Haj to Utopia
A week after Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914, a clarion call appeared in the Ghadar, an ardently revolutionary newspaper emanating from San Francisco to reach a readership of overseas Indians in East Asia, North and South America, Mesopotamia, and East Africa: "O Warriors! The opportunity you have been looking for has arrived." The prodigal children of Hindustan were summoned to return home and fight, for the battle of liberation was at hand.

The message of the paper's Ailan-e-Jang (Declaration of War) was stirring and simple:

Arise, brave ones! Quickly... We want all brave and self-sacrificing warriors who can raise revolt...

Salary: death
Reward: martyrdom
Pension: freedom
Field of battle: Hindustan. 5

From the expatriate intellectual circles in London, Paris, Berlin, and San Francisco to Gandhi's early career in South Africa to the passage of subcontinental natives throughout the realms mapped out by the Pan-Islamic Khilafat or the Communist International, much of the power of the independence struggle was incubated outside the territory of British India. Any dramatic events visible upon the lighted prosenium of the subcontinent were profoundly affected by a multitude of actors busy in the shadows offstage, including students, soldiers, pilgrims,
INTRODUCTION

Traders, and laborers originating from a variety of distinct regional, linguistic, class, religious, and political backgrounds. And no small portion of this power was routed, sooner or later, along the channels of a circulatory system with its heart in California, headquarters for the diasporic Ghadar movement. Its name, it declared, was its work: the word meant "mutiny" or "rebellion."

As restrictions tightened on what activities counted as legal inside British India, prewar anticolonial activists in the throes of the Swadeshi movement in Bengal and the canal colony unrest in Punjab had either to go underground or to go abroad, where they might "function in an atmosphere of greater liberty." 16 Har Dayal, later one of the Ghadar movement's key intellectual shapers, wrote from Paris in the March 1910 Baner Matin: "We must . . . try to strengthen all groups of workers outside India. The centre of gravity of political work has been shifted from Calcutta, Poona, and Lahore to Paris, Geneva, Berlin, London, and New York." 17 Indeed, these foreign bases became increasingly important as staging grounds and logistical support points as "revolutionary movements at home and abroad gained momentum and world events evolved in their favor." The irresistible opportunity arose not only because Britain was at war, leaving its precious colony vulnerable and depleted of troops, but also because its archenemy, Germany, was offering support to those with their own interest in undermining the strength of the empire, such as the Indian and Irish national revolutionaries and pro-Ottoman Pan-Islamists. It was largely through the German connection that the movement impinged upon the United States' historical record, as the Ghadarites were put on sensational trial in San Francisco for conspiracy, sedition, and espionage during World War I, almost three years after their most spectacular thwarted attempt at mutiny in February 1915.

By the summer of 1915, when the Lieutenant General of Punjab Sir Michael O'Dwyer announced that the movement inside India had been crushed, the Ghadarites and their larger network had lost a major battle, but not a war. Revolutionary activities, sporadic fighting, and invasion plans continued to unfold beyond the northwestern and northwestern frontiers, while those jailed carried on the struggle through hunger strikes and other forms of resistance. Some veterans reemerged in time to take part in the next generation of militancy, which they themselves had inspired, in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In this way the Ghadar movement served as a missing link, a source of hidden continuity between the Bengali "anarchist" conspiracies, "national revolutionary terrorism" and some internal and revolutionist movements of the 1920s. Far more than an abstract inspiration, however, Ghadar's printed materials and personnel served quite concretely as a conduit or switching circuit, capable of linking various elements among the Indian radicals abroad, linking Indian radicals to other networks, and linking pre- to postwar revolutionary movements inside the country. In fact it could be hasted that the movement's wider network overlapped at some point, at no more than a degree of separation, with every radical tendency of its time. Of course this is a large claim, and it requires some careful qualification; we must distinguish relationality from identity, while recognizing both where appropriate.

Why was Ghadar able to serve this function? One factor was its geographical reach. Another was the unique experience of its founding members, located as they were at a conjuncture of contexts enabling them powerfully to articulate American class and race relations to the economics and geopolitics of empire, by linking the grievances of discrimination against a low-wage immigrant labor force to the colonized status of their home country. Furthermore, amid the ambivalent dynamism of prewar social ferment, they managed to forge an eclectic ideological synthesis that in turn created possible points of contact with a variety of potential partners. Thus, to fully unravel the story of the movement we must examine its complex interfaces with other international radical networks in order to reveal at what nodes, through which actors, and based on which common threads of ideological principles, methods and tactics, instrumental goals, or political aspirations the radical networks were woven together; or, to put it another way, to reveal which molecular particles in its incendiary chemistry were shared or exchanged at each confluence bonding site.

GHADAR AND ITS CORE PRINCIPLES

Ghadrast is most often portrayed as a nationalist movement, pure and simple. Its members were indubitably patriotic, and their goal of a homecoming to liberate territory from foreign occupation is easily intelligible to a nationalist logic. Yet in both geographical and ideological terms they overrode the purview of mainstream nationalism. Their indictment of tyranny and oppression was on principles that are globally applicable, even while generated by a historically specific situation and reflected in culturally specific terms; moreover, they increasingly envisioned a comprehensive social and economic restructuring for postcolonial India rather than a mere handover of the existing governmental institutions.

Ghadrast is also often identified as a Sikh movement, exclusively and by definition, with the Komagata Maru incident triggering a burst of heroic activity to redeem the community from the lingering shame of loyalism in 1877. The Komagata Maru was a ship bearing several hundred South Asian immigrants to Vancouver in the summer of 1914. Conceived by its organizer, Gurind Singh, as a deliberate challenge to new immigration restrictions, the voyage proved a catalyst for radicalization on both sides of the Pacific after the passengers were refused entry to Canada. The voyage culminated in a violent stand-off in the harbor before the ship turned back to sea, and in a shoot-out on arrival in Calcutta in which more than twenty passengers were killed. This narrative reflected the tensions present within the coalition out of which...
the original movement itself was formed, by rejecting the original non-Sikh elements as too much of a superficial accretion of Howard intellectuals specializing about side issues, while the movement’s true heart was to be found among the salt-of-the-earth soldier-farmer-poets who went off to get things done. And without doubt these men were at the heart of the movement; particularly in the second phase, during the 1970s, the movement could be thoroughly identified with this community.

But the uniqueness of Ghadar’s radicalism was born of its combinations of contexts, populations, issues, frames, scales. There was no hermetic seal between the Bengalis and Punjabis, the students and laborers; between activities initiated in California, or elsewhere in the Indian political network abroad; between schemes undertaken only by subscription among the farmers, or aided by German funds. None of its components in isolation could have produced the same phenomenon. Furthermore, to portray Ghadar as a Sikh organization by design would be to disregard its members’ own expansive universalist principles. Their minds were not narrow, and I believe that they themselves would have wanted to be defined not by asccriptive ethno-religious identity but by their ideological affinities and commitments. In this sense we could consider the Khirki Communitists (regional recruits to the M.N. Roy-dominated Communist Party of India infrastructure), rather than the Akali Dal (aimed at regaining control of Sikh holy places, and later associated with the Sikh separatist movement), as better representing the true spirit and intention of the Ghadar movement among the next generation of Punjabi radical movements, although its returned veterans moved into both formations. Indeed, the Ghadar veterans were credited with injecting a more radical social justice and anti-imperial orientation into the Akali movement, which otherwise pointed the way toward a narrower Sikh nationalism.

Any attempt to validate or disqualify an activity as a Ghadarite enterprise based on whether it was conceived, authorized, and directed by a central guiding committee in California is to misrepresent the formality of its party structure. The reality was far more decentralized, as autonomous branches sprang up in various places among those who received the Ghadar, without any direct coordination regarding their activities or decisions. Any influence attributable to a core group stemmed from the stirring content of the published materials flowing from the San Francisco fountainhead, and the inspiration provided by the Ghadarites’ manifest willingness to act upon these ideals.

