrayal has been contested by P. Rajaraman (in *The Justice Party: a historical perspective, 1916–37*), who argues that the movement was an inevitable result of longstanding "social cleavage" between Brahmins and non-Brahmins.

The British role in the development of the non-Brahmin movement is broadly accepted by some historians. The statistics used by non-Brahmin leaders in their 1916 manifesto were prepared by senior Indian Civil Service officers for submission to the public services commission. The Mylapore Brahmin faction rose to prominence in the early 20th century. England, while acknowledging its usefulness, was wary and supported non-Brahmins for several government posts. They sought to weaken the Mylaporean Brahmins by incorporating non-Brahmins in several government posts.

An early example was the appointment of C. Sankaran Nair to a high court bench job in 1903 by Lord Ampthill solely because Nair was a non-Brahmin. The job fell vacant after Bashyam Iyengar left. V. Krishnaswami Iyer was expected to succeed him. He was a vocal opponent of the Mylapore Brahmins and advocated the induction of non-Brahmin members in the government. In 1912, under the influence of Sir Alexander Cardew, the Madras Secretariat, for the first time used Brahmin or non-Brahmin as a criterion for job appointments. By 1918, it was maintaining a list of Brahmins and non-Brahmins, preferring the latter.

Early non-Brahmin associations

Identity politics among linguistic groups was common in British India. In every area, some groups considered the British less threatening than a Congress-led independent government. In 1909, two lawyers, P. Subrahmanyam and M. Purushotham Naidu, announced plans to establish an organisation named "The Madras Non-Brahmin Association" and recruit a thousand non-Brahmin members before October 1909. They elicited no response from the non-Brahmin populace and the organisation never saw the light of the day. Later in 1912, disaffected non-Brahmin members of the bureaucracy like Saravana Pillai, G. Veerasamy Naidu, Doraiswami Naidu and S. Narayanaswamy Naidu established the "Madras United League" with C. Natesa Mudaliar as Secretary. The league restricted itself to social activities and distanced itself from contemporary politics. On 1 October 1912, the league was reorganised and renamed as the "Madras Dravidian Association". The association opened many branches in Madras city. Its main achievement was to establish a hostel for non-Brahmin students. It also organised annual "At-home" functions for non-Brahmin graduates and published books presenting their demands.

Formation

In the 1916 elections to the Imperial Legislative Council, the non-Brahmin candidates T. M. Nair (from southern districts constituency) and P. Ramarayaningar (from landlords constituency) were defeated by the Brahmin candidates V. S. Srinivasa Sastri and K. V. Rangaswamy Iyengar. The same year

P. Theagaraya Chetty and Kurma Venkata Reddy Naidu lost to Brahmin candidates with Home Rule League support in local council elections. These defeats increased animosity and the formation of a political organisation to represent non-Brahmin interests.

On 20 November 1916, a gathering of non-Brahmin leaders and dignitaries met at the Advocate T.Ethirajulu Mudaliyar's residence in Vepery, Chennai. Diwan Bahadur Pitti Theagaraya Chettiar, Dr. T. M. Nair, Diwan Bahadur P. Rajarathina Mudaliyar, Dr. C. Nadesa Mudaliyar, Diwan Bahadur P. M. Sivagnana Mudaliar, Diwan Bahadur P. Ramaraya Ningar, Diwan Bahadur M. G. Aarokkiasami Pillai, Diwan Bahadur G. Narayanasamy Reddy, Rao Bahadur O. Thanikasalam Chettiar, Rao Bahadur M. C. Raja, Dr. Mohammed Usman Sahib, J. M. Nallusamipillai, Rao Bahadur K. Venkataretti Naidu (K. V. Reddy Naidu), Rao Bahadur A. B. Patro, T. Ethirajulu Mudaliyar, O. Kandasamy Chettiar, J. N. Ramanathan, Khan Bahadur A. K. G. Ahmed Thambi Marikkayar, Alarmelu Mangai Thayarmmal, A. Ramaswamy Mudaliyar, Diwan Bahadur Karunagara Menon, T. Varadarajulu Naidu, L. K. Thulasiram, K. Apparao Naidugaru, S. Muthaiah Mudaliyar and Mooppil Nair were among those present at the meeting.

They established the South Indian People's Association (SIPA) to publish English, Tamil and Telugu newspapers to publicise grievances of non-Brahmins. Chetty became the secretary. Chetty and Nair had been political rivals in the Madras Corporation council, but Natesa Mudaliar was able to reconcile their differences. The meeting also formed the "South Indian Liberal Federation" (SILF) as a political movement. Dr. T. M. Nair and Pitti Theagaraya Chettiar were the co-founders of this

movement. Rajarathna Mudaliyar was selected as the President. Ramaraya Ningar, Pitti Theagaraya Chettiar, A. K. G. Ahmed Thambi Marikkayar and M. G. Aarokkiasami Pillai were also selected as the Vice-Presidents. B. M. Sivagnana Mudaliyar, P. Narayanasamy Mudaliar, Mohammed Usman, M. Govindarajulu Naidu were selected as the Secretaries. G. Narayanasamy Chettiar acted as treasurer. T. M. Nair was elected as one of the executive committee members. Later, the movement came to be popularly called the "Justice Party", after the English daily *Justice* published by it. In December 1916, the association published "The Non Brahmin Manifesto", affirmed its loyalty and faith in the British Raj, but decried Brahminic bureaucratic dominance and urged for non-Brahmins to "press their claims as against the virtual domination of the Brahmin Caste". The manifesto was harshly criticised by the nationalist newspaper *The Hindu* (on 20 December 1916):

It is with much pain and surprise that we have perused this document. It gives a manifestly unfair and distorted representation of many of the matters to which it makes reference. It can serve no purpose but it is bound to create bad blood between persons belonging to the Great Indian Community.

The periodical *Hindu Nesan*, questioned the timing of the new association. The *New Age* (Home Rule Movement's newspaper) dismissed it and predicted its premature death. By February 1917, the SIPA joint stock company had raised money by selling 640 shares of one hundred rupees each. The money purchased a printing press and the group hired C. Karunakara Menon to edit a newspaper which was to be called *Justice*.

However, negotiations with Menon broke down and Nair himself took over as honorary editor with P. N. Raman Pillai and M. S. Purnalingam Pillai as sub-editors. The first issue came out on 26 February 1917. A Tamil newspaper called *Dravidan*, edited by Bhaktavatsalam Pillai, was started in June 1917. The party also purchased the Telugu newspaper *Andhra Prakasika* (edited by A. C. Parthasarathi Naidu). Later in 1919, both were converted to weeklies due to financial constraints.

On 19 August 1917, the first non-Brahmin conference was convened at Coimbatore under the presidency of Ramarayananingar. In the following months, several non-Brahmin conferences were organised. On 18 October, the party published its objectives (as formed by T. M. Nair) in *The Hindu*:

1) to create and promote the education, social, economic, political, material and moral progress of all communities in Southern India other than Brahmins 2) to discuss public questions and make a true and timely representation to Government of the views and interests of the people of Southern India with the object of safeguarding and promoting the interests of all communities other than Brahmins and 3) to disseminate by public lectures, by distribution of literature and by other means sound and liberal views in regard to public opinion.

Between August and December 1917 (when the first confederation of the party was held), conferences were organised all over the Madras Presidency—at Coimbatore, Bikkavole, Pulivendla, Bezwada, Salem and Tirunelveli. These conferences and other meetings symbolised the arrival of the SILF as a non-Brahmin political organisation.

Early history (1916–1920)

During 1916–20, the Justice party struggled against the Egmore and Mylapore factions to convince the British government and public to support communal representation for non-Brahmins in the presidency. Rajagopalachari's followers advocated non-cooperation with the British.

Conflict with Home Rule Movement

In 1916, Annie Besant, the leader of the Theosophical Society became involved in the Indian independence movement and founded the Home Rule League. She based her activities in Madras and many of her political associates were Tamil Brahmins. She viewed India as a single homogeneous entity bound by similar religious, philosophical, cultural characteristics and an Indian caste system. Many of the ideas she articulated about Indian culture were based on *puranas*, *manusmriti* and *vedas*, whose values were questioned by educated non Brahmins. Even before the League's founding, Besant and Nair had clashed over an article in Nair's medical journal *Antiseptic*, questioning the sexual practices of the theosophist Charles Webster Leadbeater. In 1913, Besant lost a defamation suit against Nair over the article.

Besant's association with Brahmins and her vision of a homogeneous India based on Brahminical values brought her into direct conflict with Justice. The December 1916 "Non-Brahmin Manifesto" voiced its opposition to the Home Rule Movement. The manifesto was criticised by the Home rule periodical *New India*. Justice opposed the Home Rule

Movement and the party newspapers derisively nicknamed Besant as the "Irish Brahmini". *Dravidan*, the Tamil language mouthpiece of the party, ran headlines such as *Home rule is Brahmin's rule*. All three of the party's newspapers ran articles and opinions pieces critical of the home rule movement and the league on a daily basis. Some of these *Justice* articles were later published in book form as *The Evolution of Annie Besant*. Nair described the home rule movement as an agitation carried on "by a white woman particularly immune from the risks of government action" whose rewards would be reaped by the Brahmins.

Demand for communal representation

On 20 August 1917, Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, proposed political reforms to increase representation of Indians in the government and to develop self-governing institutions. This announcement increased the division among the non-Brahmin political leaders of the Presidency. Justice organised a series of conferences in late August to support its claims. Theagaraya Chetty, cabled Montagu asking for communal representation in the provincial legislature for non-Brahmins. He demanded a system similar to the one granted to Muslims by the Minto–Morley Reforms of 1909—separate electorates and reserved seats. The non-Brahmin members from Congress formed the Madras Presidency Association (MPA) to compete with Justice. Periyar E. V. Ramasamy, T. A. V. Nathan Kalyanasundaram Mudaliar, P. Varadarajulu Naidu and Kesava Pillai were among the non-Brahmin leaders involved in creating MPA. MPA was supported by the Brahmin nationalist newspaper *The Hindu*. Justice denounced MPA as a Brahmin creation intended to weaken their cause. On 14 December

1917, Montagu arrived at Madras to listen to comments on the proposed reforms. O. Kandaswami Chetty (Justice) and Kesava Pillai (MPA) and 2 other non-Brahmin delegations presented to Montagu. Justice and MPA both requested communal reservation for Balija Naidus, Pillais and Mudaliars (Vellalas), Chettis and the Panchamas—along with four Brahmin groups. Pillai convinced the Madras Province Congress Committee to support the MPA/Justice position. British authorities, including Governor Baron Pentland and the *Madras Mail* supported communal representation. But Montagu was not inclined to extend communal representation to subgroups. The Montagu–Chelmsford *Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms*, issued on 2 July 1918, denied the request.

At a meeting held in Thanjavur, the party dispatched T. M. Nair to London to lobby for extending communal representation. Dr. Nair arrived in June 1918 and worked into December, attended various meetings, addressed Members of Parliament (MPs), and wrote articles and pamphlets. However, the party refused to cooperate with the Southborough committee that was appointed to draw up the franchise framework for the proposed reforms, because Brahmins V. S. Srinivasa Sastri and Surendranath Banerjee were committee members. Justice secured the support of many Indian and non-Indian members of Indian Civil Service for communal representation.

The Joint Select Committee held hearings during 1919–20 to finalise the Government of India Bill, which would implement the reforms. A Justice delegation composed of Arcot Ramasamy Mudaliar, Kurma Venkata Reddi Naidu, Koka Appa Rao Naidu and L. K. Tulasiram, attended the hearings. Ramarayananingar also represented the All India Landholder association and the

Madras Zamindar association. Reddi Naidu, Mudaliar and Ramarayaningar toured major cities, addressed meetings, met with MPs, and wrote letters to the local newspapers to advance their position. Nair died on 17 July 1919 before he could appear. After Nair's death, Reddi Naidu became the spokesman. He testified on 22 August. The deputation won the backing of both Liberal and Labour members. The Committee's report, issued on 17 November 1919, recommended communal representation in the Madras Presidency. The number of reserved seats was to be decided by the local parties and the Madras Government. After prolonged negotiations between Justice, Congress, MPA and the British Government, a compromise (called "Meston's Award") was reached in March 1920. 28 (3 urban and 25 rural) of the 63 general seats in plural member constituencies were reserved for non-Brahmins.

Opposition to non-cooperation movement

Unsatisfied with the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms and the March 1919 Rowlatt Act, Mahatma Gandhi launched his non-cooperation movement in 1919. He called for a boycott of the legislatures, courts, schools and social functions. Non-cooperation did not appeal to Justice, which sought to leverage continued British presence by participating in the new political system. Justice considered Gandhi to be an anarchist threatening social order. The party newspapers *Justice*, *Dravidan* and *Andhra Prakasika* persistently attacked non-cooperation. Party member Mariadas Ratnaswami wrote critically of Gandhi and his campaign against industrialisation in a pamphlet named *The political philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi* in 1920. K. V. Reddi Naidu also fought non-cooperation.

This stance isolated the party—most political and social organisations supported the movement. Justice Party's believed that he associated mostly with Brahmins, though he was not a Brahmin himself. It also favoured industrialisation. When Gandhi visited Madras in April 1921, he spoke about the virtues of Brahminism and Brahmin contributions to Indian culture. *Justice* responded:

The meeting was presided over by local Brahmin politicians of Gandhi persuasion, and Mr. Gandhi himself was surrounded by Brahmins of both sexes. A band of them came to the meeting singing hymns. They broke coconut in front of Gandhi, burnt camphor and presented him with holy water in silver basin. There were other marks of deification and, naturally, the vanity of the man was flattered beyond measure. He held forth on the glories of Brahminism and Brahminical culture. Not even knowing even the elements of Dravidian culture, Dravidian philosophy, Dravidian literature, Dravidian languages, and Dravidian history, this Gujarati gentleman extolled the Brahmins to the skies at the expense of non-Brahmins; and the Brahmins present must have been supremely pleased and elated.

Kandaswamy Chetty sent a letter to the editor of Gandhi's journal *Young India*, advising him to stay away from Brahmin/non-Brahmin issues. Gandhi responded by highlighting his appreciation of Brahmin contribution to Hinduism and said, "I warn the correspondents against separating the Dravidian south from Aryan north. The India today is a blend not only of two, but of many other cultures." The party's relentless campaign against Gandhi, supported by the *Madras Mail* made him less popular and effective in South

India, particularly in southern Tamil districts. Even when Gandhi suspended the movement after the Chauri Chaura incident, party newspapers expressed suspicion of him. The party softened on Gandhi only after his arrest, expressing appreciation for his "moral worth and intellectual capacity".

In office

The Government of India Act 1919 implemented the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, instituting a Diarchy in Madras Presidency. The diarchial period extended from 1920 to 1937, encompassing five elections. Justice party was in power for 13 of 17 years, save for an interlude during 1926–30.

1920–26

During the non-cooperation campaign, the Indian National Congress boycotted the November 1920 elections. Justice won 63 of the 98 seats. A. Subbarayalu Reddiar became the first Chief Minister, soon resigning due to declining health. Ramarayananingar (Raja of Panagal), the Minister of Local Self-Government and Public Health replaced him. The party was far from happy with the diarchial system. In his 1924 deposition to the Muddiman committee, Cabinet Minister Kurma Venkata Reddy Naidu expressed the party's displeasure:

I was a Minister of Development without the forests. I was a Minister of Agriculture minus Irrigation. As a Minister of Agriculture I had nothing to do with the Madras Agriculturists Loan Act or the Madras Land Improvement Loans Act... The efficacy and efficiency of a Minister of Agriculture without having anything to do with irrigation, agricultural loans, land

improvement loans and famine relief, may better be imagined than described. Then again, I was Minister of Industries without factories, boilers, electricity and water power, mines or labor, all of which are reserved subjects.

Internal dissent emerged and the party split in late 1923, when C. R. Reddy resigned and formed a splinter group and allied with Swarajists who were in opposition. The party won the second council elections in 1923 (though with a reduced majority). On the first day (27 November 1923) of the new session, a no-confidence motion was defeated 65–44 and Ramarayananingar remained in power until November 1926. The party lost in 1926 to Swaraj. The Swaraj party refused to form the government, leading the Governor to set up an independent government under P. Subbarayan.

1930–37

After four years in opposition, Justice returned to power. Chief Minister B. Munuswamy Naidu's tenure was beset with controversies. The Great Depression was at its height and the economy was crumbling. Floods inundated the southern districts. The government increased the land tax to compensate for the fall in revenues. The *Zamindars* (landowners) faction was disgruntled because two prominent landlords—the Raja of Bobbili and the Kumara Raja of Venkatagiri— were excluded from the cabinet. In 1930, P. T. Rajan and Naidu has differences over the presidency and Naidu did not hold the annual party confederation for three years. Under M. A. Muthiah Chettiar, the *Zamindars* organised a rebel "ginger group" in November 1930. In the twelfth annual confederation of the party held on 10–11 October 1932, the rebel group

deposed Naidu and replaced him with the Raja of Bobbili. Fearing that the Bobbili faction would move a no-confidence motion against him in the council, Naidu resigned in November 1932 and the Rao became Chief Minister. After his removal from power, Munuswamy Naidu formed a separate party with his supporters. It was called Justice Democratic Party and had the support of 20 opposition members in the legislative council. His supporters rejoined the Justice party after his death in 1935. During this time, party Leader L. Sriramulu Naidu served as Mayor of Madras.

Decline

Increasing nationalist feelings and factional infighting caused the party to shrink steadily from the early 1930s. Many leaders left to join Congress. Rao as inaccessible to his own party members and tried to curtail the powers of district leaders who had been instrumental in the party's previous successes. The party was seen as collaborators, supporting the British government's harsh measures. Its economic policies were also very unpopular. Its refusal to decrease land taxation in non-Zamindari areas by 12.5% provoked peasant protests led by Congress. Rao, a *Zamindar*, cracked down on protests, fueling popular rage. The party lost the 1934 elections, but managed to retain power as a minority government because Swaraj (the political arm of the Congress) refused to participate.

In its last years in power, the party's decline continued. The Justice ministers drew a large monthly salary (Rs.4,333.60, compared to the Rs.2,250 in the Central Provinces) at the height of the Great Depression which was sharply criticised by the Madras press including *Madras Mail*, a traditional backer

of the party, attacked its ineptitude and patronage. The extent of the discontent against the Justice government is reflected in an article of *Zamin Ryot*:

The Justice Party has disgusted the people of this presidency like plague and engendered permanent hatred in their hearts. Everybody, therefore, is anxiously awaiting the fall of the Justice regime which they consider tyrannical and inauguration of the Congress administration...Even old women in villages ask as to how long the ministry of the Raja of Bobbili would continue.

Lord Erskine, the governor of Madras, reported in February 1937 to then Secretary of State Zetland that among the peasants, "every sin of omission or commission of the past fifteen years is put down to them [Bobbili's administration]". Faced with a resurgent Congress, the party was trounced in the 1937 council and assembly elections. After 1937 it ceased to be a political power.

Justice's final defeat has been ascribed variously to its collaboration with the British Government; the elitist nature of the Justice party members, loss of scheduled caste and Muslim support and flight of the social radicals to the Self-Respect Movement or in sum, "...internal dissension, ineffective organisation, inertia and lack of proper leadership".

In opposition

Justice was in opposition from 1926–30 and again from 1937 until it transformed itself to Dravidar Kazhagam in 1944.

1926–30

In the 1926 elections, Swaraj emerged as the largest party, but refused to form the government because of its opposition to dyarchy. Justice declined power because it did not have enough seats and due to clashes with governor Viscount Goschen over issues of power and patronage. Goschen turned to the nationalist independent members. Unaffiliated, P. Subbarayan was appointed Chief Minister. Goschen nominated 34 members to the Council to support the new ministry. Initially Justice joined Swaraj in opposing "government by proxy". In 1927, they moved a no confidence motion against Subbarayan that was defeated with the help of the Governor-nominated members. Halfway through the ministry's term, Goschen convinced Justice to support the ministry. This change came during the Simon Commission's visit to assess the political reforms. After the death of Ramarayanan in December 1928, Justice broke into two factions: the Constitutionalists and the Ministerialists. The Ministerialists were led by N. G. Ranga and favoured allowing Brahmins to join the party. A compromise was reached at the eleventh annual confederation of the party and B. Munuswamy Naidu was elected as the president.

1936–44

After its crushing defeat at the hands in 1937, Justice lost political influence. The Raja of Bobbili temporarily retired to tour Europe. The new Congress government under C. Rajagopalachari introduced compulsory Hindi instruction. Under A. T. Panneerselvam (one of the few Justice leaders to have escaped defeat in the 1937 elections) Justice joined

Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's Self-Respect Movement (SRM) to oppose the government's move. The resulting anti-Hindi agitation, brought the party effectively under Periyar's control. When Rao's term ended, Periyar became president on 29 December 1938. Periyar, a former Congressman, had a previous history of cooperation with the party. He had left Congress in 1925 after accusing the party of Brahminism. SRM cooperated closely with Justice in opposing Congress and Swaraj. Periyar had even campaigned for Justice candidates in 1926 and 1930. For a few years in the early 1930s, he switched from Justice to the communists. After the Communist party was banned in July 1934, he returned to supporting Justice. The anti-Hindi agitations revived Justice's sagging fortunes. On 29 October 1939, Rajagopalachari's Congress government resigned, protesting India's involvement in World War II. Madras provincial government was placed under governor's rule. On 21 February 1940 Governor Erskine cancelled compulsory Hindi instruction.

Under Periyar's leadership, the party embraced the secession of Dravidistan (or *Dravida Nadu*). At the 14th annual confederation (held in December 1938), Periyar became party leader and a resolution passed pressing Tamil people's right to a sovereign state, under the direct control of the Secretary of State for India. In 1939, Periyar organised the Dravida Nadu Conference for the advocacy of a "separate, sovereign and federal republic of Dravida Nadu". Speaking on 17 December 1939, he raised the slogan "Dravida Nadu for Dravidians" replacing the "Tamil Nadu for Tamils" that had been used earlier (since 1938). The demand for "Dravidistan" was repeated at the 15th annual confederation in August 1940. On 10 August 1941, Periyar stopped the agitation for *Dravida*

Nadu to help the government in its war efforts. When the Cripps Mission visited India, a Justice delegation, comprising Periyar, W. P. A. Soundarapandian Nadar, N. R. Samiappa Mudaliar and Muthiah Chettiar, met the mission on 30 March 1942 and demanded a separate Dravidian nation. Cripps responded that secession would be possible only through a legislative resolution or through a general referendum. During this period, Periyar declined efforts in 1940 and in 1942 to bring Justice to power with Congress' support.

Transformation into Dravidar

Kazhagam

Periyar withdrew the party from electoral politics and converted it into a social reform organisation. He explained, "If we obtain social self-respect, political self-respect is bound to follow". Periyar's influence pushed Justice into anti-Brahmin, anti-Hindu and atheistic stances. During 1942–44, Periyar's opposition to the Tamil devotional literary works *Kamba Ramayanam* and *Periya Puranam*, caused a break with Saivite Tamil scholars, who had joined the anti-Hindi agitations. Justice had never possessed much popularity among students, but started making inroads with C. N. Annadurai's help. A group of leaders became uncomfortable with Periyar's leadership and policies and formed a rebel group that attempted to dethrone Periyar. This group included P. Balasubramanian (editor of *The Sunday Observer*), R. K. Shanmugam Chettiar, P. T. Rajan and A. P. Patro, C. L. Narasimha Mudaliar, Damodaran Naidu and K. C. Subramania Chettiar. A power struggle developed between the pro and anti-

Periyar factions. On 27 December 1943, the rebel group convened the party's executive committee and criticised Periyar for not holding an annual meeting after 1940. To silence his critics Periyar decided to convene the confederation.

