

## CHAPTER FOUR

# AROUND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

(1914-1922)

### A Windfall

Stray cases of dacoity in East Bengal kept up the smouldering fire of revolutionary outburst and cases involving lives of Government servants became gradually scarce.

The period was used in hatching a plan of action in a wider field with a harder striking force by the leaders of the movement in India and by those who happened to be living at the time in foreign countries especially in Germany. There were a few who could foresee from the deteriorating diplomatic tension, the possibility of an outbreak of hostilities between the United Kingdom and Germany, and became alert in organising forces as could be pooled together at the time with the slender resources available to them.

Whatever might be the strength in human power in membership and active supporters, there was a serious lack of firearms with which to carry raid in the closest preserves of the enemy. The sources of supply were anything but meagre, the attendant risks, many, and the cost, prohibitive.

At this juncture an event of momentous importance that could at least for the time being solve the difficult problem, came handy. In Calcutta, Messrs. Rodda and Company, a firm of gunmakers, placed an order for weapons in a foreign country and in the third week of August 1914, the consignment of 202 cases reached the Calcutta port all right. A member of the staff, on August 26, 1914, was deputed to release the goods from the Calcutta Customs.

He took at the first instance delivery of 192 cases and left office to bring the rest. He failed to turn up within a reasonable time. Information was sent to the police to the effect followed by a frantic search that failed. The lost cases contained no less than 50 Mauser pistols and 46,000 rounds of ammunition to match. The pistols were large-sized '300 bore ones. They were "so made and packed that by attaching to the butt the box containing the pistols, a weapon was produced which could be fired from the shoulder in the same way as a rifle". (*Report of the Sedition Committee, 1918, p. 66*).

The articles thus secured served the growing need of the revolutionaries. The magnificent quantity of cartridges were freely used in cases where the use of pistols was found essential. There had scarcely been any case of murder and other outrages subsequently in which Mauser pistols had not been used. Unfortunately for the revolutionaries by February 26, 1915, the police recovered 23,200 rounds of ammunition and by the middle of 1918, no less than 31 pistols were seized by the police from different places.

### ***Indo-German Plot***

(1914-1918)

Long before Germany came into conflict with England, German diplomats had been watching the intensification of political unrest and outbreaks of violence in India with keen interest. The principal motive was to force Great Britain to deploy large forces in India and thereby prevent their transfer to fighting zones. The question of Indian Independence loomed large during the discussions between the revolutionaries and the German Government which assured full support to the cause.

As early as 1911 some young Indians with revolutionary ideas lived in or about Berlin. They had been thinking of seeking foreign aid. They made formal proposal relating to their cause when they came to know of the mind of the German Government to render help to them in the manner and extent suitable to both. Hardayal as one of the sponsors, got into the spirit of this new

movement and when he left Europe for U.S.A. he had a complete picture of the position with him.

He reached U.S.A. in April 1911 and found to his satisfaction that the youngmen of his way of thinking had already built up an well-knit organisation for realisation of their common aim.

### New Avenue

England's declaration of war on Germany opened up a new avenue for activities in the line and the revolutionaries did not lose a moment to approach the German Government to help them in all possible ways.

The German Government by this time possessed a complete knowledge of every individual revolutionary Indian resident in the country and was also conversant with his views in respect of British rule in India. The Foreign Office was contacted by some of those Indians and they were able to convince about their earnestness in driving away the foreigners, and to secure promise of every possible help in the war of Indian independence.

The Indians were reluctant to be tied to any conditions for the help they would receive both in cash and in kind. They proposed and the German Foreign Office accepted, that such help would be taken as a loan which would be repaid by the Government of Independent India.

The Foreign Office also agreed to advise their Embassies in Honolulu, Batavia, Manila, etc., to help the Indian cause with the same earnestness as the Home Government itself, to facilitate formation of revolutionary units at different parts of the world, and in the consolidation of unattached persons and parties working with the same object. It was supported by efforts to evolve a system to affiliate all those behind the movement into an efficient working unit, the principal aim of which would be to cause mutiny among the native troops in British India and in different centres engaged in war.

One of the prominent Indian revolutionaries was given charge "to direct a campaign to win Indian prisoners of war captured by the Germans from the British ranks from their allegiance." Arrangements were also made to print and publish war-news to be smuggled over the Siamese-Burmese border with

the help of Berlin Office Code previously given to the man in charge of such operations.

German collaboration was set on a firm footing. Moreover, the project was to be financed by the Kaiser and promulgated by the Berlin Foreign Office through secret agents, disbursement to be met from an alleged war fund by the German Consulate at San Francisco. It was a proud and glorious day for India that among the rank of freedom-fighters outside India there was no distinction of caste, creed, zonal and or party affiliations, each person merging his own interest or identity in a general pool which could work with complete confidence actuated by the highest ideal of one nationhood.

There was another great advantage for the Indian revolutionaries at the time that support of the Muslim population in India was almost sure to come inasmuch as the Sultan of Turkey, though declaring no open war against the British, was prepared to lend his whole weight against the enemies of the German Government.

### Organisational Set-up

In September 1914, an organisation by the name of International Pro-Indian Committee was formed in Zurich and its President applied to the local German Consul to obtain permission for him to publish anti-British literature in Germany. In the next month he left Zurich and reached Berlin to work under the Foreign Office and immediately established the "Indian National Party" with some members of the *Ghadr* party of San Francisco.

Another group formed themselves into the Indian Independence Committee in Berlin by the end of 1914. One of the early activities of the Committee was to issue a manifesto accusing Japan for joining the allies and expressing deep sense of sympathy for the German cause. Though there was a little time lag, the manifesto was followed by a most important interview in the highest circle in Germany. The proposals of the Indian delegation was broadly accepted and work started on the suggested line.

### Plan of Action

After contact had been firmly established, it was thought expedient to strengthen the hands of the fighters inside India.

As a first step it was thought necessary, as was one of the clauses of the agreement, to send arms and ammunition to India. The German Admiralty was advised to arrange for the carrying and safe delivery of military equipment at their convenience but with the utmost expedition. It was clear that the plan of the German Government was to help Indians to drive away the Britishers from India and to retard England's plans for prosecuting war upon the Central Powers. India was to be attacked from two points. The revolutionaries were to go through Manila, China, Japan, Borneo and Siam into Burma. In the West, it was planned to seize Suez Canal, to go through Persia and Afghanistan and thence to the west coast of India. The scheme which depended on Moslem disaffection was directed against the North West Frontier but the other schemes which relied upon the co-operation of the *Ghadr* party of San Francisco and the Bengali revolutionaries, had its centre in Bangkok and Batavia. The Bangkok scheme was entrusted to returned Sikhs of the *Ghadr* party, the Batavian scheme to the Bengalis. Both the schemes were under general direction of the Consul General for Germany in Shanghai acting under orders from the German Embassy at Washington.

It was not very difficult to have regular contact with the Indian revolutionaries in U.S.A. (the *Ghadr* party) and according to an approved plan some of these came over to Berlin. Two or three persons were sent back to India to apprise their Indian counterparts of the favourable developments that had been taking shape in distant lands.

By 1915 the Indian Independence Committee became completely free from foreign influence and began functioning in its own way.

It was really a bold venture for a few unknown Indians to start a revolutionary organisation in foreign lands. The Committee thought it essential now to establish contact with revolutionary workers scattered over different parts of the globe.

The revolutionary spurt in Bengal can be attributed, to a large measure, to the intensification of activities of the Berlin Committee. The *Ghadr* party in U.S.A. sent emissaries to Germany and the contact that was established greatly strengthened the work in both countries.

### Bengal's Endeavour

In India, particularly in Bengal, the leaders met in the early part of 1915 and endeavoured to place the whole scheme of rising in rebellion in India with the help of the Germans upon a proper footing, establishing co-operation between revolutionaries in Siam and other places with Bengal and getting into touch with the Germans for action. Feverish movement of revolutionaries took place, workers going to Batavia, Bangkok, Japan, Siam and Burma. Inside Bengal and its neighbouring State, Orissa, arrangements were made for receiving the arms sent by Germany at different centres.

