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Cover Picture: Moninder Singh, who was instrumental behind Communities United Against Narendra Modi, an initiative launched to oppose the Indian Prime Minister's visit to Canada. He was arrested inside the Ross Street Sikh temple on April 16, but later freed.

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RA→**ICAL**
DESI

"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor."
~ Desmond Tutu

Protests against Modi show not everyone is convinced by his performance

This month marks the first anniversary of the election of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to power. It coincides with his recently concluded Canadian tour, which generated a lot of curiosity in the media. Most media commentators showered praises over Modi's oratory skills and development model in India. Although he remains popular internationally, the protests held across Canada against Modi's visit show that not everyone is convinced by his performance and image. The protestors were largely angry at the presence of a controversial leader who represents the Hindu nationalist Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) which has been responsible for many acts of violence against religious minorities, such as the demolition of the ancient Babri mosque in 1992, anti-Christian violence in Gujarat in 1997, and the anti-Muslim pogrom in the same state during 2002 when Modi was its Chief Minister. Modi was denied a US visa for that episode in the past, but he has not been convicted for the violence. If that was not enough, Sikh settlers from Punjab also came under attack by BJP supporters in recent months.

The protestors were annoyed at the Canadian government's decision to invite Modi despite his baggage. Those who showed up at these protests belonged to different religious minority groups and other marginalized communities, like Dalits (so-called untouchables) and LGBT people who find the BJP's religious orthodoxy problematic. Secularists and leftists were also part of these protests.

On the other side, Modi supporters keep saying that he has been cleared by the Indian court system and has been duly elected by the Indian voters. Even if we all agree on that, the question is what Modi is really doing to stop the ongoing violence and hate propoganda against minorities in India. During his election, Modi used the slogan "*Sabh Ka Saath; Sabh Ka Vikas*" (Everyone's support; Everyone's progress). If that is the case, why he is not doing anything to control the supporters of Hindu nationalism from intimidating minorities and spewing venom against others? After all, he is the Prime Minister of a secular republic, and not a PM of the BJP. But these forces have become emboldened under his government. Many Modi supporters were upset over the protests that were held to embarrass their beloved leader. Rather than simply demonizing the protestors, they need to take a hard look at the performance of Modi over the last year. The attacks on churches have grown. Poor Muslims are being forced to convert to Hinduism. The demand to transform India into a Hindu state has grown. The glorification of Nathuram Godse continues unashamedly. Godse was a supporter of Hindu theocracy who assassinated Mahatma Gandhi for his opposition to the "Hindu nation".

Those who conveniently brush aside allegations of Modi's involvement in the anti-Muslim pogrom as a thing of the past should at least open their eyes to these current instances of religious intolerance. Also the argument that Modi has been elected does not mean an end to the ideological fight against his party by the secularists and leftists. It's a shame that some so-called secularists and leftists in the South Asian community either remained silent, or meekly joined the supporters of Modi in welcoming him. It seems that their brand of secularism is selective. They have been very vocal against Sikh separatists in the past, but failed miserably on the question of Modi and BJP. Lastly, the Canadian government needs to be asked, if any democratically elected government is acceptable, why it did not recognize the elected government of Hamas? Why these double standards? Also, if democracy allows anyone involved in systemic violence against minorities to get elected, why can't it let people show their anger through protest, which is also a democratic tool? Instead of seeing protestors as threat or a nuisance, prove them wrong by pressing the Modi government to stop the attacks on religious minorities, and to silence the ultra Hindu nationalists bent on turning a pluralist Indian society into a discriminatory and exclusionary theocratic state. Unless that really happens, leaders like Modi will continue to be greeted by protestors wherever they go.

-Editors

Unwanted Guest

Modi's visit sparks protests across Canada despite his popularity

As the Prime Minister of the world's so called largest secular democracy walked on the red carpet to enter the Ross Street Sikh temple in Vancouver, the air was filled with "Modi Go Back" chants. Heavy police deployment and roadblocks failed to keep close to 500 protestors from gathering near the oldest Sikh temple, where Narendra Modi, who came to power last May, was given a warm welcome on April 16. As temple officials escorted him inside, the slogans remained audible to everyone in the front courtyard.