Similarly, when I argue that the movement functioned to provide connecting links and switching points to other related anticolonial movements, I do not mean that an official unified party line had necessarily endorsed or established formal links with any of them, but that numerous individuals were multiple hats without conflict. Many activists who had been associated with California Ghadar, and were closely tied to its Yugantar Ashram headquarters in San Francisco, also participated in or supported other formations. There were Ghadarites or Ghadar supporters active in networks of revolutionary (Hindu) nationalism (Tarsukh, Dax, Har Dayal), Marxism (Rattan Singh, Santokh Singh), Pan-Islamism (Mohammad Barakatullah, Obaidullah Sindhi), and various combinations thereof. Thus tracking relationships and connections is less a question of “Ghadar” than of Ghadari. So we might speak of a party, referring to a distinct organization of particular people at a certain place and time; and a movement, referring to an idea, a sensibility and a set of ideological commitments that took wing—or rather, took ship—exuberantly outrunning their originators’ control.

Both ideologically and tactically, the Indian revolutionaries drew from a variety of sources, combining them without concern for the constraints of any existing orthodoxy; this very richness of ingredients, of facets, of spliceable threads, is what provided so many different opportunities for collaboration. “In the literature of unrest,” commented Valentine Chirol, then foreign bureau chief of the (London) Times and inveterate demonizer of revolutionaries, “one frequently comes across the strangest juxtaposition of names, Hindu deities, and Cromwell and Washington, and celebrated anarchists all being invoked in the same breath.” Yet I do not think the links were casual or contingent, and though many observers and historians have tended to dismiss Ghadar’s political orientation as an unauthorized hodgepodge, I believe we can perceive within Ghadarite words and deeds an eclectic and evolving, yet consistent radical program. A.C. Bose sums up a range of influences, as well as a range of target audiences: “Just as their sources of inspiration ranged from Rana Pratap and Victor Emmanuel II to Sivaji and Garibaldi, and from Mazzini and Guru Govind Singh to the daring terrorists among the Carbonnari [sic], the Nihilists and the Fenians, their appeals for cooperation too were directed at the educated youth of their country and the near-iliterate soldiers as well as at conservative businessmen and the reactionary Indian princes.” Indeed, the Ghadar propagandists were far from insensitive to the knack of tailoring material to audience.

Elsewhere Bose quotes a Bengal official’s observation that in their practices the “Indian revolutionists imitate the Irish Fenians and the Russian anarchists. Their literature is replete with references to both. Titlis took his ‘no rent’ campaign from Ireland, and the Bengalees learnt the utility of boycott from Irish history. Karm Dutt was compared to Patrick O’Donnell, who killed James Cary. Political dexterity to collect money they have learnt from the Russian.” Of course, there were not instances of slavish imitation but of active selection, adaptation, and application, or the recognition of analogies. Elements picked up as “influences” or “borrowings” were those with which the borrowers already felt resonance, or which they deemed most relevant to their situation. For example, egalitarianism was a Sikh value long before contact with American democratic discourse—hence the receptive recognition of that particular element rather than another of many available varieties of Western political philosophy.
Moreover, their encounter with an ideal in the founding values of French and American political liberalism, combined with disgust at the distance between this ideal and the reality they encountered, was an important impetus of the emergent Ghadarite thinking, which gravitated toward the politically libertarian aspects rather than the classical economic elements of Enlightenment thinking as it invoked the touchstones of freedom and democracy. This was especially true of texts intended for potential sympathizers among American audiences. Ghadar editor Ram Chandra wrote to the Boston Daily Advertiser in October 1916, in response to accusations of a conspiracy "to stir up trouble against British rule in India" through the publication of seditious literature and fomentation of an uprising. Ram Chandra met these accusations with aplomb, saying: "We very cheerfully admit this, but we wish to emphasize the fact that all we are doing is to preach Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, the birthright of every human being, and to awaken the world to a realization of the enslaved condition of India, where these great principles are denied to all."

Another audience to whom Ghadarites soon began making "passionate appeals" was "the labor unions of the world." These appeals elaborated on the familiar economic drain theory and exhorted the people of the world to make common cause against systems of imperialism. Such a blending of political libertarianism and economic socialism, along with a persistent tendency toward romantic revolutionism, and within their specific context a marked antigovernment bent, is why one may argue that the Ghadar movement's alleged incoherence is actually quite legible through a logic of anarchism—which thereby provides a somewhat ironic bridge between rival nationalist and Communist readings of the Ghadar story. In short, not only did Ghadar manage to join the impulses toward class struggle and civil rights with anticolonialism, it also managed to combine concomitants to both liberty and equality. Initially drawing sustenance from both utopian socialism and libertarian thought, their critique of capitalism and of liberalism's racial double standard gained increasingly systematic articulation in the course of the war and the world political shifts in its aftermath.

As to the blending of tactical models, since this was a definitively action-oriented movement, the method was no less important than the motive. This required balancing instrumentality with integrity, strategic with ideological thinking. Ghadar is often positioned as a transitional phase between two modes of revolutionary struggle, namely, the conspiratorial secret society model and the mass organization model, which is also to say the voluntarist and structuralist theories of precipitating change. However, Ghadar's should be seen not just as a temporary or intermediate half measure, but as a relatively stable mode distinct from other more unequivocal tendencies (in both directions) during both the prewar and the interwar periods.
The juxtaposition that was so incomprehensible to Chiril, who deemed it clear evidence of the muddled irrationality of the insurgents, is exactly what I want to explore here, by seeking to understand the logic by which the insurgents selected, combined, adapted, and applied tactical and ideological content into a form that continued to develop, dynamically and yet consistently, throughout the trajectory of the revolutionaries abroad.

**TRANPOSITIONS**

**Beyond Nationalism**

Ghadar's definitive early theorist and propagandist, Har Dayal, in an October 1912 Nation Day speech to Indian students and select faculty at the University of California, declared himself an internationalist who did not believe in "narrow views of nationalism." Pervasive "nationalism" Tarakath Das, speaking at the same event on the "scope and aim of Indian nationalism," pledged that beyond autonomy from Britain, Young India must "demand a revolution in social ideals so that humanity and liberty would be valued above property, special privilege would not over- shadow equal opportunity, and women would not be kept under subjection.

The research that has culminated in this book began in an attempt to escape the reductive equation of anticolonialism with nationalism. Given numerous reservations about that project, both analytical and political, I hoped to identify precedents for ways of conceiving anticolonialism that transcended or critiqued it, and that were capable of proposing alternative visions of a liberated society that neither mirrored the logic of imperialism (and Orientalism) nor replicated the extractive and disciplinary institutions of the modern state while merely replacing foreign with local control. On the other hand, the historical salience and emotional power of a national liberation struggle in undertaking the work of decolonization is impossible to deny. Yet as the revolutionaries of Kirti and the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army well knew, truly liberatory struggle is not only against that which restricts freedom, but also for that which facilitates or produces freedom. The eviction of foreign rule is one thing, and the implementation of a postindependence socioeconomic and political order based on maximizing substantive liberty, equality, and solidarity quite another. What does the independent society actually look like?

A comprehensive radical critique of colonial rule entailed more than an analysis of the foreignness of the regime; it also required a response to the regime's very structure and character. Colonization imposed complex processes of rationalization, bureaucratization, and technical-industrial development, as well as insertion into the unprecedented expansion of global capitalism. Regardless of what alternate forms of modernity would have emerged in the absence of European intervention, that intervention did produce a situation in which the material conditions, social destabilizations, and economic transformations associated with the modernization process were perceived as corollaries of colonization. By contextualizing the revolutionary movement abroad relative to the shifts, trends, and currents of international radicalism over the first few decades of the twentieth century, we may see the configuration of factions within the Indian independence struggle mirroring the spectrum of possible responses to these conditions manifest within Western movements of opposition and critical resistance, including varieties of accommodation, incorporation, synthesis, transcendance, resistance, and rejection.

**Three Anticolonial Discourses**

In my exploration of ways of conceptualizing anticolonial struggle that transcended nationalism during this globally turbulent period (1905-1920), two major antisyntactic movements stood out as transnational vehicles for opposition to Western imperialism and critique of modern capitalist society, both of which were available in various forms to Indian radicals: Socialism and Pan-Islamism. Yet any attempt to define either of these complex, multifold terms is fraught with as many contradictions and counterexamples as in the case of nationalism.