### In the Middle East

The Berlin Committee found it necessary to extend its activities in Western Asia and the Persian revolutionaries were contacted with the ostensible object of receiving aid towards opening a route to reach India without much risk. Those who came with this mission were glad to meet a few of their own way of thinking who had come earlier and had studied the situation profitably and working satisfactorily in their own way.

In February or March 1915 Indian revolutionaries reached Turkey and they divided themselves into two groups, one to proceed towards Baghdad *via* Persia and the other to Damascus *via* the Suez. Turkey was drawn into the war, (November 5, 1914), and the *Ghadr* newspaper played its part exceedingly well in this sphere also. Besides the editorials and news comments, articles by extremist Egyptian leaders were published from time to time.

In the issue of November 20, 1914, a speech of Enver Pasha was given prominent publicity. It ran thus:

"This is the time that the *Ghadr* should be declared in India, the magazines of the English should be plundered, their weapons looted and they should be killed therewith. The Indian number 32 crores at the best and the English are only two lakhs; they should be murdered; they have no army. The Suez Canal will shortly be closed by the Turks. He who will die and liberate the country and his native land will live for ever. Hindus and Muhammadans, you are both soldiers of the army and you are brothers, and this low, degraded English is your enemy; you should become *ghasis* by declaring *jihad* and by combining with your brothers. Murder the English and liberate India." (*Report of the Sedition Committee, 1918, p. 169*).

In early 1915 some prominent revolutionaries reached Constantinople. The Indian soldiers stationed around for the purpose of attacking Mesopotamia were approached through propaganda literature and not a few of them were induced to desert the army.

Syria was not left out of attention and was approached by one or two members of the party. Egypt was deemed to be a more important place to propagate the idea of revolution where Iranian sepoys were stationed in large numbers. Everywhere the revolutionaries had to expose themselves to extreme danger to their lives. A highly efficient espionage service of the British Government had planted spies and established military posts throughout their own territory as well as of those who have had, by force of circumstances, to submit to the Britisher's convenience.

About half a dozen members of the *Ghadr* party managed to enter Persia with great difficulty and found that two others had been living there in disguise. It came to be known subsequently that these two got into British Baluchistan and had been partially successful in smuggling arms into India. Unfortunately the plot was discovered; both of them were arrested and put to death.

### ***Arms by the Sea***

(1914-1915)

The German Government tried their level best to fulfil their commitment of sending arms to India and issued instructions to their Embassies and Agents wherever possible for taking steps for the implementation of their promise.

Early in March news reached India of promise of German help details of which could be arranged in Batavia with German officers stationed at that place. While emissaries reached Batavia for discussion, *S. S. Maverick* an oil-tanker started from San Pedro, California, on a voyage towards India on March 22, 1915. The original plan of landing arms in Karachi was changed to Bengal and Orissa at the intervention of a representative of the revolutionaries who had by this time reached Batavia from Calcutta.

*Maverick* first went to San Jose del Cabo in lower California with Anger in Java as its destination. In the course of its voyage it touched Socorro, 600 miles west of Mexico and waited for a month watching for another ship, *Annie Larsen*, which had been loaded with arms and ammunition at San Diego. *Maverick* received a surprise search visit from *H. M. A. S. Ghani* and *H. M. C. S. Rainbow* and an American man-of-war all of which separately searched the vessel. Then she started for Java touching Helo Johnson Island on its way. On arrival at Java on July 22, 1915, it was seized by a Dutch torpedo boat and was apparently interned.

The *Annie Larsen* having failed in its objective wandered rather aimlessly avoiding search and interception as best as it could and arrived at Hoquiam in Washington in June 1915. It was at once seized and searched by the U. S. Government. The entire cargo of arms and ammunitions was confiscated to the State.

A third ship, *Henry S.*, also met with the same fate. Before it had started on its voyage from Manila for Shanghai, its full load of cargo, a huge stock of arms and ammunitions, was discovered by the Customs authorities at Manila which compelled the master of the ship to unload the cargo before sailing. It was then allowed to leave the port having miserably failed in its mission.

It is now known that similar other attempts for sending ships carrying arms for the Indian revolutionaries were made during the World War I. One was directed to proceed from Shanghai to a place in Bengal. The second was for Orissa. The third was to sail "to the Andamans shipping a cargo of arms at sea and raid Port Blair, pick up anarchists, convicts and men of the mutinous Singapore regiment, who it was thought were interned there, and then proceed to Rangoon and raid it."

As details of the scheme had become fairly known to the British Government, it became almost impossible for anybody connected with the conspiracy to work in comparative secrecy and safety. Each man was closely watched and arrested at the first opportunity. Every haunt of the conspirators became known and anything that was most likely to take place was forestalled. It also became very difficult to maintain any contact through messengers or through postal services without interception. Thus a Plan on



which high hopes were placed for an armed rising in India was frustrated without achieving result of any moment.

While preparations for a formidable rising had been going on both within and outside India, outbursts of revolutionary violence involving lives of servants of the Government and agents and spies in the employ of the police occurred here and there in various parts of Bengal.

### ***The Ghadr Movement***

(1908-1918)

Events had been moving fast; the Muzaffarpore outrage, the Alipore and other conspiracy cases and other stray incidents in their train disclosed the growing trend towards organised violence inside the country. The early pioneering attempts of some patriotic youngmen and subsequent formation of the Indian Association of the Pacific Coast, the Indian Independence League (the Hindi Association) in U.S.A., the Indian Independence Committee and the Berlin Committee in Germany, were signs of revolutionary activity of Indians living overseas. It was not very difficult for the two groups to establish contact across the vast expanse of water mainly through the help of the German Government. Their combined activities found manifestations in the Far East, the Middle East, Turkey, Egypt, China, Japan, Burma, the North-Western Frontier of India. In India itself it rejuvenated the secret organisations and led to intense activities in Punjab.

It was a grand project though succeeded only to the extent of a fraction only. Yet, it disclosed great boldness in conception, determination, resourcefulness, patience and power of suffering of the revolutionaries in the cause of India's independence. The *Ghadr* Party and the Berlin Committee, through their ramifications can claim to have contributed a large share towards the achievement of the goal.

The beginning was unassuming, just like a spark that starts a conflagration and it really brought together a certain section of the interested people in three continents and laid a solid foundation on which the later revolutionary movement largely depended.

A few youngmen arrived in Berkeley, California, in 1907 avowedly for study. They got together and formed themselves into a nucleus with the object of advancing the cause of Indian freedom in the best manner that was possible under the circumstances. In collaboration with others the Indian Independence League, a title suggestive of the object of its sponsors, was founded in California in about 1908.

The earliest men of this unit to attract notice was Tarak Nath Das and just a few of his associates. Within a very short time they were joined by Pandurang Khankhoje and still on a later date by Kashi Ram and others. Besides their preoccupation as students and organisers of a political party, some of them tried to obtain military training and lessons in the manufacture of bombs and explosives.

By the time these youngmen had started their open activity, there was a feeling of discontent among the Sikhs in Canada and U.S.A., particularly in the former, who were put to great hardships because of their Indian nationality. Amongst the Indians they formed the biggest single unit and their difficult case was a source of great irritation to Indians of all classes.

The concentration of the Sikhs in Portland served as a fertile ground for disseminating seeds of hatred against the British who could not give protection to the Indians, while holding them in subjection in their native land.

Khankhoje with Kashi Ram started the Indian Independence League at Portland. Centres grew up in various parts of the U.S.A. such as Oregon, San Francisco, Washington, etc., and the organisation gained in volume and strength. Literature in the form of manifestoes were issued to the members of the League and a few of them reached the shores of India and fell into receptive hands.

The Asiatic Immigration Act of 1909 had already caused grave discontent in the minds of Indians and this situation was fully exploited by the leaders of 'the League'. The aggrieved Indians were injected with the thought of revolution and a demand was created amongst them to be treated in the same way as citizens of other independent countries were being treated.

The work of 'the League' received a great impetus with the arrival of Vishnu Ganesh Pingley and thereafter of Hardayal in

San Francisco in April 1911. With his dynamic personality, vast knowledge of history and of human affairs and gift of eloquence Hardayal was able to infuse new life, new outlook into the activities of the revolutionaries.