Communities United Against Narendra Modi, a broad coalition of activists representing diverse groups, had been preparing for days to greet the controversial political figure. Modi is the leader of the Hindu nationalist Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), which is widely blamed for the attacks on religious minorities in India. He was the Chief Minister of Gujarat state, which witnessed an anti-Muslim massacre in 2002. Human rights activists and survivors of the pogrom openly accuse him of being complicit in the violence. While he was not convicted in these crimes, the US government had previously denied him a visa for his alleged involvement. Things changed after

he became Prime Minister, and both enjoys as head of state did not deter the US and Canada opened their doors for him. The immunity he his critics from organizing demonstrations during his

September 2014 U.S. visit, and last month's visit to Canada. Those who showed up at the Vancouver rally included Sikh separatists seeking a Sikh homeland in India, Muslims, Christians, die hard leftists and secularists, and members of the LGBT community.

Gujarat had also witnessed a series of attacks on churches under the BJP government much before the 2002 anti-Muslim violence. Recent attacks on churches under Modi's government attracted international attention and condemnation. Modi came under criticism for remaining indifferent to these incidents, but finally broke his silence following his party's humiliating defeat in the Delhi

assembly election. The BJP's religious conservatism does not sit well with other marginalised sections, such as so-called untouchables, or gays and lesbians, since the party's ideology supports the Hindu caste system and opposes same-sex relationships.

The placards bearing slogans such as "Keep religion and politics apart", and flags of the Sikh homeland, clearly reflected the diversity of those who came out in big numbers. The most unusual element of the demonstration was the presence of opponents of Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who accompanied his Indian counterpart on the occasion. Among the critics of Harper were people from the Indigenous communities and campaigners

against his infamous anti-terror Bill C-51. Their participation made the demonstration even more powerful in terms of numbers. Perhaps this is why many Caucasian drivers passing by on Marine Drive were seen honking and waving in solidarity.

Ironically, the group inside the temple to welcome Modi was also very diverse. The local BJP leader Aditya Kumar Tewatia was inside, along with some well-known leftists and secularists to give a warm welcome to the high profile guest. These secularists are largely known as pro-India moderates who have been in conflict with the supporters of a Sikh homeland. Some are aligned with the Akali Dal, a mainstream Sikh political party

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which is the coalition partner of the BJP. In contrast to the Akali Dal, the Sikh radicals see the BJP as a serious threat to their existence. Part of the anti-BJP sentiment seems to be an outcome of recent attacks in Gujarat on Sikh settlers from Punjab. These attacks are blamed on supporters of the BJP that remains in power in Gujarat. The Sikh settlers had opposed Modi in last year's general election, and camped in Punjab to defeat his party from coming to power. In fact, Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), a US-based advocacy group that seeks a referendum on the question of the right to self-determination, had launched a complaint against Modi with Canadian authorities, seeking his prosecution for the 2002 anti-Muslim violence. The SFJ has been instrumental behind similar complaints against the visiting leaders of other political parties,

including the Congress that is blamed for engineering the 1984 anti-Sikh carnage. Its supporters were among the protestors who raised angry slogans when the Modi-Harper motorcade entered the temple premises. One of them, Tejinder Kaur, was also present in a protest organized in the US against Modi's visit last fall. For doing so, she had received threats on social media.

Those who organize the annual cross-Canada blood donation campaign in memory of victims of the 1984 pogrom Canada also brought their banners. Prominent among them were men like Sunil Sharma, who had been mobilizing people to show up at the rally.

Earlier in the day, Moninder Singh, a supporter of the Sikh homeland, was evicted from inside the temple and arrested. He was

later released. A section of the Sikh community feels that the BJP has an agenda to assimilate their community, seeing Sikhs as part of the Hindu mainstream, while treating Christianity and Islam as foreign religions. Moninder Singh had faced stiff resistance within the circle of supporters of the Sikh homeland for helping to organize the rally. He was virtually abandoned by some veteran Sikh homeland supporters who instead want to negotiate peace with Modi. This section of the separatists continues to believe that the BJP government can give them amnesty and waive off the blacklist that prevents them from visiting India. Sikh separatists who had a serious fight with the previous Congress regime in India during the 1980s, the decade which saw the emergence of the Sikh homeland

COVER STORY

struggle, have often been denied entry to India. Notably, the blacklist of Sikh separatists was waived the last time a BJP-led coalition came to power. Some of these veteran separatists were able to travel back home during that period after negotiating peace with the BJP government. There were also fears that whosoever shows public opposition against Modi will be denied a visa by Indian officials.