On 27 August 1944, Justice's sixteenth annual confederation took place in Salem where the pro-Periyar faction won control. The confederation passed resolutions compelling party members to: renounce British honours and awards such as Rao Bahadur and Diwan Bahadur, drop caste suffixes from their names, resign nominated and appointed posts. The party also took the name Dravidar Kazhagam (DK). Annadurai, who had played an important role in passing the resolutions, became the general secretary of the transformed organisation. Most members joined the Dravidar Kazhagam. A few dissidents like P. T. Rajan, Manapparai Thirumalaisami and M. Balasubramania Mudaliar did not accept the new changes. Led at first by B. Ramachandra Reddi and later by P. T. Rajan, they formed a party claiming to be the original Justice party. This party made overtures to the Indian National Congress and supported the Quit India Movement. The Justice Party also lent its support to Congress candidates in the elections to the Constituent Assembly of India. It contested nine seats in the 1952 Assembly elections. P. T. Rajan was the sole successful candidate. The party also fielded M. Balasubramania Mudaliar from the Madras Lok Sabha constituency in the 1952 Lok Sabha elections. Despite losing the election to T. T. Krishnamachari of the Indian National Congress, Mudaliar polled 63,254 votes and emerged runner-up. This new Justice party did not contest elections after 1952. In 1968, the party celebrated its Golden Jubilee at Madras.

Organisation

The Justice party's first officeholders were elected in October 1917. Arcot Ramaswamy Mudaliar was the party's first general secretary. The party began writing a constitution in 1920, adopting it on 19 December 1925 during its ninth confederation. An 18 October 1917 notice in *The Hindu*, outlining the party's policies and goals was the nearest it had to a constitution in its early years.

Madras City was the centre of the party's activities. It functioned from its office at Mount Road, where party meetings were held. Apart from the head office, several branch offices operated in the city. By 1917, the party had established offices at all the district headquarters in the presidency, periodically visited by the Madras-based leaders. The party had a 25-member executive committee, a president, four vice-presidents, a general secretary and a treasurer. After the 1920 elections, some attempts were made to mimic European political parties. A chief whip was appointed and Council members formed committees. Article 6 of the constitution made the party president the undisputed leader of all non-Brahmin affiliated associations and party members in the legislative council. Article 14 defined the membership and role of the executive committee and tasked the general secretary with implementing executive committee decisions. Article 21 specified that a "provincial confederation" of the party be organised annually, although as of 1944, 16 confederations had been organised in 27 years.

Works

Legislative initiatives

During its years in power, Justice passed a number of laws with lasting impact. Some of its legislative initiatives were still in practice as of 2009. On 16 September 1921, the first Justice government passed the first communal government order (G. O. # 613), thereby becoming the first elected body in the Indian legislative history to legislate reservations, which have since become standard. The Madras Hindu Religious Endowment Act, introduced on 18 December 1922 and passed in 1925, brought many Hindu Temples under the direct control of the state government. This Act set the precedent for later Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment (HR & CE) Acts and the current policy of Tamil Nadu.

The Government of India Act of 1919 prohibited women from becoming legislators. The first Justice Government reversed this policy on 1 April 1921. Voter qualifications were made gender neutral. This resolution cleared the way for Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi's nomination to the council in 1926, when she became the first woman to become a member of any legislature in India. In 1922, during the first Justice ministry (before relationships with Scheduled Castes soured), the Council officially replaced the terms "Panchamar" or "Paraiyar" (which were deemed derogatory) with "Adi Dravidar" to denote the Scheduled Castes of the presidency.

The Madras Elementary Education Act of 1920 introduced compulsory education for boys and girls and increased

elementary education funding. It was amended in 1934 and 1935. The act penalised parents for withdrawing their children from schools. The Madras University Act of 1923 expanded the administrative body of the University of Madras and made it more representative. In 1920 the Madras Corporation introduced the Mid-day Meal Scheme with the approval of the legislative council. It was a breakfast scheme in a corporation school at Thousand Lights, Madras. Later it expanded to four more schools. This was the precursor to the free noon meal schemes introduced by K. Kamaraj in the 1960s and expanded by M. G. Ramachandran in the 1980s.

The State Aid to Industries Act, passed in 1922 and amended in 1935, advanced loans for the establishment of industries. The Malabar Tenancy Act of 1931 (first introduced in September 1926), controversially strengthened the legal rights of agricultural tenants and gave them the "right to occupy (land) in some cases".

Universities

Rivalry between the Tamil and Telugu members of Justice party led to the establishment of two universities. The rivalry had existed since the party's inception and was aggravated during the first justice ministry because Tamil members were excluded from the cabinet. When the proposal to set up Andhra University (long demanded by leaders like Konda Venkatapayya and Pattabi Sitaramaya) was first raised in 1921, it was opposed by Tamil members including C. Natesa Mudaliar. The Tamils argued that it was hard to define Andhras or the Andhra University. To appease the disgruntled Tamil members like J. N. Ramanathan and Raja of Ramnad, Theagaraya Chetty

inducted a Tamil member T. N. Sivagnanam Pillai in the second Justice ministry in 1923. This cleared the way for the passage of Andhra University Bill on 6 November 1925, with Tamil support. The institution opened in 1926 with C. R. Reddy as its first vice-chancellor. This led to calls for the establishment of a separate, Tamil, University, because the Brahmin-dominated Madras University did not welcome non-Brahmins. On 22 March 1926, a Tamil University Committee chaired by Sivagnanam Pillai began to study feasibility and in 1929 Annamalai University opened. It was named for Annamalai Chettiar who provided a large endowment.

Infrastructure

The second Justice Chief Minister, Ramarayananingar's years in power saw improvements to the infrastructure of the city of Madras – particularly the development of the village of Theagaroya Nagar. His administration implemented the Madras Town Planning Act of 7 September 1920, creating residential colonies to cope with the city's rapid population growth.

The Long Tank, a 5 km (3.1 mi) long and 2 km (1.2 mi) wide water body, formed an arc along the city's western frontier from Nungambakkam to Saidapet and was drained in 1923. Development west of the Long Tank had been initiated by the British government in 1911 with the construction of a railway station at the village of Marmalan/Mambalam. Ramarayananingar created a residential colony adjoining this village. The colony was named "Theagaroya Nagar" or T. Nagar after just-deceased Theagaroya Chetty. T. Nagar centered around a park named Panagal Park after Ramarayananingar, the Raja of Panagal. The streets and other features in this new neighbourhood were

named after prominent officials and party members, including Mohammad Usman, Muhammad Habibullah, O. Thanikachalam Chettiar, Natesa Mudaliar and W. P. A. Soundarapandian Nadar). Justice governments also initiated slum clearance schemes and built housing colonies and public bathing houses in the congested areas. They also established the Indian School of Medicine in 1924 to research and promote Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani schools of traditional medicine.

Political legacy

The Justice party served as a non-Brahmin political organisation. Though non-Brahmin movements had been in existence since the late 19th century, Justice was the first such political organisation. The party's participation in the governing process under dyarchy taught the value of parliamentary democracy to the educated elite of the Madras state . Justice and Dravidar Kazhagam were the political forerunners of the present day Dravidian parties such as Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, which have ruled Tamil Nadu (a successor state Madras Presidency) without interruption since 1967.

Controversies

Attitude towards Brahmins

The Justice party began as a political organisation to represent the interests of non-Brahmins. Initially it did not accept Brahmins as party members. However, along with other groups including Europeans, they were allowed to attend meetings as

observers. After the defeat in 1926, calls were made to make the party more inclusive and more nationalist in character. Opponents, especially Periyar E. V. Ramasamy's self-respect faction protected the original policy. At a tripartite conference between Justice, Ministerialists and Constitutionalists in 1929, a resolution was adopted recommending the removal of restrictions on Brahmins joining the organisation. In October 1929, the executive committee placed a resolution to this effect for approval before the party's eleventh annual confederation at Nellore. Supporting the resolution, Munuswamy Naidu spoke as follows:

So long as we exclude one community, we cannot as a political speak on behalf of or claim to represent all the people of our presidency. If, as we hope, provincial autonomy is given to the provinces as a result of the reforms that may be granted, it should be essential that our Federation should be in a position to claim to be a truly representative body of all communities. What objection can there be to admit such Brahmins as are willing to subscribe to the aims and objects of our Federation? It may be that the Brahmins may not join even if the ban is removed. But surely our Federation will not thereafter be open to objection on the ground that it is an exclusive organization.

Former education minister A. P. Patro supported Naidu's view. However this resolution was vehemently opposed by Periyar and R. K. Shanmukham Chetty and failed. Speaking against letting Brahmins into the party, Periyar explained:

At a time when non-Brahmins in other parties were gradually coming over to the Justice Party, being fed up with the Brahmin's methods and ways of dealing with political

questions, it was nothing short of folly to think of admitting him into the ranks of the Justice Party.

The party began to accept Brahmin members only in October 1934. The pressure to compete with the Justice party forced the Congress party to let more non-Brahmins into the party power structure. The party's policies disrupted the established social hierarchy and increased the animosity between the Brahmin and non-Brahmin communities.

Nationalism

The Justice party was loyal to the British empire. In its early years, Justice opposed the Home Rule Movement. It did not send representatives to the Central Legislative Assembly, the national parliamentary body. During 1916–20, it focused on obtaining communal representation and participating in the political process. During the non-cooperation period, it joined with the *Madras Mail* in opposing and denouncing Gandhi and the nationalists. Sir Theagaraya Chetty, President of the party from 1916 to 1924, publicly expressed his view on the floor of the assembly that "political prisoners were worse than dacoits and robbers" amidst opposition from nationalists including members of his own party as A. P. Patro. The then Justice Party government headed by the Raja of Panagal banned the publication and distribution of poems written by Indian nationalist Subramanya Bharathy. However, by the mid-1920s, the party adopted more nationalist policies. It discarded its earlier disdain of spinning thread by hand and Swadeshi economics. In 1925, the party's annual confederation passed a resolution supporting "indigenous industries" and "swadeshi enterprise". This shift enabled Justice to better compete

against Swaraj to whom Justice was slowly losing ground. The term "Swaraj" (or self-rule) itself was included in the constitution. Madras branch president C. R. Reddy led this change. To Justicites, *Swaraj* meant partial self-government under British rule, not independence. The constitution stated: "..to obtain *Swaraj* for India as a component of the British Empire at as early a date as possible by all peaceful and legitimate and constitutional means.."

The historical record does not clearly indicate whether Justice condemned the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. The party's shift toward nationalist policies was reversed in the 1930s, during the terms of Munusamy Naidu and Raja of Bobbili. During the civil disobedience campaign, the Justice governments did not protest the polices' harsh measures. However, with nationalism growing in the country and a string of Congress victories in local elections in 1934, the party reversed course again towards nationalism. Justice turned to Periyar E. V. Ramaswamy as its champion. Ramaswamy had drifted away in the early 1930s. In exchange for their support in campaigning and propaganda, the Justicites included the Self-Respect movement's socialist "Erode" program in their election manifesto. The new program had much in common with Congress' nationalist policies such as Prohibition.

Rumors about Justice Party

Justice party, which had captured power in 1920, claiming to represent all non-Brahmins in the presidency gradually lost the support of many communities. Under Theagaraya Chetty and later Panaganti Ramarayananigar, the party came to represent a few non-Brahmin Shudra castes, alienating

Scheduled Castes and Muslims. During the first Justice ministry, Muslim council members supported the government, but withdrew in a disagreement over appointments. Explaining the Muslim disillusionment with the Justice party, Abbas Ali Khan, a Muslim member said in late 1923:

I have found out from actual experience that whenever the question of experience came in, they always preferred a Mudaliar, a Nayudu, a Chettiar, or a Pillai but not a Muhamaddan

Justice party never regained Muslim support, because it failed to convince the group that high-caste Hindus had not received a disproportionate allocation of jobs opened up by communal reservation.

The fracture with Scheduled Castes came during the same time period. After T. M. Nair's death, Adi Dravidas were slowly pushed out of the party. The "Pulianthope incidents" (also called as the "B&C Mill strike") soured the relationship of non-Brahmin Sudra castes like Vellalas, Beri Chettis, Balija Naidus, Kammas and Kapus with Paraiyars. On 11 May 1921, bots and caste Hindus went on strike in the Carnatic textile mill. On 20 June, workers in Buckingham Mill followed. The Paraiyars were quickly persuaded to end the strike, but the caste Hindus continued to strike. This created animosity between the two groups. In an ensuing clash between the police and caste Hindus, several were killed. Justice leaders accused the Government of creating problems by pampering the Paraiyars. The party paper *Justice* claimed:

Public opinion...holds the present deplorable state of affairs has been brought about partly at all events by the undue

pampering of the Adi-Dravidas by the officials of the Labour department, and partly by the, perhaps, unconscious encouragement given to them by some police officers.

O. Thanikachala Chetty raised this issue in Madras Legislative Council on 12 October, which led to an acrimonious debate between Justice members and S. Srinivasa Iyengar, a Brahmin law member of the Governor's executive council and Lionel Davidson, the Home member. Davidson blamed Justice, saying, "it is no longer merely a labour dispute confined to strikers and non-strikers, but a faction fight inflamed by caste prejudices." M. C. Rajah, the main representative of Scheduled Castes in the Council agreed with Davidson. An Adi Dravida reader of the *Madras Mail* condemned Justice in the same way that T. M. Nair had once condemned the Brahmins. Soon after the Pulianthope incidents, Rajah and Paraiyars left the party.

Chapter 17

Kheda Satyagraha of 1918

The **Kheda Satyagraha of 1918**, in the Kheda district of Gujarat, India during the period of the British Raj, is a **Satyagraha** movement organised by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. It was a major revolt in the Indian independence movement. It was the second Satyagraha movement after Champaran Satyagraha. Gandhi organised this movement to support peasants

Leaders

In Gujarat, Mahatma Gandhi was chiefly the spiritual head of the struggle. His chief lieutenant, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and a close coterie of devoted by Gandhians, namely Indulal Yagnik, Shankarlal Banker, Mahadev Desai, Narhari Parikh, Mohanlal Pandya and Ravi Shankar Vyas toured the countryside, organised the villagers and gave them political leadership and direction. Many aroused Gujaratis from the cities of Ahmedabad and Vadodara joined the organizers of the revolt, but Gandhi and Patel resisted the involvement of Indians from other provinces, seeking to keep it a purely Gujarati struggle.

The Struggle

In 1918, the British Raj had increased the taxes of Kheda region by 23% while it was hit by Chappania famine and others leading to cholera and plague. Nadiad collector refused any aid

from 'anavari' system of taxes inspite of Sardar Patel and Mahatma's meetings. Patel and his colleagues organised a major tax revolt, and all the different ethnic and caste communities of (Kheda) rallied around it. The peasants of Kheda signed a petition calling for the tax for this year to be scrapped in wake of the famine. The government in Bombay rejected the charter. They warned that if the peasants did not pay, the lands and property would be confiscated and many arrested.

The tax withheld, the government's collectors and inspectors sent in thugs to seize property and cattle, while the police confiscated the lands and all agrarian property. The farmers did not resist arrest, nor retaliate to the force employed with violence. Instead, they used their cash and valuables to donate to the *Gujarat Sabha* which was officially organising the protest.

The revolt was astounding in terms of discipline and unity. Even when all their personal property, land and livelihood were seized, a vast majority of Kheda's farmers remained firmly united in the support of Patel. Gujaratis sympathetic to the revolt in other parts resisted the government machinery, and helped to shelter the relatives and property of the protesting peasants. Those Indians who sought to buy the confiscated lands were excluded from society. Although nationalists like Sardul Singh Caveeshar called for sympathetic revolts in other parts, Gandhi and Patel firmly rejected the idea.

Result

The Government finally sought to foster an honourable agreement for both parties. The tax for the year in question, and the next would be suspended, and the increase in rate reduced, while all confiscated property would be returned.

People also worked in cohesion to return the confiscated lands to their rightful owners. The ones who had bought the lands seized were influenced to return them, even though the British had officially said it would stand by the buyers.

Chapter 18

Jallianwala Bagh Massacre

The **Jallianwala Bagh massacre**, also known as the **Amritsar massacre**, took place on 13 April 1919. A large but peaceful crowd had gathered at the Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar, Punjab to protest against the arrest of pro-Indian independence leaders Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlu and Dr. Satya Pal. In response to the public gathering, the British Brigadier-General R. E. H. Dyer surrounded the Bagh with his soldiers. The Jallianwala Bagh could only be exited on one side, as its other three sides were enclosed by buildings. After blocking the exit with his troops, he ordered them to shoot at the crowd, continuing to fire even as protestors tried to flee. The troops kept on firing until their ammunition was exhausted. At least 1000 people were killed and over 1,200 other people were injured of whom 192 were seriously injured.

Responses polarized both the British and Indian peoples. Eminent author Rudyard Kipling declared at the time that Dyer "did his duty as he saw it". This incident shocked Rabindranath Tagore (the first Indian and Asian Nobel laureate) to such an extent that he renounced his knighthood and stated that "such mass murderers aren't worthy of giving any title to anyone".

The massacre caused a re-evaluation by the British Army of its military role against civilians to *minimal force whenever possible*, although later British actions during the Mau Mau insurgencies in Kenya have led historian Huw Bennett to note

that the new policy was not always carried out. The army was retrained and developed less violent tactics for crowd control.

The level of casual brutality, and lack of any accountability, stunned the entire nation, resulting in a wrenching loss of faith of the general Indian public in the intentions of the UK. The ineffective inquiry, together with the initial accolades for Dyer, fuelled great widespread anger against the British among the Indian populace, leading to the Non-cooperation movement of 1920–22. Some historians consider the episode a decisive step towards the end of British rule in India.

Britain never formally apologised for the massacre but expressed "regret" in 2019.

Background

Defence of India Act

During World War I, British India contributed to the British war effort by providing men and resources. Millions of Indian soldiers and labourers served in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, while both the Indian administration and the princes sent large supplies of food, money, and ammunition. However, Bengal and Punjab remained sources of anticolonial activities. Revolutionary attacks in Bengal, associated increasingly with disturbances in Punjab, were significant enough to nearly paralyse the regional administration. Of these, a pan-Indian mutiny in the British Indian Army planned for February 1915 was the most prominent amongst a number of plots formulated between 1914 and 1917 by Indian nationalists in India, the United States and Germany.

The planned February mutiny was ultimately thwarted when British intelligence infiltrated the Ghadarite movement, arresting key figures. Mutinies in smaller units and garrisons within India were also crushed. In the scenario of the British war effort and the threat from the militant movement in India, the Defence of India Act 1915 was passed limiting civil and political liberties. Michael O'Dwyer, then the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, was one of the strongest proponents of the act, in no small part due to the Ghadarite threat in the province.

The Hunter Commission report published the following year by the Government of India criticised both Dyer personally and also the Government of the Punjab for failing to compile a detailed casualty count, and quoted a figure offered by the Sewa Samati (a Social Services Society) of 379 identified dead, and approximately 1,200 wounded, of whom 192 were seriously injured. The casualty number estimated by the Indian National Congress was more than 1,500 injured, with approximately 1,000 dead.

Dyer was lauded for his actions by some in Britain, and indeed became a hero among many of those who were directly benefiting from the British Raj, such as members of the House of Lords. He was, however, widely denounced and criticised in the House of Commons, whose July 1920 committee of investigation censured him. Because he was a soldier acting on orders, he could not be tried for murder. The military chose not to bring him before a court-martial, and his only punishment was to be removed from his current appointment, turned down for a proposed promotion, and barred from further employment in India. Dyer subsequently retired from

the army and moved to England, where he died, unrepentant about his actions, in 1927.

The Rowlatt Act

The costs of the protracted war in money and manpower were great. High casualty rates in the war, increasing inflation after the end, compounded by heavy taxation, the deadly 1918 flu pandemic, and the disruption of trade during the war escalated human suffering in India. The pre-war Indian nationalist sentiment was revived as moderate and extremist groups of the Indian National Congress ended their differences to unify. In 1916, the Congress was successful in establishing the Lucknow Pact, a temporary alliance with the All-India Muslim League. British political concessions and Whitehall's India Policy after World War I began to change, with the passage of Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms, which initiated the first round of political reform in the Indian subcontinent in 1917. However, this was deemed insufficient in reforms by the Indian political movement. Mahatma Gandhi, recently returned to India, began emerging as an increasingly charismatic leader under whose leadership civil disobedience movements grew rapidly as an expression of political unrest.

The recently crushed Ghadar conspiracy, the presence of Mahendra Pratap's Kabul mission in Afghanistan (with possible links to then nascent Bolshevik Russia), and a still-active revolutionary movement especially in Punjab and Bengal (as well as worsening civil unrest throughout India) led to the appointment of a Sedition committee in 1918 chaired by Sidney Rowlatt, an English judge. It was tasked to evaluate German and Bolshevik links to the militant movement in India,

especially in Punjab and Bengal. On the recommendations of the committee, the Rowlatt Act, an extension of the Defence of India Act 1915, was enforced in India to limit civil liberties.

The passage of the Rowlatt Act in 1919 precipitated large scale political unrest throughout India. Ominously, in 1919, the Third Anglo-Afghan War began in the wake of Amir Habibullah's assassination and institution of Amanullah in a system strongly influenced by the political figures courted by the Kabul mission during the world war. As a reaction to the Rowlatt act, Muhammad Ali Jinnah resigned from his Bombay seat, writing in a letter to the Viceroy, "I, therefore, as a protest against the passing of the Bill and the manner in which it was passed tender my resignation.... ... a Government that passes or sanctions such a law in times of peace forfeits its claim to be called a civilized government". In India, Gandhi's call for protest against the Rowlatt Act achieved an unprecedented response of furious unrest and protests.

Before the massacre

Especially in Punjab, the situation was deteriorating rapidly, with disruptions of rail, telegraph, and communication systems. The movement was at its peak before the end of the first week of April, with some recording that "practically the whole of Lahore was on the streets, the immense crowd that passed through Anarkali was estimated to be around 20,000". Many officers in the Indian army believed revolt was possible, and they prepared for the worst. The British Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab, Michael O'Dwyer, is said to have believed that these were the early and ill-concealed signs of a conspiracy for a coordinated revolt planned around May, on

the lines of the 1857 revolt, at a time when British troops would have withdrawn to the hills for the summer.

The Amritsar massacre and other events at about the same time, have been described by some historians as the end result of a concerted plan by the Punjab administration to suppress such a conspiracy. James Houssemayne Du Boulay is said to have ascribed a direct relationship between the fear of a Ghadarite uprising in the midst of an increasingly tense situation in Punjab, and the British response that ended in the massacre.

On 10 April 1919, there was a protest at the residence of Miles Irving, the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar. The demonstration was to demand the release of two popular leaders of the Indian Independence Movement, Satya Pal and Saifuddin Kitchlew, who had been earlier arrested by the government and moved to a secret location. Both were proponents of the Satyagraha movement led by Gandhi. A military picket shot at the crowd, killing several protesters and setting off a series of violent events. Riotous crowds carried out arson attacks on British banks, killed several British people and assaulted two British females.

On 11 April, Marcella Sherwood, an elderly English missionary, fearing for the safety of the approximately 600 Indian children under her care, was on her way to shut the schools and send the children home. While travelling through a narrow street called the Kucha Kurrichhan, she was caught by a mob who violently attacked her. She was rescued by some local Indians, including the father of one of her pupils, who hid her from the mob and then smuggled her to the safety of Gobindgarh Fort.

After visiting Sherwood on 19 April, the Raj's local commander, Colonel Dyer, enraged at the assault, issued an order requiring every Indian man using that street to crawl its length on his hands and knees as a punishment. Colonel Dyer later explained to a British inspector: "Some Indians crawl face downwards in front of their gods. I wanted them to know that a British woman is as sacred as a Hindu god and therefore they have to crawl in front of her, too." He also authorised the indiscriminate, public whipping of locals who came within lathi length of British policemen. Marcella Sherwood later defended Colonel Dyer, describing him "as the saviour of the Punjab".

For the next two days, the city of Amritsar was quiet, but violence continued in other parts of Punjab. Railway lines were cut, telegraph posts destroyed, government buildings burnt, and three Europeans murdered. By 13 April, the British government had decided to put most of Punjab under martial law. The legislation restricted a number of civil liberties, including freedom of assembly; gatherings of more than four people were banned.

On the evening of 12 April, the leaders of the *hartal* in Amritsar held a meeting at the Hindu College - Dhab Khatikan. At the meeting, Hans Raj, an aide to Kitchlew, announced a public protest meeting would be held at 18:30 the following day in the Jallianwala Bagh, to be organised by Muhammad Bashir and chaired by a senior and respected Congress Party leader, Lal Kanhyalal Bhatia. A series of resolutions protesting against the Rowlatt Act, the recent actions of the British authorities and the detention of Satyapal and Kitchlew was drawn up and approved, after which the meeting adjourned.