The flame of sedition began to spread slowly over California and Oregon, the States in which there were fairly large number of Indian emigrants. The first fruits were the establishment in Astoria (Oregon) of the Hindusthani Association towards the end of 1912 or the beginning of 1913. The avowed objects of 'the Association' were to receive vernacular papers from India; to encourage Indian youths to come over to America for educating themselves in the service of the Motherland through absorption of new ideas and new methods of activity. Weekly discussions in meetings created a sentiment of intense patriotism amongst the members who used to meet together frequently.

The Hindi Association, organised later, had the same ideas as its predecessor, the Hindusthani Association. It aimed at the unity of Indians of all classes, creeds and education with the common object of opposition to the British in India.

Prior to this, the 'Indian Association of the Pacific Coast' had been formed and contact was established among these organisations. To intensify the activities, a *Ghadr* party was formed and decision was taken to publish an organ of the party, the *Ghadr* (Mutiny), in Gurmukhi in San Francisco. Gradually the Paper was to be issued in Urdu, Hindi, and Gujrati, which was done in the course of a year or so. An English version of selected articles was also issued and distributed free amongst those who showed any interest in the cause of Indian independence; particularly amongst the disgruntled Sikh community and the soldiers in the Indian army stationed at different parts of the world.

The first issue of the *Ghadr* was published on November 1, 1913, from San Francisco. The press in which the Paper was printed was known as the Jugantar Ashram. The Paper openly declared that

"To-day there begins in foreign lands, but in our country's tongue, a war against the British Raj... What is your name? Mutiny. What is your work? Mutiny. Where it will break out? India. The time will soon come when fire and blood will take the place of pen and ink."

The *Ghadr* played on every passion that it could possibly excite, preaching murder and rebellion in every sentence and urging all Indians to go to India with the express object of forging a revolution for driving out the Britishers by making their administration collapse.

The Paper further preached that to make the War of Independence a success, it was necessary to start newspapers and publish suitable books and send them to India. Military exercises were essential and appeal should be issued to foreign nations for active help. The activities of 'the Association' rapidly spread on all directions and it had to open branches, besides at Portland and Astoria, at St. John, Sacramento, Stockton, Bridal Veil, etc.

Simultaneously with the *Ghadr*, a collection of revolutionary poems named *ghadr-ki-gunj* (the echoes of rebellion), *nim hakim khatrajain*, *gorc shahi zulum*, etc., all proclaimed that there was no time to lose, nor did they need any help of *pundits* and *mullahs* to show them the right way. "Draw the sword, it's time to fight . . . postpone your prayers for another time; the call of the hour is to kill", was the essence of the writings.

Hardayal was arrested by the U.S. authorities on March 23, 1914, for his violent speeches and objectionable activities. He was released on bail and fled the country to escape the chances of being handed over to the British.

The echoes of the activities of the *Ghadr* party reached British Columbia and stirred up the passion of the Sikh and the Hindu residents there. The difficulties created by the Canadian Government under the Immigration Law was fully exploited and various attempts were made to make its provisions affecting the Indians nugatory.

The *Ghadr* party soon realised that mere agitation in foreign lands would not be very effective in putting sufficient pressure on the Indian Government; nor would it be able to cause as much embarrassment to the authorities as to make them yield ground to their demands for independence.

With its growing strength the *Ghadr* party was looked upon by the American Government as one that had exceeded its nuisance value and had been posing a serious problem within the country. Evidence was not lacking that not being content with its limited sphere of activity in U.S.A. or Canada, the party had

adopted a programme of sending its members to India to take up the work of propaganda and at every possible opportunity to prepare themselves for all eventualities. The Army in India was looked upon as a vulnerable point where a degree of intelligent approach and persuasion were likely to produce effect and the *Ghadr* party workers were advised to use one arm of their activity in this direction.

In 1913 three Sikh delegates visited Punjab. They were members of the *Ghadr* party and came to reconnoitre the position. They addressed meetings at various towns on the subject of the grievances of Indians in Canada and had resolutions of protest passed in which all communities joined.

Meetings were organised by the *Ghadr* party in several States, particularly in San Francisco and California and the one held at Sacramento (California) on December 30, 1913, was significant for more reasons than one. It was a vast gathering representing all communities of India and the presence of high German Officials cast ahead a shadow of coming events and added greatly to its significance.

The news of the travails of the passengers of the *Komagata Maru* at the different ports it touched in its long sojourn to Budge Budge had inflamed the passion of the Sikh community in particular and all Indians abroad in general and they were prepared to take any risk to remedy the wrong suffered by them. The Budge Budge incident of September 29, 1914, let off the last spark and hurried preparations were made to avenge the ignominy and loss of blood that was caused by an alien Government.

With the aid of sympathisers and agents and sedulous distribution of inflammatory literature many recruits were obtained in the Far East, particularly in Shanghai and men were induced to throw in their lot with the revolutionary movement in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Manila, Penang, Singapore, and Siam.

The great trek back began from Canada and U.S.A. and every ship viz., the *Korea*, *Tosha Maru*, *Mashima Maru*, *Kawachi Maru*, *Salamis*, etc., that was bound for India was crowded with Sikhs returning with the object of preparing for an insurrection with the ultimate object of overthrowing the Government in India.

## ***A Memorable Interlude***

(1914-1915)

There was no secret now about the aims and objects of the *Ghadr* party. The British and the Canadian Governments combined to check the movement spreading further and to remove, by questionable measures, from the arena, the main actors of the drama.

As a first step an elaborate espionage system was introduced in Canada to break up the Indian Committee of Vancouver, whose representatives were the Charterers of the *Komagata Maru* there, and thus to cripple all efforts for coming to the aid of the stranded ship and also to make it impossible for them to requisition some other ship for bringing emigrants to Canada in future.

With a view to give effect to this idea, the Department of Interior in its Criminal Investigation Branch put one William Hopkinson, formerly of the Indian Police Service, in charge of the whole affair. Hopkinson employed Bela Singh to act as his chief informer and Bela Singh proved himself to be a valuable asset to the Intelligence Branch.

Reports of cases of persuasion, offers of material gains and threats by Bela Singh and his men became very frequent. The influence of Hopkinson through Bela Singh was being gradually felt by the Sikh community. At such a contingency, it was thought necessary to put a stop to further nefarious activities of the Government agent endangering the existence of the organisation. Steps were discussed in secret and in a few days one of Bela Singh's men mysteriously disappeared into thin air. A second man, Arjun Singh, was shot dead by Ram Singh in broad daylight within a few days of the first incident. A plea of private defence was advanced and accepted by the Court.

Bela Singh out of a spirit of revenge entered a Sikh temple in Vancouver in August 1914, where a service held in honour of a dead compatriot was nearing its end and the congregation had bowed their heads before the *Holy Granth*, when all on a sudden and without any provocation whatsoever, Bela Singh riddled BHAG SINGH, the President of the Canadian organisation and one Sardar

BATAN SINGH with bullets. Both the victims expired instantaneously. A few other members of the congregation were wounded, some of whom very seriously.

Bela Singh was hauled up before the Court on October 21, 1914, on a charge of murder. Hopkinson got him released on bail. The accused confessed his guilt in the open Court but advanced the plea of self-defence. This was accepted and he was acquitted on the ground "that such a daring deed, done in the presence of such a large gathering, could be done only in self-defence." The contention of the prosecution that Bela Singh had gone there with the express intention of a murderous assault as there could be no justification for visiting a temple where there was a religious congregation of unarmed men with a loaded revolver and firing repeated shots without provocation, was over-ruled.

This was too bold a challenge to the local Sikh community to accept lying down. Schemes for retribution, particularly for bringing the real murderer, Hopkinson, to book, were mooted and rejected. Ultimately a young man then not much known to the community took upon himself the task of avenging the deaths of Bhag Singh and Sardar Batan Singh.