While a section of the big media in India tried to frame it as a separatist demonstration, many known secularists and leftists were there to show resistance. Significantly, the Ghadar Centenary Celebrations Committee supported the initiative. The group was formed by various progressive organizations to celebrate the centenary of the Ghadar Party in 2013. The Ghadar Party was established by the South Asian immigrants in 1913 to launch an armed revolt against the British occupation of India. The party believed in secularism, and always emphasised keeping religion and politics apart and denounced religious divisions. Many of its supporters were practising Sikhs, but their brand of faith was liberal and egalitarian, and they saw socialism and the modernist values of Sikhism as compatible. Much before the Ghadar Party was formed, they established the Khalsa Diwan Society, the body that governs the Ross Street Sikh temple. The Khalsa Diwan Society not only participated in the Indian freedom movement, but was also in forefront of the fight against racism and discriminatory immigration policies.

The Ghadar Centenary Celebrations Committee members were upset when it was announced that Modi would be welcomed at the temple. One of them, Avtar Gill, had said that if any other Sikh temple hosted Modi's visit, they would not have been bothered, but for the Khalsa Diwan Society to do this was something that supporters of the Ghadar ideology could not accept. Interestingly, Shanti Sarup, an activist from Abbotsford who organizes an annual community fair in commemoration of the Ghadar Party, was among those who welcomed Modi inside the temple.

Chin Banerjee of the South Asian Network for Secularism and Democracy was among the speakers at the rally. His group has also been celebrating the Ghadar history and opposing religious sectarianism in India and elsewhere.

Both the participants and the organizers were not just regular demonstrators, as some in the crowd were from the intelligentsia within the South Asian community.

Well-known atheist Sadhu Binning, the famous Punjabi writer and retired UBC professor, was seen in the crowd. He frequently attends rallies which are organized by social justice activists. Indira Prahst, the media spokesperson of the initiative against Modi, is an instructor at Langara College. A very senior Punjabi author from Abbotsford, Gurmeet Singh Tiwana, was seen holding a placard. Both Binning and Tiwana are known for their secularist political views. But other secularist writers, such as Nadeem Parmar, were on the other side of the fence to receive Modi.

The story did not end there, as the protestors followed Modi to Surrey where he delivered a speech at the Laxminarayan Hindu temple. Some of the temple members are associated with the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) – an ultra Hindu nationalist organization of which BJP is a part. Modi is an RSS member. The organization aims to transform India into a Hindu theocracy. The former president of

the temple, Parshotam Goel, is an RSS man who has been instrumental in organizing awareness camps in the temple to educate worshippers about the role of the RSS. Former RSS leader K.S. Sudarshan had been invited to the temple in the past. A fiery Hindu preacher, Sadhvi Rithambra, had also visited the place. She was accused of inciting the mob that razed the ancient Babri mosque in India in 1992. The demonstration held near the Hindu temple was a little more tense than the one organized in Vancouver, as the Modi supporters responded sharply to the sloganeering by the protestors. However, the police prevented the situation from getting out of control, according to some eyewitnesses. The Surrey temple visit was partly hosted by the Hindu Sikh Forum. Harkirat Singh, a prominent moderate Sikh priest and a vocal critic of the Sikh homeland, is

one of the leaders of the forum.

A day before his visit to Vancouver, Modi had addressed a huge gathering of supporters in Toronto. His visit generated a lot of hype in the mainstream media, and he was described by many outlets as the "Rock Star PM". So much so that US President Barack Obama wrote a piece in his support for *Time* magazine. Modi comes from a humble background, and is known for his oratory skills. By mainstream standards, his development model of Gujarat has been seen as "ideal". His supporters believe that it was his charismatic personality that brought the BJP to power with a brute majority, raising hopes among countries like the US and Canada for solid, long term investments and trade relations under a stable government. While all this was being told to the Canadian audience by the media, his critics kept the pot

boiling, reminding others about his baggage. Protests were also held in Toronto, proving that not everybody is impressed by "Modi mania" in the South Asian community. Anxiety over the political agenda of the BJP continues to prevail.