If we approach the three "isms" not as ideological monoliths but as heteroglossic discourses,11 we can recognize an analogous range of positions within each of them on the debates then in progress over how to respond to the confrontation with modernity—whether by espousing Enlightenment rationalism or by embracing its various antitheses, whether defined as spiritual, mystical, nihilist, millenarian, or romanticist.

Rationalism forms an important axis in the intellectual history of revolution, cutting across leftist, nationalist, and religious responses. While this epistemological axis does not replace those based in material economic or political structures, it is nevertheless necessary to take account of modes of resistance that cannot be "legitimated by a post-enlightenment rationalist frame,"12 and furthermore to acknowledge that such modes cannot be wholly identified with religious movements; rather, mystical/romantic or antiliberal modalities occur within all three discourses alongside those modalities legible to a rationalist, material interest-based analysis, whether of the liberal or socialist orientation. I suspect that in actuality both modalities may almost always be operating at once, and that it is simply a matter of relative proportion in each case. Ghadar and its analogues certainly contained elements of both.

In such a way (e.g., by positing nationalist, leftist, and Islamist modalities) each as a discourse or flexible idiom in which various ideological statements could be made, and a range of political and philosophical positions taken, rather than a unified ideology itself—the interaction of the three movements during this period could be reframed as a transposition of analogous ideas, goals, and...
aspirations among them. The Ghadarite network, through its various alliances and alignments, was capable of engaging with those who were making compatible utterances—that is, statements of militant anti-imperialism, economic egalitarianism, and social emancipation—in any of these three languages.

The Limits of Translatability
In order to recognize functionally comparable statements within separate "semantic fields," a practical theorist must look underneath form for content, within a single axis of intent, behind problematic for thematic. More directly, an organizer must ask whether alliances and coalitions are all necessarily provisional, based only on a negative term: whether a shared opposition is their common immediate goal. But is this enough? How much compatibility is necessary between the positive terms of multiple alternative visions to enable their adherents to work together beyond resistance? Which differences are semantic and superficial, and which are substantive and prohibitive?

Some of the confusion in defining an "ism" arises from equating a discourse in its totality only with the most dominant or authoritative statement it has been used to make or in one’s preferred interpretation, dominant or not. The same tendency is also behind many orthodox exponent’s refusal to admit any possibility of rapprochement or compatibility with other discourses, or even with dissenters claiming to be part of their own. If X and Y may be defined as X and Y only in their most purified and homogenised form, then indeed there is no common ground, no possible overlap, the meanings of X and Y are polarised. But more often than not, I would guess, the strands that can most successfully interweave across categoric boundaries are likely to be the heterodox or counterdominant ones on both sides, the threads struggling from the fringes beyond the reach of doctrinal enforcement, though still recognizably part of the fabric.

A caveat, however: I am not therefore suggesting that all discourses were interchangeable, or even that the parameters of each spectrum were isomorphic. The threads they shared were nevertheless woven into fabrics of different shades and patterns. Moreover, every language imposes its own limitations and tendencies regarding what is equipped to express most directly in its available vocabulary or repertory of concepts, and what requires more complex circumlocutions. And while each language is versatile, there may be points at which it becomes expedient to borrow words or even switch to another tongue better suited to the concept or construction one is trying to express.

Nevertheless, if the emphasis is on connections and alliances, the interface between different ideological networks, and the points of translatability between their idioms, then we might ask not what a nationalist says and does, but what is being said in the idioms and done according to the logic of nationalism; not what a socialist or Pan-Islamist stipulates, but what kind of socialism and what kind of Pan-Islamism are operative. In that regard, the question then became with what kind of nationalists, leftists and Islamists, in what contexts, and at what points of each network, via interfaces based on which shared traits or common elements, were the Ghadarites engaged in meaningful interactions; and how, precisely, were these Indian anticolonialists situated in the context of the international radicalism of the time.

Praxis
Finally, notwithstanding all this talk of ideology and discourse, this work is not intended to be an abstract philosophical exercise. Rather, my approach to intellectual history is much like that described by Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski in the preface to their 1986 book on Egyptian nationalism. Combining the "internal" and "external" approaches, the authors explain: "This work proceeds on the basis of several assumptions about historical inquiry. Perhaps the most basic of these is that there are crucial interrelationships between the intellectual life of a society and its political development. An adequate understanding . . . demands that attention be given to the complex connections between ideas of the world and behavior in the world." Like theirs in this way, my work here is concerned with praxis: that is, not with theory in isolation, but with the way that ideas are generated within historical context and play a substantive role in bringing about historical change.

Moreover, this work is a narrative about people who felt the same way. The Ghadarites were pragmatists, not dogmatists; activists above all, not systematic armchair theorists. Above all, as Rattan Singh recalled, "Every step taken by the Ghadar Party . . . has been practical and has meant action. Its resolutions have never remained on paper; they have always been put into action." Indeed, radicalism itself resides as much in the commitment to acting on ideas, making them effective in reality, and translating them into social form, as it does in the actual content of the ideas. In selecting their allies, the Ghadarites allotted more weight to shared goals and common sensibilities (notably their appreciation for fierce and total commitment to one's objectives) than to niceties of doctrine. Yet neither were they ideologically vacant. Far more than an inchost of burst of quickly dispersed revolutionary energy, they created an important missing link in the genealogy of South Asian radicalism, as well as a bridge between contemporary radical movements. Then lies not the least of their contributions to history.

Overview
Chapter 1 concerns the birth of the Ghadar movement on the Pacific coast in 1913, its activities in California, and the content and spread of its propaganda, culminating in its homemade journey of intended liberation launched at the outbreak of World War I. Although the attempted uprising of February 1915 was crushed
by means of the First Lahore Conspiracy trials, the ideas it had instilled lingered significantly: when the would-be freedom fighters of 1914–1915 set out upon their return to India "to inform their kinsmen of the unequal treatment that was meted out to them" overseas, they did so by "preaching the doctrines of revolution that they had learned from the Ghadar and the crude socialism that they had picked up in the towns of western Canada and the United States."43 Crucially, the radicalization of South Asians in North America in the early twentieth century was defined by labor relations as refracted by race, which facilitated their affinity with the IWW's American form of syndicalism, as shown in chapter 2.

Chapters 3 and 4 together mark a turning point in the narrative, in which the nationalist aspect comes to the fore. Here I focus on the period of strategic anti-British partnerships in the context of World War I, through which a number of elaborate covert operations were carried out with German/Ottoman patronage, in contrast to the fewer in Germany that the California Ghadarites had initiated autonomously. Nationalism also mediated the collaborations among Indian, Irish, and Egyptian revolutionaries active in Europe and North America, and the analogies in sensibility and situation that they recognized among themselves. This period was shut down with another legal case in 1918, the sensational Hindu-German Conspiracy trial in San Francisco.

But the Ghadar Party appeared in a second distinct incarnation, this time Communist in the more orthodox Marxist-Leninist sense, in contrast to its pre-war leanings toward the less systematic (though perhaps more holistic) utopian socialism associated with Har Dayal. This is the matter of chapter 5. Following the exhilarating success of the Bolshevik revolution, and given the Comintern's strategic commitment to supporting Asian national liberation struggles, Ghadarites turned to Moscow as their new self-described mecca for political training, theoretical guidance, and moral and material support. During the 1920s, Ghadar sent batches of trainees to Moscow while establishing new organs and organizing centers in China and Punjab.44 At the same time it helped seed the growth of civil rights and antideportation campaigns in the United States through the Friends of Freedom for India (FFI). In India meanwhile it helped seed the growth of the next generation of militant anticolonial struggle through Bhagat Singh, the Kirti group, the Naujavan Bharat Sabha, and the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army.

In the final two chapters I back up in time to pick up the parallel thread of Pan-Islamism, which had been continuously intertwined with Ghadar's activities starting from the latter's prewar overtures to Muslim soldiers identified as potential mutineers in the British Indian army. The interaction became even more significant through the German/Ottoman-backed schemes in west and central Asia during the war, reflecting the goals and preoccupations of this alliance. After the war, when Moscow displaced Berlin as center of patronage, this pattern of relationships did not change. It culminated in a rapprochement with the Khilafat movement of the early 1920s and its subtext, the Hijrat movement. Theoretical links were elaborated by Obeidullah Sindhi and Mohammed Barakatullah, both of whom had complex Ghadar ties.