Young SEWA (or MEWA) SINGH contrived a ruse for endearing himself to Hopkinson by offering his services as an informer against the Indians. As fate ordained, Hopkinson swallowed the bait. To his great dismay, Sewa Singh could not find a suitable opportunity to complete his task. One morning while Hopkinson was engaged in shaving before a large mirror, Sewa entered the room with a revolver in his hand. Hopkinson got a view of Sewa in the mirror and turning round with the speed of lightning caught hold of Sewa's hand (Gurdit Singh: *The Voyage of Komagata Maru*: Part II, p. 19). Sewa Singh with a great presence of mind laughingly asked Hopkinson not to get excited, as he had come to surrender the revolver because he had no use for it. Said Sewa Singh with a composure seldom to be excelled, "My countrymen hate me and openly accuse me of being in your pay, while you never offer me the job which you promised." He was ashamed for having to bear the burden of such a miserable existence and had come to ask Hopkinson to put an end to his life with a shot of the revolver.

This ruse not only saved Sewa Singh's life, but it brought

him a bit closer to Hopkinson. On October 21, 1914, when Bela Singh's case had reached a crucial stage and Hopkinson was engaged in helping the prosecution in essential matters, he was shot dead in the open Court in Victoria. The assailant, when questioned after arrest, said that a person like Hopkinson who had been perpetrating such a reprehensible act of employing a brother against a brother, amply deserved a violent death.

In the trial for murder, Sewa Singh did not put up any defence and made it a very simple affair by admitting his guilt of wilfully murdering Hopkinson. Sewa Singh was sentenced to death. On January 11, 1915, the day of his execution, he left a message to the world through the priest of the local Gurdwara, who was the last man to see him.

He looked quite cheerful as if looking forward to a happy existence. He said that he bore no ill-will against any body because that was not only against his religion but the thought of killing a person was not in his grain. He had to make an exception with regard to Hopkinson, because "I heard that he was oppressing my poor people very much" and this was borne out by facts about which he came to know in the course of an enquiry that he personally made before taking the final plunge. He thought that Hopkinson's life could not be spared because that was the only course open to the accused for preventing the continuing oppression that was perpetrated by the victim without any check or hindrance on the helpless and unsuspecting people. In his own language:

"I, performing the duty of a true Sikh and remembering the name of God, will proceed towards the scaffold with the same amount of pleasure as the hungry babe does towards its mother. I shall gladly have the rope put around my neck thinking it to be a rosary of God's name. I am quite sure that God will take me into His blissful arms because I have not done this deed in my personal interest but to the benefit of both my people and the Canadian Government" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, January 12, 1915, quoted in *The Illustrated Weekly*, February 28, 1961).

This ennobling spirit of sacrifice has immortalised the name of Sewa Singh in the history of the Freedom Movement of India.



## ***A Sad Sequelae***

(1918)

After Hardayal had left U. S. A. the burden of responsibility fell upon RAM CHANDRA who contacted men willing to return to India and within a comparatively short time no less than four hundred Indians left America; sixty leaving together on the *S.S. Korea*.

With the declaration of war on Germany, the U. S. A. Government took drastic steps against those who had been working in a way detrimental to the interests of Great Britain. They were accused of making preparations since a year or more before the War actually broke out to embarrass the British Government through a revolution which would compel it to withdraw troops from European battle fronts and hasten achievement of political independence for India. The party was supported with liberal supply of money and arms by Germany. The major charge was that the Indians were engaged in starting military preparations against the authority of the British Crown, a country with which the U. S. was at peace, and to give aid, comforts and assistance to the German Empire with which England was at war.

The U. S. A. police started investigations and more than one hundred men and women, Indian and German were arrested in San Francisco, Oregon, Chicago, and Washington.

The trial opened on November 20, 1917, at San Francisco and lasted till April 30, 1918, with forty-two accused some of whom were tried *in absentia*.

There were two prominent persons Pandit Ram Chandra and BHAI RAM SINGH among the accused. Originally Ram Singh was a resident of Canada but his desire to help those who had been preparing to come back to India brought him to U. S. A.

He tried to introduce discipline in the party and a method in conducting its affair which he found to be seriously lacking. He was opposed by Pandit Ram Chandra who had so long had almost complete control over the organisation.

The differences widened with time and it seemed that both Ram Chandra and Ram Singh had been heading two rival groups

amongst not a very large number of people. Their object was the same, with conflicting mode of approach, and both of them were arrested and placed before the same Court for trial.

During the prosecution the arrangements for defence had been lacking in conjoint action. Ram Singh tried to present a united front in respect of not only the defence but before the interested U. S. A. public who had been making a capital of this dissension through newspaper columns.

Two strong-willed men each sticking to his own point of view soon fell apart much to the dismay and confusion of most of the people concerned. It was a terrible situation. Ram Singh wanted to put an end to the impasse by suggesting a joint action and the proposal was turned down by the Pandit unceremoniously with offensive words.

It was too much for Bhai Sahib; the treatment rankled in his heart. When the day's proceeding had stopped for lunch, the Sessions Judge had retired in his chamber, and everybody was relaxing, suddenly two successive loud shots rang in the court room and the massive body of Pandit Ram Chandra was seen rolling on the ground.

Ram Singh did nothing else and stood quiet with the pistol in his hand. There was no further attempt on his part either to attack anybody else or to lay violent hands on himself. But within a minute the Sergeant-at-arms in the court room without the least justification sent three bullets into the body of Bhai Ram Singh who was instantaneously killed.

With the fate of two accused decided under peculiar circumstances, the judgment of the Court for the rest was delivered on May 1, 1918, on the 156th day of the hearing. Thirty-two accused, some of whom were high German officials, were convicted and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment and a few were fined.

With the principal leaders removed from the field of activity the centres in U.S.A. became absolutely stale for all practical purposes and were regarded to have been virtually closed.

While preparations had been long under way, China through Sun Yat Sen promised support to Indian revolutionaries in a secret meeting in Japan in the firm belief that a free India would rouse the spirit of liberty in the hearts of the coloured races not

only of Asia but also of the other continents. It would open the eyes of the people under the dominion of the white races to the possibility of a successful culmination of a fight in favour of a dwarf that is engaged in a mortal combat with a giant, the British and other colonial powers.

A good number of the determined lot while trying to enter India were arrested and thrown into prison. Not a few somehow managed to pass through the fine meshes of traps of the intelligence service laid for their capture and reached Punjab with a heart overflowing with hatred against the rule that had failed to uphold their dignity and the barest human rights in countries having diplomatic relations with England.

The Punjab unrest and outbursts of violence all over Punjab were mostly the outcome of the efforts of the revolutionaries that at one time or the other were residents of Canada or U.S.A. Not only the loyal peasants but also soldiers in military cantonments in different parts of Northern India, such as, Lahore, Ferozepore, Ambala, Benares, etc., were approached for the purpose of helping the *Ghadr* movement and some had expressed their willingness to come to the aid of the revolutionaries.

## ***A Fateful Voyage***

(1913-1914)

The words "those who have no status at home are *ipso facto* deprived of any abroad", literally voiced the feelings of hundreds of Sikhs in Canada where they had gone in search of livelihood. Many of them were retired army men having given the best part of their lives in defence of the British Empire.

Up to 1904 they were treated with some consideration. By 1908 there were some 8,000 of them and others had still been coming. The Government wanted Canada to be a close preserve of white men; all immigration of Indians were to be stopped. Persecutions started for driving away all those who had already settled there.

There was serious discontent amongst the settlers and series of meetings were held to protest against what they deemed to be

detrimental to their interests. At times these meetings assumed political colour demanding equal status with the nationals of other independent nations throughout the British dominions. Baffled in their attempts they appealed to the British and the Canadian governments to stop discriminatory treatment against Indians *vis-a-vis* other nationals in Canada. There was no effect to these representations. The Indians, mostly Punjabis, the Sikhs predominating amongst them, in Vancouver felt greatly agitated because of political propaganda amongst them.

The Canadian Government got alarmed and passed an order meant for the Indians to leave Canada and to migrate to British Honduras which was at the time regarded as 'Hell' for its characteristic shortcomings. The Indians declined.

There was a great row against the suggestion and the Canadian Government passed a law, on May 9, 1910, under which every intending immigrant, with a few particular exceptions, had to satisfy the Canadian Government that he was in possession of 200 dollars and had travelled by a continuous journey on a through ticket from his native country to Canada.

It was known to everybody that there was no direct steamship from India to Canada and it was very clear that migration from India to Canada could not be effected any further.