Aditya Kumar Tewatia, who described these demonstrations as "unfortunate," thinks that Modi has already been cleared by the Indian courts, and that his visit marks a new beginning in Indo-Canadian relations. Whether or not history proves Modi right only time will tell, but the protests held to embarrass the visiting Indian Prime Minister represent the general sense of scepticism over his political party and its philosophy. At least for now, it is safe to conclude that he remained an unwanted guest in the quarters of activists and human rights watchers in Canada.

-RDNB

Opinion

Modi visit coverage by Indian media reflects its prejudices

The way Indian media covered the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Canada demands thorough questioning of its integrity and objectivity. Not only did some prominent media channels black out the protests against his visit, but there were underlying suggestions and framing of these protests as acts of Sikh separatists seeking Khalistan, the imaginary Sikh homeland to be carved out of Punjab. My own experience as a media commentator during this high profile visit leaves no doubt in my mind about prejudices that exist in the media industry.

I received calls from a couple of Indian media channels who wanted to talk to me about Modi's first official tour to this part of the world. They wanted a firsthand account of the response to his Canadian visit, and my take on it as a commentator. One of them even wanted to know if I can be introduced as a "Sikh journalist", which I objected to. Yes, I was born in a Sikh family, but how does that matter when you ask a professional journalist about his approach on an unrelated subject. I asked them whether they classify other journalists as Hindus or Muslims. They had nothing to say, but they apparently did not dare to introduce

me the way they initially wanted to. The second question was much more loaded. They asked me why the Sikh community in Canada was trying to embarrass the Indian Prime Minister. I had to tell them that the Sikh community is diverse, and not everyone is opposed to Modi. There are Sikhs who love Modi, and there are those who are opposed to him, so there is no sense to paint the entire Sikh community with one brush. Also, those opposed to Modi belong to not just one community. The protests included Muslims and Christians, secularists and members of the LGBT community. After all, they have a common ground against Modi and his Hindu nationalist Bhartiya Janata Party, which has a track record of intimidating religious minorities

and so-called others in India.

Another media channel never even bothered to ask about the protests. But on one occasion it asked me an open-ended question about the "unanimous support" Modi has presumably received from Indians in Canada. I pointed out that not everyone is impressed with Modi in the Indian community, as he is being greeted by protestors wherever he goes. Not surprisingly, a highly reputed Indian TV channel that covered Modi's visit to Vancouver on April 16 did not show a single footage about the protests.

These illustrations might be brushed aside as few and selective, but cannot be ignored completely. It's a shame that the media outlets functioning in the democratic

society of India behave in such a prejudicial manner. The reflection of this prejudice was also visible within the ethnic media here in Canada. Sikhs for Justice, an advocacy group opposed to Modi's visit, reported the silence over their campaign in the South Asian media, allegedly under pressure from Indian officials.

Because of these flaws in the coverage, the stories of the protests were either ignored or were framed in a manner that suited the interests of the Indian establishment, which demonized the organizers as "separatists" or "anti-nationals". The presence of leftists and secularists was purposely diluted to ensure that the coverage fits into the agenda of the Indian state.

This was despite the fact that the protesters also showed their anger against Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who accompanied Modi during the Vancouver visit. A broad alliance of activists came together to oppose two right-wing Prime Ministers for their conservative agendas. Such diversity represents a broader struggle between the power and the people, who came together cutting across ideological and ethnic boundaries. This does not reflect in any manner a fight between the Indian government and Sikh separatists. Rather, some traditional separatist leaders were opposed to the protests, and among those who were there to welcome Modi were a

few well known secularists and moderate Sikhs. Both sides were diverse in composition.

The bias of the media can also be gauged from the simple fact that describing Modi as a "Rock Star PM" wasn't seen as problematic, while anyone who gave him an unfavorable description was seen as prejudiced. Why is objectivity never questioned when one is pleasing the power, and why does it become doubtful when one challenges it? This is a question that seeks an answer.

Gurpreet Singh is a founder of Radical Desi.