Massacre

On Sunday, 13 April 1919, Dyer, convinced a major insurrection could take place, banned all meetings. This notice was not widely disseminated, and many villagers gathered in the Bagh to celebrate the important Hindu and Sikh festival of Baisakhi, and peacefully protest the arrest and deportation of two national leaders, Satyapal and Saifuddin Kitchlew. Dyer and his troops entered the garden, blocking the main entrance behind them, took up position on a raised bank, and with no warning opened fire on the crowd for about ten minutes, directing their bullets largely towards the few open gates through which people were trying to flee, until the ammunition supply was almost exhausted. The following day Dyer stated in a report that "I have heard that between 200 and 300 of the crowd were killed. My party fired 1,650 rounds".

At 9:00 on the morning of 13 April 1919, the traditional festival of Baisakhi. Reginald Dyer, the acting military commander for Amritsar and its environs, proceeded through the city with several city officials, announcing the implementation of a pass system to enter or leave Amritsar, a curfew beginning at 20:00 that night and a ban on all processions and public meetings of four or more persons. The proclamation was read and explained in English, Urdu, Hindi, and Punjabi, but few paid it any heed or appear to have learned of it later. Meanwhile, local police had received intelligence of the planned meeting in the Jallianwala Bagh through word of mouth and plainclothes detectives in the crowds. At 12:40, Dyer was informed of the meeting and returned to his base at around 13:30 to decide how to handle

it. By mid-afternoon, thousands of Indians had gathered in the Jallianwala Bagh (garden) near the Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar. Many who were present had earlier worshipped at the Golden Temple, and were passing through the Bagh on their way home. The Bagh was (and remains today) an open area of six to seven acres, roughly 200 yards by 200 yards in size, and surrounded on all sides by walls roughly 10 feet in height. Balconies of houses three to four stories tall overlooked the Bagh, and five narrow entrances opened onto it, several with lockable gates. During the rainy season, it was planted with crops, but served as a local meeting and recreation area for much of the year. In the center of the Bagh was a *samadhi* (cremation site) and a large well partly filled with water which measured about 20 feet in diameter.

Apart from pilgrims, Amritsar had filled up over the preceding days with farmers, traders, and merchants attending the annual Baisakhi horse and cattle fair. The city police closed the fair at 14:00 that afternoon, resulting in a large number of people drifting into the Jallianwala Bagh.

Dyer arranged for an aeroplane to overfly the Bagh and estimate the size of the crowd, that he reported was about 6,000, while the Hunter Commission estimates a crowd of 10,000 to 20,000 had assembled by the time of Dyer's arrival. Colonel Dyer and Deputy Commissioner Irving, the senior civil authority for Amritsar, took no actions to prevent the crowd assembling, or to peacefully disperse the crowds. This would later be a serious criticism levelled at both Dyer and Irving.

An hour after the meeting began as scheduled at 17:30, Colonel Dyer arrived at the Bagh with a group of 50 troops,

including 25 Gurkhas of 1/9 Gurkha Rifles (1st battalion, 9th Gurkha Rifles), 25 Pathans and Baluch and 59th Sindh Rifles. Fifty of them were armed with .303 Lee–Enfield bolt-action rifles. It is not clear whether Dyer had specifically chosen troops from that ethnic group due to their proven loyalty to the British or that they were simply the units most readily available. He had also brought two armoured cars armed with machine guns; however, the vehicles were left outside, as they were unable to enter the Bagh through the narrow entrances. The Jallianwala Bagh was surrounded on all sides by houses and buildings and had only five narrow entrances, most kept permanently locked. The main entrance was relatively wide, but was guarded heavily by the troops backed by the armoured vehicles.

Dyer, without warning the crowd to disperse, blocked the main exits. He stated later that this act "was not to disperse the meeting but to punish the Indians for disobedience." Dyer ordered his troops to begin shooting toward the densest sections of the crowd in front of the available narrow exits, where panicked crowds were trying to leave the Bagh. Firing continued for approximately ten minutes. Unarmed civilians including as men, women, elderly people and children were killed. This incident came to be known as the Amritsar massacre. Cease-fire was ordered only when ammunition supplies were almost exhausted, after approximately 1,650 rounds were spent.

Apart from the many deaths directly from the shooting, a number of people died of crushing in the stampedes at the narrow gates or by jumping into the solitary well on the compound to escape the shooting. A plaque, placed at the site

after independence, states that 120 bodies were removed from the well. The wounded could not be moved from where they had fallen, as a curfew was declared, and more who had been injured then died during the night.

Casualties

The number of total casualties is disputed. The following morning's newspapers quoted an erroneous initial figure of 200 casualties, offered by the Associated Press, e.g.

“News has been received from the Punjab that the Amritsar mob has again broken out in a violent attack against the authorities. The rebels were repulsed by the military and they suffered 200 casualties (sic).”

- —□ *The Times of India, 14 April 1919*

The Government of Punjab, criticised by the Hunter Commission for not gathering accurate figures, only offered the same approximate figure of 200. When interviewed by the members of the committee a senior civil servant in Punjab admitted that the actual figure could be higher. The Sewa Samiti society independently carried out an investigation and reported 379 deaths, and 192 seriously wounded. The Hunter Commission based their figures of 379 deaths, and approximately 3 times this injured on this, suggesting 1500 casualties. At the meeting of the Imperial Legislative Council held on 12 September 1919, the investigation led by Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya concluded that there were 42 boys among the dead, the youngest of them only 7 months old. The Hunter commission confirmed the deaths of 337 men, 41 boys

and a six-week old baby. In July 1919, three months after the massacre, officials were tasked with finding who had been killed by inviting inhabitants of the city to volunteer information about those who had died. This information was incomplete due to fear that those who participated would be identified as having been present at the meeting, and some of the dead may not have had close relations in the area.

Winston Churchill reported nearly 400 slaughtered, and 3 or 4 times the number wounded to the Westminster Parliament, on 8 July 1920.

Since the official figures were obviously flawed regarding the size of the crowd (6,000–20,000), the number of rounds fired and the period of shooting, the Indian National Congress instituted a separate inquiry of its own, with conclusions that differed considerably from the British Government's inquiry. The casualty number quoted by the Congress was more than 1,500, with approximately 1,000 being killed.

Indian nationalist Swami Shraddhanand wrote to Gandhi of 1500 deaths in the incident. The British Government tried to suppress information of the massacre, but news spread in India and widespread outrage ensued; details of the massacre did not become known in Britain until December 1919.

Aftermath

This event caused many moderate Indians to abandon their previous loyalty to the British and become nationalists distrustful of British rule.

Colonel Dyer reported to his superiors that he had been "confronted by a revolutionary army", to which Major General William Beynon replied: "Your action correct and Lieutenant Governor approves." O'Dwyer requested that martial law should be imposed upon Amritsar and other areas, and this was granted by Viceroy Lord Chelmsford.

Both Secretary of State for War Winston Churchill and former Prime Minister H. H. Asquith, however, openly condemned the attack, Churchill referring to it as "unutterably monstrous", while Asquith called it "one of the worst, most dreadful, outrages in the whole of our history". Winston Churchill, in the House of Commons debate of 8 July 1920, said, "The crowd was unarmed, except with bludgeons. It was not attacking anybody or anything... When fire had been opened upon it to disperse it, it tried to run away. Pinned up in a narrow place considerably smaller than Trafalgar Square, with hardly any exits, and packed together so that one bullet would drive through three or four bodies, the people ran madly this way and the other. When the fire was directed upon the centre, they ran to the sides. The fire was then directed to the sides. Many threw themselves down on the ground, the fire was then directed down on the ground. This was continued to 8 to 10 minutes, and it stopped only when the ammunition had reached the point of exhaustion."

After Churchill's speech in the House of Commons debate, MPs voted 247 to 37 against Dyer and in support of the Government. Cloake reports that despite the official rebuke, many Britons still "thought him a hero for saving the rule of British law in India."

Rabindranath Tagore received the news of the massacre by 22 May 1919. He tried to arrange a protest meeting in Calcutta and finally decided to renounce his British knighthood as "a symbolic act of protest". In the repudiation letter, dated 31 May 1919 and addressed to the Viceroy of India, Lord Chelmsford, he wrote "I ... wish to stand, shorn, of all special distinctions, by the side of those of my countrymen who, for their so called insignificance, are liable to suffer degradation not fit for human beings."

Gupta describes the letter written by Tagore as "historic". He writes that Tagore "renounced his knighthood in protest against the inhuman cruelty of the British Army to the people of Punjab", and he quotes Tagore's letter to the Viceroy "The enormity of the measures taken by the Government in Punjab for quelling some local disturbances has, with a rude shock, revealed to our minds the helplessness of our position as British subjects in India ... [T]he very least that I can do for my country is to take all consequences upon myself in giving voice to the protest of the millions of my countrymen, surprised into dumb anguish of terror. The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in the incongruous context of humiliation..." *English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore Miscellaneous Writings Vol# 8* carries a facsimile of this hand written letter.

Hunter Commission

On 14 October 1919, after orders issued by the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, the Government of India announced the formation of a committee of inquiry into the events in Punjab. Referred to as the Disorders Inquiry

Committee, it was later more widely known as the Hunter Commission. It was named after the chairman, William, Lord Hunter, former Solicitor-General for Scotland and Senator of the College of Justice in Scotland. The stated purpose of the commission was to "investigate the recent disturbances in Bombay, Delhi and Punjab, about their causes, and the measures taken to cope with them". The members of the commission were:

- Lord Hunter, Chairman of the Commission
- Mr Justice George C. Rankin of Calcutta
- Sir Chimanlal Harilal Setalvad, Vice-Chancellor of Bombay University and advocate of the Bombay High Court
- W.F. Rice, member of the Home Department
- Major-General Sir George Barrow, KCB, KCMG, GOC Peshawar Division
- Pandit Jagat Narayan, lawyer and Member of the Legislative Council of the United Provinces
- Thomas Smith, Member of the Legislative Council of the United Provinces
- Sardar Sahibzada Sultan Ahmad Khan, lawyer from Gwalior State
- H.C. Stokes, Secretary of the Commission and member of the Home Department

After meeting in New Delhi on 29 October, the commission took statements from witnesses over the following weeks. Witnesses were called in Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bombay, and Lahore. Although the commission as such was not a formally constituted court of law, meaning witnesses were not subject to questioning under oath, its members managed to elicit

detailed accounts and statements from witnesses by rigorous cross-questioning. In general, it was felt the commission had been very thorough in its enquiries. After reaching Lahore in November, the commission wound up its initial inquiries by examining the principal witnesses to the events in Amritsar. The commission held its official sittings in the Lahore Town Hall building near Anarkali Bazaar.

On 19 November, Dyer was ordered to appear before the commission. Although his military superiors had suggested he be represented by legal counsel at the inquiry, Dyer refused this suggestion and appeared alone. Initially questioned by Lord Hunter, Dyer stated he had come to know about the meeting at the Jallianwala Bagh at 12:40 hours that day but did not attempt to prevent it. He stated that he had gone to the Bagh with the deliberate intention of opening fire if he found a crowd assembled there. Patterson says Dyer explained his sense of honour to the Hunter Commission by saying, "I think it quite possible that I could have dispersed the crowd without firing, but they would have come back again and laughed, and I would have made, what I consider, a fool of myself." Dyer further reiterated his belief that the crowd in the Bagh was one of "rebels who were trying to isolate my forces and cut me off from other supplies. Therefore, I considered it my duty to fire on them and to fire well".

After Mr. Justice Rankin had questioned Dyer, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad enquired:

Sir Chimanlal: Supposing the passage was sufficient to allow the armoured cars to go in, would you have opened fire with the machine guns?

Dyer: I think probably, yes.

Sir Chimanlal: In that case, the casualties would have been much higher?

Dyer: Yes.

Dyer further stated that his intentions had been to strike terror throughout Punjab and in doing so, reduce the moral stature of the "rebels". He said he did not stop the shooting when the crowd began to disperse because he thought it was his duty to keep shooting until the crowd dispersed, and that minimal shooting would not prove effective. In fact, he continued the shooting until the ammunition was almost exhausted. He stated that he did not make any effort to tend to the wounded after the shooting: "Certainly not. It was not my job. Hospitals were open and they could have gone there."

Exhausted from the rigorous cross-examination questioning and unwell, Dyer was then released. Over the next several months, while the commission wrote its final report, the British press, as well as many MPs, turned increasingly hostile towards Dyer as the full extent of the massacre and his statements at the inquiry became widely known. Lord Chelmsford refused to comment until the Commission had been wound up. In the meanwhile, Dyer became seriously ill with jaundice and arteriosclerosis, and was hospitalised.

Although the members of the commission had been divided by racial tensions following Dyer's statement, and though the Indian members had written a separate, minority report, the final report, comprising six volumes of evidence and released on 8 March 1920, unanimously condemned Dyer's actions. In

"continuing firing as long as he did, it appears to us that General Dyer committed a grave error." Dissenting members argued that the martial law regime's use of force was wholly unjustified. "General Dyer thought he had crushed the rebellion and Sir Michael O'Dwyer was of the same view", they wrote, "(but) there was no rebellion which required to be crushed." The report concluded that:

- Lack of notice to disperse from the Bagh, in the beginning, was an error.
- The length of firing showed a grave error.
- Dyer's motive of producing a sufficient moral effect was to be condemned.
- Dyer had overstepped the bounds of his authority.
- There had been no conspiracy to overthrow British rule in the Punjab.

The minority report of the Indian members further added that:

- Proclamations banning public meetings were insufficiently distributed.
- Innocent people were in the crowd, and there had been no violence in the Bagh beforehand.
- Dyer should have either ordered his troops to help the wounded or instructed the civil authorities to do so.
- Dyer's actions had been "inhuman and un-British" and had greatly injured the image of British rule in India.

The Hunter Commission did not impose any penal or disciplinary action because Dyer's actions were condoned by various superiors (later upheld by the Army Council). The Legal

and Home Members on the Viceroy's Executive Council ultimately decided that, though Dyer had acted in a callous and brutal way, military or legal prosecution would not be possible due to political reasons. However, he was finally found guilty of a mistaken notion of duty and relieved of his command on 23 March. He had been recommended for a CBE as a result of his service in the Third Afghan War; this recommendation was cancelled on 29 March 1920.

Reginald Dyer was disciplined by being removed from his appointment, was passed over for promotion and was prohibited from further employment in India. He died in 1927.

Demonstration at Gujranwala

Two days later, on 15 April, demonstrations occurred in Gujranwala protesting against the killings at Amritsar. Police and aircraft were used against the demonstrators, resulting in 12 deaths and 27 injuries. The Officer Commanding the Royal Air Force in India, Brigadier General N D K MacEwen stated later that:

I think we can fairly claim to have been of great use in the late riots, particularly at Gujranwala, where the crowd when looking at its nastiest was absolutely dispersed by a machine using bombs and Lewis guns.

Assassination of Michael O'Dwyer

On 13 March 1940, at Caxton Hall in London, Udham Singh, an Indian independence activist from Sunam who had witnessed the events in Amritsar and had himself been wounded, shot and killed Michael O'Dwyer, the Lieutenant-

Governor of Punjab at the time of the massacre, who had approved Dyer's action and was believed to have been the main planner.

Some, such as the nationalist newspaper *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, made statements supporting the killing. The common people and revolutionaries glorified the action of Udham Singh. Much of the press worldwide recalled the story of Jallianwala Bagh, and alleged O'Dwyer to have been responsible for the massacre. Singh was termed a "fighter for freedom" and his action was referred to in *The Times* newspaper as "an expression of the pent-up fury of the down-trodden Indian People". Reporter and historian William L. Shirer wrote the next day, "Most of the other Indians I know [other than Gandhi] will feel this is divine retribution. O'Dwyer bore a share of responsibility in the 1919 Amritsar massacre, in which Gen. Dyer shot 1,500 Indians in cold blood. When I was at Amritsar eleven years after [the massacre] in 1930, the bitterness still stuck in the people there."

In Fascist countries, the incident was used for anti-British propaganda: *Bergeret*, published in large scale from Rome at that time, while commenting upon the Caxton Hall assassination, ascribed the greatest significance to the circumstance and praised the action of Udham Singh as courageous. The *Berliner Börsen Zeitung* termed the event "The torch of Indian freedom". German radio reportedly broadcast: "The cry of tormented people spoke with shots."

At a public meeting in Kanpur, a spokesman had stated that "at last an insult and humiliation of the nation had been avenged". Similar sentiments were expressed in numerous

other places across the country. Fortnightly reports of the political situation in Bihar mentioned: "It is true that we had no love lost for Sir Michael. The indignities he heaped upon our countrymen in Punjab have not been forgotten." In its 18 March 1940 issue *Amrita Bazar Patrika* wrote: "O'Dwyer's name is connected with Punjab incidents which India will never forget." The *New Statesman* observed: "British conservatism has not discovered how to deal with Ireland after two centuries of rule. Similar comment may be made on British rule in India. Will the historians of the future have to record that it was not the Nazis but the British ruling class which destroyed the British Empire?" Singh had told the court at his trial:

I did it because I had a grudge against him. He deserved it. He was the real culprit. He wanted to crush the spirit of my people, so I have crushed him. For full 21 years, I have been trying to wreak vengeance. I am happy that I have done the job. I am not scared of death. I am dying for my country. I have seen my people starving in India under the British rule. I have protested against this, it was my duty. What greater honour could be bestowed on me than death for the sake of my motherland?

Singh was hanged for the murder on 31 July 1940. At that time, many, including Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi, condemned the murder as senseless even if it was courageous. In 1952, Nehru (by then Prime Minister) honoured Udham Singh with the following statement, which appeared in the daily *Partap*:

I salute Shaheed-i-Azam Udham Singh with reverence who had kissed the noose so that we may be free.

Soon after this recognition by the Prime Minister, Udham Singh received the title of *Shaheed*, a name given to someone who has attained martyrdom or done something heroic on behalf of their country or religion.

Monument and legacy

A trust was founded in 1920 to build a memorial at the site after a resolution was passed by the Indian National Congress. In 1923, the trust purchased land for the project. A memorial, designed by American architect Benjamin Polk, was built on the site and inaugurated by President of India Rajendra Prasad on 13 April 1961, in the presence of Jawaharlal Nehru and other leaders. A flame was later added to the site.

The bullet marks remain on the walls and adjoining buildings to this day. The well into which many people jumped and drowned attempting to save themselves from the bullets is also a protected monument inside the park.

Formation of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee

Shortly following the massacre, the official Sikh clergy of the Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) in Amritsar conferred upon Colonel Dyer the Saropa (the mark of distinguished service to the Sikh faith or, in general, humanity), sending shock waves among the Sikh community. On 12 October 1920, students and faculty of the Amritsar Khalsa College called a meeting to strengthen the Nationalistic Movement. The students pushed for an anti-British movement and the result was the formation

of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabhandak Committee on 15 November 1920 to manage and to implement reforms in Sikh shrines.

Visit by Queen Elizabeth II

Although Queen Elizabeth II had not made any comments on the incident during her state visits in 1961 and 1983, she spoke about the events at a state banquet in India on 13 October 1997:

It is no secret that there have been some difficult episodes in our past – Jallianwala Bagh, which I shall visit tomorrow, is a distressing example. But history cannot be rewritten, however much we might sometimes wish otherwise. It has its moments of sadness, as well as gladness. We must learn from the sadness and build on the gladness.

On 14 October 1997, Queen Elizabeth II visited Jallianwala Bagh and paid her respects with a 30-second moment of silence. During the visit, she wore a dress of a colour described as pink apricot or saffron, which was of religious significance to the Sikhs. She removed her shoes while visiting the monument and laid a wreath at the monument.

While some Indians welcomed the expression of regret and sadness in the Queen's statement, others criticised it for being less than an apology. The then Prime Minister of India Inder Kumar Gujral defended the Queen, saying that the Queen herself had not even been born at the time of the events and should not be required to apologise.

The Queen's 1997 statement was not without controversies. During her visit there were protests in the city of Amritsar, with people waving black flags and chanting the insult "Queen, go back." Queen Elizabeth and the Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh merely signed the visitor's book. The fact that they did not leave any comment, regretting the incident was criticized.

During the same visit, minutes after Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip stood in silence at the Flame of Liberty, the Prince and his guide, Partha Sarathi Mukherjee, reached a plaque recording the events of the 1919 massacre. Among the many things found on the plaque was the assertion that 2,000 people were killed in the massacre. (The precise text is: "This place is saturated with the blood of about two thousand Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims who were martyred in a non-violent struggle." It goes on to describe the events of that day.) "That's a bit exaggerated," Philip told Mukherjee, "it must include the wounded." Mukherjee asked Philip how he had come to this conclusion. "I was told about the killings by General Dyer's son," Mukherjee recalls the Duke as saying, "I'd met him while I was in the Navy." These statements by Philip drew widespread condemnation in India.

Indian journalist Praveen Swami wrote in the *Frontline* magazine: "(The fact that)... this was the solitary comment Prince Philip had to offer after his visit to Jallianwala Bagh... (and that) it was the only aspect of the massacre that exercised his imagination, caused offence. It suggested that the death of 379 people was in some way inadequate to appall the royal conscience, in the way the death of 2,000 people would have. Perhaps more important of all, the staggering arrogance that

Prince Philip displayed in citing his source of information on the tragedy made clear the lack of integrity in the wreath-laying."

Demands for apology

There are long-standing demands in India that Britain should apologize for the massacre. Winston Churchill, on 8 July 1920, urged the House of Commons to punish Colonel Dyer. Churchill, who described the massacre as "monstrous", succeeded in persuading the House to forcibly retire Colonel Dyer, but would have preferred to have seen the colonel disciplined.

An apology was made at the time in a statement made by Sir William Vincent, the home member of the Viceroy's Council in a debate on the Punjab disturbances. This made clear the deep regret of the Government of India. It made clear that the actions taken were wrong and repudiated by the Government. It was called a noteworthy case of improper action; "overdrastic and severe action, excessive use of force and acts reasonably interpreted as designed to humiliate Indian people cannot but be regarded as unpardonable (and) morally indefensible." In addition, the Indian Government reported in despatches to the UK government that the actions of General Dyer were far beyond what was necessary. Also, General Dyer acted far beyond the principle of using reasonable and minimum force. Sir William Vincent stated that the actions of Dyer were of deep regret. A manual of instructions was created post the massacre to instruct officers in their use of force and this was to be avoided unless absolutely necessary.

In February 2013 David Cameron became the first serving British Prime Minister to visit the site, laid a wreath at the memorial, and described the Amritsar massacre as "a deeply shameful event in British history, one that Winston Churchill rightly described at that time as monstrous. We must never forget what happened here and we must ensure that the UK stands up for the right of peaceful protests". Cameron did not deliver an official apology. This was criticized by some commentators. Writing in *The Telegraph*, Sankarshan Thakur wrote, "Over nearly a century now British protagonists have approached the 1919 massacre ground of Jallianwala Bagh thumbing the thesaurus for an appropriate word to pick. 'Sorry' has not been among them."

The issue of apology resurfaced during the 2016 India visit of Prince William and Kate Middleton when both decided to skip the memorial site from their itinerary. In 2017, Indian author and politician Shashi Tharoor suggested that the Jalianwala Bagh centenary in 2019 could be a "good time" for the British to apologise to the Indians for wrongs committed during the colonial rule. Visiting the memorial on 6 December 2017, London's mayor Sadiq Khan called on the British government to apologize for the massacre.

In February 2019 the British House of Lords began discussing and debating the massacre.

On 12 April 2019, a ceremony was held in Amritsar just before the centenary anniversary of the massacre. Although she did not issue an apology, British Prime Minister Theresa May called the 1919 shooting of unarmed civilians a "shameful scar", echoing the 2013 statement, made by David Cameron.

National Memorial Event in the UK

On 15 April 2019, a national memorial event was held in the British Parliament hosted by Jasvir Singh and organised by City Sikhs and the Faiths Forum for London entitled 'Jallianwala Bagh 100 Years On', where testimonies of survivors were read out from the book 'Eyewitness at Amritsar', there were traditional musical performances, and a minute's silence was held to remember those who had been killed a century earlier.