A Word for the Journey
Har Dayal commented in the Bande Mataram in 1910: "Exile has its privileges. It is the price paid for the right of preaching the truth as it appears to us. We do not deal in political casuistry mingled with erroneous philosophy. . . . We may pay homage only to our conscience and defy all the governments of the world to make us deviate a hair's breadth from the path of Duty and Righteousness."45

The Revolutionary Movement Abroad was a phenomenon of travelers; it could not have occurred otherwise. As perspectives opened out for economic migrants encountering new contexts, and as political trajectories became literal journeys of enforced exile and clandestine organizing, the leading edge of radicalism passed literally and figuratively beyond the bounds of the territorial nation-state. Yet in all these journeys, whether the world traveler's face was set toward a home as a free Indian citizen or a free American or Soviet one, the destination was always a dream of utopia.

Kim Stanley Robinson has one of the transplanetary nomads in his speculative Mars trilogy declare that "history is the haj to utopia."46 In simplest terms, Robinson's book is about the colonization and terraforming of Mars. But more deeply, it is about the process of designing a society, initially far beyond the reach of the old earth's interstate relations and corporate economics, though these interests of course are pulled closer as breakthroughs in transport and communications occur, and as the immigrant population increases. Nevertheless, as the new society develops, the Martians have an unprecedented opportunity to define new categories of identity within social units based rather on affinity and ideology than in ethnic or national affiliation; and to negotiate a framework of principles for accommodating difference, by which the autonomy of communities who use different social blueprints can be maintained within a larger federation, in which ecological survival rather than political power forms the baseline for collective control. Aside from the anachronistic ecological aspect, this seems to me quite applicable to the vision of a Ghadarite India.

Lailmi Saineel has described the function of ritual pilgrimage in spatially marking off an identity, purified and confirmed by certain practices carried out along the way and especially on reaching the destination—where, upon arrival, the traveler experiences the intensity of a sense of identification with a transnational community or "brotherhood" of spiritual kindred, resulting in a recommitment to an ideological program.47 I am certainly not suggesting that the future Ghadarites set sail for America with any such conscious sense of ritual significance. Their journey began not as an intentional pilgrimage but a prag-
matic journey of economic or educational opportunity. However, I suspect that they would recognize the effect that Sanneh describes. And the revolutionaries did begin to speak in the language of pilgrimage. For the Ghadarites “Moscow became Mecca.” Meanwhile, hajis bound for the real Mecca and muhajirin bound for the heart of the caliphate at Istanbul became literal fellow travelers. There was a mission to be fulfilled across the sea, and if they could not make it to the other shore, they were ready to immolate themselves so that others could. They spoke of an altar, and a sacrifice; they spoke of moths to the flame. But the Swadeshi activists’ Bharat Mata had been replaced as deity on the blood-splattered dais by intilah (revolution) or azadi (freedom).

And after the revolution, upon reaching the odyssey’s end, would they dwell within the kingdom of god, the dictatorship of the proletariat, or the federated United States of India? For those who preached liberty, equality, and fraternity, would it make a difference whether their foundational logic and social ethic had been derived from transcendent or divine sources, natural law, or human reason? Would it matter by what map or method they had traced their path? Around what polestar they had oriented their voyage? Whether they had been steered by God’s plan, a Hegelian world spirit, a Marxist structural dialectic, or their own fiery wills?
“The Air of Freedom”

Ghadar in America

IMMIGRANTS

There had been a smattering of Indian sailors in New England ports since the late eighteenth century, and the odd celebrity religious philosopher since the late nineteenth, starting with Vivekananda’s star turn at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893, which garnered a cult following of theosophists and countercultural practitioners among an northeastern elite. Meanwhile, the flow of indentured labor to the Caribbean islands and the north coast of South America began in the 1870s, to fill the vacuum left by the abolition of the slave trade. But the first South Asian immigrant population of significant size in mainland North America were the Punjabi Sikhs who began arriving on the West Coast around 1903.2

The leap from tens to thousands arriving per year was rather abrupt.3 Even so, according to an official count, only 6,666 South Asians entered the United States (legally) between 1899 and 1913. Hundreds more waited in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Manila, and other East Asian ports for trans-Pacific passage, hoping for a little help from friends who had already made the crossing. By the eve of the war in 1914 there was an estimated total of 10,000 South Asians in North America.4

Most of the Punjabi laborers came from relatively prosperous families of small independent landholders, overwhelmingly concentrated in the Doob region. About half of them were veterans of the British army or military police. After their service, having seen a bit of the world, many of these men of cosmopolitan experience if little formal education now had a taste for further adventures rather than settling back down in the sleepy villages of their birth. Lured by the opportunity to make some good money, and offered incentives by steamship
companies looking to fill in their dwindling manifests of Chinese working-class passengers (the Chinese Exclusion Act had been signed into U.S. law in 1882), the Punjabis came to work in lumber mills or laying railroads, a few in canneries or construction. But overwhelmingly they filtered into the migratory agricultural labor force. Disciplined and adaptable, they were much in demand, claimed the Immigration Department’s official translator Dady Burjor, to the point where big landowners from the Sacramento Valley sometimes went directly to Angel Island to hire new arrivals. (The noncombatants who came directly from the village, usually as a result of a collective economic decision by an extended family, were in Dady Burjor’s opinion a lesser quality of crude yokel.)

This positive desire to emigrate was compounded by straitened economic circumstances brought about by colonial agricultural policies at home. The 1901 Alienation of Land Act, by restricting the transfer of land from traditionally landowning groups, had been designed to prevent the loss of rural control to urban (usually Hindu) moneylenders. But it also had the effect of institutionalizing existing inequities of access for some Sikh and low-caste populations. Then the 1906 Colonization Bill and Bari Doob canal scheme led to a sharp rise in water rates and micromanagement of its use, which aimed at maximizing the region’s rich agricultural output for the British commodity market, thereby rerouting it away from local control and subsistence needs.

This had sparked a wave of agitation in 1907, led by the brothers Ajit Singh and Khiran Singh, future Ghadar collaborators and the respective uncle and father of Bhagat Singh. Notably during the course of the unrest, Ajit Singh had spoken not just for reform of the offending legislation but for the unequivocal expulsion of the British from India, by violent means if necessary. He also founded the Indian Patriots’ Association, the Bharat Mata Society, and a newspaper, the Peshwa. For his activities he was sent to jail in Mandalay until 1909, when he decamped to Persia along with his Peshwa collaborator Sufi Amba Parisbad. Here they set up a revolutionary center from which they facilitated contacts among revolutionaries throughout Europe and North America for many years. By 1904 Ajit Singh was living in Paris, under the faux Persian identity of Hassan Khan, and supporting himself by giving English lessons. His travels during the war later took him as far as Brazil and Argentina. As fate would have it, he died literally on the eve of independence, 15 August 1947.

But the general Punjabi population was not yet connecting their grievances to a larger, secular and/or national context. Much of the political consciousness-raising at that time was occurring rather through the religiously defined Aryan Sanas and Sikh Sabha, while the British army remained a strong focus of collective identity and allegiance. In theory these veterans had the right to settle in Canada as subjects of the dominion, taking pride in the community’s sterling record of military service to the empire and the status it supposedly conferred. In practice they encountered worsening racism, both popular and legislative. Why such antipathy? After all, notes Harish Puri, the Indian threat could not have been simply about racial purity, since there were far more Chinese and Japanese entrants at the time. But politically the Indians were a special case, bearing on the delicate stability of colonial rule. Among the fears of the Secretary of State for India about what might happen if emigration to Canada were allowed to continue were the following:

i. That the terms of close familiarity which competition with white labour brings about do not make for British prestige; and it is by prestige alone that India is held not by force;

ii. That there is a socialist propaganda in Vancouver, and the consequent danger of the East Indians being imbued with socialist doctrines;

iii. Labour rivalry is sure to result in occasional outbreaks of feelings on the part of the whites and any dissatisfaction at unfair treatment of Indians in Vancouver is certain to be exploited for the purpose of agitation in India;

iv. East Indian affairs are sometimes made use of by unscrupulous partisans to serve the cause of their political party.