Boota Singh honoured at Jallianwala Bagh event

A visiting social justice activist from India, Boota Singh, was honoured with the Radical Activism Award of the Year by Radical Desi Publications, at an April 19 event held in commemoration of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. Boota Singh is the editor of *Sulgde Pind*, a Punjabi magazine that covers alternative politics, and is also Press Secretary of the Association for Democratic Rights. He has also translated books, including Naomi Klein's *Shock Doctrine* and many of the essays of Arundhati Roy. Boota Singh was the guest speaker at the Jallianwala Bagh commemoration event, organized by *Mehak Punjab Dee TV* and *Radical Desi*. On April 13, 1919, over 1,000 people died during the indiscriminate firing on supporters of the civil disobedience movement in British occupied India. They had gathered at the Jallianwala Bagh, a public park in Amritsar, to oppose draconian laws. Boota Singh spoke at length about the relevance of the history of the massacre and the ongoing repression against marginalized communities and religious minorities in India. He voiced his concerns about the brutal laws being used in free India to muzzle the voices of dissent. There was a pin drop silence as he spoke for more than one hour and received a standing ovation after he finished. Progressive playwright Samuel John also performed at the event, while renowned Punjabi poets recited their poems in memory of the victims. In the meantime, the host of *Mehak Punjab Dee TV*, Kamaljit Singh Thind, joined the Vancouver Vaisakhi parade with a special float carrying a miniature model of the Jallianwala Bagh memorial. He has single handedly organized the picture exhibition of the Jallianwala episode during previous annual Vaisakhi parades.

-RDNB

Hate crime victim family member meets former Neo-Nazi with an open heart

A relative of a hate crime victim in Vancouver met the former Neo-Nazi with an open heart on his visit from India.

Boota Singh is a prominent social justice activist associated with Association for Democratic Rights from India. His father-in-law Nirmal Singh Gill was brutally murdered by neo-Nazis in 1998. Gill was the caretaker of the Guru Nanak Sikh temple in Surrey and was beaten to death in the temple parking lot. Five skinheads were convicted for the manslaughter.

On his first visit to Vancouver, he had a chance to meet former neo-Nazi Tony McAleer, who is now a changed man and motivates youngsters to say no to racism. Although McAleer was not involved in the crime, he takes some "moral responsibility" for the incident for contributing to the skinhead movement back then. He had apologized for the murder on a community radio station and also paid a visit to the temple to show respect for the departed soul.

Boota Singh appreciated the work of McAleer and both men hugged each other during their brief, but warm encounter. Earlier Boota Singh visited the temple where Gill's portrait greets visitors inside the senior center.

The murder had fuelled tension within the Sikh community as the moderates and the fundamentalist camps were locked in a vicious fight. The moderates had prematurely blamed the fundamentalists for the murder, only to apologize later when the truth was revealed.

-RDNE

Indigenous activists occupy centres of power in BC

Over a period of 15 days, protesting against indigenous activists the dumping of occupied two centres of bio-waste on their power in BC. The first act of traditional lands. resistance was reported on March 31 near Bella Bella, where members of the Heiltsuk Nation occupied the Department of Fisheries office to oppose the opening of the herring roe fishing to the commercial fishery. Following the standoff, supporters of Heiltsuk Nation held a demonstration in downtown Vancouver. While this story was still fresh in the minds of the public, members of the Nicola Valley First Nation occupied the constituency office of Premier Christy Clark in Kelowna. The angry activists were protesting against the dumping of bio-waste on their traditional lands. These acts are seen as part of the broader Blockadia movement, by people who oppose the assault on their traditional ways of life and natural resources. BC has a long history of such resistance by indigenous communities on their unceded territories. These actions follow the Idle No More indigenous grassroots movement which began in December 2012, and the continued growth of opposition to oil pipelines by indigenous communities across BC.

-RDNB

Vancouver incidents raise huge environmental concerns

Two recent serious environmental incidents in Vancouver, within the unceded traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples, are a reminder of the potential consequences of transporting huge quantities of volatile raw materials through heavily populated urban areas. On March 4, a fire at the Vancouver port released clouds of toxic acid over part of the city, followed on April 8 by a spill of bunker fuel in English Bay.

There are still many questions about the March 4 fire at the Vancouver docks. Quick action was taken by members of the International Longshore Workers Union, who identified the chemical involved in the container fire, and by firefighters who were on the scene within minutes. These workers also helped to ensure that the dock area was evacuated and that the health hazard to thousands of people was made known as soon as possible. The City authorities quickly warned residents of the affected neighbourhoods to stay indoors, and police were sent to urge people to stay off the streets, with mixed success. However, it appears that little effort has been made to estimate the full extent of the toxic materials emanating from the fire. Residents in the Downtown Eastside, Strathcona and Hastings Sunrise neighbourhoods reported seeing brownish yellow clouds of toxic chemicals in streets close to the port, which should warrant a much more in depth investigation of the possible

long term health impacts in these areas.