The Asian Awards

In April 2019 The Asian Awards honoured the Martyrs of Jallianwala Bagh with the prestigious Founders Award. It was accepted by the nephew of freedom fighter Bhagat Singh, Dr Jagmohan Singh.

In popular culture

- 1932: Noted Hindi poet Subhadra Kumari Chauhan wrote a poem, "Jallianwalla Bagh Mein Basant", (Spring in the Jallianwalla Bagh) in memory of the slain in her anthology *Bikhre Moti* (Scattered Pearls).
- 1977: The massacre is portrayed in the Hindi movie *Jallian Wala Bagh* starring Vinod Khanna, Parikshat Sahni, Shabana Azmi, Sampooran Singh Gulzar, and Deepti Naval. The film was written, produced and directed by Balraj Tah with the screenplay by Gulzar. The film is a part-biopic of Udham Singh (played by Parikshit Sahni) who assassinated Michael O'Dwyer

in 1940. Portions of the film were shot in the UK notably in Coventry and surrounding areas.

- 1981: Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* portrays the massacre from the perspective of a doctor in the crowd, saved from the gunfire by a well-timed sneeze.
- 1982: The massacre is depicted in Richard Attenborough's film *Gandhi* with the role of General Dyer played by Edward Fox. The film depicts most of the details of the massacre as well as the subsequent inquiry by the Montague commission.
- 1984: The story of the massacre also occurs in the 7th episode of Granada TV's 1984 series *The Jewel in the Crown*, recounted by the fictional widow of a British officer who is haunted by the inhumanity of it and who tells how she came to be reviled because she ignored the honours to Dyer and instead donated money to the Indian victims.
- 2002: In the Hindi film *The Legend of Bhagat Singh* directed by Rajkumar Santoshi, the massacre is reconstructed with the child Bhagat Singh as a witness, eventually inspiring him to become a revolutionary in the Indian independence movement.
- 2006: Portions of the Hindi film *Rang De Basanti* nonlinearly depict the massacre and the influence it had on the freedom fighters.
- 2009: Bali Rai's novel, *City of Ghosts*, is partly set around the massacre, blending fact with fiction and magical realism. Dyer, Udham Singh and other real historical figures feature in the story.
- 2012: A few shots of the massacre are captured in the movie *Midnight's Children*, a Canadian-British

film adaptation of Salman Rushdie's 1981 novel of the same name directed by Deepa Mehta.

- 2014: The British period drama *Downton Abbey* makes a reference to the massacre in the eighth episode of season 5 as "that terrible Amritsar business". The characters of Lord Grantham, Isobel Crawley and Shrimpy express their disapproval of the massacre when Lord Sinderby supports it.
- 2017: The Hindi language film *Phillauri* references the massacre as the reason the spirit of the primary character portrayed by Anushka Sharma cannot find peace as her lover lost his life in Amritsar and was unable to return to their village for their wedding. The movie depicts the massacre and the following stampede, with the climax shot on-location at the modern-day Jallianwallah Bagh memorial.
- 2019: The UK's BBC broadcast historian Dr. Zareer Masani's *Amritsar 1919: Remembering a British Massacre* was broadcast.
- 2019: the UK's Channel 4 broadcast "The Massacre That Shook the Empire" on Saturday 13 April at 9PM in which writer Sathnam Sanghera examined the 1919 massacre and its legacy.
- 2019: The UK's BBC broadcast a special Thought for the Day on Friday 12 April presented by Jasvir Singh to mark the anniversary.

Chapter 19

Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms

The **Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms** or more briefly known as the **Mont–Ford Reforms**, were introduced by the colonial government to introduce self-governing institutions gradually in British India. The reforms take their name from Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India from 1917 to 1922, and Lord Chelmsford, Viceroy of India between 1916 and 1921. The reforms were outlined in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, prepared in 1918, and formed the basis of the Government of India Act 1919. These are related to constitutional reforms. Indian nationalists considered that the reforms did not go far enough, while British conservatives were critical of them. The important features of this act were that:

1. The Imperial Legislative Council was now to consist of two houses: the Central Legislative Assembly and the Council of State.
2. The provinces were to follow the *Dual Government System* or *dyarchy*.

Background

Edwin Montagu became Secretary of State for India in June 1917 after Austen Chamberlain resigned following the capture of Kut by the Turks in 1916 and the capture of an Indian army staged there. He put before the British Cabinet a proposed statement regarding his intention to work towards the gradual development of free institutions in India with a view to

ultimate self-government. Lord Curzon thought that this gave Montagu too much emphasis on working towards self-government and suggested that he work towards increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. The Cabinet approved the statement with Curzon's amendment incorporated in place of Montagu's original statement.

Reforms

In late 1917, Montagu went to India to meet Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy of India, and leaders of Indian community, to discuss the introduction of limited self-government to India, and the protection rights of minority communities. He drew up a report, with Bhupendra Nath Bose, Lord Donoghmore, William Duke and Charles Roberts.

The Report went before Cabinet on 24 May and 7 June 1918 and was embodied in the Government of India Act of 1919. These reforms represented the maximum concessions the British were prepared to make at that time. The franchise was extended, and increased authority was given to central and provincial legislative councils, but the viceroy remained responsible only to London.

The changes at the provincial level were very significant, as the provincial legislative councils contained a considerable majority of elected members. In a system called "dyarchy," the nation-building departments of government were placed under ministers who were individually responsible to the legislature.

The departments that made up the "steel frame" of British rule were retained by executive councilors who were nominated by the Governor. They were often, but not always, British and who were responsible to the governor. The Act of 1919 introduced Diarchy in the provinces. Accordingly, the Rights of the Central and Provincial Governments were divided in clear-cut terms. The central list included rights over defence, foreign affairs, telegraphs, railways, postal, foreign trade etc. The provincial list dealt with the affairs like health, sanitation, education, public work, irrigation, jail, police, justice etc. The powers which were not included in the state list vested in the hands of the Centre. In case of any conflict between the 'reserved' and 'unreserved' powers of the State (the former included finance, police, revenue, publication of books, etc. and the latter included health, sanitation, local-self government etc.), the Governor had its final say. In 1921, the "Diarchy" was installed in Bengal, Madras, Bombay, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, the Punjab, Bihar and Orissa, and Assam; in 1932 it was extended to the North-West Frontier Province.

In 1921 another change recommended by the report was carried out when elected local councils were set up in rural areas, and during the 1920s urban municipal corporations were made more democratic and "Indianized."

The main provisions were the following:

- The secretary of state would control affairs relating to Government of India.
- The Imperial Legislative Council would comprise two chambers- the Council of State and the Central Legislative Assembly.

- The Imperial Legislative Council was empowered to enact laws on any matter for whole of India.
- The Governor General was given powers to summon, prorogue, dissolve the Chambers, and to promulgate Ordinances.
- The number of Indians in Viceroy's Executive Council would be three out of eight members.
- Establishment of bicameral Provincial Legislative councils.
- Dyarchy in the Provinces-
- Reserved subjects like Finance, Law and Order, Army, Police etc.
- Transferred subjects like Public Health, Education, Agriculture, Local Self-government etc.
- There would henceforth be direct election and an extension of Communal franchise.
- A council of princes was also set up with 108 members to allow princes to debate matters of importance. But it had no power and some princes didn't even bother to attend what was little more than a 'talking shop'

Reception in India

Many Indians had fought with the British in the First World War and they expected much greater concessions. The Indian National Congress and the Muslim League had recently come together demanding self-rule. The 1919 reforms did not satisfy political demands in India. The British repressed opposition, and restrictions on the press and on movement were re-enacted through the Rowlatt Acts introduced in 1919. These measures

were rammed through the Legislative Council with the unanimous opposition of the Indian members. Several members of the council including Jinnah resigned in protest. These measures were widely seen throughout India as a betrayal of the strong support given by the population for the British war effort.

Gandhi launched a nationwide protest against the Rowlatt Acts with the strongest level of protest in the Punjab. The situation worsened in Amritsar in April 1919, when General Dyer ordered his troops to open fire on demonstrators hemmed into a tight square, resulting in the deaths of at least 379 civilians. Montagu ordered an inquiry into the events at Amritsar by Lord Hunter. The Hunter Inquiry recommended that General Dyer, who commanded the troops, be dismissed, leading to Dyer's sacking. Many British citizens supported Dyer, whom they considered had received unfair treatment from the Hunter Inquiry. The conservative *Morning Post* newspaper collected a subscription of £26,000 for General Dyer and Sir Edward Carson moved a censure motion on Montagu which was nearly successful. Montagu was saved largely due to a strong speech in his defence by Winston Churchill.

The Amritsar massacre further inflamed Indian nationalist sentiment ending the initial response of reluctant co-operation. At the grass roots level, many young Indians wanted faster progress towards Indian independence and were disappointed by lack of advancement as Britons returned to their former positions in the administration. At the Indian National Congress annual session in September 1920, delegates supported Gandhi's proposal of swaraj or self-rule – preferably within the British Empire or out of it if necessary. The

proposal was to be implemented through a policy of non-cooperation with British rule meaning that Congress did not field candidates in the first elections held under the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms in 1921.

Review

The Montagu-Chelmsford report stated that there should be a review after 10 years. Sir John Simon headed the committee (Simon Commission) responsible for the review, which recommended further constitutional change. Three round table conferences were held in London in 1930, 1931 and 1932 with representation of the major interests. Mahatma Gandhi attended the 1931 round table after negotiations with the British Government. But Gandhi's communal attitude was a hindrance to any decision being taken. The major disagreement between the Indian National Congress and the British was separate electorates for each community which Congress opposed but which were retained in Ramsay MacDonald's Communal Award. A new Government of India Act 1935 was passed continuing the move towards self-government first made in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report.

Chapter 20

Rowlatt Act

The **Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act of 1919**, popularly known as the **Rowlatt Act**, was a legislative council act passed by the Imperial Legislative Council in Delhi on 18 March 1919, indefinitely extending the emergency measures of preventive indefinite detention, incarceration without trial and judicial review enacted in the Defence of India Act 1915 during the First World War. It was enacted in light of a perceived threat from revolutionary nationalists to organisations of re-engaging in similar conspiracies as during the war which the Government felt the lapse of the Defence of India Act would enable.

Purpose and introduction

The British colonial government passed the Rowlatt Act which gave powers to the police to arrest any person without any reason whatsoever. The purpose of the Act was to curb the growing nationalist upsurge in the country. Gandhi called upon the people to perform *satyagraha* against the act.

Passed on the recommendations of the Rowlatt Committee and named after its president, Sir Sidney Rowlatt, the act effectively authorized the colonial government to imprison any person suspected of terrorism living in British India for up to two years without a trial, and gave the colonial authorities power to deal with all revolutionary activities.

The unpopular legislation provided for stricter control of the press, arrests without warrant, indefinite detention without trial, and juryless *in camera* trials for proscribed political acts. The accused were denied the right to know the accusers and the evidence used in the trial. Those convicted were required to deposit securities upon release, and were prohibited from taking part in any political, educational, or religious activities. On the report of the committee, headed by Justice Rowlatt, two bills were introduced in the Central Legislature on 6 February 1919. These bills came to be known as "Black Bills". They gave enormous powers to the police to search a place and arrest any person they disapproved of without warrant. Despite much opposition, the Rowlatt Act was passed on 18 March 1919. The purpose of the act was to curb the growing nationalist upsurge in the country.

Impact

Mahatma Gandhi, among other Indian leaders, was extremely critical of the Act and argued that not everyone should be punished in response to isolated political crimes. Madan Mohan Malaviya and Muhammad Ali Jinnah, a member of the All-India Muslim League resigned from the Imperial legislative council in protest against the act. The act also angered many other Indian leaders and the public, which caused the government to implement repressive measures. Gandhi and others thought that constitutional opposition to the measure was fruitless, so on 6 April, a hartal took place. This was an event in which Indians suspended businesses and went on strikes and would fast, pray and hold public meetings against the 'Black Act' as a sign of their opposition and civil

disobedience would be offered against the law. Mahatma Gandhi bathed in the sea at Mumbai and made a speech before a procession to a temple took place. This event was part of the Non-cooperation movement.

It was the Rowlatt Act which brought Gandhi to the mainstream of the Indian struggle for independence and ushered in the **Gandhian Era** of Indian politics. Jawaharlal Nehru described Gandhi's entry into the protests in his *Glimpses of World History*:

Early in 1919 he was very ill. He had barely recovered from it when the Rowlatt Bill agitation filled the country. He also joined his voice to the universal outcry. But this voice was somehow different from others. It was quiet and low, and yet it could be heard above the shouting of the multitude; it was soft and gentle , and yet there seemed to be steel hidden away somewhere in it; it was courteous and full of appeal, and yet there was something grim and frightening in it; every word used was full of meaning and seemed to carry a deadly earnestness. Behind the language of peace and friendship there was power and quivering shadow of action and a determination not to submit to a wrong...This was something very different from our daily politics of condemnation and nothing else, long speeches always ending in the same futile and ineffective resolutions of protest which nobody took very seriously. This was the politics of action, not of talk.

However, the success of the hartal in Delhi, on 30 March, was overshadowed by tensions running high, which resulted in rioting in the Punjab, Delhi and Gujrat. Deciding that Indians were not ready to make a stand consistent with the principle of

nonviolence, an integral part of *satyagraha* (disobeying the British colonial government's laws without using violence), Gandhi suspended the resistance.

The Rowlatt Act came into effect on 21 March 1919. In Punjab the protest movement was very strong, and on 10 April two leaders of the congress, Dr. Satyapal and Saifuddin Kitchlew, were arrested and taken secretly to Dharamsala.

The army was called into Punjab, and on 13 April people from neighbouring villages gathered for Baisakhi Day celebrations and to protest against deportation of two important Indian leaders in Amritsar, which resulted in the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919.

Revocation

Accepting the report of the Repressive Laws Committee, the British colonial government repealed the Rowlatt Act, the Press Act, and twenty-two other laws in March 1922.

Chapter 21

Non-cooperation Movement and Khilafat Movement

Non-cooperation movement

The movement of Non-cooperation was launched on 4 September 1920 by Mahatma Gandhi with the aim of self-governance and obtaining full independence (*Purna Swaraj*) as the Indian National Congress (INC) withdrew its support for British reforms following the Rowlatt Act of 18 March 1919, and the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 13 April 1919.

The Rowlatt Act of March 1919, which suspended the rights of political prisoners in sedition trials, was seen as a "*political awakening*" by Indians and as a "threat" by the British. Although it was never invoked and declared void just a few years later, the act motivated Gandhi to conceive the idea of satyagraha (truth), which he saw as synonymous with independence. This idea was also authorised the following month by Jawaharlal Nehru, for who the massacre also endorsed "*the conviction that nothing short of independence was acceptable*".

Gandhi's planning of the non-cooperation movement included persuading all Indians to withdraw their labour from any activity that "*sustained the British government and also economy in India*", including British industries and educational institutions. In addition to promoting "self-reliance" by

spinning khadi, buying Indian-made goods only and boycotting British goods, Gandhi's non-cooperation movement called for the restoration of the Khilafat (Khilafat movement) in Turkey and the end to untouchability. This result in public held meetings and strikes (*hartals*) led to the first arrests of both Jawaharlal Nehru sahibb and his father, Motilal Nehru, on 6 December 1921.

It was one of the movements for Indian independence from British rule and ended, as Nehru described in his autobiography, "suddenly" on 4 February 1922 after the Chauri Chaura incident. Subsequent independence movements were the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement.

Through non-violent means or Ahinsa, protesters would refuse to buy British goods, adopt the use of local handicrafts and picket liquor shops.

Factors leading to the non-cooperation movement

The non-cooperation movement was a reaction towards the oppressive policies of the British Indian government such as the Rowlatt Act and the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar. A large crowd had gathered at Jallianwala Bagh near the Golden Temple in Amritsar to protest against the arrest of Saifuddin Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal, while others had came to attend the annual Baisakhi festival. The civilians were fired upon by soldiers under the command of Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer, resulting in killing and injuring thousands of protesters. The outcry generated by the massacre led to

thousands of unrests and more deaths by the hands of the police. The massacre became the most infamous event of British rule in India.

Gandhi, who was a preacher of non-violence, was horrified. He lost all faith in the goodness of the British government and declared that it would be a "sin" to co-operate with the "satanic" government.

Gandhi derived his ideologies and inspiration from ongoing non-cooperation movements, particularly that by Satguru Ram Singh, who is credited as being the first Indian to use non-cooperation and boycott of British merchandise and services as a political weapon.

Indian Muslims who had participated in the Khilafat movement to restore the status of the Khalifa gave their support to the non-cooperation movement. In response to the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and other violence in Punjab, the movement sought to secure Swaraj, independence for India. Gandhi promised Swaraj in one year if his Non-Cooperation programme was fully implemented. The other reason to start the non-cooperation movement was that Gandhi lost faith in constitutional methods and turned from cooperator of British rule to non-cooperator.

Other causes include economic hardships to the common Indian citizen, which the nationalists attributed to the flow of Indian wealth to Britain, the ruin of Indian artisans due to British factory-made goods replacing handmade goods, and forced recruitment and resentment with the British government over Indian soldiers dying in World War I while fighting as part of the British Army.

The calls of early political leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak (Congress Extremists) were called major public meetings. They resulted in disorder or obstruction of government services. The British took them very seriously and imprisoned him in Mandalay in Burma and V.O.Chidambaram Pillai received 40 years of imprisonment. The non-cooperation movement aimed to challenge the colonial economic and power structure, and British authorities would be forced to take notice of the demands of the independence movement.

Gandhi's call was for a nationwide protest against the Rowlatt Act. All offices and factories would be closed. Indians would be encouraged to withdraw from Raj-sponsored schools, police services, the military, and the civil service, and lawyers were asked to leave the Raj's courts. Public transportation and English-manufactured goods, especially clothing, was boycotted. Indians returned honours and titles given by the government and resigned from various posts like teachers, lawyers, civil and military services.

Veterans such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, and Annie Besant opposed the idea outright. The All India Muslim League also criticized the idea. But the younger generation of Indian nationalists was thrilled and backed Gandhi. The Congress Party adopted his plans, and he received extensive support from Muslim leaders like Maulana Azad, Mukhtar Ahmed Ansari, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Abbas Tyabji, Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar and Maulana Shaukat Ali.

The eminent Hindi writer, poet, playwright, journalist, and nationalist Rambriksh Benipuri, who spent more than eight years in prison fighting for India's independence, wrote:

When I recall Non-Cooperation era of 1921, the image of a storm confronts my eyes. From the time I became aware, I have witnessed numerous movements, however, I can assert that no other movement upturned the foundations of Indian society to the extent that the Non-Cooperation movement did. From the most humble huts to the high places, from villages to cities, everywhere there was a ferment, a loud echo.

Impact and suspension

The impact of the revolt was a total shock to British authorities and a massive encouragement to millions of Indian nationalists. Unity in the country was strengthened and many Indian schools and colleges were made. Indian goods were encouraged. On 4 February 1922 a massacre took place at Chauri Chaura, a small town in the district of Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh. A police officer had attacked some volunteers picketing a liquor shop. A whole crowd of peasants that had gathered there went to the police *chowki* (station). The mob set fire to the police *chowki* with some 22 police men inside it.

Mahatma Gandhi felt that the revolt was veering off-course, and was disappointed with the gradual loss of non-violent nature of the movement. He did not want the movement to degenerate into a contest of violence, with police and angry mobs attacking each other back and forth, victimizing civilians in between. Gandhi appealed to the Indian public for all resistance to end, went on a fast lasting 3 weeks, and called off

the non-cooperation movement. Gandhi was also a firm believer of STS (struggle truce struggle). He believed that after a duration of struggle, there should be a resting phase by which they could recover the power and rise again more strong and powerful. Though this point is not mentioned but every movement lead by Gandhi was withdrawn by him after a year or two.

End of non-cooperation

The Non-cooperation movement was withdrawn after the Chauri Chaura incident. Although he had stopped the national revolt single-handedly, on 10 March 1922, Mahatma Gandhi was arrested. On 18 March 1922, he was imprisoned for six years for publishing seditious materials. This led to suppression of the movement and was followed by the arrest of other leaders.

Although most Congress leader's remained firmly behind Gandhi, the determined leaders broke away, including the Ali brothers (Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali). Motilal Nehru and Chittaranjan Das formed the Swaraj Party, rejecting Gandhi's leadership. Many nationalists had felt that the non-cooperation movement should not have been stopped due to isolated incidents of violence, and most nationalists, while retaining confidence in Gandhi, were discouraged.

It is argued, though without any concrete proof, that Gandhi called off the movement in an attempt to salvage his own personal image, which would have been tarnished if he had been blamed for the Chauri Chaura incident; However, historians and contemporary leaders associated with the

movement welcomed Gandhi's judgment. Gandhi could not compromise his fundamental principle of non-violence by reluctantly accepting and allowing the violent struggle that evidently was circling round the movement with extremist elements of Indian independence movement at its core. So, a similar type of movement was introduced in 1930, the civil disobedience movement. The main difference was the introduction of a policy of violating the law 'peacefully'.

Savings

Gandhi's commitment to non-violence was redeemed when, between 1930 and 1934, tens of millions again revolted in the Salt Satyagraha which made India's cause famous worldwide for its unerring adherence to non-violence. The Satyagraha ended in success. The demands of Indians were met and the Congress was recognized as a representative of the Indian people. The Government of India Act 1935 also gave India its first taste in democratic self-governance.

Khilafat Movement

The **Khilafat movement** or the **Caliphate movement**, also known as the **Indian Muslim movement** (1919–24), was a pan-Islamist political protest campaign launched by Muslims of British India led by Shaukat Ali, Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar, Hakim Ajmal Khan, and Abul Kalam Azad to restore the caliph of the Ottoman Caliphate, who was considered the leader of the Muslims, as an effective political authority. It was a protest against the sanctions placed on the caliph and the

Ottoman Empire after the First World War by the Treaty of Sèvres.

The movement collapsed by late 1922 when Turkey gained a more favourable diplomatic position and moved towards Nationalism. By 1924 Turkey simply abolished the role of caliph.

Background

Ottoman sultan Abdul Hamid II (1842–1918) launched his pan-Islamist program in a bid to protect the Ottoman Empire from Western attack and dismemberment, and to crush the democratic opposition at home. He sent an emissary, Jamaluddin Afghani, to India in the late 19th century. The cause of the Ottoman monarch evoked religious passion and sympathy amongst Indian Muslims. Being the caliph, the Ottoman sultan was nominally the supreme religious and political leader of all Sunni Muslims across the world. However, this authority was never actually used.

A large number of Muslim religious leaders began working to spread awareness and develop Muslim participation on behalf of the caliphate. Muslim religious leader Maulana Mehmud Hasan attempted to organize a national war of independence with support from the Ottoman Empire.

Abdul Hamid II was forced to restore the constitutional monarchy marking the start of the Second Constitutional Era by the Young Turk Revolution. He was succeeded by his brother Mehmed V (1844–1918) but following the revolution, the real power in the Ottoman Empire lay with the nationalists.

The movement was a topic in Conference of London (February 1920); however, nationalist Arabs saw it as threat of continuation of Islamic dominance of Arab lands.

Partitioning

The Ottoman Empire, having sided with the Central Powers during World War I, suffered a major military defeat. The Treaty of Versailles (1919) reduced its territorial extent and diminished its political influence but the victorious European powers promised to protect the Ottoman sultan's status as the caliph. However, under the Treaty of Sèvres (1920), territories such as Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq were severed from the empire.

Within Turkey, a progressive, secular nationalist movement arose, known as the Turkish national movement. During the Turkish War of Independence (1919–1923), the Turkish revolutionaries, led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, abolished the Treaty of Sèvres with the Treaty of Lausanne (1923). Pursuant to Atatürk's Reforms, the Republic of Turkey abolished the position of caliphate in 1924. Atatürk offered the caliphate to Ahmed Sharif as-Senussi, on the condition that he reside outside Turkey; Senussi declined the offer and confirmed his support for Abdulmejid. The title was then claimed by Hussein bin Ali, Sharif of Mecca and Hejaz, leader of the Arab Revolt, but his kingdom was defeated and annexed by ibn Saud in 1925.