On none of these points was he necessarily wrong, as time would show.

In the same vein Brigadier General E. J. Swarnie warned in a confidential memorandum that Indians who came as free laborers to Canada were “politically inexpedient” due to the risk that “these men [might] go back to India and preach ideas of emancipation which would upset the machinery of law and order.” The fresh air of freedom, it seemed, was a dangerous gas.

Ghadr narratives (both contemporary and retrospective) repeated the notion that in America the “settlers” now breathed the air of modernity, freedom, and equality. And yet a gap remained between this stated American ideal and their own American experience. Once they reached California, they could obtain a daily wage of up to $2–$3 for harvesting asparagus, celery, potatoes, beans, lemons, and oranges. It is interesting that chroniclers of the community seem to find a source of pride in some of the very factors used as pretext for racial discrimination against them: the white laborers were jealous and resentful of the immigrants’ strength, endurance, industriousness, and ability to live with such astounding frugality. To help in doing so Indian laborers developed mutual support networks for living and work situations, often rooming, cooking, and eating collectively, and forming work teams represented by an Anglophone spokesman with the task of procuring work and negotiating terms, or dealing with lawyers as necessary. Some teams even divided their wages equally at the end of the week. The young network of gurdwaras (Sikh temples serving as community centers) also served as important sites of mobilization, resistance, and solidar-
ility, furthering a tradition of Sikh growth as community leaders, representatives, intermediaries, and mobilizers around the Pacific Rim.

For example, one of the most important political spokesmen for the British Columbia Sikhs prior to the formation of the Pacific Coast Hindi Association was Teja Singh, a respected preacher who had been studying at Columbia University when he received an invitation in 1906 to represent his community on the West Coast. Although more a scholar and cleric than a rabble-rouser, he began addressing meetings in the gurdwaras to mobilize defense against the threat of deportation, all the while framing his actions as a sacred mission guided by Guru Nanak, and phrasing his speeches in the idiom of spirituality.

But although the gurdwaras did remain convenient organizing bases for Gurdwara activities, offering an ideal infrastructure for communicating and assembling people, their original mission was oriented toward defensive self-purification in line with the work of the Sikh Sabha in Punjab, preserving community identity against the danger of its erosion in a foreign country. These efforts, carried out though the leaders of the Khalsa Diwan Society, were concerned with countering deviations in orthodox dress and food habits among the Sikh laborers through education and the foundation of new gurdwaras (and if necessary the boycott and ostracism of apostates).32 However, Puri attributes this attitude, as well as the attachment to martial-caste loyalty to Britain, to elites among the immigrants. The Ghadar Party, when it emerged, represented quite a different stance.

Meanwhile, Indian students began trickling into the United States around 1906 seeking technical training or degrees in fields emblematic of modernity, such as engineering and chemistry; or if they had followed Har Dayal’s recommendations, economics and sociology. Many had first tried Japan only to find that the Anglo-Japanese agreement prevented their access to the specific types of training they sought. The majority of students were Bengali, and their most immediate context of political radicalization had been the Swadeshi movement and the connected revolutionist centers in London and Paris.

In 1913, Jasoda Singh, a prosperous potato farmer and agricultural entrepreneur near Stockton, approached Har Dayal with a proposal to endow a scholarship with the goal of bringing students from all over India to study in the United States, preferably at the University of California, where most were enrolled.33 Along with important future Ghadarites Waukhu Singh and Santokh Singh (whom Behari Lal described as “exceptionally patriotic and pious men”), 34 he had formed a society in 1912 whose members pledged “one hundred per cent dedication” to their country’s liberation. The first competition for the Guru Gobind Singh scholarships was to be judged by a selection committee consisting of Har Dayal, Teja Singh, Taraknath Das, and Arthur Pope, a sympathetic philosophy professor of the University of California. The scholarship was supposed to cover tuition, textbooks, lab fees, room and board, second-class return passage to India, and a $50 monthly stipend. Eligibility was in theory to be unrestricted by caste, religion, race, or gender. Out of six hundred applicants, six were selected for the 1912–13 academic year, including Gobind Behari Lal.35 But by the time they arrived, Jasoda Singh’s harvest had proven significantly less lucrative than expected due to a drop in potato prices that year, and the promised funds were not forthcoming. The scholarship winners decided to stay and enroll anyway, using their own resources.

Together the six scholars rented a house near the campus. Among the six, Nand Singh was the designated mediator to the scholarship committee, ensuring their material needs were supplied. They took turns cooking “Indian food of a very simple kind, rice, dal, milk, vegetable or meat” and also got a small weekly allowance for pocket money. By the end of 1912, however, the funds dried up completely. The notion of “self-supporting,” said Behari Lal, was “a peculiar American system” quite new to them.36 Now, like the rest of the students, they earned their living by working in the mornings or afternoons, or during holidays, waiting tables in boardingshusses, washing dishes in restaurants, selling newspapers, or even working in canneries. During the summers, they worked in the fields and orchards where, almost always in the company of Indian farm workers—Sikhs, Moslems, Hindus, Pathans—they picked fruit from the trees or planted celery [sic] or potatoes or did some thing or other.37 On a 240 to 300 or more hourly wage, or by selling Indian handicrafts such as shawls (was it assumed they would bring the stock of goods with them?), one could live comfortably for a year on $45 and like a king for $350.38

In 1913, Calcutta’s English-language magazine Modern Review printed a series of articles offering advice to Indian students on how to deal with arrival and life in America, such as how to find housing and employment. One should bring identification papers from a sponsoring organization and then get a recommendation letter from the American consul general in Seattle. (Students also were advised to just say no if the immigration inspector asked if they believed in polygamy. Such a traditional form of Oriental deviance was certainly no less controversial than the very modern Western practice of free love, advocacy of which was to get Har Dayal into trouble the following year.) Someone would then meet and escort them to G.D. Kumar’s new India House. From there they could write to Berkeley, and someone else would come up to meet them. The recommended course was to arrive in the spring, work over the summer, and enroll in the fall, either at the university straightaway or at a free Berkeley high school for a year first.

Har Dayal also published a series of articles in Modern Review, praising the United States as the ideal place in all the world “from which a solitary wandering Hindu can send a message of hope and encouragement to his countrymen.” As
the future-oriented nation par excellence, the United States was the perfect foil for India, whose ancient culture it was thus eager to embrace. Indeed, such a proclivity would be mutually beneficial. Vedantic philosophy would do wonders for the superficial, "restless, noisy," "overfed, self-complacent" Americans, while modernity would stimulate and inspire the Indians mired in tradition, stunted by colonial chains, and hampered by current repression. He thought the social and political climate of the United States would be very salubrious for Indian students, virtually "an ethical sanatorium." Here they could openly explore "the value of unity, the lessons to be learned from Japan, the importance of industrial progress, the greatness of the American people, the blessings of democracy, the honourability of manual labour, the meanness of Theodore Roosevelt and the necessity for education, liberal and technical, for the uplifting of the people of India." As they were in Har Dayal's opinion "endowed with energy and brains but little money," they would benefit in practical terms not only from technical training but from the moral effects of supporting themselves for the first time through manual labor, thereby "learning self-reliance and resourcefulness of mind."39

In a similar vein Harasrn Singh Chima published "Why India Sends Students to America" in 1907. He asserted that the real purpose for him and his fellow students was "that we may deserve the title educated in the fullest and practical sense of the word. We came here to imbibed free thoughts from free people and teach the same when we go back to our country and to get rid of the tyranny of the rule of the universal oppressor (the British)."40