Instead of accepting the orders lying down, two societies viz., The United India League and The Khalsa Dewan Society, Vancouver, were formed on December 15, 1911. These organisations arranged deputation to the authorities apparently with no effect. At this stage one Gurdit Singh, a wealthy and resourceful contractor in Singapore and Malaya went over to Hong Kong in 1913 to see things for himself and chartered a Japanese ship, the *Komagata Maru*, on behalf of Guru Nanak Navigation Co. Gurdit Singh's further plan was to charter "four ships, two to ply in the Canada-Calcutta Line and two in the Bombay-Brazil Line." The newly chartered ship started from Hong Kong on April 4, 1914, and picked up passengers at Shanghai, Moji and Yokohama. It reached Victoria on May 21 and Vancouver on May 23, with 372 passengers. The ship was cordoned off by armed men of the Canadian Government and all but twenty-two, who had been returning to Canada, were not allowed to land on the Canadian soil.

In nearly two months the food and water in the ship were exhausted. Men were thirsty and hungry and the situation became very tense. Skirmishes over water, which the Japanese passengers were allowed to bring from the shore, became frequent.

Persuasion, appeal, legal action failed to produce any effect and the tension rose to the point of bursting. On July 19, 1914, the ship was ordered to leave the port. The passengers would not yield, they were determined to die at Vancouver after a struggle, whatever shape it might take, than to surrender to sure death in the mid-seas due to starvation. The relations and friends of the passengers were not allowed to visit the ship nor the passengers could establish any contact with those on the land.

As a next step the Government decided to resort to force for making the ship leave the port. A large steam boat, the *Sea Lion*, approached the *Komagata Maru* with scores of armed policemen in it. On July 19, a fight ensued, one party, armed with pistols and the other with drift wood and coal for the boiler.

Both sides suffered injuries of varying degree. The news of the fight spread far and wide. The appeal of the passengers to persons holding responsible positions both in England and India went unheeded. To crown all, England sanctioned the use of force and ordered the warship *Rainbow* and another to evict *Komagata Maru* from the port. One warship stood on either side of *Komagata Maru* for action. The people flocked on the land to witness the outcome of the incident.

The Indians on land felt almost helpless. Out of desperation the question of retaliation now raised its head. On the boat the passengers decided upon fighting with whatever materials they could find handy, viz., sticks, bars, coal, parts of fittings that could be unloosed from the ship. It sounded like a joke but everybody realised that it was a grim one and must be met with determination and courage.

From the open deck of the ship someone noticed that an individual on a hillock at a distance from the port had been signalling with some purpose. Unnoticed by the authorities the Sikhs in the ship communicated by semaphore signalling their idea of giving effect to any plan that might be deemed feasible at

the moment. The return signal from the land disclosed that in case of any untoward incident happening to the ship in the port the whole of Vancouver would be put to flames. This was accepted as the only reply to casualties to *Komagata Maru* passengers.

The Indian plan of action reached the ears of the authorities through spies and informers and the whole picture changed within an incredibly short time. Provisions for the passengers were supplied and the *Komagata Maru* left Vancouver on July 23, 1914, for Yokohama in Japan after nearly two months.

The ship reached Yokohama on August 16, 1914. The curse of carrying Indian passengers followed its track. The Hong Kong authorities would not allow the passengers to land. The ship left Yokohama on August 18, for Kobe reaching the place on August 21, where fresh difficulties were placed in its way. Hong Kong was now closed to them while news was received of the willingness on the part of the Government of India to bear all expenses relating to diversion of the ship from Kobe to India.

Though Calcutta was given out as the destination it was really towards Madras that the ship was ordered to proceed. There was fresh trouble on this score. Ultimately the British Consul General at Kobe had to yield and change it to Calcutta again.

The *Komagata Maru* reached Singapore on September 16, 1914, where it was kept waiting at a distance of five miles from the coast. The passengers were not to be allowed to land not even for sending telegrams to the relevant authorities in India and elsewhere.

When the ship had been sailing at full speed on September 24, 1914, near Kulpi it suddenly checked its speed. A European had been signalling from a launch by means of a flag. The next day a launch with several European officers and fairly large number of Punjabis boarded the ship and the deck passengers were thoroughly searched. It was repeated on two successive days. When nearing Budge-Budge about 17 miles away from Calcutta on September 28, 1914, it became apparent that it had concluded its voyage. The officer who took charge of the passengers gave out that they would be taken in a special train and sent to Punjab straightway.

Gurdit Singht on behalf of his comrades expressed surprise at the announcement. He was ordered to request his friends to get down quietly without any remonstrance whatsoever. While the amazed men had been holding consultations regarding the next step, a European officer approached them with the order that unless they vacated the ship within fifteen minutes they would be forced to with the help of bullets. Every five minutes he would shout how many minutes remained for the order to be carried out. At long last he announced there was just one minute more.

The tired and hungry passengers were at their wits' ends. They were kicked and pushed down the ship by way of a single plank that connected the ship with the dock.

On September 29, 1914, at the Budge-Budge railway station the men were ordered to get into the waiting train without delay. In no uncertain terms they were given to understand that any parleying would be replied with force.

The men through their representatives demanded of the officers to show the order of the Government for treating them in the particular manner. Not a scrap of paper could be shown to them. The people refused to entrain against the orders of the District Magistrate, 24-Parganas, and decided to march towards Calcutta on foot. In the meantime the first special train had gone off with about sixty men. A second special was secured for the purpose.

The District Magistrate had not sufficient force at his command to prevent the march. Troops and police were requisitioned. A few European officers tried to block the way; each pointed the nozzle of his pistol and threatened to shoot. Sardar ~~Inde~~ Singh and Sardar Amar Singh bared open their breasts, touched the mouth of the pistol with them and asked the officer to shoot. This was not done.

The men marched nearly three miles with the Punjab Police at their sides. It continued for another mile when a car followed by others appeared from the opposite side. One of the men posed himself as representing the Governor and asked the Sikhs to go back to the Budge-Budge station where the grievances would be heard by him. The weary passengers had to wend their way back like a herd of cattle under threats, combined with rough handling

all the way. The party of District Magistrate was now strengthened by a strong detachment of men armed with rifles of the Calcutta Reserve Force as well as two companies of the Royal Fusiliers from Fort William.

As soon as every one had come to the station at dusk the Police forthwith ordered them to board the steamer instead of the train. There was considerable confusion in the minds of the men as they had only a couple of hours before been forced to get down from the very ship. They expressed their willingness to board the train instead of the steamer. For their refusal the passengers were severely beaten up, kicked and pushed to get them back into the steamer. The irritated men refused to obey. They were forthwith charged with bayonets and were fired upon as the resistance grew in volume. They were riddled with bullets and sixteen (according to unofficial sources, forty) lay dead on the platform and its neighbourhood. One of the passengers, Tahal Singh, died in the Medical College on October 13. An attempt to reply the wanton firing with one or two revolvers that the men had with them resulted in the death of Sgt. Major Eastwood, a Punjabi policeman Mal Singh, a constable named Tarun Singh and several sepoy of the Armed Police. The District Traffic Superintendent of the Railway, Lomax, was hit with a bullet and died on the spot.

The scattered men were chased and fired upon like wild beasts of game till 3 a.m. of September 30, 1914. More than 120 Punjabis were arrested. War had broken out in the meantime. Emergency Laws for dealing with undesirable foreigners and enemies had been passed and the unfortunate passengers of the *Komagata Maru* were treated under these laws.

The tale of indignities and troubles suffered by the passengers of the *Komagata Maru* and the reckless shooting and killing of weary men who had suffered immensely in fortune and physical comfort served to inflame the minds of the people all over India as also in Canada and U.S.A. The movement which was largely related to economic, social and religious matters veered towards the political in an intensified form. The *Komagata Maru* incident from the beginning to the end will be reckoned as one of those that accelerated the pace of the freedom movement of India.



**Partial Success**

(1914)

There was no mistake in fixing the place and timing for attacking an eminent police officer, Basanta Kumar Chatterji, but luck favoured him and he remained unscathed while his guard, Head Constable Ram Bhajan Singh, died instead.