Khilafat Movement in South Asia

Although political activities and popular outcry on behalf of the caliphate emerged across the Muslim world, the most prominent activities took place in India. A prominent Oxford educated Muslim journalist, Maulana Muhammad Ali Johar had spent four years in prison for advocating resistance to the colonial government and support for the caliphate. At the onset of the Turkish War of Independence, Muslim religious leaders feared for the caliphate, which the European powers were reluctant to protect. To some of the Muslims of India, the prospect of being conscripted to fight against fellow Muslims in Turkey was anathema. To its founders and followers, the Khilafat was not a religious movement but rather a show of solidarity with their fellow Muslims in Turkey.

Mohammad Ali and his brother Maulana Shaukat Ali joined with other Muslim leaders such as Pir Ghulam Mujaddid Sarhandi, Sheikh Shaukat Ali Siddiqui, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed Ansari, Raees-Ul-Muhajireen Barrister Jan Muhammad Junejo, Hasrat Mohani, Syed Ata Ullah Shah Bukhari, Mohammad Farooq Chishti, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Dr. Hakim Ajmal Khan to form the All India Khilafat Committee. The organisation was based in Lucknow, India at Hathe Shaukat Ali, the compound of Landlord Shaukat Ali Siddiqui. They aimed to build political unity amongst Muslims and use their influence to protect the caliphate. In 1920, they published the Khilafat Manifesto, which called upon the British to protect the caliphate and for Indian Muslims to unite and hold the British accountable for this purpose. The Khilafat Committee in

Bengal included Mohmmad Akram Khan, Manruzzaman Islamabadi, Mujibur Rahman Khan and Chittaranjan Das.

In 1920 an alliance was made between Khilafat leaders and the Indian National Congress, the largest political party in India and of the nationalist movement. Congress leader Mohandas Gandhi and the Khilafat leaders promised to work and fight together for the causes of Khilafat and *Swaraj*. Seeking to increase pressure on the colonial government, the Khilafatists became a major part of the non-cooperation movement — a nationwide campaign of mass, peaceful civil disobedience. Some also engaged in a protest emigration from North-West Frontier Province to Afghanistan under Amanullah Khan. Khilafat leaders such as Dr. Ansari, Maulana Azad and Hakim Ajmal Khan also grew personally close to Gandhi. These leaders founded the Jamia Millia Islamia in 1920 to promote independent education and social rejuvenation for Muslims.

The non-cooperation campaign was at first successful. The programme started with boycott of legislative councils, government schools, colleges and foreign goods. Government functions and surrender of titles and distinctions. Massive protests, strikes and acts of civil disobedience spread across India. Hindus and Muslims joined forces in the campaign, which was initially peaceful. Gandhi, the Ali brothers and others were swiftly arrested by the colonial government. Under the flag of Tehrik-e-Khilafat, a Punjab Khilafat deputation comprising Moulana Manzoor Ahmed and Moulana Lutfullah Khan Dankauri took a leading role throughout India, with a particular concentration in the Punjab (Sirsa, Lahore, Haryana etc.). People from villages such as Aujla Khurd were the main contributors to the cause.

Collapse

Although holding talks with the colonial government and continuing their activities, the Khilafat movement weakened as Muslims were divided between working for the Congress, the Khilafat cause and the Muslim League.

The final blow came with the victory of Mustafa Kemal Pasha's forces, who overthrew the Ottoman rule to establish a progressive, secular republic in independent Turkey. He abolished the role of caliph and sought no help from Indians.

The Khilafat leadership fragmented on different political lines. Syed Ata Ullah Shah Bukhari created Majlis-e-Ahrar-e-Islam with the support of Chaudhry Afzal Haq. Leaders such as Dr. Ansari, Maulana Azad and Hakim Ajmal Khan remained strong supporters of Gandhi and the Congress. The Ali brothers joined Muslim League. They would play a major role in the growth of the League's popular appeal and the subsequent Pakistan movement. There was, however, a caliphate conference in Jerusalem in 1931 following Turkey's abolition of the Khilafat, to determine what should be done about the caliphate.

Legacy

The Khilafat movement evokes controversy and strong opinions. By critics, it is regarded as one of the political agitation based on a pan-Islamist, fundamentalist platform and being largely indifferent to the cause of Indian independence. Critics of the Khilafat see its alliance with the Congress as a marriage of convenience. Proponents of the Khilafat see it as

the spark that led to the non-cooperation movement in India and a major milestone in improving Hindu-Muslim relations, while advocates of Pakistan and Muslim separatism see it as a major step towards establishing the separate Muslim state. The Ali brothers are regarded as founding-fathers of Pakistan, while Azad, Dr. Ansari and Hakim Ajmal Khan are widely celebrated as national heroes in India.

Critics also argue that the movement was associated with large scale killings of Hindus such as the Moplah massacre.

Chapter 22

Chauri Chaura Incident and Hindustan Socialist Republican Association

Chauri Chaura incident

The **Chauri Chaura incident** took place on 4 February 1922 at Chauri Chaura in the Gorakhpur district of the United Provinces (modern-day Uttar Pradesh) in British India, when a large group of protesters participating in the non-cooperation movement, clashed with police who opened fire. In retaliation the demonstrators attacked and set fire to a police station, killing all of its occupants. The incident led to the death of three civilians and 22 policemen. Mahatma Gandhi, who was strictly against violence, halted the non-cooperation movement on the national level on 12 February 1922, as a direct result of this incident. In spite of Gandhi's decision, 19 arrested demonstrators were sentenced to death and 14 to imprisonment for life by the British colonial authorities.

Background

From 1920 onwards, Indians, led by Mahatma Gandhi, were engaged in a nationwide non-cooperation movement. Using non-violent methods of civil disobedience known as Satyagraha, protests were organised by the Indian National

Congress to challenge oppressive government regulatory measures such as the Rowlatt Act, with the ultimate goal of attaining *Independence*.

The incident

Two days before the incident, on 2 February 1922, volunteers participating in the Non-cooperation movement led by a retired soldier of the British Indian Army named Bhagwan Ahir, protested against high food prices and liquor sales at Gauri Bazaar. The demonstrators were beaten back by the local *Daroga* (Inspector) Gupteshwar Singh and other police officers. Several of the leaders were arrested and put in the lock-up at the Chauri Chaura police station. In response to this, a protest against the police was called on 4 February, to be held at the Bazaar.

On 4 February, approximately 2,000 to 2,500 protesters assembled and began marching towards the market lane at Chauri Chaura. They had gathered to picket the *Gauri Bazaar Liquor Shop*. Ahir was leading the protest. Armed police were dispatched to control the situation while the protesters marched towards the Bazaar, shouting anti-british slogans. In an attempt to frighten and disperse the crowd, Gupteshwar Singh ordered his 13 IST guards to fire warning shots into the air. This only agitated the crowd who began to throw stones at the police.

With the situation getting out of control, the Sub-Inspector Prithvi Pal ordered the police to open fire on the advancing crowd, killing eleven and wounding many others. Reports vary on the reason for the police retreat, with some suggesting that

the constables ran out of ammunition while others claimed that the crowd's unexpectedly assertive reaction to the gunfire was the cause. In the ensuing chaos, the heavily outnumbered police fell back to the shelter of the police *chowki* while the angry mob advanced. Infuriated by the gunfire into their ranks, the crowd set the *chowki* ablaze, killing all of the Indian policemen including Singh and the constables trapped inside.

The following are the names of the policemen that were killed in the incident:

- Inspector Gupteshwar Singh
- Sub-Inspector Prithvi Pal
- Constable Bashir Khan
- Constable Kapil Dev Singh
- Constable Lakhai Singh
- Constable Raghuvir Singh
- Chaukidar Visheshwar Singh
- Constable Mohammed Khan
- Constable Hasan Khan
- Constable Gadabaksh Khan
- Constable Jama Khan
- Chaukidar Manglu Chaubey
- Constable Rambali Pandey
- Constable Kapil Dev
- Constable Indrasan Singh
- Constable Ramlakhan Singh
- Constable Mardana Khan
- Constable Jagdev Singh
- Constable Jaigai Singh
- Chaukidar Wazir
- Chaukidar Ghisai Ram

- Chaukidar Katwaru Ram

One *chaukidar* (government watchman) named Jathai Ram was thrown into the burning station by the mob but he was able to survive. He had several burn injuries. When the regional Police Commissioner arrived after the incident, he ordered Jathai to be taken to hospital where he later died.

Most victims were burned to death, although several appear to have been killed by the crowd at the entrance to the chowki and their bodies thrown back into the fire. The death count is reported in the literature as either 22 or 23 policemen by different accounts, possibly because of ignoring or counting the subsequent death of Jathai Ram.

Aftermath

In response to the killing of the police, the British colonial authorities declared martial law in and around Chauri Chaura. Several raids were conducted and hundreds of people were arrested.

Appalled at the outrage, Gandhi went on a five-day fast as penance for what he perceived as his culpability in the bloodshed. In reflection, Gandhi felt that he had acted too hastily in encouraging people to revolt against the British colonial government without sufficiently emphasising the importance of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and without adequately training the people to exercise restraint in the face of attack. He decided that the Indian people were ill-prepared and not yet ready to do what was needed to achieve independence. Gandhi was also arrested and sentenced to six years of imprisonment

but was later released in February 1924, on grounds of his ill health. On 12 February 1922, the Indian National Congress halted the Non-co-operation Movement on the national level as a direct result of the Chauri Chaura tragedy.

Nehru and most of the workers of the Congress, who were in prison when Gandhi took this decision, felt that this was a hasty and incorrect decision at a time when the nation was reaching the epoch of support for the Indian independence movement. A few months after this withdrawal, the colonial government arrested Gandhi and put him in jail.

Trial and conviction

A total of 225 people were brought to trial at Gorakhpur Sessions Court of Judge H. E. Holmes, on charges of "rioting and arson" in conjunction with the Chauri Chaura affair. Of these 6 died while in police custody, 2 were sentenced to 2–2 years imprisonment, while 170 were sentenced to death by hanging and 47 were acquitted on 9 January 1923, following conviction in a trial which lasted eight months.

A storm of protest erupted over the verdicts, which were characterised as "legalised murder" by Indian Communist leader M.N. Roy, who called for a general strike of Indian workers.

On 30 April 1923, The Allahabad High Court pronounced the final judgement of the case after the appeal of the politicians:

- The (19) people who were sentenced to hanging were

–

Nazar Ali, Bhagwan Ahir, Lal Mohammed, Shyamsundar, Abdullah, Dudhi Singh, Kali Charan, Lauti Kumar, Mahadev Singh, Meghu Ali, Raghuvir, Ramlakhan, Ramroop, Sahdev, Rudali, Mohan, Sampat, Shyam Sundar and Sitaram.

- 14 people were sentenced to life imprisonment.
- 19 people were sentenced to 8 years imprisonment.
- 57 people were sentenced to 5 years imprisonment.
- 20 people were sentenced to 3 years imprisonment.
-
- and finally, 3 people to only 2 years imprisonment.
- Rest 38 people were acquitted.
- The 19 people that were convicted were hanged between 2 & 11 July 1923.

Memorial

- A memorial to the dead policemen was dedicated by the British colonial authorities in 1923. Following independence the words *Jai Hind* were added to it, as well as a verse by poet Jagdamba Prasad Mishra which is made famous by revolutionary poet Ram Prasad Bismil. The verse reads: *Shaheedon ki chitaaon par lagenge har baras mele* ("On the pyres of martyrs, there will be fairs every year").
- The people of the district did not forget the 19 persons tried and executed after the Chauri Chaura incident . In 1971, they formed an association called – *Chauri Chaura Shaheed Smarak Samiti*. In 1973, this Samiti constructed near the lake at Chauri Chaura a 12.2 meters high triangular minaret on

each side of which a figure is depicted hanging with a noose round his neck. The minaret was built at a cost of Rs 13,500 contributed by popular subscription.

- Later another Shaheed Smarak (now the main one) was built by the Government of India to honour those hanged after the incident. This tall memorial has names of those executed engraved upon it. A library & museum related to the independence struggle has been set up near the memorial.
- Indian Railways have named a train to honour those executed after the Chauri Chaura incident. The train is named Chauri Chaura Express, which runs from Gorakhpur to Kanpur.

Hindustan Socialist Republican Association

Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) was a revolutionary organisation, previously it was known as the **Hindustan Republican Army**, founded by Ram Prasad Bismil, Sachindra Nath Bakshi, Sachindranath Sanyal and Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee. Previously, it was known as the **Hindustan Republican Association (HRA)**, whose written constitution and published manifesto titled *The Revolutionary* were produced as evidence in the Kakori conspiracy case of 1925.

Origins

Background

The Non-cooperation movement of 1920 led to large scale mobilisation of Indian population against the British rule. Though intended as a Nonviolent resistance movement, it soon turned violent. After the Chauri Chaura incident, Mahatma Gandhi suspended the movement to prevent the escalation of violence. This disillusioned a section of nationalists who felt the suspension was premature and unwarranted. The political vacuum created by the suspension led to the formation of revolutionary movements by the more radical amongst those who sought to overthrow British rule.

Opposition of Gandhi in Gaya Congress

In February 1922 some agitating farmers were killed in Chauri Chaura by the police. Consequently, the police station of Chauri Chaura was attacked by the people and 22 policemen were burnt alive.

Without ascertaining the facts behind this incident, Mahatma Gandhi, declared an immediate stop to the non-cooperation movement (he himself had given a call for it) without consulting any executive committee member of the Congress. Ram Prasad Bismil and his group of youth strongly opposed Gandhi in the Gaya Congress of 1922. When Gandhi refused to rescind his decision, the Indian National Congress was divided into two groups – one liberal and the other for rebellion. In January 1923, the liberal group formed a new Swaraj Party

under the joint leadership of Moti Lal Nehru and Chittranjan Das, and the youth group formed a revolutionary party under the leadership of Bismil.

Yellow Paper constitution

With the consent of Lala Har Dayal, Bismil went to Allahabad where he drafted the constitution of the party in 1923 with the help of Sachindra Nath Sanyal and another revolutionary of Bengal, Dr. Jadugopal Mukherjee. The basic name and aims of the organisation were typed on a *Yellow Paper* and later on a subsequent Constitutional Committee Meeting was conducted on 3 October 1924 at Kanpur in the United Provinces under the chairmanship of Sanyal.

Sharing responsibility

This meeting decided the name of the party would be the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA). Bismil was declared the District Organiser for Shahjahanpur and Chief of Arms Division, as well as Provincial Organiser of United Province (Agra and Oudh). Sachindra Nath Sanyal became National Organiser and another senior member, Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, was Coordinator of the Anushilan Samiti. After attending the meeting in Kanpur, both Sanyal and Chatterjee left the United Provinces and proceeded to Bengal for further extension of the organisation.

The HRA established branches in Agra, Allahabad, Benares, Cawnpore, Lucknow, Saharanpur and Shahjahanpur. They also manufactured bombs in Calcutta – at Dakshineswar and Shovabazar – and at Deoghar in Jharkhand (then Bihar

province). The Calcutta workshops were discovered by the police in 1925 and those in Deoghar were found in 1927.

Publication of *Revolutionary*

Sanyal wrote a manifesto for the HRA entitled *Revolutionary*. This was distributed around large cities of North India on 1 January 1925. It proposed the overthrow of British colonial rule and its replacement with what it termed a "Federal Republic of the United States of India". In addition, it sought universal suffrage and the socialist-oriented aim of the abolition of "all systems which make any kind of exploitation of man by man possible"

The policies of Gandhi were criticised and youths were called to join the organisation. The police were astonished to see the language used and sought its leader in Bengal. Sanyal had gone to despatch this pamphlet in bulk and was arrested in Bankura, West Bengal. Before Sanyal's arrest, Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee had also been caught by police at Howrah railway station of Calcutta, Bengal Presidency.

Early activities

There were many early attempts at disruption and obtaining funds, such as the robbery of the houses of a village officials at Dwarikapur and Bichpuri in 1923-24, but the Kakori train robbery was the most prominent of the early HRA efforts. The Kakori event occurred on 9 August 1925, when HRA members looted government money from a train around 10 miles (16 km) from Lucknow and accidentally killed a passenger in the process. Significant members of the HRA were arrested and

tried for their involvement in that incident and others which had preceded it. The outcome was that four leaders – Ashfaqullah Khan, Ram Prasad Bismil, Roshan Singh and Rajendra Lahiri – were hanged in December 1927 and a further 16 imprisoned for lengthy terms. The result of the trial, in which the HRA participants sang patriotic songs and displayed other forms of defiance, seriously damaged the leadership of the HRA and dealt a major blow to its activities. Many associated with the HRA who escaped trial found themselves placed under surveillance or detained for various reasons. Azad was the only one of the principal leaders who managed to escape arrest whereas Banwari Lal became an approver.

Hindustan Socialist Republican Association

In 1928, the British government set up the Commission, headed by Sir John Simon, to report on the political situation in India. Some Indian activist groups protested the Commission, because it did not include a single Indian in its membership, although by no means all did so. The effect was to galvanize various activist factions in opposition to a common cause.

Responding to the rise in anti-colonial sentiment in 1928, the HRA became the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, with the change of name probably being largely due to the influence of Bhagat Singh. Around the time of the Kakori robbery and the subsequent trial, various revolutionary groups had emerged in places such as Bengal, Bihar, and Punjab. These groups and the HRA met at Feroz Shah Kotla, in Delhi,

on 8–9 September 1928, and from this emerged the HSRA. The socialist leanings voiced in the earlier HRA manifesto had gradually moved more towards Marxism and the HSRA spoke of a revolution involving a struggle by the masses to establish "the dictatorship of the proletariat" and the banishment of "parasites from the seat of political power". It saw itself as being at the forefront of this revolution, spreading the word and acting as the armed section of the masses. Its ideals were apparent in other movements elsewhere at that time, including incidents of communist-inspired industrial action by workers and the rural kisan movement. At the request of Bhagat Singh, the newly-named HSRA resolved to bomb members of the Simon Commission and also to cease robbing rich people, the latter being a realisation that the Kakori conspirators had suffered most from the evidence given by such people.

The HSRA's manifesto titled *Philosophy of the Bomb* was written by Bhagwati Charan Vohra.

Killing of John Saunders

When the Simon Commission visited Lahore on 30 October 1928, Lala Lajpat Rai led a peaceful protest against the Commission. The police responded with violence, with the Superintendent of Police, James A. Scott, ordering his men to *lathi* charge the protesters. Lala Lajpat Rai was beaten but addressed a meeting later. He died on 17 November 1928, perhaps in part because of his injuries although this is uncertain. Historian Neeti Nair says "His death was widely attributed to the mental if not physical shock he had suffered." When the matter of Rai's death was raised in the British Parliament, the government denied any casual role. Although

Singh did not witness the event, he vowed to take revenge, and joined other revolutionaries, Shivaram Rajguru, Sukhdev Thapar and Chandrashekhar Azad, in a plot to kill Scott. However, in a case of mistaken identity, Singh was signalled to shoot on the appearance of John P. Saunders, an Assistant Superintendent of Police. He was shot by Rajguru and Singh while leaving the District Police Headquarters in Lahore on 17 December 1928. Chanan Singh, a Head Constable who was chasing them, was fatally injured by Azad's covering fire.

This case of mistaken identity did not stop Singh and his fellow-members of the HSRA from claiming that retribution had been exacted. The next day the HSRA acknowledged the assassination by putting up posters in Lahore that read

JP Saunders is dead; Lala Lajpat Rai is avenged. ... In this man has died an agent of the British authority in India. ... Sorry for the bloodshed of the human being, but the sacrifice of individuals at the altar of revolution ... is inevitable.

The perpetrators of the Saunders murder having eluded capture and gone into hiding, the next major action by the HSRA was the bombing of the Central Legislative Assembly in Delhi on 8 April 1929. This was a provocative propaganda exercise, intended to highlight the aims of the HSRA and timed as a protest against the introduction of the Public Safety Bill and the Trade Disputes Bill, both of which had been drafted in an attempt to counter the effects of revolutionary activities and trade unionism

Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt threw bombs at the empty treasury benches, being careful to ensure that there were no casualties in order to highlight the propagandist nature of

their action. They made no attempt to escape and courted arrest while shouting *Inquilab Zindabad* (Long Live the Revolution) and *Samrajyavad Murdabad'* (Down with Imperialism). Their rationale for the bombing was explained in a leaflet titled "To Make the Deaf Hear" (paraphrasing the words of Édouard Vaillant). This leaflet was also thrown in the assembly and was reproduced the next day in the *Hindustan Times*. On 15 April 1929 police raided the HSRA's bomb factory in Lahore and arrested Kishori Lal, Sukhdev Thapar and Jai Gopal. The Assembly Bomb case trial followed and Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were hanged on 23 March 1931 for their actions.

Later activities

In December 1929, the HSRA bombed the special train of Viceroy Irwin. The Viceroy escaped unhurt. Later the Lahore faction of HSRA broke away and formed the *Atishi Chakar* (The Ring of Fire) party under the leadership of Hansraj. They carried out a series of bombings across Punjab in June 1930. On 21 January 1930, during the trial of the Lahore Conspiracy Case, Bhagat Singh and his HSRA comrades, appeared in the court wearing red scarves. When the magistrate took his chair, they raised slogans "Long Live India", , "Long Live People" ,"Bharat Mata Ki Jai" and "Down with Imperialism". On 1 September 1930, the Rawalpindi faction made a failed attempt to burgle the Office of the Controller of Military Accounts. During this period the leading members of the HSRA were Azad, Yashpal, Bhagwati Charan Vohra and Kailash Pati. In July 1930 the HSRA robbed the Gadodia stores in New Delhi and carried away 14,000 rupees. This money was

later used to fund a bomb factory. In December 1930, an attempt was made to assassinate the Governor of Punjab, which wounded him in his arm.

Decline

By 1931, most of the HSRA's main leaders were either dead or in jail. Kailash Pati was arrested in October 1930 and turned an approver (witness for the prosecution). On 27 February 1931, Chandrasekhar Azad shot himself during a gunfight with the police in a famous incident of Alfred Park. Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev Thapar, and Rajguru were hanged in March 1931. After Azad's death, there was no central leader to unite the revolutionaries and regional differences increased. The organisation split into various regional groups and they carried out bombings and attacks on Indian officials without any central coordination. In December 1931 another attempt was made to revive the HSRA at a meeting in Meerut. However this attempt failed with the arrests of Yashpal and Daryao Singh in 1932. This effectively ended the HSRA as a united organisation though the various regional factions kept up their armed struggle till 1936.

Criticism

The association's methods were diametrically opposite to that of Gandhi's nonviolent resistance movement. The revolutionaries and their methods were severely criticised by Gandhi. Responding to the attack on Lord Irwin's train, Gandhi wrote a harsh critique of the HSRA titled "The Cult of the Bomb" (*Young India*, 2 January 1930). In it, he declared that

bomb-throwing was nothing but "froth coming to the surface in an agitated liquid". He condemned the HSRA and its actions as "cowards" and "dastardly". According to Gandhi, the HSRA's violent struggle had its hazards. The violence led to more reprisals and suffering. Also, it would turn inward as "it was an easy natural step" from "violence done to the foreign ruler" "to violence to our own people". The HSRA responded to this criticism with its own manifesto "The Philosophy of the Bomb", in which they defended their violent methods as being complementary to Gandhi's non-violent methods.

Legacy

A bomb factory and hideout located in Turi Bazaar, Ferozpur, has been declared as a national monument by the Government of Punjab.

Chapter 23

Kakori Conspiracy and Mahad

Satyagraha

Kakori conspiracy

The **Kakori Conspiracy** (or **Kakori train robbery**) was a train robbery that took place at Kakori, a village near Lucknow, on 9 August 1925 during the Indian Independence Movement against the British Raj. The robbery was organised by Hindustan Republican Association (HRA). The robbery was conceived by Ram Prasad Bismil and Ashfaqullah Khan who belonged to the HRA, which later became the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association. This organisation was established to carry out revolutionary activities against the British Empire in India with the objective of achieving independence. Since the organisation needed money for purchase of weaponry, Bismil and his party decided to plunder a train on one of the Northern Railway lines. The robbery plan was executed by Ram Prasad Bismil, Ashfaqulla Khan, Rajendra Lahiri, Chandrashekhar Azad, Sachindra Bakshi, Keshab Chakravarty, Manmathnath Gupta, Mukundi Lal, Murari Lal Gupta and Banwari Lal. One passenger was killed unintentionally.