No less than the workers, the students experienced racism. Boardinghouses and restaurants often declined to serve them, and they were ineligible for membership in most campus clubs. This, along with the need for them to do menial labor, may to some degree have neutralized the class privilege they had enjoyed in India. In any case the Ghadaries and their immediate predecessors deliberately fostered secularity, tolerance, and fraternization across religions and caste lines. Of course it would be disingenuous to suggest that all differences of class, caste, religion, and regional origin were erased in the New World. However, it does seem that these differences faded into lower relief in comparison to their mutual interests and experiences in the North American context. Even if these and other differences were not completely erased—only temporarily deemphasized to remerge later—by 1912 the Ghadar community's two main ingredients were present. The movement's "outstanding characteristic," in participant Gobind Behari Lal's opinion, was the "combination of university-bred scholar and the cultural leader and of the pre-educated Indians, workers, farmers and small shopkeepers etc. of the Pacific Coast."41 But the existing emphasis on education for workers and manual labor for students closed the distance between them and encouraged the merging of each group's concerns with those of the other—a volatile fusion that illuminated and ignited both of them. Neither students nor laborers as a group were overwhelmingly political upon arrival, as the majority were focused on their personal advancement. The farmers had come seeking prosperity, the students professional success. However, an important minority had come with other ideas in mind. A professor complained: "[The students] are generally revolutionaries, or if not such when they come, are soon taken in hand by their fellows and converted," after which, "having come under the influence of the socialist and revolutionary ideas they regarded it as their mission in life to work for the subversion of the British rule in India."42 A California Immigration officer observed in 1914 that "most of the Indian students residing there are infected with seductive ideas," so thoroughly that "even Sikhs of the labouring class have not escaped their pernicious influence."43 But who radicalized whom?

In Modern Review Har Dayal said, of the peasants as much as the students, that America had "lifted [them] to a higher level of thought and action. The great flag of the greatest democratic state in the world's history, burns up all cowardice, servility, pessimism and indifference, as fire consumes the dross and leaves pure gold behind."44 Of course this exposure to liberal discourses and rising expectations advertised by the land of opportunity, combined with systematic exclusion from access to the same, is what fired their ire, not merely the imbibing of some magically liberating influence inherent in the American atmosphere. Between 1907 and 1910, while American anxiety and hostility increased apace as the number of Indians grew, although opinion was far from unified during this period of dramatic social and cultural flux. Moreover, class positioning on both sides conditioned American responses to Indian newcomers, causing Indians to be read as exotic tantalizing Orientals if they came from educated elite back- grounds, and as threatening dark-complected aliens if they came as low-wage workers. According to Rattan Singh's account, the Sikh "pioneers" did fairly well in prosperous periods, but an economic downturn in the United States in 1907 led to tensions with white workers. Joan Jensen attributes this to a predictable pattern: whenever the economy put pressure on low-income white laborers, anti-Asian hysteria rose in direct proportion, as the incoming workers, who were ready to accept even lower wages, were seen as competition. Just as the West Coast's Asiatic Expulsion League had thought things were under control with the Chinese and Japanese, now here came the latest manifestation of the "Yellow Peril," this time in the form of a "side of turban."45 Organized labor accused Sikhs of being in league with the bosses who collaborated with the steamship companies in recruiting Asian laborers. Often even Socialists judged Asian workers backwards and unorganizable, a drag on the progress of more advanced and "modern" white labor.46
Indian laborers were used as strikebreakers in Tacoma. They suffered a series of hostile incidents, including being driven out of town in an act of premeditated violence. The incident occurred in Bellingham, Washington, and was followed by similar acts in other parts of the country. The rioting in St. John, Oregon, was reportedly caused by the collapse of the police, who were attacked by the workers, armed with sticks and clubs.

The views of the West Coast groups were supported by the white labor movement. The American public was not as unified in its response to the incident as it had been with the earlier Pacific strikes. The American response was not as resolute and determined as it had been in the past. The American public was much more divided in its response to the incident than it had been with the earlier Pacific strikes. The American public was much more divided in its response to the incident than it had been with the earlier Pacific strikes.

Meanwhile, policymakers proposed increasing the number of laborers to keep the wages down. For example, the United States might make an agreement with the British requiring Indians to carry passports, and then refuse passports to laborers. Or the United States might persuade shipping lines to continue service for Asians or to refuse to sell tickets to Indian laborers, thereby to override the American one with such policy. An immigration commission report recommended congressional exclusion, and a gentlemen's agreement with Britain to stem the flow of East Indians, as they were by now "universally regarded as the least desirable race of immigrants" admitted to the United States. The report suggested requiring a literacy test might help curtail East Indian immigration.

In 1912, the Root amendment to the pending Dillingham immigration bill called for the deportation of "any alien who shall take advantage of his residence in the United States to cooperate with others for the violent overthrow of a foreign government recognized by the United States." It was defeated. In 1913 the Alien Land Law was passed, in part to prevent Japanese or Sikh agricultural workers from accumulating their own profitable land base in California's Central Valley, a process already underway. At the same time another bill was defeated through last-minute amendments restricting entry for anyone originating within a geographical region (if not politically) arbitrary latitude and longitude that covered most of China, part of Russia, part of Polynesia, and all of India, Burma, Siam, the Malayan States, Arabia, Afghanistan, and the Indian Ocean islands.

ACTIVISTS

As early as 1907, officials in Punjab noted the circulation of "seditious pamphlets" addressed to soldiers in the local army garrisons "pointing out to them how easy it would be to throw off British rule." The circular emanated from some natives of India now in the United States. As North America grew as an organizing center, revolutionaries abroad in Europe, such as Har Dayal, Ajit Singh, and Bhupinder Pal, increasingly started looking west in hopes of advancing their cause. Once there, the necessary tasks would be to carry out anti-British "seditions" and to protect the communities from North American racism. The two imperatives were complementary: in the organizers' calculations, the latter was precisely what might prime a potential mass movement to develop its consciousness of the former. In other words, the rage fueled by discrimination might be channeled toward anti-colonial struggle. This, in conjunction with Indian independence and American civil rights, could also lead to conflicts in priority. The difference in primary aspirations for status as American citizens versus status as free Indian citizens was eventually reflected in a divergence of interest between moderate permanent settlers and radical temporary sojourners, though this might ultimately be a circular argument, given that it was the radicals who led to go fight in the mutiny, leaving the moderates behind. But it was only between 1912 and 1918 that the Indian frame came to override the American one with such urgency, and that the narrative arc of national liberation came to bolt out that of immigrant arrival and success. Before the Ghadar movement coalesced, while organizers did habitually speak against British rule, in the immediate sense they prioritized worker education and the social welfare of the immigrant community. A few examples of the organizers follow.
then beginning to arrive in larger numbers. It was also reported that he "em-
ployed his talents in cheating them at every opportunity" and was "regarded by
the Indians as a swindler and by Americans as a loafer." He enrolled in a mining
college, and later worked in the fields picking fruit, as a "waifer in the house of an
American lady," and as an unsuccessful entrepreneur. Both his Eastern Employ-
ment Agency and his Indo-American General Trading Company failed.

But Puri also started a Hindustan Association and a dormitory called the
Magnolia Street Union, which provided Punjabi laborers with room and board
for 20¢ a night. He also published a short-lived Urdu paper called the Circular-
ized (Circular of Freedom), which appeared in June, July, and August 1907 in
San Francisco and Oakland. One of the first significant pieces of anticolonial
propaganda literature circulated on the West Coast, it was prohibited from ship-
ment to India due to its "seditionist" content. According to the report of the direc-
tor of criminal intelligence for January 1908, its "object... is to organize an
Indian national party among the Indians who go to America for employment. . . .
It seems to owe its existence to the collision which has occurred between the
white and coloured labour at Vancouver and at places in California, the state of
Washington and elsewhere in the west of America." 94

Puri's paper was allegedly connected to an "Indian Association" based in San
Francisco, and with branches in Astoria and Vancouver, the purpose of which was to "impart instructions to Indians on national lines, to teach gunfiring,
Japanese exercises, and the use of spear, sword and other weapons in self-defence,
and to foster American sympathy with India." 95 Although copies of the original
paper are now impossible to find, the Director of Criminal Intelligence (DCI)
reports inform us that the August issue included an article advocating a boycott
government service; and that both the July and the August issues contained
extracts from the anti-British Gaelic American (of which we have not heard the
last) and from other Indian newspapers—presumably the Bande Mataram and
Indian Sociologist, since they shared material with the Gaelic American.