Just over a month later, at least 2700 litres of toxic bunker fuel leaked from the MV Marathassa, a grain carrier in English Bay. Hours elapsed before any cleanup began, and the City was not notified until nearly 12 hours later. Although this fuel spill is regarded as relatively minor, recreational fisheries west of the Lion's Gate Bridge were closed, and residents were warned to stay off the beaches during cleanup operations. It seems unclear which level of government or which department has authority over monitoring water quality in English Bay and Burrard Inlet, and experts say that federal cuts to science programs have left a major gap in research and preparedness for such events. This incident follows last year's closure of the Kitsilano Coast Guard Station by the Harper government, to save \$700,000. According to retired Canadian Coast Guard Capt. Tony Toxopeus, who spent his 32 year career in the Vancouver harbour, the station could have had a boat with oil containing booms by the vessel's side within an hour of the spill.

These near tragedies could very easily have become far worse. The incidents highlight the importance of strong public services to protect our environment and living conditions. Interestingly, organized workforces in both the private and public sectors are usually the initial responders in emergencies. Workers who have the protection of trade unions and strong

collective agreements are in a much better position to act in the wider interests of society, without fear of being fired or disciplined.

These incidents also raise fundamental issues related to jobs, the economy and the environment. As experiences in both capitalist and socialist societies prove, human economic activities inevitably have consequences for the environment, such as the impact of greenhouse gas emissions on global weather patterns. Some people advocate ending industrial economic activities, but this strategy would result in the deaths of billions of human beings, especially those who lack the wealth and resources to survive such a change. However, pressure is needed to compel governments to exercise much more stringent controls over the extraction, transport and processing of raw materials, especially Alberta tar sands and derivatives such as diluted bitumen. We need much wider social discussion on ways to dramatically reduce carbon emissions, and to limit the overall environmental footprint of human economies.

These recent events emphasize that time is running short to deal with the environmental crisis, not only for our small corner of Canada, but for the entire planet, and for our children and grandchildren.

Kimball Cariou is the Editor of People's Voice, a social justice activist, and a member of the Radical Desi Editorial Team.

Remembering Sarabha

This year marks the centenary of the martyrdom of Kartar Singh Sarabha, one of the founders of the Ghadar Party.

Born on May 23, 1896 at the village of Sarabha, Punjab, in British occupied India, Kartar Singh lost his parents at a very tender age and was brought up by his grandfather Badan Singh. He showed early signs of leadership during his school days and was popular among his classmates for being courageous and extraordinarily active.

For higher education, Sarabha was sent to Orissa state, which was already under the influence of revolutionary activities against foreign rule. This exposure shaped his political ideas. In 1912 he reached the US to pursue studies in chemistry. Most immigrants had started moving to North America during that period, either to earn a better livelihood or pursue higher studies, but racism against South Asians was rampant. Since they travelled to this part of the

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world as British subjects, their expectation toward the British officials for help in an event of racial violence was understandable. But they hardly got any assistance in such situations. Sarabha also encountered such humiliating racist experiences, further hardening his feelings against the British Empire. These immigrants realized that the root cause of their sufferings abroad was slavery back home. As a result of this awakening, the Ghadar Party came into being in Astoria, Oregon, in 1913. The party resolved to launch an armed rebellion against the British government in India, and simultaneously fought against racism in North America. It wanted to establish a secular and egalitarian society in post-independent India.

Sarabha was instrumental in forming the party, and he was also the brain behind the *Ghadar* newsletter. In fact, the Ghadar Party got its name from this radical newsletter, which was started to educate Indians about the plunder being done by the British regime. Ghadar means mutiny in Urdu, and this expression was used by the British for the first uprising of 1857. The Ghadar Party followers wanted to revive the spirit of the first war of independence through their paper, so they appropriated this name. As the newsletter gained popularity, the Hindi Pacific Association, the original name of the group, came to be known as the Ghadar Party.

Sarabha wrote fiery poems and articles to make his compatriots

understand the need for rebellion. He was also encouraged to seek armed training and learned to fly a plane.