Between 7 and 8 o'clock at night of November 25, 1914, three Bengali youths threw a bomb at the *baitakkhana* (drawing room) of the police officer at No. 10/4/4, Mussalmanpara Lane, where a few minutes before Basanta held conversation with three other police officers. Basanta was called away inside the house and the other men had just left, when a bomb exploded with a loud report injuring Ram Bhajan very seriously. His legs were completely smashed and there were other marks of grave injury on his body. The unfortunate man died of his wounds in two days. The assailants rushed off the place and no clue could be had of them.

About 300 yards away from the scene of the outrage a young Bengali was found sitting by the roadside severely injured and exhausted through loss of blood. He was taken into custody but the police could not establish any connection between him and the incident and he was let off after a protracted trial.

**A Charmed Life**

(1914-1916)

There are not many tales when in a series of attempts made on the life of a particular police official of which two were apparently abortive from the assailants' point of view and a third had had to be undertaken for the same purpose on June 30, 1916, which *The Statesman*, (July 1, 1916), editorially commented as

"the most audacious crime which the Bengal anarchists have yet perpetrated."

and

"It is a special triumph for the anarchists and a special source of humiliation for the Government."

On the other hand the incident displayed a high sense of duty of an officer who might have been easily furnished, at least after the

second attempt, with a comparatively safer assignment in the police line or alternatively leave it to save himself from the assassin's repeated attacks.

The first attempt was made on July 19, 1914, at Dacca, when several shots were fired at him, but he escaped unhurt while an attendant was killed on the spot.

As stated above a second attempt was made on Basanta when he escaped the blasts of bomb by just a couple of minutes.

It was a summer evening, day-light had not completely faded out at about 6-30 p.m. when Basanta Kumar Chatterji, was seen proceeding on a bicycle on his way home from office followed by his armed guard also on a cycle in Sambhunath Pandit Street, Bhawanipore. At the time the roads of the neighbourhood were filled with traffic, both pedestrian and vehicular. On one side of the road was an open plot of land in which a number of Bengali youths were engaged in a football game.

From the roadside, as if appearing from nowhere, five Bengali youths rushed at Basanta and the orderly with revolvers. The plucky guard noticed the persons attacking his officer and caught hold of one of them by the neck, and before he could draw out his weapon he was hit on his leg twice and fell down on the ground. Basanta received no less than nine shots, the largest ever discharged on a single person, one of which pierced him through his head killing him outright. The wounded orderly, Bilas Chandra Ghose, succumbed to his injuries in the Sambhu Nath Pandit Hospital on August 16, 1916.

Challenged by another constable on the road, whom they scared away by a blank shot of the revolver, the assailants ran towards east of the place of occurrence along Elgin Road and then entered a by-lane (Peepulpatty Lane) and were lost sight of. The police investigation on the spot gave no hope of identifying the assailants. There was no other clue that might lead to their apprehension or anything of the sort.

## ***A Tangled Web***

(1914-1917)

### **Ferozepore Outrage**

As a part of the plan to secure money for party purposes it was decided by the revolutionaries of Punjab to plunder the Moga Government Treasury on November 30, 1914.

On November 27, 1914, at about 1 p m., a party of fifteen men amongst whom were JAGGAT SINGH, JIWAN SINGH, KAKSHIS SINGH, LAL SINGH, DHIAN SINGH, KASHI RAM JOSHI and RAHAMAT ALI came to the *ekka* stand at Ferozepore Cantonment in a body and chartered three *tum tums* to take them to the Canal Bridge at Ferozepore.

At Misriwala village, Sub-Inspector Basharat Ali and Jowala Singh, *Zaildar* and a few others of the police party were waiting for the Superintendent of Police who was expected to reach the place at about that time.

At the appearance of so many people going in a body the Sub-Inspector Basharat Ali signalled the *tum tums* to stop but without any effect.

Basharat Ali sent one of his men on a pony to intercept the progress of Jaggat Singh and his party. He was able to stop them and bring them to the Sub-Inspector. They were made to sit round him on the ground when one of them said that they were Government servants engaged in recruiting and it was highly improper to interfere with their movement.

The Sub-Inspector was not convinced by what he heard and accused them of suspicious behaviour. They were asked to wait till the arrival of the Superintendent of Police to whom they would be free to make their representations.

It was now realised by the party that escape would be difficult and each of the four brought out a pistol and Jaggat Singh shot Basharat Ali. As he was falling down another man struck him several times on his head with a *takwa*. The people that had been with the police and the *Zaildar* took to their heels followed by some of the persons detained by the police.

Jowala Singh, *Zaildar*, was shot from behind by the pursuers and he fell on the ground. As he was lying prostrate he was shot for the second time and was left to his fate.

In the meantime the villagers of Misriwala came out to get a first-hand knowledge of what was going about and taking the strangers to be a gang of dacoits pursued them with whatever came handy to them. Jaggat Singh and others took fright because of the large number of the persons gathered there and tried to run away from the place. The villagers did not relax their pursuit. Nine of the party took shelter behind the reeds that ran along both sides of the canal bank, the remaining six went towards Ogaki and could not be traced.

Emboldened by the active interference of the villagers some of Basharat Ali's men came back to find him dead. Jowala Singh survived for a few minutes more.

The nine men that had taken shelter behind the reeds could not leave their place of hiding because the area had now been completely surrounded by the villagers. One of the men, Jiwan Singh, was seen outside under a tree and was arrested. As the firing continued from the surrounding party, apparently indiscriminately, to places wherefrom shots came from those besieged, six men came out from their hiding and were arrested separately. Some people took courage to go forward and searched the place of hiding of the fugitives. One, CHANDA SINGH was dead and another, DHIAN SINGH, found mortally wounded. He was a man of great stature and seemed to be one of the ringleaders.

They were tried by the Sessions Judge, Ferozepore, and on February 13, 1915, judgment was delivered convicting Jaggat Singh of murder of Basharat Ali under Section 302 I.P.C.

The other six :

- (i) Jiwan Singh,
- (ii) Kakshis Singh,
- (iii) Lal Singh,
- (iv) Dhian Singh,
- (v) Kashi Ram,
- (vi) Rahamat Ali, and

were convicted of offences under sections 149 and 302 I.P.C. and

sentenced to death. Property of each of the accused persons was ordered to be confiscated to the State.

The accused preferred appeals to the Chief Court, Punjab, which were rejected on March 9, 1915, and the sentences of the lower Court were confirmed.

Three of the accused were executed on March 25, in the Montgomery Jail, two on March 26, and another two on March 27, 1915, in Lahore Jail.

## ***A Chance Find***

(1915)

There were sufficient indications of unrest amongst the Sikhs in Punjab and the Police were on the alert for anything that might give rise to suspicion. On February 20, 1915, three Sikhs, one of whom was ARJAN *alias* SAJJAN SINGH, were seen going on a *tonga* close to the Anarkali Post Office. The sticks they had been carrying in their hands were, to the Sub-Inspector of Police, Mohamed Musa, something else than what they looked on the surface, possibly swords under the cover of a stick.

He asked the *tonga* to stop and wanted to examine the sticks. The Sikhs demurred but the police was able to snatch one of these from one of the passengers.

All on a sudden Sajjan Singh drew out a revolver and fired at the police. The Head Constable, Masum Shah, died on his way to the hospital and the S. I. Mahomed Musa was seriously wounded.

The assailant, Sajjan Singh, was arrested by a few bystanders who pushed him into a shop while two others managed to escape.

It was surmised that the three Sikhs involved in the Anarkali outrage belonged to the party that was arrested on February 18, together with two others who were arrested on February 20, 1915.

On February 25, 1915, Sajjan Singh was placed before the District Magistrate on a charge of murdering the Head Constable Masum Shah and attempting to murder S. I. Mohamed Musa. He was committed to the Sessions where the trial started on March 11, 1915. On March 13, the Judge found Sajjan Singh

guilty on all charges and condemned him to death. Sajjan Singh declared that he would not mind killing anybody found working against India's interests.

The condemned prisoner was executed in the Lahore Central Jail on April 20, 1915, in the early hours of the morning.

### ***Meerut Court-Martial***

(1915)

The influence of the happenings around and personal contact by the patriots produced favourable effects on the minds of some soldiers of the Indian Army.