Puri acquired a modest bit of land in Oakland around 1908 and considered
settling in the United States, since he was still afraid to return to India. But he
apparently changed his mind, reaching Tokyo in time to make a "very objection-
able" (which presumably meant militantly seditious) speech at a farewell dinner
for Muhammad Barakatullah, who was leaving his teaching post there in sum-
mer 1909. Puri then "turned up unexpectedly" in Bijnor (his hometown) in 1912
and advised the youth at the Arya Samaj gurukul (religious school) there that
they should "go to America where they would learn how a man could achieve
liberty." The report is silent as to what happened to him later, whether he stayed in
Bijnor, and whether he reconciled with the Ghadarites when they returned in
1904-15.

Guru Dutt Kumar

Guru Dutt Kumar arrived in British Columbia around 1907 and opened a gro-
cy store in Victoria. Born in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), he
was exposed to the revolutionary movement in Cakutta, where he had studied at
the National College, briefly taught Urdu and Hindi, and apprenticed at a pho-

tographer's studio. In Cakutta he also met Taraknath Das, who assisted him
in coming to North America, along with Harun Singh Sahri, a veteran of the
Fourth Cavalry. 96

In 1909 Kumar became the secretary of a new Hindustan Association in
Vancouver—the same association linked to Puri's Circular of Freedom. Its ulti-
mate goal was "complete self-government" for the "Hindustani Nation," which
for him would entail not only the elimination of foreign exploitation but the
promotion of domestic education, industry, trade, and agriculture. 97 The organi-
zation boasted some 250 members and ministered most to "students and edu-
cated men," F.C. Isemonger and James Slattery's official report claimed that
it functioned chiefly to entice Indian students to America, where they could be
"instructed in nationalism, revolutionary, and even anarchical doctrines." 98 Ini-
tially working closely with the Khalsa Diwan Society, Kumar emphasized social
reform, moral uplift, temperating, and caste and religious harmony. While agit-
ating against entry bans on new immigrants, including families attempting to join
their loved ones who were already there, an anticolonial strain was becoming
increasingly overt. 99

Kumar and his colleagues also opened the Swadesh Sevak Home in Vancou-
ver, modeled on Krishnavarma's London India House. It offered a school for im-
migrants' children (although with families barred from entry, surely there could
not have been many of them) and evening English classes for the immigrants
themselves. Its corresponding organ was the Swadesh Sevak, started in 1910 as
the Gurmuki counterpart to Taraknath Das's Free Hindustan. Both papers re-
printed articles from the Bande Mataram and Indian Sociologist, which were
published by their radical movement counterparts in Europe, and advocated
mutiny among the Sikh troops in the British Indian army. The paper was put on
the list of "objectionable" literature prohibited from entering India under the Sea
Customs Act, as of March 1912. 100 Meanwhile, Kumar, Sahri, and others took up the practice of visiting groups of
Indian laborers at their workplaces to talk with them about "social and politi-
cal problems." 101 In addition to circulating the paper, they held meetings and
raised funds for combating the entry ban or reversing the arrest of confederates
who had been threatened with deportation. 102 Upon his arrest in October 1909,
Kumar was found to be in contact with Das, and "in possession of the addresses
of a number of Hindu [i.e., Indian] agitators in America, Africa, Switzerland,
Egypt and France, and also had some notes on the manufacture of nitroglycerine. The deportation case was decided in his favor, and he stayed on to become "a leader in the agitation against the immigration laws." 44

Kumar and Sahri also focused (secretly) on recruiting new immigrants as potential anti-British revolutionaries, offering training in the procurement and use of arms and explosives. An association requiring an oath of secrecy for membership was formed in 1911, whose aim was "to establish liberty, equality and fraternity of the Hindustani nation in their relation with the rest of the nations of the world." 45

The arrests on the pretext of illegal entry were symptoms of the suspicion and surveillance under which the British and Canadian authorities kept the Hindustani Association. In May 1911, the Vancouver Daily Province printed a story claiming that the "Vancouver Hindus" had sent thousands of dollars to "plotters in India" for the purchase of rifles. Kumar wrote scathingly to the editor, refuting the headline as slander, but nevertheless closed down the association soon afterward, along with the paper and the house, and left the country to join Taraknath Das in Seattle. 46

Taraknath Das

Taraknath Das had been recruited to the original Bengali Anusilan Samiti in 1903 and helped to form its Dacca branch in 1905. 47 The following year he took the familiar route through Japan to New York at age twenty-three. After earning a college degree in Seattle, he went to work as an interpreter in the U.S. immigration office in Vancouver. But he was fired in 1908 for his obtrusive habit of exhibiting scathing anti-British opinions.

In April, just before Das’s dismissal, the first issue of his eight-page English-language journal Free Hindustan had appeared. After two months he relocated printing to Seattle, where the Socialist paper Western Clarion provided the use of its press, 48 and then to New York, aided by the press and the comradeship of George Freeman, editor of the Irish-American Fenian Brotherhood’s organ Gaelic American. In fact, the DCI noted in July 1908 that the first two issues of Free Hindustan had arrived enclosed in a copy of the latter, even before the partnership officially began in August. The new paper was "similar in size and character to the Indian Sociologist," and Das, its editor, also happened to be the treasurer of the Vancouver Indian Association. "The subject to which most attention is directed in these two numbers," noted Sir Charles Cleveland, Director of Criminal Intelligence, "is naturally the immigration question and, in addition, the impoverishment of India by England, and a few other grievances are discussed with considerable bitterness." 49

Like the Indian Sociologist, whose tone it echoed, Free Hindustan took its masthead motto from Herbert Spencer: "Resistance to Tyranny is Obedience to God." The paper’s claimed purpose was "political education of the masses for revolution." A 1906 issue "advised political work among the Sikh soldiers for an ‘organised uprising’." 50 It noted that "considerable numbers [of Sikhs] were settled in Canada and the Western States, and... were already much irritated by the Canadian immigration restrictions." 51 The first issue contained an account of a mass meeting of Vancouver Indians outraged by such measures and protesting the threat of deportation. The meeting had sent a cablegram to the Secretary of State for India, Lord Morley, expressing as much. The paper also contained articles accusing Britain’s "murderous commercial policy" of wreaking catastrophic famine in India, and compared its "Measures of Oppression" to those of czarist Russia—a comparison the Swadesi radicals had also made.

In 1908, Das entered a prestigious military school in Norwich, Vermont, but was forbidden to enroll in advanced coursework or to join the Vermont National Guard as most alumni did. Aside from his foreign nationality, his political history also worked against him. Despite his popularity among the students and his "great interest in everything pertaining to military matters," he refused yet again to tone down the hostility to Britain that he had been warned against expressing "on all occasions, appropriate and otherwise." 52 He moved on instead to earn advanced degrees in political science at the Universities of Washington and California, during which period a British Foreign Office Memorandum on Indian revolutionaries abroad identified him as a West Coast "ringleader." 53 Given his skill in negotiating mainstream American society, he had become something of an advocate and representative of the Indian community.

In 1910 he helped set up the United India House in Seattle, where he and other Bengali students lectured to gatherings of around twenty-five laborers every Saturday. 54 Das gave frequent lectures to the "students and settlers" on the Pacific coast, mainly on the theme of the economic exploitation of India. In addition to such efforts at public education, Das modeled some of his secret society methods of organization on the Bengali groups, with whom he remained in contact. They were kind enough to pass on their notorious bomb manual, which Das later shared with his San Francisco counterparts when invited down to address a meeting in 1914. 55

This activity must have eluded the knowledge of the immigration and naturalization authorities, who permitted him to attain U.S. citizenship in 1914. In the 1920s he married a white American woman named Mary Keating Morse, a noted women’s suffragist and founding member of the NAACP. He later became a professor of political science at Columbia University, and remained prominent in Indian politics in North America until his death in 1956, though his path would diverge from the Ghatadar lineage as he turned toward a more conservative form of nationalism and fell out with the leaders of the reborn Ghatadar Party in the early 1920s.
Pandurang Khankhoje

While Kumar and Das were most associated with Vancouver and Seattle, Pandurang Khankhoje could claim much credit for starting up the Indian Independence League in Portland and Astoria, which formed the seed of the Ghadar Party. Khankhoje's inspiration was Thak, who had first encouraged the young man to seek military training outside of India. Like many others, he too had first tried Japan, but found that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance forbade his study of the "modern methods of warfare" there. He proceeded to California in 1905 and enrolled first in agricultural science at the University of California and then in 1909 at the Tamalpais Military Academy. He hoped to continue his training at West Point but was rebuffed as a non-U.S. citizen; his application for citizenship was also turned down. Nevertheless, he had already learned enough to drastically readjust his thinking on the possibilities of Indian military resistance, as he realized that modern weaponry and chemicals based in advanced technology were not within feasible reach of most Indians, although, says Emily Brown, "he did find the books on discipline, quick action, and secrecy to be of some value."