Robbery

On 9 August 1925, the Number 8 Down Train travelling from Shahjahanpur to Lucknow was approaching the town of Kakori (now in Uttar Pradesh), when Rajendra Lahiri pulled the emergency chain to stop the train and subsequently overpowered the guard. It is believed that they looted that specific train because it was supposedly carrying the money bags which allegedly belonged to the Indians and was being transferred to the British government treasury. They looted only these bags (which were present in the guards' cabin and contained about ₹ 8000) and escaped to Lucknow. The objectives of this robbery were to :

- Fund the HRA with funds stolen from the British administration.
- Garner public attention by creating a positive image of the HRA among Indians.

One lawyer, Ahmad Ali, who was a passenger, had got down to see his wife in the ladies compartment and was killed in an unintentional discharge by Manmathnath Gupta, but this made it a manslaughter case. Following the incident, the British administration started an intense manhunt and arrested several of the revolutionaries who were members or part of the HRA. Their leader, Ram Prasad Bismil, was arrested at Saharanpur on 26 September 1925, and his lieutenant, Ashfaqullah Khan, was arrested on 17 July 1926 at Delhi.

Arrests

Forty people were arrested from all over India. Their names (with the place of arrest) are:

- From Agra
- Chandra Dhar Johri
- Chandra Bhal Johri
- From Allahabad
- Shitala Sahai
- Jyoti Shankar Dixit
- Bhupendra Nath Sanyal
- From Banaras
- Manmathnath Gupta
- Damodar Swarup Seth
- Ram Nath Pandey
- Dev Dutt Bhattacharya
- Indra Vikram Singh
- Mukundi Lal
- From Bengal
- Sachindra Nath Sanyal
- Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee
- Rajendra Lahiri
- Sharat Chandra Guha
- Kali Das Bose
- From Etah
- Babu Ram Verma
- From Hardoi
- Bhairon Singh
- From Jubbulpore
- Pranawesh Chatterjee

- From Kanpur
- Ram Dulare Trivedi
- Gopi Mohan
- Raj Kumar Sinha
- Suresh Charan Bhattacharya
- From Lahore
- Mohan Lal Gautam
- From Lakhimpur
- Harnam Sundarlal
- From Lucknow
- Govind Charan Kar
- Shachindra Nath Vishvas
- From Meerut
- Vishnu Sharan Dublish
- From Orai
- Veer Bhadra Tiwari
- From Pune
- Ram Krishna Khatri
- From Raibareli
- Banwari Lal
- From Saharanpur
- Ram Prasad Bismil
- From Shahjahanpur
- Banarsi Lal
- Lala Har Govind
- Prem Krishna Khanna
- Indubhushan Mitra
- Thakur Roshan Singh
- Ram Dutt Shukla
- Madan Lal
- Ram Ratna Shukla

Arrested later—

- From Delhi
- Ashfaqullah Khan
- From Pratapgarh
- Sachindranath Bakshi

Of the above, Sachindranath Sanyal, Rajendra Lahiri and Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee had already been arrested in Bengal. Lahiri was prosecuted in a Dakshineswar bombing case, while Ashfaqullah Khan and Sachindranath Bakshi were arrested later when the main Kakori conspiracy case was over. A supplementary case was filed against these two and they were prosecuted in the same manner.

Kakori trial

Ram Prasad Bismil and some others were charged with various offences, including robbery and murder. Fourteen people had been released due to lack of evidence. Two of the accused — Ashfaqullah Khan and Sachindra Bakshi—were captured after the trial. Chandrasekhar Azad, reorganised the HRA in 1928 and operated it till 27 February 1931, committing suicide during a standoff with police.

Charges pressed against further three men were dropped. Damodar Swarup Seth was discharged due to illness, while Veer Bhadra Tiwari & Jyoti Shankar Dixit have been suspected of providing information to the authorities. Two other individuals — Banarsi Lal and Indu Bhushan Mitra came to be approvers in return for a lenient sentence.

Court's proceedings

Charges against 19 of the accused were withdrawn (2 had become approvers while 17 people had been released). The trial against the remaining 21 began on 1 May 1926 in the Special Sessions Court of Justice Andrews Hamilton. Abbas Salim Khan, Banwari Lal Bhargava, Gyan Chattarjee and Mohammed Ayuf were the assessors of the case. Of the 21, two people namely Sachindranath Biswas and Lala Hargovind were released due to lack of evidence, while Gopi Mohan became an approver.

The court appointed Jagat Narayan Mulla as public prosecutor knowingly; he had been prejudiced against Ram Prasad Bismil since 1916, when Bismil led the grand procession of Bal Gangadhar Tilak at Lucknow. He had also been the public prosecutor in the Mainpuri conspiracy case of 1918.

The government officers had also bribed many of the accused to become government approvers. The trials were mainly based on the statements given by Banwari Lal who had met the revolutionaries and also involved in the planning the robbery activities taken up by group in Bamrauli (25 December 1924), Bichpuri (7 March 1925) & Dwarikapur (24 May 1925). So, his statement was used as the main evidence to prove the HRA members guilty.

The judgement case trials of the Sessions Court was pronounced on 6 April 1927-

Ram Prasad Bismil, Roshan Singh and Rajendra Lahiri were sentenced to hanging. Sachindranath Sanyal was given life

imprisonment. Manmathnath Gupta was sentenced to 14 yrs imprisonment. Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, Govind Charan Kar, Raj Kumar Sinha, Ram Krishna Khatri and Mukundi Lal were sentenced to 10 yrs imprisonment while Suresh Charan Bhattacharya and Vishnu Sharan Dublish were given 7 yrs imprisonment. Bhupendra Nath Sanyal, Ram Dulare Trivedi, Prem Krishna Khanna and Pranawesh Chatterjee were sentenced to imprisonment for 5 years and the least punishment (3 years imprisonment) was given to Ram Nath Pandey and Banwarilal.

Final verdict

Following the arrest of Ashfaqullah Khan, the police coerced him to gain supplementary evidence against his accomplices but he refused. Another supplementary case was filed against Ashfaqulla Khan and Sachindranath Bakshi in the court of Special Sessions Judge John Reginald William Bennett. An appeal was filed in the then Chief Court of Awadh (now in Uttar Pradesh) on 18 July 1927. The case trials started the next day. The judgement of the trial was pronounced a month later on 22 August.

The punishments were given as follows:

- Death sentence: Ram Prasad Bismil, Thakur Roshan Singh, Rajendra Nath Lahiri and Ashfaqullah Khan
- Deportation to Kālā Pānī (Port Blair cellular jail) : Sachindranath Sanyal, Sachindranath Bakshi, Govind Charan Kar, Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee and Mukundi Lal
- 14 years' imprisonment: Manmathnath Gupta

- 10 years' imprisonment: Raj Kumar Sinha, Vishnu Sharan Dublith, Ram Krishna Khatri and Suresh Charan Bhattacharya
- 5 years' imprisonment: Bhupendranath Sanyal, Prem Krishna Khanna, Banwari Lal and Ram Dulare Trivedi
- 4 years' imprisonment: Pranawesh Chatterjee
- 3 years' imprisonment: Ram Nath Pandey

Hunger strike in the jail

- After the court gave the judgement of the main Kakori Conspiracy Case on 6 April 1927, a group photograph was taken and all the accused were sent to the different jails of the United Provinces. In the prisons, they were asked to wear the uniform like the other prisoners which lead to immediate protests and hunger-strikes. The revolutionaries argued that since they had been charged with crimes against the British rule (and supposedly overturning the British Raj), they should be treated as political prisoners and thus should possess the rights and amenities provided to political prisoners.

Defense committee

The legal defense for the arrested revolutionaries was provided by Gobind Ballabh Pant, Mohan Lal Saxena, Chandra Bhanu Gupta, Ajit Prasad Jain, Gopi Nath Srivastava, R. M. Bahadurji, B. K. Chaudhury and Kripa Shankar Hajela.

Pandit Jagat Narayan Mulla, a leading advocate from Lucknow and uncle-in-law of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru refused to defend the arrested revolutionaries. He was appointed as Public Prosecutor by the law of court.

Among the political figures who came out in support of those arrested for the Kakori train robbery were: Motilal Nehru, Madan Mohan Malviya, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Lala Lajpat Rai, Jawaharlal Nehru , Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, Shiv Prasad Gupta, Shri Prakash and Acharya Narendra Dev.

Reaction in the country

There were widespread protests against the court's decision all over the country. Members of the Central Legislature even petitioned the Viceroy of India to commute the death sentences given to the four men to life sentences. Appeals were also sent to the Privy Council. However, these requests were turned down and the men were finally executed. Appeals were claimed to have been also made by Mahatma Gandhi, despite his lack of executive authority.

Clemency appeal

On 22 August 1927, the chief court endorsed the original judgement with an exception of one (7 yrs) punishment from the judgement of 6 April. A mercy appeal was filed in due course before the Provincial Governor of U.P. by the members of legislative council which was dismissed. Ram Prasad Bismil wrote a letter to Madan Mohan Malviya on 9 September 1927 from Gorakhpur Jail. Malviya sent a memorandum to the then Viceroy and Governor General of India Lord Irwin with the

signatures of 78 Members of Central Legislature, which was also turned down.

On 16 September 1927, the final mercy appeal was forwarded to Privy Council at London and to the King Emperor through a famous lawyer of England, Henry S. L. Polak, but the British Government, who had already decided to hang them, sent their final decision to the India office of Viceroy that all the four condemned prisoners were to be hanged till death by 19 December 1927 positively.

Mahad Satyagraha

Mahad Satyagraha or **Chavdar Tale Satyagraha** was a satyagraha led by B. R. Ambedkar on 20 March 1927 to allow untouchables to use water in a public tank in Mahad (currently in Raigad district), Maharashtra, India. The day (20 March) is observed as Social Empowerment day in India.

Background

By the Indian caste system, untouchables (Dalits) were segregated from the other Hindu castes. They were banned from using water bodies and roads which were used by other Hindu castes. In August 1923, Bombay Legislative Council passed a resolution that people from the depressed classes should be allowed to use places which were built and maintained by the government. In January 1924, Mahad which was part of the Bombay Province passed the resolution in its municipal council to enforce the act. But it was failed to implement because of the protest from the savarna Hindus.

Satyagraha

In 1927, Ambedkar decided to launch a satyagraha (nonviolent resistance) to assert their rights to use water in the public places.

Mahad, a town in Konkan, was selected for the event because it had a nucleus of support from 'caste hindus'. These included A.V.Chitre, an activist from the Marathi Chandraseniya Kayastha Prabhu (CKP) community; G.N.Sahasrabudhe, a Chitpawan Brahmin of the Social Service League and Surendranath Tipnis, a CKP who was president of the Mahad municipality.

Surendranath Tipnis, the president of the Mahad municipality declared its public spaces open to untouchables and invited Ambedkar to hold a meeting at Mahad in 1927. After the meeting, they proceeded to the 'Chowder tank'. Ambedkar drank water from the tank and thousands of untouchables followed him.

Ambedkar also made a statement addressing the Dalit women during the Satyagraha. He asked them to abandon all old customs that provided recognizable markers of untouchability and asked them to wear saris like high caste women. Before that time, the Dalit women were not allowed to drape saris completely. Immediately after Ambedkar's speech at Mahad, the dalit women readily decided to drape their saris like the higher caste women. Upper caste women namely Lakshmbai Tipnis and Indirabia Chitre helped the Dalit women dress like 'upper caste women' by covering the legs of the dalit women down to their ankles.

Ambedkar decided to hold the second conference in Mahad on 26–27 December 1927. But caste Hindus filed a case against him that tank as a private property. He was not able to continue his satyagraha as the case was sub judice.

On 25 December (*Manusmriti Dahan Din*), Shastrabuddhe under the guidance of Ambedkar, burnt *Manusmriti*, a Hindu law book, as a protest. In December 1937, the Bombay High Court ruled that untouchables have the right to use water from the tank.

Struggle to access water by Dalit still continues. Access to water is still denied to Dalits at many places and are beaten or killed many times if they try to drink water from the forbidden places.

On 19 March 1940, Dr. Ambedkar arranged a rally and public conference in Mahad to recollect 14th Mahad Satyagraha Day as "Empowerment Day". On this day, Adv. Vishnu Narhari Khodke, as President of Mahad Municipal Corporation, arranged a function and honoured Dr. Ambedkar with a Letter of Honour (मानपत्र) for his "Chavdar tale Satyagraha" and "Manusmriti Dahan" and other movements in Mahad.

Chapter 24

Simon Commission and Bardoli

Satyagraha

Simon Commission

The **Indian Statutory Commission** also known as Simon Commission', was a group of seven Members of Parliament under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon (later, 1st Viscount Simon). The commission arrived in British India in 1928 to study constitutional reform in Britain's largest and most important possession. One of its members was the future leader of the Labour Party Clement Attlee, who became committed to self-government for India.

At the time of introducing the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms in 1919, the British Government declared that a commission would be sent to India after ten years to examine the effects and operations of the constitutional reforms and to suggest more reforms for India.

In November 1927, the British government appointed the Simon Commission to report on India's constitutional progress for introducing constitutional reforms, as promised. The Commission was strongly opposed by many Indians. It was opposed by Nehru, Gandhi, Jinnah, the Muslim League and Indian National Congress because it contained seven members of the British Parliament but no Indians. Indians saw it as a violation to their right of self determination and insult to their

self respect. However it was supported by B R Ambedkar and Periyar E. V. Ramasamy.

Prominent Indian nationalist Lala Lajpat Rai led a protest in Lahore. He suffered a police beating during the protest, and died of his injuries on 17 November 1928.

Background

The Government of India Act 1919 had introduced the system of diarchy to govern the provinces of British India. Indian opinion clamoured for revision of this form of government, and the Government of India Act 1919 itself stated that a commission would be appointed after ten years to investigate the progress of the governance scheme and suggest new steps for reform. In the late 1920s, the ruling Conservative government feared imminent electoral defeat at the hands of the Labour Party, and also feared the effects of the consequent transference of control of India to such an "inexperienced" body. Hence, it appointed seven MPs to constitute the promised commission to examine the state of Indian constitutional affairs.

Some people in India were outraged and insulted that the Simon Commission, which was to determine the future of India, did not include a single Indian member. The Indian National Congress, at its December 1927 meeting in Madras (now Chennai), resolved to boycott the Commission and challenged Lord Birkenhead, the Secretary of State for India, to draft a constitution that would be acceptable to the Indian populace. A faction of the Muslim League, led by Mohammed Ali Jinnah, also decided to boycott the Commission.

However, opinion was divided, with support for co-operation coming from some members of the Muslim League and also both Hindu Mahasabha and members of the Central Sikh League. An All-India Committee for Cooperation with the Simon Commission was established by the Council of India and by selection of the Viceroy, Lord Irwin. The members of the committee were: C. Sankaran Nair (Chairman), Arthur Froom, Nawab Ali Khan, Shivdev Singh Uberoi, Zulfiqar Ali Khan, Hari Singh Gour, Abdullah Al-Mamun Suhrawardy, Kikabhai Premchand and Prof. M. C. Rajah.

In Burma (Myanmar), which was included in the terms of reference of the Simon Commission, there was strong suspicion either that Burma's unpopular union with India would continue, or that the constitution recommended for Burma by the Commission would be less generous than that chosen for India; these suspicions resulted in tension and violence in Burma leading to the rebellion of Saya San.

The crux of the commission is very clear to review 1919 reforms implementation status. The commission found education was denied to untouchables and untouchables were ill treated in the name of caste.

Protests and death of Lala Lajpat

Rai

The Simon Commission left England in January 1928. Almost immediately with its arrival in Bombay on 4 February 1928, its members were confronted by throngs of protesters, although there were also some supporters among the crowds who saw it

as the next step on the road to self-governance. A strike began and many people turned out to greet the Commission with black flags. Similar protests occurred in every major Indian city that the seven British MPs visited.

One protest against the Simon Commission became infamous. On 30 October 1928, the Commission arrived in Lahore where it was met by protesters waving black flags. The protest was led by the Indian nationalist Lala Lajpat Rai, who had moved a resolution against the Commission in the Legislative Assembly of Punjab in February 1928. In order to make way for the Commission, the local police force began beating protestors. Lala Lajpat Rai was critically injured and died a fortnight later.

Aftermath

The Commission published its 2-volume report in May 1930. It proposed the abolition of dyarchy and the establishment of representative government in the provinces. It also recommended that separate communal electorates be retained, but only until tensions between Hindus and Muslims had died down. In September 1928, ahead of the Commission's release, Motilal Nehru presented his Nehru Report to counter its charges that Indians could not find a constitutional consensus among themselves. This report advocated that India be given dominion status of complete internal self-government.

Noting that educated Indians opposed the Commission and also that communal tensions had increased instead of decreased, the British government opted for another method of dealing with the constitutional issues of India. Before the publication of the report, the British government stated that Indian

opinion would henceforth be taken into account, and that the natural outcome of the constitutional process would be dominion status for India.

The outcome of the Simon Commission was the Government of India Act 1935, which called for "responsible" government at the provincial level in India but not at the national level—that is a government responsible to the Indian community rather than London. It is the basis of many parts of the Indian Constitution. In 1937 the first elections were held in the Provinces, resulting in Congress Governments being returned in almost all Provinces.

Clement Attlee was deeply moved by his experience on the Commission, and endorsed the final report. However by 1933 he argued that British rule was alien to India and was unable to make the social and economic reforms necessary for India's progress. He became the British leader most sympathetic to Indian independence (as a dominion), preparing him for his role in deciding on Indian independence as British Prime Minister in 1947.

Members of the Commission

- Sir John Simon, MP for Spen Valley (Liberal, chairman)
- Clement Attlee, MP for Limehouse (Labour)
- Harry Levy-Lawson, 1st Viscount Burnham
- Edward Cadogan, MP for Finchley (Conservative)
- Vernon Hartshorn, MP for Ogmores (Labour)
- George Lane-Fox, MP for Barkston Ash (Conservative)

- Donald Howard, 3rd Baron Strathcona and Mount Royal

Bardoli Satyagraha

The **Bardoli Satyagraha**, in the state of Gujarat, India during the British Raj, was a major episode of civil disobedience and revolt in the Indian Independence Movement on June 1928. The movement was eventually led by Vallabhbhai Patel, and its success gave rise to Patel becoming one of the main leaders of the independence movement.

Background

In 1925, the taluka of Bardoli in Gujarat suffered financial troubles. However, the government of the Bombay Presidency had raised the tax rate by 22% that year, and despite petitions from civic groups, it refused to cancel the raise in the face of the calamities. The situation for the farmers was grave enough that they barely had enough property and crops to pay off the tax, let alone feed themselves afterwards.

Considering options

The Gujarati activists Narhari Parikh, Ravi Shankar Vyas, and Mohanlal Pandya talked to village chieftains and farmers and solicited the help of Gujarat's most prominent freedom fighter, Vallabhbhai Patel. Patel had guided Gujarat's farmers during the Kheda struggle, and had served recently as Ahmedabad's municipal president. He was widely respected by common Gujaratis across the state.

Patel told a delegation of farmers frankly that if they should realise fully what a revolt would imply. He would not lead them unless he had the understanding and agreement of all the villages involved. Refusing to pay the taxes could lead to their property being confiscated, including their lands, and many would go to jail. They could face complete decimation. The villagers replied that they were prepared for the worst but definitely could not accept the government's injustice.

Patel then asked Gandhi to consider the matter, but Gandhi merely asked what Patel thought, and when the latter replied with confidence about the prospects, he gave his blessing. However, Gandhi and Patel agreed that neither the Congress nor Gandhi would directly involve themselves, and the struggle left entirely to the people of Bardoli taluka.

Struggle

Patel first wrote to the Governor of Bombay, asking him to reduce the taxes for the year in phase of the calamities. But the Governor ignored the letter, and reciprocated by announcing the date of collection.

Patel then instructed all the farmers of Bardoli taluka to refuse payment of their taxes. Aided by Parikh, Vyas and Pandya, he divided Bardoli into several zones, each with a leader and volunteers specifically assigned. Patel also placed some activists close to the government, to act as informers on the movements of government officials.

Above all, Patel instructed the farmers to remain completely nonviolent and not to respond physically to any incitements or

aggressive actions from officials. He reassured them that the struggle would not end until all taxes had been cancelled for the year and all seized property and lands had been returned to their rightful owners.

The farmers received complete support from their compatriots in Gujarat. Many hid their most precious belongings with relatives in other parts, and the protestors received financial support and essential supplies from supporters in other parts. However, Patel refused permission to enthusiastic supporters in Gujarat and other parts of India to go on in sympathetic protest.

The government declared that it would crush the revolt. Along with tax inspectors, bands of Pathans were gathered from northwest India to seize the property of the villagers and terrorize them. The Pathans and the men of the collectors forced themselves into the houses and took all property, including cattle (resisters had begun keeping their cattle inside their locked homes when the collectors were about to prevent them from seizing the animals from the fields).

The government began to auction the houses and the lands, but not a single person from Gujarat or anywhere else in India came forward to buy them. Patel had appointed volunteers in every village to keep watch. As soon as he sighted the officials who were coming to auction the property, the volunteer would sound his bugle. The farmers would leave the village and hide in the jungles. The officials would find the entire village empty. They could never find out who owned a particular house.

However, some rich people from Bombay came to buy some lands. There was also one village recorded that paid the tax. A

complete social boycott was organized against them, and relatives broke their ties to families in the village. Other ways that the social boycott was enforced against landowners who broke with the tax strike or purchased seized land were to refuse to rent their fields or to work as labourers for them.

Members of the legislative councils of Bombay and across India were angered by the terrible treatment of the protesting farmers. Indian members resigned their offices and expressed open support of the farmers. The government was heavily criticised, even by many in the Raj's offices.

Resolution

In 1928, an agreement was finally brokered by a Parsi member of the Bombay government. It agreed to restore the confiscated lands and properties, to cancel revenue payment for the year and to cancel the 22% raise until after the succeeding year. The government had appointed the Maxwell-Broomfield Commission to look in to the matter. After a rigorous survey, the raise in taxes was decided to be just 6.03%. However, the basic problems of the peasants were left unsolved, and bonded labour continued.

The farmers celebrated their victory, but Patel continued to work to ensure that all lands and properties were returned to every farmer and that no one was left out. When the government refused to ask the people who had bought some of the lands to return them, wealthy sympathisers from Bombay bought them out and returned the lands to the rightful owners.

Commemoration

The momentum from the Bardoli victory aided in the resurrection of the freedom struggle nationwide. In 1930, the Congress would declare Indian independence, and the Salt Satyagraha would be launched by Gandhi.

Patel credited Gandhi's teachings and the farmers' undying resolve, and people across the nation recognised his vital leadership. It was women of Bardoli who bestowed the title *Sardar* for the first time, which in Gujarati and most other Indian languages means *Chief* or *Leader*. It was after Bardoli that *Sardar Patel* became one of India's most important leaders.

Chapter 25

Central Assembly Bombed by Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt

Bhagat Singh

- **Bhagat Singh** (1907 – 23 March 1931) was an Indian socialist revolutionary whose two acts of dramatic violence against the British in India and execution at age 23 made him a folk hero of the Indian independence movement.

In December 1928, Bhagat Singh and an associate, Shivaram Rajguru, fatally shot a 21-year-old British police officer, John Saunders, in Lahore, Punjab, in what is today Pakistan, mistaking Saunders, who was still on probation, for the British police superintendent, James Scott, whom they had intended to assassinate. They believed Scott was responsible for the death of a popular Indian nationalist leader Lala Lajpat Rai by having ordered a lathi charge in which Rai was injured and two weeks thereafter died of a heart attack. As Saunders exited a police station on a motorcycle, he was felled by a single bullet fired from across the street by Rajguru, a marksman. As he lay injured, he was then shot at close range several times by Singh, the postmortem report showing eight bullet wounds. Another associate of Singh, Chandra Shekhar Azad, shot dead

an Indian police head constable, Channan Singh, who attempted to give chase to Singh and Rajguru as they fled.