Their success was apparent with the 12th Cavalry and 128th Pioneers. Two persons from the first, viz., Sowar (Acting Lance Daffadar) ISHAR SINGH and Sowar HAZARA SINGH and two others, Havildar (Qr. Master Havildar) BIBA SINGH and Sepoy PHULA SINGH of the second were charged with the offence that knowing the existence of a conspiracy against the State between the 2nd February and March 23, 1915, that some persons had been inducing soldiers of the Indian Army stationed in Meerut to break out into open rebellion against the State, failed, to give information thereof without delay to the appropriate Officer.

A Summary Court-martial was held at Meerut on April 19, 1915, to try the cases of all the accused.

The court found that the accused persons were severally and collectively guilty of the charge.

All the four :

- (i) No. 572 Sowar (Actg. Lance Daffadar) Ishar Singh,
- (ii) No. 310 Sowar Hazara Singh,  
both of the 12th Cavalry;
- (iii) No. 2970 Havildar (Qr. Master) Biba Singh,
- (iv) No. 2848 Sepoy Phula Singh,  
both of the 128th Pioneers

were found guilty and sentenced to death at one sitting by the Brigadier President, Meerut. The judgment was confirmed by the General Commander-in-Chief in India on April 21, 1915.

The sentences were duly carried into execution in the Civil Jail, Meerut, on April 26, 1915, and four Indian soldiers who had deep love for an Independent India joined the long line of martyrs for India's freedom.

### ***Hoshiarpur Outrage***

(1915)

The revolutionaries had reasons for suspicion that somebody very close to them must have acted in a way that had resulted in the arrest of one of the trusted and active members of the party. On enquiry it came to be known that Chanda Singh, *Zaildar*, Nangal Kalan, had been secretly sending information about the activities of the secret organisation. It was decided in the Council of the revolutionaries that Chanda Singh should be killed and thereby stopped from doing any further mischief to the cause.

On April 25, 1915, a man was sent to the house of Chanda Singh at Nangal Kalan in the evening to ascertain whether he was in his house at the time. The man also sent word to Banta Singh and Buta Singh to get ready. Being sure of Chanda Singh's presence through the emissary, BANTA SINGH, BUTA SINGH and another, who subsequently absconded, waited in the vicinity of Chanda's house in hiding for an opportunity to execute their plan. A short time after as soon as Chanda Singh came out, Banta and Buta attacked him unawares and shot him through his head causing instantaneous death.

Buta Singh was arrested on June 6, at Chitti village in company with another, an absconder in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, and Banta Singh on June 25 in his own village.

They were placed on trial on July 23, 1915, charged with the murder of Chanda Singh on April 25, at Nangal Kalan.

On July 27, 1915, both the accused: Buta Singh, and Banta Singh were sentenced to death and their property was ordered to be confiscated to the State.

An appeal to the Punjab Government and Government of India for a review of the sentence was rejected and the accused were executed on August 12, 1915, in the Lahore Jail.

## ***Reward of a 'Traitor'***

(1915)

While getting ready for bigger projects, the revolutionaries were not idle and could find time to apply their mind to matters which in their opinion were obstacles in their way. Sardar Bahadur Ichhra Singh of Jagatpur, a village some 15 miles from Tarn Taran, had been, as the revolutionaries held, working as a 'traitor'. He made himself obnoxious by his pro-Government political views. Moreover, he threatened some of the accused with prosecution as men of habitual bad character or men with no ostensible means of livelihood. A plan was made to get rid of him. On June 4, 1915, in broad daylight at about 6.30 p.m. he was attacked by KALU SINGH, ATMA SINGH, CHANNAN SINGH and BANTA SINGH and was killed on the spot.

The first three were arrested on June 12, and the fourth on June 25.

In the trial that followed:

- (i) Atma Singh,
- (ii) Kalu Singh,
- (iii) Channan Singh, and
- (iv) Banta Singh

were sentenced to death on July 21, 1915, their execution taking place on August 6, 1915, in the Lahore Central Jail.

Banta *alias* Butu Singh's execution was stayed as he was to appear as accused in other cases pending before other courts.



## ***Valla Canal Bridge Raid***

(1915)

In furtherance of revolutionary activities arms and ammunition were absolutely necessary. Plans and preparations had had to be made to collect them even at a great risk. On June 12, 1915, KALA SINGH, CHANNAN SINGH, HARNAM SINGH, ATMA SINGH and BANTA SINGH, with a few others appeared at the Valla (Walla) Canal Bridge, Amritsar, and attacked the Military Guard stationed at Valla (Walla) Railway Bridge at 4 a.m. with the object of seizing the rifles and ammunition. They took advantage of a passing train and swooped upon the guards with the utmost speed and alacrity.

A sepoy, Phul Singh and a Havildar, Chittar Naik, were killed by rifle and pistol shots. Phul Singh, in addition, received as many as five *chhari* wounds and his body was riddled with bullets. Chittar Naik sustained two bullet wounds and two wounds from *chharis*. Six rifles and a large quantity of ammunition were carried away by the raiders.

Having committed these murders, the party proceeded with the weapons southwards. Near Palasaur they killed one Gulab because he refused to part with his horse.

From Palasaur the raiders were pursued as far as the Gobindial ferry. Firing between the pursuers and the pursued were maintained all through the route of escape. The ferrymen were forced under threat of death to carry all the raiders to the other side of the Kalang. A boatman, Malang, was shot dead because he advised the boatmen not to carry the fugitives in their boats.

Kala Singh and his party were vigorously pursued by armed police who were successful in arresting two persons on their way. The rest of the gang covered forty miles and were able to enter the Kapurthala State where Kala Singh, Channan Singh, Harnam Singh and Atma Singh were arrested.

Betrayed by his own men BANTA SINGH was arrested on June 25, 1915, after a considerable search at a place not far away from his own house.

The accused Kala Singh declared that he had attacked the guards and was responsible for their death. He had come to

India from Shanghai in a French steamer *via* Colombo and had decided to rise against the Government after reaching India and studying the political situation within the country.

All the five accused were charged with the murder of Chittar Singh, Hawaldar Phul Singh, Gulab and Malang on June 12, 1915, and also for committing dacoity with murder. On July 21, 1915, sentences were passed condemning all the accused to death.

A petition was submitted to the Lieutenant Governor for clemency which was rejected on August 4, 1915. Except Banta Singh the executions of the condemned persons:

- (i) Kala Sing,
- (ii) Channan Singh,
- (iii) Harnam Singh, and
- (iv) Atma Singh

took place between the 9th and 14th August, 1915.

### ***Padri Murder***

(1915)

In the Lahore Conspiracy Case, Kapur Singh of Padri Kalan was a prosecution witness and thereafter served as an informer to the police against political suspects.

Just after sunset on August 2, 1915, Prem Singh of the Lahore (Supplementary) Conspiracy Case, and a few others assembled at Padri Kalan, Amritsar district, for the purpose of removing the objectionable man from the world. The victim was walking home after bathing at a well when he was shot dead. It was found that the dead man's hands had been severed from his body with the help of *chhavis*.

On the basis of this information a case was started against fifteen Sikhs, mostly returned immigrants, of whom two were absconding. Four were charged with murder, three with conspiracy and abetment and others with conspiracy and murder.

On March 7, 1916, orders were passed by the Lahore Special Tribunal sentencing,

- (i) Prem Singh of Sur Sing, and
- (ii) Inder Singh of Padri

to capital punishment and five to transportation for life.

## ***Army Revolt***

(1915)

The work to win over the Army for national cause did not go absolutely in vain. In Lahore Conspiracy Case there were frequent allusions about the attempt of the revolutionaries to win over army-men to their cause by the prosecution.

In the course of an investigation it became clear that the association of some of the men of the *23rd Cavalry Regiment* with the revolution engendered by the emigrant Sikhs, was more serious than what had hitherto been known.

Materials were collected to prove association of at least eighteen men with the revolutionaries who had been engaged in adopting measures to subvert the British rule in India.