Early on, he had tried to use his school holidays not only to work—building roads, lumbering, and picking hops, grapes, and strawberries—but to talk with the laborers alongside him about the evils of British rule and encourage them to join the Indian Independence League. As of yet these efforts proved premature, but not for long. After graduation he drifted for a time, looking for work. In Portland he made the significant acquaintance of Pandit Kanshiram, an "old revolutionary and disciple of Sati Amra Prasad." Kanshiram was now a prosperous lumber-mill owner who often provided financial support to both students and workers. Khankhoje proposed that they start a new Indian Independence League in Portland, "similar to the ones we had in Japan and San Francisco." He recalled: "The sight of so many Indians in one place had inspired me. I had to find some way to organize a movement with the Indian workers in America and spread the word right up to India."

But Kanshiram had reservations, based largely on the persistent mistrust of the workers for the educated youngsters, whom they felt liable to deceive, cheat, or condescend to them. But Khankhoje worked hard to dispel this perception, with Kanshiram's help, gradually earning trust through his integrity and good faith as he made himself "indispensable" when translation, medicine buying, or letter writing was needed. Finally the establishment was successful, though Sohan Singh Bhakna proved a tough nut to crack, as one of the most vocal in resistance to trust a babu. Bhakna worked at the timber factory in Astoria while also serving as the local gaon, or striving to represent the rights of Indian workers on both sides of the border. As a gesture of good faith, Khankhoje proposed Bhakna as founding president, and Kanshiram as treasurer, of what workers would call the Azad-e-Hind (Freedom of India) Party.

As Kanshiram recognized the need to delegate, he assigned Khankhoje to local leadership of the Astoria branch. A Punjabi-owned lumber mill there welcomed him with open arms, thanks to his letters of introduction from Kanshiram and Bhakna, who had now come around to be a staunch ally. Astoria then became the hub of the North American movement and the birthplace of what would become the Ghadar Party. There were also branches of the movement now in Sacramento, San Francisco, and Portland.

Once things seemed to be running smoothly, Khankhoje returned to his studies at the Agricultural College in Corvallis, and later Washington State College, still nursing his dream of "training an army of farmer revolutionaries" and not as he would be for much of his life between, quite literally, the sword and the plowshare. This conflict is a recurring theme in his biography; as his daughter puts it, "He was now simultaneously engaged in two fields: agriculture and revolution." It was in agriculture that his life's work would be celebrated. Diego Rivera immortalized Khankhoje in a mural for his contribution to the nourishment of the Mexican people through development of special strains of maize, and the Mukta Gram project that he established decades later in independent India, as a model for village self-sufficiency in food production and cottage industries, was inspired by his visit to Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute around 1912. For the moment, however, he used all his spare moments outside of soil and crop genetics research conducting military trainings and touring the region with his old roommate and longtime comrade Bishan Das Kocher, armed with lectures, magic lantern slides, and a cutting-edge cinematograph machine, raising funds and awareness.

Vishnu Ganesh Pingle

Another important figure in this circle was Vishnu Ganesh Pingle, at the time an engineering student at the University of Oregon. He also studied for a time at Berkeley, despite having been initially refused entry; this had, as usual, stimulated further agitation against the immigration laws. After meeting Khankhoje, a like-minded fellow Maharakshtra, Pingle began to neglect his studies and became preoccupied with the prospect of building a revolutionary army. He eventually took on leadership roles in the Portland and Astoria organizations, but his primary interest was Indian national liberation rather than American immigration woes, though the two matters were always linked. Thus, as the Portland group got more enmeshed in legal immigration issues on behalf of both Canada and United States entrants, Pingle was drawn back down to the Ghadarite stronghold of the San Francisco Bay Area, where the concern for national liberation was ascendant.
The Pacific Coast Hindi Association (PCHA)

Thanks to the work of these early activists, the building blocks of the movement were all in place by 1913. At that time, leading organizers, supported by those farmers and agricultural workers whose discontentment was acute, started looking for someone who could consolidate the existing nodes of activity, unite the students and the workers, channel the pervasive and building unrest, and beef up the political content of cultural and social reform projects. This person turned out to be Har Dayal.

Accounts vary as to who actually suggested that Har Dayal take the helm of a unified organization of the West Coast Indian community. It may have been Thakur Das, who had been active for some years in Iran under the name of Ghulam Hussain, working with Aji Singh—himself an initial suggestion for California leadership—and Sufi Ambo Prasad. Hussain/Das had then worked among Cama and Rana’s Paris circle until they sent him to Portland in 1912 as “a skilled agitator...with a specific mission to stir up disaffection among the Sikhs.” Initially Har Dayal asked if this mission could wait; his schedule was booked with activities in San Francisco progressive circles, including projects such as his Radical Club, the utopian Fraternity of the Red Flag, and the IWW branch secretarship. All this was soon to change, however.

There had already been a series of meetings in the Pacific Northwest throughout the spring of 1913 (the largest attended by 120 workers) by the time Har Dayal arrived for the fateful gathering in Astoria in early June. Also present were Hussain/Das, Sohan Singh Bhakna, Ram Chandra, Kanshi Ram, and Nawab Khan. “Two electric tram cars and two motor cars are said to have been hired for the occasion,” reported Isenmorgen and Slattery, “and the cars were decorated with placards bearing the words ‘India’ and ‘Freedom.’ Har Dayal was hailed with the words ‘Bandey Matarum,’ but declined to be gorlamed.”

Reconfirming the leadership of Khansukej’s group, Sohan Singh Bhakna was elected president and Kanabiram treasurer. Har Dayal was named secretary. Now all the main components of the organizational infrastructure were in place, under the new name of the Pacific Coast Hindi Association (PCHA). In addition to a committee for collecting funds and a fifteen-member working committee (soon swelling to twenty-four) of annually elected representatives of local branches, there would be a general association comprising representatives from all the local communities up and down the coast, including both students and workers. The group then selected San Francisco as the publishing and propaganda hub because that was where Har Dayal’s influence was strongest.

Nawab Khan provided a lengthy transcription of Har Dayal’s speech: “You have come to America and seen with your own eyes the prosperity of this country. What is the cause of this prosperity? Why nothing more than this, that America is ruled by its own people. In India, on the other hand, the people have no voice in the administration of the country.” Deploring the situation in which a rich agricultural land was wrecked by famine as its crops were exported, he urged his audience: “Desist...from your petty religious dissensions and turn your thoughts toward the salvation of your country. What you earn, earn for your country. What work you do, do it for your country...Collect money and get the youth educated in America in order that they may become equipped to serve...Prepare now to sacrifice yourselves.” He then rhetorically reframed their immigrant status as an explicit function of Indian liberation. It was useless to keep struggling for American civil rights without the backing of an independent government, he said, arguing that “as long as the Indians remained in subjection to the British they would not be treated as equals by Americans or any other nation.”

Ghedar was the fruit of a very particular synthesis of populations, of issues, of anti-imperialist frames, and of ideological elements. It is precisely the richness of this combination that enabled it to play the role of missing link in the genealogy of Indian radicalism, and of medium of translation among coexisting movement discourses. Still, to a degree unprecedented within the revolutionary movement abroad, Ghadar was overwhelmed by a workers’ movement, in which, moreover, the line between workers and intellectuals had become rather blurred. The impact of racial discrimination and its crucial interaction with class cannot be underestimated as a catalyst for the radicalization of South Asians in North America. Yet only when this frame was overlaid on the geopolitical reality of India’s colonized status would American discontent transmute into Indian mutiny.