After having escaped, Singh and his associates used pseudonyms to publicly announce avenging Lajpat Rai's death, putting up prepared posters that they altered to show Saunders as their intended target. Singh was thereafter on the run for many months, and no convictions resulted at the time. Surfacing again in April 1929, he and another associate, Batukeshwar Dutt, set off two home-made bombs inside the Central Legislative Assembly in Delhi. They showered leaflets from the gallery on the legislators below, shouted slogans, and then allowed the authorities to arrest them. The arrest, and the resulting publicity, brought to light Singh's complicity in the John Saunders case. Awaiting trial, Singh gained much public sympathy after he joined fellow defendant Jatin Das in a hunger strike, demanding better prison conditions for Indian prisoners, the strike ending in Das's death from starvation in September 1929. Singh was convicted and hanged in March 1931, aged 23.

Bhagat Singh became a popular folk hero after his death. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote about him: "Bhagat Singh did not become popular because of his act of terrorism but because he seemed to vindicate, for the moment, the honour of Lala Lajpat Rai, and through him of the nation. He became a symbol; the act was forgotten, the symbol remained, and within a few months each town and village of the Punjab, and to a lesser extent in the rest of northern India, resounded with his name." In still later years, Singh, an atheist and socialist in life, won admirers in India from among a political spectrum that included both communists and right-wing Hindu nationalists.

Although many of Singh's associates, as well as many Indian anti-colonial revolutionaries, were also involved in daring acts and were either executed or died violent deaths, few came to be lionised in popular art and literature to the same extent as Singh.

Early life

Bhagat Singh was a Sandhu Jat, born in 1907 to Kishan Singh and Vidyavati at Chak No. 105 GB, Banga village, Jaranwala Tehsil in the Lyallpur district of the Punjab Province of British India, present day Pakistan. His birth coincided with the release of his father and two uncles, Ajit Singh and Swaran Singh, from jail. His family members were Hindus and Sikhs; some had been active in Indian Independence movements, others had served in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's army. His ancestral village was Khatkar Kalan, near the town of Banga, India in Nawanshahr district (now renamed Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar) of the Punjab.

His family was politically active. His grandfather, Arjun Singh followed Swami Dayananda Saraswati's Hindu reformist movement, Arya Samaj, which had a considerable influence on Bhagat. His father and uncles were members of the Ghadar Party, led by Kartar Singh Sarabha and Har Dayal. Ajit Singh was forced into exile due to pending court cases against him while Swaran Singh died at home in Lahore in 1910 following his release from jail.

Unlike many Sikhs of his age, Singh did not attend the Khalsa High School in Lahore. His grandfather did not approve of the school officials' loyalty to the British government. He was

enrolled instead in the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic High School, an Arya Samaji institution. The Arya Samaj philosophy greatly influenced him throughout his life.

In 1919, when he was 12 years old, Singh visited the site of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre hours after thousands of unarmed people gathered at a public meeting had been killed. When he was 14 years old, he was among those in his village who welcomed protesters against the killing of a large number of unarmed people at Gurudwara Nankana Sahib on 20 February 1921. Singh became disillusioned with Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence after he called off the non-cooperation movement. Gandhi's decision followed the violent murders of policemen by villagers who were reacting to the police killing three villagers in the 1922 Chauri Chaura incident. Singh joined the Young Revolutionary Movement and began to advocate for the violent overthrow of the British Government in India.

In 1923, Singh joined the National College of Arts in Lahore, where he also participated in extra-curricular activities like the dramatics society. In 1923, he won an essay competition set by the Punjab Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, writing on the problems in the Punjab. Inspired by the Young Italy movement of Giuseppe Mazzini, he founded the Indian socialist youth organisation Naujawan Bharat Sabha in March 1926. He also joined the Hindustan Republican Association, which had prominent leaders, such as Chandrashekhar Azad, Ram Prasad Bismil and Shahid Ashfaqallah Khan. A year later, to avoid an arranged marriage, Singh ran away to Cawnpore. In a letter he left behind, he said:

My life has been dedicated to the noblest cause, that of the freedom of the country. Therefore, there is no rest or worldly desire that can lure me now.

Police became concerned with Singh's influence on youths and arrested him in May 1927 on the pretext that he had been involved in a bombing that had taken place in Lahore in October 1926. He was released on a surety of Rs. 60,000 five weeks after his arrest. He wrote for, and edited, Urdu and Punjabi newspapers, published in Amritsar and also contributed to low-priced pamphlets published by the Naujawan Bharat Sabha that excoriated the British. He also wrote for *Kirti*, the journal of the Kirti Kisan Party ("Workers and Peasants Party") and briefly for the *Veer Arjun* newspaper, published in Delhi. He often used pseudonyms, including names such as Balwant, Ranjit and Vidhrohi.

Revolutionary activities

Lala Lajpat Rai's death and killing of Saunders

In 1928, the British government set up the Simon Commission to report on the political situation in India. Some Indian political parties boycotted the Commission because there were no Indians in its membership, and there were protests across the country. When the Commission visited Lahore on 30 October 1928, Lala Lajpat Rai led a march in protest against it. Police attempts to disperse the large crowd resulted in violence. The superintendent of police, James A. Scott, ordered the police to lathi charge (use batons against) the protesters and personally assaulted Rai, who was injured. Rai died of a

heart attack on 17 November 1928. Doctors thought that his death might have been hastened by the injuries he had received. When the matter was raised in the Parliament of the United Kingdom, the British Government denied any role in Rai's death.

Singh was a prominent member of the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA) and was probably responsible, in large part, for its change of name to Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) in 1928. The HSRA vowed to avenge Rai's death. Singh conspired with revolutionaries like Shivaram Rajguru, Sukhdev Thapar, and Chandrashekhar Azad to kill Scott. However, in a case of mistaken identity, the plotters shot John P. Saunders, an Assistant Superintendent of Police, as he was leaving the District Police Headquarters in Lahore on 17 December 1928.

Contemporary reaction to the killing differs substantially from the adulation that later surfaced. The Naujawan Bharat Sabha, which had organised the Lahore protest march along with the HSRA, found that attendance at its subsequent public meetings dropped sharply. Politicians, activists, and newspapers, including *The People*, which Rai had founded in 1925, stressed that non-co-operation was preferable to violence. The murder was condemned as a retrograde action by Mahatma Gandhi, the Congress leader, but Jawaharlal Nehru later wrote that:

Bhagat Singh did not become popular because of his act of terrorism but because he seemed to vindicate, for the moment, the honour of Lala Lajpat Rai, and through him of the nation. He became a symbol, the act was forgotten, the symbol

remained, and within a few months each town and village of the Punjab, and to a lesser extent in the rest of northern India, resounded with his name. Innumerable songs grew about him and the popularity that the man achieved was something amazing.

Escape

After killing Saunders, the group escaped through the D.A.V. College entrance, across the road from the District Police Headquarters. Chanan Singh, a Head Constable who was chasing them, was fatally injured by Chandrashekhar Azad's covering fire. They then fled on bicycles to pre-arranged safe houses. The police launched a massive search operation to catch them, blocking all entrances and exits to and from the city; the CID kept a watch on all young men leaving Lahore. The fugitives hid for the next two days. On 19 December 1928, Sukhdev called on Durgawati Devi, sometimes known as Durga Bhabhi, wife of another HSRA member, Bhagwati Charan Vohra, for help, which she agreed to provide. They decided to catch the train departing from Lahore to Bathinda en route to Howrah (Calcutta) early the next morning.

Singh and Rajguru, both carrying loaded revolvers, left the house early the next day. Dressed in western attire (Bhagat Singh cut his hair, shaved his beard and wore a hat over cropped hair), and carrying Devi's sleeping child, Singh and Devi passed as a young couple, while Rajguru carried their luggage as their servant. At the station, Singh managed to conceal his identity while buying tickets, and the three boarded the train heading to Cawnpore (now Kanpur). There they boarded a train for Lucknow since the CID at Howrah

railway station usually scrutinised passengers on the direct train from Lahore. At Lucknow, Rajguru left separately for Benares while Singh, Devi and the infant went to Howrah, with all except Singh returning to Lahore a few days later.

1929 Assembly incident and arrest

For some time, Singh had been exploiting the power of drama as a means to inspire the revolt against the British, purchasing a magic lantern to show slides that enlivened his talks about revolutionaries such as Ram Prasad Bismil who had died as a result of the Kakori conspiracy. In 1929, he proposed a dramatic act to the HSRA intended to gain massive publicity for their aims. Influenced by Auguste Vaillant, a French anarchist who had bombed the Chamber of Deputies in Paris, Singh's plan was to explode a bomb inside the Central Legislative Assembly. The nominal intention was to protest against the Public Safety Bill, and the Trade Dispute Act, which had been rejected by the Assembly but were being enacted by the Viceroy using his special powers; the actual intention was for the perpetrators to allow themselves to be arrested so that they could use court appearances as a stage to publicise their cause.

The HSRA leadership was initially opposed to Bhagat's participation in the bombing because they were certain that his prior involvement in the Saunders shooting meant that his arrest would ultimately result in his execution. However, they eventually decided that he was their most suitable candidate. On 8 April 1929, Singh, accompanied by Batukeshwar Dutt, threw two bombs into the Assembly chamber from its public gallery while it was in session. The bombs had been designed

not to kill, but some members, including George Ernest Schuster, the finance member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, were injured. The smoke from the bombs filled the Assembly so that Singh and Dutt could probably have escaped in the confusion had they wished. Instead, they stayed shouting the slogan "Inquilab Zindabad!" ("Long Live the Revolution") and threw leaflets. The two men were arrested and subsequently moved through a series of jails in Delhi.

Assembly case trial

According to Neeti Nair, associate professor of history, "public criticism of this terrorist action was unequivocal." Gandhi, once again, issued strong words of disapproval of their deed. Nonetheless, the jailed Bhagat was reported to be elated, and referred to the subsequent legal proceedings as a "drama". Singh and Dutt eventually responded to the criticism by writing the Assembly Bomb Statement:

We hold human life sacred beyond words. We are neither perpetrators of dastardly outrages ... nor are we 'lunatics' as the *Tribune* of Lahore and some others would have it believed ... Force when aggressively applied is 'violence' and is, therefore, morally unjustifiable, but when it is used in the furtherance of a legitimate cause, it has its moral justification.

The trial began in the first week of June, following a preliminary hearing in May. On 12 June, both men were sentenced to life imprisonment for: "causing explosions of a nature likely to endanger life, unlawfully and maliciously." Dutt had been defended by Asaf Ali, while Singh defended himself. Doubts have been raised about the accuracy of

testimony offered at the trial. One key discrepancy concerns the automatic pistol that Singh had been carrying when he was arrested. Some witnesses said that he had fired two or three shots while the police sergeant who arrested him testified that the gun was pointed downward when he took it from him and that Singh "was playing with it." According to an article in the *India Law Journal*, the prosecution witnesses were coached, their accounts were incorrect, and Singh had turned over the pistol himself. Singh was given a life sentence.

Arrest of associates

In 1929, the HSRA had set up bomb factories in Lahore and Saharanpur. On 15 April 1929, the Lahore bomb factory was discovered by the police, leading to the arrest of other members of HSRA, including Sukhdev, Kishori Lal, and Jai Gopal. Not long after this, the Saharanpur factory was also raided and some of the conspirators became informants. With the new information available, the police were able to connect the three strands of the Saunders murder, Assembly bombing, and bomb manufacture. Singh, Sukhdev, Rajguru, and 21 others were charged with the Saunders murder.

Hunger strike and Lahore conspiracy case

Singh was re-arrested for murdering Saunders and Chanan Singh based on substantial evidence against him, including statements by his associates, Hans Raj Vohra and Jai Gopal. His life sentence in the Assembly Bomb case was deferred until the Saunders case was decided. He was sent to Central Jail Mianwali from the Delhi jail. There he witnessed discrimination between European and Indian prisoners. He considered

himself, along with others, to be a political prisoner. He noted that he had received an enhanced diet at Delhi which was not being provided at Mianwali. He led other Indian, self-identified political prisoners he felt were being treated as common criminals in a hunger strike. They demanded equality in food standards, clothing, toiletries, and other hygienic necessities, as well as access to books and a daily newspaper. They argued that they should not be forced to do manual labour or any undignified work in the jail.

The hunger strike inspired a rise in public support for Singh and his colleagues from around June 1929. *The Tribune* newspaper was particularly prominent in this movement and reported on mass meetings in places such as Lahore and Amritsar. The government had to apply Section 144 of the criminal code in an attempt to limit gatherings.

Jawaharlal Nehru met Singh and the other strikers in Central Jail Mianwali. After the meeting, he stated:

I was very much pained to see the distress of the heroes. They have staked their lives in this struggle. They want that political prisoners should be treated as political prisoners. I am quite hopeful that their sacrifice would be crowned with success.

Muhammad Ali Jinnah spoke in support of the strikers in the Assembly, saying:

The man who goes on hunger strike has a soul. He is moved by that soul, and he believes in the justice of his cause ... however much you deplore them and, however, much you say

they are misguided, it is the system, this damnable system of governance, which is resented by the people.

The government tried to break the strike by placing different food items in the prison cells to test the prisoners' resolve. Water pitchers were filled with milk so that either the prisoners remained thirsty or broke their strike; nobody faltered and the impasse continued. The authorities then attempted force-feeding the prisoners but this was resisted. With the matter still unresolved, the Indian Viceroy, Lord Irwin, cut short his vacation in Simla to discuss the situation with jail authorities. Since the activities of the hunger strikers had gained popularity and attention amongst the people nationwide, the government decided to advance the start of the Saunders murder trial, which was henceforth called the Lahore Conspiracy Case. Singh was transported to Borstal Jail, Lahore, and the trial began there on 10 July 1929. In addition to charging them with the murder of Saunders, Singh and the 27 other prisoners were charged with plotting a conspiracy to murder Scott, and waging a war against the King. Singh, still on hunger strike, had to be carried to the court handcuffed on a stretcher; he had lost 14 pounds (6.4 kg) from his original weight of 133 pounds (60 kg) since beginning the strike.

The government was beginning to make concessions but refused to move on the core issue of recognising the classification of "political prisoner". In the eyes of officials, if someone broke the law then that was a personal act, not a political one, and they were common criminals. By now, the condition of another hunger striker, Jatindra Nath Das, lodged in the same jail, had deteriorated considerably. The Jail committee recommended his unconditional release, but the

government rejected the suggestion and offered to release him on bail. On 13 September 1929, Das died after a 63-day hunger strike. Almost all the nationalist leaders in the country paid tribute to Das' death. Mohammad Alam and Gopi Chand Bhargava resigned from the Punjab Legislative Council in protest, and Nehru moved a successful adjournment motion in the Central Assembly as a censure against the "inhumane treatment" of the Lahore prisoners. Singh finally heeded a resolution of the Congress party, and a request by his father, ending his hunger strike on 5 October 1929 after 116 days. During this period, Singh's popularity among common Indians extended beyond Punjab.

Singh's attention now turned to his trial, where he was to face a Crown prosecution team comprising C. H. Carden-Noad, Kalandar Ali Khan, Jai Gopal Lal, and the prosecuting inspector, Bakshi Dina Nath. The defence was composed of eight lawyers. Prem Dutt Verma, the youngest amongst the 27 accused, threw his slipper at Gopal when he turned and became a prosecution witness in court. As a result, the magistrate ordered that all the accused should be handcuffed. Singh and others refused to be handcuffed and were subjected to brutal beating. The revolutionaries refused to attend the court and Singh wrote a letter to the magistrate citing various reasons for their refusal. The magistrate ordered the trial to proceed without the accused or members of the HSRA. This was a setback for Singh as he could no longer use the trial as a forum to publicise his views.

Special Tribunal

To speed up the slow trial, the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, declared an emergency on 1 May 1930 and introduced an ordinance to set up a special tribunal composed of three high court judges for the case. This decision cut short the normal process of justice as the only appeal after the tribunal was to the Privy Council located in England.

On 2 July 1930, a *habeas corpus* petition was filed in the High Court challenging the ordinance on the grounds that it was *ultra vires* and, therefore, illegal; the Viceroy had no powers to shorten the customary process of determining justice. The petition argued that the Defence of India Act 1915 allowed the Viceroy to introduce an ordinance, and set up such a tribunal, only under conditions of a breakdown of law-and-order, which, it was claimed in this case, had not occurred. However, the petition was dismissed as being premature.

Carden-Noad presented the government's charges of conducting robberies, and the illegal acquisition of arms and ammunition among others. The evidence of G. T. H. Hamilton Harding, the Lahore superintendent of police, shocked the court. He stated that he had filed the first information report against the accused under specific orders from the chief secretary to the governor of Punjab and that he was unaware of the details of the case. The prosecution depended mainly on the evidence of P. N. Ghosh, Hans Raj Vohra, and Jai Gopal who had been Singh's associates in the HSRA. On 10 July 1930, the tribunal decided to press charges against only 15 of the 18 accused and allowed their petitions to be taken up for hearing the next day. The trial ended on 30 September 1930.

The three accused, whose charges were withdrawn, included Dutt who had already been given a life sentence in the Assembly bomb case.

The ordinance (and the tribunal) would lapse on 31 October 1930 as it had not been passed by the Central Assembly or the British Parliament. On 7 October 1930, the tribunal delivered its 300-page judgement based on all the evidence and concluded that the participation of Singh, Sukhdev, and Rajguru in Saunder's murder was proven. They were sentenced to death by hanging. Of the other accused, three were acquitted (Ajoy Ghosh, Jatindra Nath Sanyal and Des Raj), Kundan Lal received seven years' rigorous imprisonment, Prem Dutt received five years of the same, and the remaining seven (Kishori Lal, Mahabir Singh, Bijoy Kumar Sinha, Shiv Verma, Gaya Prasad, Jai Dev and Kamalnath Tewari) were all sentenced to transportation for life.

Appeal to the Privy Council

In Punjab province, a defence committee drew up a plan to appeal to the Privy Council. Singh was initially against the appeal but later agreed to it in the hope that the appeal would popularise the HSRA in Britain. The appellants claimed that the ordinance which created the tribunal was invalid while the government countered that the Viceroy was completely empowered to create such a tribunal. The appeal was dismissed by Judge Viscount Dunedin.

Reactions to the judgement

After the rejection of the appeal to the Privy Council, Congress party president Madan Mohan Malviya filed a mercy appeal before Irwin on 14 February 1931. Some prisoners sent Mahatma Gandhi an appeal to intervene. In his notes dated 19 March 1931, the Viceroy recorded:

While returning Gandhiji asked me if he could talk about the case of Bhagat Singh because newspapers had come out with the news of his slated hanging on March 24th. It would be a very unfortunate day because on that day the new president of the Congress had to reach Karachi and there would be a lot of hot discussion. I explained to him that I had given a very careful thought to it but I did not find any basis to convince myself to commute the sentence. It appeared he found my reasoning weighty.

The Communist Party of Great Britain expressed its reaction to the case:

The history of this case, of which we do not come across any example in relation to the political cases, reflects the symptoms of callousness and cruelty which is the outcome of bloated desire of the imperialist government of Britain so that fear can be instilled in the hearts of the repressed people.

A plan to rescue Singh and fellow HSRA inmates from the jail failed. HSRA member Durga Devi's husband, Bhagwati Charan Vohra, attempted to manufacture bombs for the purpose, but died when they exploded accidentally.

Execution

Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were sentenced to death in the Lahore conspiracy case and ordered to be hanged on 24 March 1931. The schedule was moved forward by 11 hours and the three were hanged on 23 March 1931 at 7:30 pm in the Lahore jail. It is reported that no magistrate at the time was willing to supervise Singh's hanging as was required by law. The execution was supervised instead by an honorary judge, who also signed the three death warrants, as their original warrants had expired. The jail authorities then broke a hole in the rear wall of the jail, removed the bodies, and secretly cremated the three men under cover of darkness outside Ganda Singh Wala village, and then threw the ashes into the Sutlej river, about 10 kilometres (6.2 mi) from Ferozepore.

Criticism of the tribunal trial

Singh's trial has been described by the Supreme Court as "contrary to the fundamental doctrine of criminal jurisprudence" because there was no opportunity for the accused to defend themselves. The Special Tribunal was a departure from the normal procedure adopted for a trial and its decision could only be appealed to the Privy Council located in Britain. The accused were absent from the court and the judgement was passed ex-parte. The ordinance, which was introduced by the Viceroy to form the Special Tribunal, was never approved by the Central Assembly or the British Parliament, and it eventually lapsed without any legal or constitutional sanctity.

Reactions to the executions

The executions were reported widely by the press, especially as they took place on the eve of the annual convention of the Congress party at Karachi. Gandhi faced black flag demonstrations by angry youths who shouted "Down with Gandhi". *The New York Times* reported:

A reign of terror in the city of Cawnpore in the United Provinces and an attack on Mahatma Gandhi by a youth outside Karachi were among the answers of the Indian extremists today to the hanging of Bhagat Singh and two fellow-assassins.

Hartals and strikes of mourning were called. The Congress party, during the Karachi session, declared:

While dissociating itself from and disapproving of political violence in any shape or form, this Congress places on record its admiration of the bravery and sacrifice of Bhagat Singh, Sukh Dev and Raj Guru and mourns with their bereaved families the loss of these lives. The Congress is of the opinion that their triple execution was an act of wanton vengeance and a deliberate flouting of the unanimous demand of the nation for commutation. This Congress is further of the opinion that the [British] Government lost a golden opportunity for promoting good-will between the two nations, admittedly held to be crucial at this juncture, and for winning over to methods of peace a party which, driven to despair, resorts to political violence.

In the issue of *Young India* of 29 March 1931, Gandhi wrote:

Bhagat Singh and his two associates have been hanged. The Congress made many attempts to save their lives and the Government entertained many hopes of it, but all has been in a vain.

Bhagat Singh did not wish to live. He refused to apologise, or even file an appeal. Bhagat Singh was not a devotee of non-violence, but he did not subscribe to the religion of violence. He took to violence due to helplessness and to defend his homeland. In his last letter, Bhagat Singh wrote, " I have been arrested while waging a war. For me there can be no gallows. Put me into the mouth of a cannon and blow me off." These heroes had conquered the fear of death. Let us bow to them a thousand times for their heroism.

But we should not imitate their act. In our land of millions of destitute and crippled people, if we take to the practice of seeking justice through murder, there will be a terrifying situation. Our poor people will become victims of our atrocities. By making a dharma of violence, we shall be reaping the fruit of our own actions.

Hence, though we praise the courage of these brave men, we should never countenance their activities. Our dharma is to swallow our anger, abide by the discipline of non-violence and carry out our duty.

Gandhi controversy

There have been suggestions that Gandhi had an opportunity to stop Singh's execution but refrained from doing so. Another theory is that Gandhi actively conspired with the British to have Singh executed. In contrast, Gandhi's supporters argue

that he did not have enough influence with the British to stop the execution, much less arrange it, but claim that he did his best to save Singh's life. They also assert that Singh's role in the independence movement was no threat to Gandhi's role as its leader, so he would have no reason to want him dead. Gandhi always maintained that he was a great admirer of Singh's patriotism. He also stated that he was opposed to Singh's execution (and for that matter, capital punishment in general) and proclaimed that he had no power to stop it. Of Singh's execution Gandhi said: "The government certainly had the right to hang these men. However, there are some rights which do credit to those who possess them only if they are enjoyed in name only." Gandhi also once remarked about capital punishment: "I cannot in all conscience agree to anyone being sent to the gallows. God alone can take life, because he alone gives it." Gandhi had managed to have 90,000 political prisoners, who were not members of his Satyagraha movement, released under the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. According to a report in the Indian magazine *Frontline*, he did plead several times for the commutation of the death sentences of Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev, including a personal visit on 19 March 1931. In a letter to the Viceroy on the day of their execution, he pleaded fervently for commutation, not knowing that the letter would arrive too late. Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, later said:

As I listened to Mr. Gandhi putting the case for commutation before me, I reflected first on what significance it surely was that the apostle of non-violence should so earnestly be pleading the cause of the devotees of a creed so fundamentally opposed to his own, but I should regard it as wholly wrong to allow my judgement to be influenced by purely political

considerations. I could not imagine a case in which under the law, penalty had been more directly deserved.