In 1914, when Britain was locked in war with Germany, the Ghadar Party members decided to return to India to launch an armed revolt, with the help of the masses and Indian soldiers who worked for the empire. Their calculation was that this was the right time to strike against an enemy who was already in trouble. Sarabha, a dedicated party worker, returned and

fearlessly worked in the army cantonments to encourage soldiers to revolt. He also tried to raise funds with the help of sympathizers and through robberies. He had received money from Kishan Singh, a supporter of the passive resistance movement and the father of Bhagat Singh, a towering Indian revolutionary who was hanged in 1931 for assassinating a British police officer.

But all calculations of the Ghadarites were proven wrong, as Indians were not prepared for

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revolution. They could not muster popular support. On top of that, the moles in the movement got many activists arrested. Sarabha was also held under these circumstances. He faced his trial with courage and conviction, and was hanged on November 16, 1915.

Sarabha left behind a legacy that influenced Bhagat Singh, who always considered the former as his role model.

One of his legacies was his dedication towards secularism. And Bhagat Singh followed that. Sarabha was hanged alongside Visgnu Ganesh Pangle, a revolutionary of Maharashtrian heritage, while Bhagat Singh was executed alongside Rajguru, another radical activist from Maharashtra.

Today when we celebrate Sarabha's martyrdom, we need to recognize that his struggle has to be kept alive in the light of ongoing racism and religious intolerance in both Canada and India. As long as these challenges remain, the Ghadar history will remain relevant. Only a sustained fight for a just society will be the real tribute to heroes like Sarabha.

-RDNB

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Marx's contribution to Indian revolutionary movement must be remembered

On the birth anniversary of Karl Marx on May 5, we must take a moment to recognize his contribution to India's revolutionary struggle.

As a great thinker and social scientist, Marx shaped many working class movements across the world, but his influence over the Indian radicals is particularly noteworthy. Especially, when the Indian Diaspora continues to celebrate the Ghadar centenary, Marx's work must be acknowledged.

The Ghadar Party was a group of South Asian radicals formed in 1913 to launch an armed revolt against the British occupation of India and challenge racism in North America. The party took its name from the first uprising against the British Empire in 1857. The rebellion was an outcome of the anti-people policies of the British authorities in India. All classes and communities had joined hands to revolt against the Empire. The British succeeded in crushing the mutiny, but gave it a name, Ghadar, which means an act of treason, and demonized its participants.

Marx recognized the mutiny

as the first war of independence. Not only that, he also compiled notes on Indian history and documented important dates in the history of the uprising. Years later, the Ghadar activists deliberately appropriated the term for their newsletter, called *Ghadar* to revive

the spirit of rebellion. Clearly inspired by the events of 1857, Indian radicals celebrated the heroes of the first uprising in London in 1907, when the British empire was celebrating 50 years of crushing the mutiny. Marx had spent final years of his life in London.

One of the founders of the Ghadar Party, Lala Hardayal, published a booklet portraying Marx as a real saint, who continued to work for social justice despite challenges from power. Hardayal's booklet takes into account Marx's sufferings, and reflects how passionate he was about Marx. The ideology of Marx shaped the political views of many Ghadar activists who joined the communist movement in later years and went to Moscow to learn more about Communism and the Bolshevik revolution. They tried to bring the same radical change in Indian society in the post-British period. Their philosophy of an egalitarian society was partly born out of Marxist ideology. Those who celebrate Ghadar cannot overlook Marx and his relation with the Indian class struggle.

-RDNB

We, the workers

We are workers
from times immemorial.

we are the proletariat.
we exist now – we existed yesterday,
and we shall ever remain in
existence.
shall we always remain the same?
as we remained in the past.
shall we speak the same?
as we spoke earlier.
no – not at all.
we shall not remain- as we remained
before.
we shall not sit-where we are now.
we are not a frog in the well,
nor ponds and pools of stagnant
water
full of mud and dregs.
we shall ever continue flowing.
the corns of our hands
and wrinkles of wisdom on our
foreheads.
we always existed, we exist now,
and we shall ever remain in
existence.
we are supporters of honest duties.
we are supporters of new modes.
we are proletariats, we are loved by
the masses.
we have been in existence since time
immemorial.
we exist now,
we existed yesterday.
we shall ever remain in existence.
shall ever remain in existence.

Harjit Daudhria is a progressive Punjabi poet and veteran communist. This poem has been reproduced here to mark the International Labour Day on May 1