Ideals and opinions

Communism

Singh regarded Kartar Singh Sarabha, the founding-member of the Ghadar Party as his hero. Bhagat was also inspired by Bhai Parmanand, another founding-member of the Ghadar Party. Singh was attracted to anarchism and communism. He was an avid reader of the teachings of Mikhail Bakunin and also read Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky. In his last testament, "To Young Political Workers", he declares his ideal as the "Social reconstruction on new, i.e., Marxist, basis". Singh did not believe in the Gandhian ideology – which advocated Satyagraha and other forms of non-violent resistance, and felt that such politics would replace one set of exploiters with another.

From May to September 1928, Singh published a series of articles on anarchism in *Kirti*. He was concerned that the public misunderstood the concept of anarchism, writing that: "The people are scared of the word anarchism. The word anarchism has been abused so much that even in India revolutionaries have been called anarchist to make them unpopular." He clarified that anarchism refers to the absence of a ruler and abolition of the state, not the absence of order. He went on to say: "I think in India the idea of universal brotherhood, the Sanskrit sentence *vasudhaiva kutumbakam* etc., has the same meaning." He believed that:

The ultimate goal of Anarchism is complete independence, according to which no one will be obsessed with God or religion, nor will anybody be crazy for money or other worldly desires. There will be no chains on the body or control by the state. This means that they want to eliminate: the Church, God and Religion; the state; Private property.

On 21 January 1930, during the trial of the Lahore Conspiracy Case, Bhagat Singh and his HSRA comrades, appeared in the court wearing red scarves. When the magistrate took his chair, they raised slogans "Long Live Socialist Revolution", "Long Live Communist International", "Long Live People" "Lenin's Name Will Never Die", and "Down with Imperialism". Bhagat Singh then read the text of a telegram in the court and asked the magistrate to send it to the Third International. The telegram stated:

"On Lenin day we send harty greetings to all who are doing something for carrying forward the ideas of the great Lenin. We wish success to the great experiment Russia is carrying out. We join our voice to that of the international working class movement. The proletariat will win. Capitalism will be defeated. Death to Imperialism".

Historian K. N. Panikkar described Singh as one of the early Marxists in India. The political theorist Jason Adams notes that he was more enamoured with Lenin than with Marx. From 1926 onward, he studied the history of the revolutionary movements in India and abroad. In his prison notebooks, he quoted Lenin in reference to imperialism and capitalism and also the revolutionary thoughts of Trotsky.

On the day his execution, Bhagat Singh was reading the book, *Reminiscences of Lenin*, authored by Clara Zetkin, a German Marxist. When asked what his last wish was, Singh replied that he was studying the life of Lenin and he wanted to finish it before his death.

Atheism

Singh began to question religious ideologies after witnessing the Hindu-Muslim riots that broke out after Gandhi disbanded the Non-Cooperation Movement. He did not understand how members of these two groups, initially united in fighting against the British, could be at each other's throats because of their religious differences. At this point, Singh dropped his religious beliefs, since he believed religion hindered the revolutionaries' struggle for independence, and began studying the works of Bakunin, Lenin, Trotsky – all atheist revolutionaries. He also took an interest in Soham Swami's book *Common Sense*.

While in prison in 1930–31, Bhagat Singh was approached by Randhir Singh, a fellow inmate, and a Sikh leader who would later found the Akhand Kirtani Jatha. According to Bhagat Singh's close associate Shiva Verma, who later compiled and edited his writings, Randhir Singh tried to convince Bhagat Singh of the existence of God, and upon failing berated him: "You are giddy with fame and have developed an ego that is standing like a black curtain between you and God". In response, Bhagat Singh wrote an essay entitled "Why I am an Atheist" to address the question of whether his atheism was born out of vanity. In the essay, he defended his own beliefs and said that he used to be a firm believer in the Almighty, but

could not bring himself to believe the myths and beliefs that others held close to their hearts. He acknowledged the fact that religion made death easier, but also said that unproven philosophy is a sign of human weakness. In this context, he noted:

As regard the origin of God, my thought is that man created God in his imagination when he realised his weaknesses, limitations and shortcomings. In this way he got the courage to face all the trying circumstances and to meet all dangers that might occur in his life and also to restrain his outbursts in prosperity and affluence. God, with his whimsical laws and parental generosity was painted with variegated colours of imagination. He was used as a deterrent factor when his fury and his laws were repeatedly propagated so that man might not become a danger to society. He was the cry of the distressed soul for he was believed to stand as father and mother, sister and brother, brother and friend when in time of distress a man was left alone and helpless. He was Almighty and could do anything. The idea of God is helpful to a man in distress.

Towards the end of the essay, Bhagat Singh wrote:

Let us see how steadfast I am. One of my friends asked me to pray. When informed of my atheism, he said, "When your last days come, you will begin to believe." I said, "No, dear sir, Never shall it happen. I consider it to be an act of degradation and demoralisation. For such petty selfish motives, I shall never pray." Reader and friends, is it vanity? If it is, I stand for it.

"Killing the ideas"

In the leaflet he threw in the Central Assembly on 8 April 1929, he stated: "It is easy to kill individuals but you cannot kill the ideas. Great empires crumbled, while the ideas survived." While in prison, Singh and two others had written a letter to Lord Irwin, wherein they asked to be treated as prisoners of war and consequently to be executed by firing squad and not by hanging. Prannath Mehta, Singh's friend, visited him in the jail on 20 March, three days before his execution, with a draft letter for clemency, but he declined to sign it.

Reception

Singh was criticised both by his contemporaries, and by people after his death, for his violent and revolutionary stance towards the British as well as his strong opposition to the pacifist stance taken by Gandhi and the Indian National Congress. The methods he used to convey his message, such as shooting Saunders, and throwing non-lethal bombs, stood in stark contrast to Gandhi's non-violent methodology, however Gandhi condemned the act of violence but he still considered him to be a great patriot and martyr.

Popularity

Subhas Chandra Bose said that: "Bhagat Singh had become the symbol of the new awakening among the youths." Nehru acknowledged that Bhagat Singh's popularity was leading to a new national awakening, saying: "He was a clean fighter who

faced his enemy in the open field ... he was like a spark that became a flame in a short time and spread from one end of the country to the other dispelling the prevailing darkness everywhere". Four years after Singh's hanging, the Director of the Intelligence Bureau, Sir Horace Williamson, wrote: "His photograph was on sale in every city and township and for a time rivaled in popularity even that of Mr. Gandhi himself".

Legacy and memorials

Bhagat Singh remains a significant figure in Indian iconography to the present day. His memory, however, defies categorisation and presents problems for various groups that might try to appropriate it. Pritam Singh, a professor who has specialised in the study of federalism, nationalism and development in India, notes that

Bhagat Singh represents a challenge to almost every tendency in Indian politics. Gandhi-inspired Indian nationalists, Hindu nationalists, Sikh nationalists, the parliamentary Left and the pro-armed struggle Naxalite Left compete with each other to appropriate the legacy of Bhagat Singh, and yet each one of them is faced with a contradiction in making a claim to his legacy. Gandhi-inspired Indian nationalists find Bhagat Singh's resort to violence problematic, the Hindu and Sikh nationalists find his atheism troubling, the parliamentary Left finds his ideas and actions as more close to the perspective of the Naxalites and the Naxalites find Bhagat Singh's critique of individual terrorism in his later life an uncomfortable historical fact.

- On 15 August 2008, an 18-foot tall bronze statue of Singh was installed in the Parliament of India, next to the statues of Indira Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose. A portrait of Singh and Dutt also adorns the walls of the Parliament House.
- The place where Singh was cremated, at Hussainiwala on the banks of the Sutlej river, became Pakistani territory during the partition. On 17 January 1961, it was transferred to India in exchange for 12 villages near the Sulemanki Headworks. Batukeshwar Dutt was cremated there on 19 July 1965 in accordance with his last wishes, as was Singh's mother, Vidyawati. The National Martyrs Memorial was built on the cremation spot in 1968 and has memorials of Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev. During the 1971 India–Pakistan war, the memorial was damaged and the statues of the martyrs were removed by the Pakistani Army. They have not been returned but the memorial was rebuilt in 1973.
- The *Shaheedi Mela* (Punjabi: Martyrdom Fair) is an event held annually on 23 March when people pay homage at the National Martyrs Memorial. The day is also observed across the Indian state of Punjab.
- The Shaheed-e-Azam Sardar Bhagat Singh Museum opened on the 50th anniversary of his death at his ancestral village, Khatkar Kalan. Exhibits include Singh's ashes, the blood-soaked sand, and the blood-stained newspaper in which the ashes were wrapped. A page of the first Lahore Conspiracy Case's judgement in which Kartar Singh Sarabha was sentenced to death and on which Singh put some

notes is also displayed, as well as a copy of the *Bhagavad Gita* with Bhagat Singh's signature, which was given to him in the Lahore Jail, and other personal belongings.

- The Bhagat Singh Memorial was built in 2009 in Khatkar Kalan at a cost of ₹168 million (US\$2.4 million).
- The Supreme Court of India established a museum to display landmarks in the history of India's judicial system, displaying records of some historic trials. The first exhibition that was organised was the Trial of Bhagat Singh, which opened on 28 September 2007, on the centenary celebrations of Singh's birth.

Modern days

The youth of India still draw tremendous amount of inspiration from Singh. He was voted the "Greatest Indian" in a poll by the Indian magazine *India Today* in 2008, ahead of Bose and Gandhi. During the centenary of his birth, a group of intellectuals set up an institution named Bhagat Singh Sansthan to commemorate him and his ideals. The Parliament of India paid tributes and observed silence as a mark of respect in memory of Singh on 23 March 2001 and 2005. In Pakistan, after a long-standing demand by activists from the Bhagat Singh Memorial Foundation of Pakistan, the Shadman Chowk square in Lahore, where he was hanged, was renamed as Bhagat Singh Chowk. This change was successfully challenged in a Pakistani court. On 6 September 2015, the Bhagat Singh Memorial Foundation filed a petition in the Lahore high court and again demanded the renaming of the Chowk to Bhagat Singh Chowk.

Films and television

Several films have been made portraying the life and times of Singh. The first film based on his life was *Shaheed-e-Azad Bhagat Singh* (1954) in which Prem Abeed played the role of Singh followed by *Shaheed Bhagat Singh* (1963), starring Shammi Kapoor as Bhagat Singh, *Shaheed* (1965) in which Manoj Kumar portrayed Bhagat Singh and *Amar Shaheed Bhagat Singh* (1974) in which Som Dutt portrays Singh. Three films about Singh were released in 2002 *Shaheed-E-Azam*, *23 March 1931: Shaheed* and *The Legend of Bhagat Singh* in which Singh was portrayed by Sonu Sood, Bobby Deol and Ajay Devgn respectively. *Bhagat Singh* (2002), a drama film directed by Anand Sagar and written/produced Ramanand Sagar was aired on DD National. It featured Deepak Dutta in the titular role.

Siddharth played the role of Bhagat Singh in the 2006 film *Rang De Basanti*, a film drawing parallels between revolutionaries of Bhagat Singh's era and modern Indian youth. Gurdas Mann played the role of Singh in *Shaheed Udham Singh*, a film based on life of Udham Singh. Karam Rajpal portrayed Bhagat Singh in Star Bharat's television series *Chandrashekar*, which is based on life of Chandra Shekhar Azad.

In 2008, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML) and Act Now for Harmony and Democracy (ANHAD), a non-profit organisation, co-produced a 40-minute documentary on Bhagat Singh entitled *Inqilab*, directed by Gauhar Raza.

Theatre

Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru have been the inspiration for a number of plays in India and Pakistan, that continue to attract crowds.

Songs

Although, the patriotic Hindustani songs, "Sarfarooshi ki Tamanna" ("The desire to sacrifice") created by Bismil Azimabadi, and "Mera Rang De Basanti Chola" ("O Mother! Dye my robe the colour of spring") created by Ram Prasad Bismil, are largely associated with Singh and have been used in a number of related films.

Other

In 1968, a postage stamp was issued in India commemorating the 61st birth anniversary of Singh. A ₹5 coin commemorating him was released for circulation in 2012.

Batukeshwar Dutt

- **Batukeshwar Dutta** (18 November 1910 — 20 July 1965) was an Indian socialist revolutionary and independence fighter in the early 1900s. He is best known for having exploded two bombs, along with Bhagat Singh, in the Central Legislative Assembly in New Delhi on 8 April 1929. After they were arrested, tried and imprisoned for life, he and Bhagat Singh initiated a historic hunger strike protesting against the abusive treatment of Indian political prisoners,

and eventually secured some rights for them. He was also a member of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association.

Biography

Batukeshwar Dutta — also known as B. K. Dutta, Battu, and Mohan — was a son of Goshtha Bihari Dutta. He was born on 18 November 1910 in Khandaghosh village, Purba Bardhaman district, in what is now West Bengal in a Bengali Kayastha family. He graduated from Pandit Prithi Nath High School in Cawnpore. He was a close associate of freedom fighters such as Chandrashekhar Azad and Bhagat Singh, the latter of whom he met in Cawnpore in 1924. He learned about bomb-making while working for the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) there.

1929 Assembly bomb throwing incident

To subdue the rise of revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh, the British government decided to implement the Defence of India Act 1915, which gave the police a free hand. Influenced by a French anarchist who bombed the French Chamber of Deputies, Singh proposed to the HSRA his plan to explode a bomb inside the Central Legislative Assembly, to which it agreed. Initially it was decided that Dutt and Sukhdev would plant the bomb while Singh would travel to the USSR. However, later the plan was changed and Dutta was entrusted with planting it alongside Singh. On 8 April 1929, Singh and Dutta

threw two bombs inside the assembly rushing from Visitor's Gallery. The smoke from the bomb filled the Hall and they shouted slogans of "*Inquilab Zindabad!*" (Hindi-Urdu: "Long Live the Revolution!") and showered leaflets. The leaflet claimed that the act was done to oppose the Trade Disputes and the Public Safety Bill being presented in the Central Assembly and the death of Lala Lajpat Rai. Few sustained injuries in the explosion but there were no deaths; Singh and Dutta claimed that the act was intentional. Singh and Dutta were arrested, as planned.

The Tribune reported the incident as:

When Mr Patel from India got up to give his ruling on the Public Safety Bill, two bombs were thrown from a gallery near the seat of George Schuster. The whole House was dispersed in the panic caused. George Schuster and B. Dalal were injured while few other members received minor injuries. Bhagat Singh and Dutta were arrested by the British.

Ten minutes later the Assembly got reassembled. The Chamber was filled with smoke. Mr Patel adjourned the House till next Thursday. A red pamphlet "*Hindustan Socialist Republican Army*" signed by Balraj, Honourary Chief, was thrown into the blazing fire.

The police locked the Council House and prevented the movement of the visitors. Sir J. Simon was also in the President's Gallery when the bomb fell. Sir G. Schuster, Sir B. Dalal, Mr Raghavendra Rao and Mr Shanker Rao were among the injured.

Batukeshwar Dutta from Bengal and Bhagat Singh from Punjab were arrested.

Trial

Along with Singh and Sukhdev, Dutta was tried in the Central Assembly Bomb Case, and was sentenced in 1929 to life imprisonment by the Sessions Judge of Delhi under Section 307 of the Indian Penal Code & Section 4 of the Explosive Substances Act. He was deported to the Cellular Jail, Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Last days

After his release from prison Dutta contracted tuberculosis. He nonetheless participated in the Quit India Movement of Mahatma Gandhi and was again jailed for four years. He was lodged in Motihari Jail (in Champaran district of Bihar). After India gained independence, he married Anjali in November 1947. Independent India did not accord him any recognition, and he spent his remaining life in poverty away from the political limelight. The later life of the freedom fighter was painful and tragic. Being released from jail due to tuberculosis, he was not valued in independent India, he grappled with destitution. He was forced into starting a transport business for livelihood. Dutta outlived all his comrades (except Jaydev Kapoor) and died on 20 July 1965 in the AIIMS hospital in Delhi after a long illness. He was cremated in Hussainiwala near Ferozepur in Punjab where the bodies of his comrades Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were also cremated many years before. He was survived by his

only daughter, Bharti Dutta Bagchi, in Patna where his house was situated in the Jakkanpur area. He was one of the writers of the film *Shaheed* (1965). During the filming of *Shaheed*, once the lead actor Manoj Kumar went to meet Bhagat Singh's mother, as she was not well at that time and was admitted in a hospital in Chandigarh. Manoj Kumar said that he met Batukeshwar Dutt there.

Recognition

The B.K. Dutt Colony in New Delhi, located on a prime location opposite Safdarjung Airport and adjacent to Jor Bagh, is named after Dutta. It is the nearest private residential colony near to AIIMS in NDMC area.

Anil Verma wrote a book titled *Batukeshwar Dutt: Bhagat Singh ke Sahyogi*, which was released on the centenary of Dutta's birth. The book was published by the Government of India's publication service, the National Book Trust. It is the first book published on Dutt in any language.

In popular culture

Bhaswar Chatterjee played the role of Dutta in the movie *The Legend of Bhagat Singh* (2002).

Chapter 26

Purna Swaraj Resolution

The **Purna Swaraj** declaration or **Declaration of the Independence of India**, was promulgated by the Indian National Congress on 26 January 1930, resolving the Congress and Indian nationalists to fight for *Purna Swaraj*, or *complete self-rule* independent of the British Empire.

The flag of India was hoisted by Jawaharlal Nehru on 31 December 1929 on the banks of Ravi river, in Lahore. The Congress asked the people of India to observe 26 January as **Independence Day** (see Legacy). The flag of India was hoisted publicly across India by Congress volunteers, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, nationalists, and the public.

Background

Before 1930, Indian political parties had openly embraced the goal of political independence from the United Kingdom. The All India Home Rule League had been advocating *Home Rule* for India: dominion status within the British Empire, as granted to Australia, Canada, the Irish Free State, Newfoundland, New Zealand, and South Africa. The All India Muslim League favoured dominion status as well, and opposed calls for outright Indian independence. The Indian Liberal Party, by far the most pro-British party, explicitly opposed India's independence and even dominion status if it weakened India's links with the British Empire. The Indian National Congress, the largest Indian political party of the time, was at the head of

the national debate. Congress leader and famous poet Hasrat Mohani was the first activist to demand complete independence (Poorna Swaraj) from the British in 1921 from an All-India Congress Forum. Veteran Congress leaders such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Sri Aurobindo and Bipin Chandra Pal had also advocated explicit Indian independence from the Empire. It is said that the first independence day was celebrated on 1930, by Sitaram Seksaria in his book.

Following the 1919 Amritsar Massacre, there was considerable public outrage against British rule. Europeans, (civilians and officials) were targets and victims of violence across India. In 1920, Gandhi and the Congress committed themselves to *Swaraj*, described as political and spiritual independence. At the time, Gandhi described this as the basic demand of all Indians; he specifically said that the question of whether India would remain within the Empire or leave it completely would be answered by the behaviour and response of the British. Between 1920 and 1922, Mahatma Gandhi led the Non-Cooperation movement: nationwide civil disobedience to oppose the Rowlatt Acts and the exclusion of Indians from the government, and the denial of political and civil freedoms.

Simon commission and the Nehru report

In 1928, the British government further outraged people across India by appointing a seven-man, all-European committee led by Sir John Simon, called the Simon Commission to deliberate on constitutional and political reforms for India. Indian political parties were neither consulted nor asked to involve

themselves in the process. Upon arrival in India, Chairman Sir John Simon and other commission members were met with angry public demonstrations, which followed them everywhere. The death of a prominent Indian leader, Lala Lajpat Rai, from severe beatings by British police officials further outraged the Indian public.

The Congress appointed an all-Indian commission to propose constitutional reforms for India. Members of other Indian political parties joined the commission led by Congress President Motilal Nehru. The Nehru Report demanded that India be granted self-government under the dominion status within the Empire. While most other Indian political parties supported the Nehru commission's work, it was opposed by the Indian Liberal Party and the All India Muslim League. The British ignored the commission, its report and refused to introduce political reform.

Dominion or republic?

The Nehru Report was also controversial within Congress. Younger nationalist leaders like Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru demanded that Congress resolve to make a complete and explicit break from all ties with the British. Jawaharlal Nehru had been influenced by the idea of Bhagat Singh ("total independence"), which Singh had introduced a resolution demanding in 1927, which was rejected because of Gandhi's opposition. Now Bose and Nehru opposed dominion status, which would retain the Monarch of the United Kingdom as the constitutional head of state of India (although in the separate capacity as King of India), and preserve political powers for the British Parliament in Indian constitutional

affairs. They were supported in their stand by a large number of rank-and-file Congressmen.

In December 1928, Congress session was held in Kolkata and Mohandas Gandhi proposed a resolution that called for the British to grant dominion status to India within two years. After some time Gandhi brokered a further compromise by reducing the time given from two years to one. Jawaharlal Nehru voted for the new resolution, while Subhash Bose told his supporters that he would not oppose the resolution, and abstained from voting himself. The All India Congress Committee voted 118 to 45 in its favour (the 45 votes came from supporters of a complete break from the British). However, when Bose introduced an amendment during the open session of Congress that sought a complete break with the British, Gandhi admonished the move:

You may take the name of independence on your lips but all your muttering will be an empty formula if there is no honour behind it. If you are not prepared to stand by your words, where will independence be?

The amendment was rejected, by 1350 to 973, and the resolution was fully adopted.

On 31 October 1929, the Viceroy of India, Lord Irwin announced that the government would meet with Indian representatives in London for a Round Table Conference. To facilitate Indian participation, Irwin met with Mohandas Gandhi, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and out-going Congress President Motilal Nehru to discuss the meeting. Gandhi asked Irwin if the conference would proceed on the basis of dominion

status and Irwin said he could not assure that, resulting in the end of the meeting.

The declaration

As a result of the denial of reforms and political rights, and the persistent ignorance of Indian political parties, the Indian National Congress grew increasingly cohesive – unified in the desire to out the British from India completely. A very large number of Congress volunteers and delegates, members of other political parties and an especially large public gathering attended the session convened in Lahore. Despite the bitterly cold weather, Pattabhi Sitaramayya records that:

The heat of passion and excitement, the resentment at the failure of negotiation, the flushing of faces on hearing the war drums – oh, it was all in marked contrast to the weather.

Jawaharlal Nehru was elected President and veteran leaders like Chakravarthi Rajagopalachari and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel returned to the Congress Working Committee. They approved a declaration of independence, which stated:

The British government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually.... Therefore...India must sever the British connection and attain **Purna Swaraj** or complete independence.

At midnight on New Year's Eve, President Jawaharlal Nehru hoisted the tricolour flag of India upon the banks of the Ravi in

Lahore, which later became part of Pakistan. A pledge of independence was read out, which included a readiness to withhold taxes. The massive gathering of public attending the ceremony were asked if they agreed with it, and the vast majority of people were witnessed to raise their hands in approval. One hundred seventy-two Indian members of central and provincial legislatures resigned in support of the resolution and in accordance with Indian public sentiment.

The Declaration of Independence was officially promulgated on 26 January 1930. Gandhi and other Indian leaders would immediately begin the planning of a massive national non-violence would encourage the common people not to attack Britishers even if they attacked them. Subsequently, the *Salt Satyagraha* was initiated by Mahatma Gandhi on 12 March 1930 and what followed gave impetus to the Indian independence movement and sparked off the nationwide Non-Cooperation Movement.

The resolution was a short 750-word document; it does not have a legal/constitutional structure – instead, it reads more like a manifesto. The document called for severing ties with the British and claimed ‘Purna Swaraj’ or complete independence. It indicted British rule and succinctly articulated the resulting economic, political and cultural injustice inflicted on Indians. The document spoke on behalf of Indians and made its intention of launching the civil disobedience movement clear.

Authorship

There is some dispute as to who drafted the text of the declaration. Gandhi directly claimed authorship in 1940, while

other sources either cite Nehru as a major editor or attribute it to Nehru outright.

Legacy

The Congress regularly observed 26 January as the Independence Day of India – commemorating those who campaigned for Indian independence. In 1947, the British agreed to transfer power and political finesse to India, and 15 August became the official Independence Day. However, the new Constitution of India, as drafted and approved by the Constituent Assembly, was mandated to take effect on 26 January 1950, to commemorate the 1930 declaration. On that day in 1950, India became a republic. 26 January is now celebrated as Republic Day of India every year.