These men were charged with attempted mutiny and conspiracy against the Government of India and placed before a Summary Court-Martial which was held at Dagashi on August 14, 1915, and the succeeding few days. Sixteen Sowars, one Lance-daffadar and one Daffadar of the 23rd Cavalry Frontier Force were confronted with a charge for conspiring, between the 15th October, 1914 and the 15th May, 1915, in pursuance of which conspiracy, bombs were made, telegraph wires were cut and meetings were held at which plans for mutiny were concerted and thereby abetted. Eight of the above Non-commissioned Officers and men were arraigned on the alternative charge that each one of them at Lahore Cantonment between the 15th October, 1914 and 15th May, 1915, being aware of the existence of a conspiracy by the members of the *Ghadr* party to overthrow the Government by law established in British India in pursuance of which conspiracy certain Commissioned Officers and men of the same Regiment had agreed to rise in open mutiny, and failed to give information thereof without delay to his Commanding or other superior Officer or Officers.

Without much trouble the Court found seventeen of the accused guilty of the first charge and sentenced them to be hanged. They found the 18th as guilty of the second charge and sentenced him to transportation for life.

In a review of the case the sentences of death of twelve of the accused persons, viz.,

- (i) ABDULLA,
- (ii) BHAGAT SINGH,
- (iii) BUDH SINGH,
- (iv) BUTA SINGH,
- (v) GUJJAR SINGH,
- (vi) INDER SINGH,
- (vii) INDER SINGH,
- (viii) JETA SINGH,
- (ix) LACHMAN SINGH,
- (x) MOTA SINGH,
- (xi) TARA SINGH, and
- (xii) WADHAWAN SINGH,

mostly from Lahore and Amritsar, were confirmed by the Commander-in-Chief.

All the twelve men were executed in the Civil Jail, Ambala, on September 3, 1915, a wholesale massacre of men who wanted to see their country free and worked in furtherance of the objective.

## ***Lahore Conspiracy Trial***

(1909-1915)

The most extensive preparations next to Burma for the overthrow of the Government was made in Punjab, the idea having taken root in 1909 and developed during the early years of the World War I.

To get a picture, however imperfect, of the conspiracy it is necessary to take into account, related elsewhere, the events happening abroad in U.S.A., Canada, Malay and other Far Eastern countries including Burma. The *Ghadr*, the *Komagata Maru* and the Budge-Budge Riot, San Francisco Trial, Revolt of the 5th Native Light Infantry and the Malay State Guides, Mandalay Conspiracy and other cases on charges of waging war against the King, tampering with the army are some of the incidents. They are closely related to the Punjab Conspiracy Trials of 1915 and after.

The movement in sulky Punjab received a great momentum with the arrival of the emigrants from U.S.A., Canada, Shanghai and other countries in the Far East. With large and varied experience abroad and with a mind fully prepared for any eventuality they added strength and ingenuity to the organisations that had already been functioning in the area. A large quantity of arms and ammunition, obtained in America and Canada or secured *en route*, were smuggled into India. A fairly good number of the returned men were interned as soon as they set their feet on Indian soil. Some of them as were not arrested or released after a close scrutiny came to Punjab and proceeded to infuse revolutionary ideas in the minds of troops and the villagers.

It was rather plain to the revolutionists that the preparation for the attainment of the objective lay through ways and alleys beset with grim danger yet they were not deterred. The principal programme was seduction of Indian soldiers from their allegiance to the King and to induce them to join the rebellion; to secure arms and ammunition from private and other sources including Government armoury, from soldiers' barracks and smuggling from outside. Money was to be obtained by raids on Government treasury or looting of private property. It was deemed a

part of the programme of action to assassinate police and other officials and all civil Europeans who might come forward to help the authorities. The movement of troops and supplies to the affected areas were to be stopped by wrecking of trains and railway bridges; communications to other stations to be dislocated by cutting off telegraph wires, etc., etc.

It could not be safe or sufficient to depend on supplies of arms and ammunitions from doubtful sources. Measures were, therefore, adopted to purchase relevant chemicals for the purpose of manufacturing bombs and other explosives. The principal centres for such purpose were at Jhabawal, Ludhiana District, at Lohatbodi in the Nabha State and elsewhere.

The idea of forging a revolution in Punjab was advanced by a member of the party organised as early as 1909 (who was awarded a death sentence but later commuted to transportation for life) through *Tarkhind* (History of India), a highly seditious literature and through clandestine writings bearing on a mass rebellion. A manual on bombs was also published at the time. A person was deputed to Peshawar in 1914 to collect arms in the manner as best as possible.

Acting upon the suggestions of the *Ghadr*, attempts were made for the seduction of troops *en route* to India at Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore, Penang, Rangoon and other places and efforts were also made in India in this direction at Mian Mir, Jullundur, Bannu and Kohat, Nowshera, Rawalpindi, Kapurthala, Ferozepore, Meerut, Agra, Cawnpore, Allahabad, Benares, Fyzabad, Lucknow, Ambala, etc. To facilitate the work of the party maps were prepared showing the centres at which the work would be continued. One VISHNU GANESH PINGLEY, visited sepoy in the barracks at Meerut and was arrested on March 23, 1915, with high explosive bombs in his possession. Pingley was assisted by KARTAR SINGH and HARNAM SINGH who approached soldiers' barracks to join them in the coming insurrection by distributing or reading *Ghadr* amongst them.

The most outstanding figure in the whole conspiracy was Rash Behari Bose, Satinder Chander or "Fat Babu", the name by which he was known to his comrades-in-arms in Punjab.

The entire details were worked out by him and he would be moving from place to place like a whirlwind. His tact and

presence of mind would seldom forsake him. While scores of men were arrested, put into prison or lost their lives on the gallows, Rash Behari could never be arrested throughout the whole of his startling political career.

Returned emigrants were approached on their arrival in Punjab and those who were found to have any inclination for *Ghadr* work, were placed in the different sections of the organisation according to their taste and capability. It was not desirable that everyone should know the business or movement of any other member of the party whereas one may require a particular information about a matter or a person. It was, therefore, necessary to arrange for some agency to act as "Post Offices" and for this purpose persons were selected who were for some reasons or other could not be entrusted with work involving grave risks.

Foreign help was sought for according to plan and indications pointing to some understanding about assistance from the Germans, especially individual Germans, were very frequent.

Having equipped themselves, however inadequately, the party engaged themselves into serious work. It was arranged that on November 26, 1914, there should be an armed military array at Jhar Sahib which was to be joined by mutineers from the 23rd Cavalry and which was to march on Sarahli Patti and Tarn Taran. The mutineers in Lahore got themselves armed but for some reasons or other did not move out.

An armed military group assembled at Jhar Sahib and Khairon and marched on Sarahli and then quietly dispersed. Some others made an armed demonstration on November 25, 1914, at Lahore Cantonment and then moved to Ferozepore with the intention of assaulting the treasury and arsenal at Moga on November 30, 1914. The men proceeding for the purpose clashed with a police party at Ferozepore (Ferozeshar) on November 27, which resulted in the death of a Sub-Inspector and a *Zaildar*. Two of the group of revolutionaries were killed at the place of occurrence in mutual exchange of fire with the police and seven others were subsequently tried and hanged.

Looting of private properties occurred at Sannawal and Mansuran (Ludhiana District on January 23 and 27, respectively), at Jhaner (in Malerkotla State on January 29), at Chabba

(Amritsar on February 2), at Rabhoh (Ludhiana District on February 3, 1915), and also at other places.

Individual acts of resistance and skirmishes were not infrequent. A Head Constable and a Sub-Inspector of Police were killed by a revolutionary at Anarkali Bazar on February 20, 1915, for which he was hanged.

One armed gang met on June 5, 1915, to attack the Kapurthala Magazine to secure arms and then to attack the Lahore and Montgomery Jails. The action was postponed to the 12th June as the party was considered insufficient for the purpose, a section having been despatched to attack the Valla Bridge military picket stationed there. On June 12, the guards were attacked in the course of which four persons were killed and four of the attackers were tried and hanged.

The Valla Bridge raid was a part of the activities for disrupting railway communications which formed a part of the programme of the revolutionaries. Another plan for attack on Darha Railway bridge on February, 1915, had to be abandoned at the last moment.

There were contacts between the disaffected persons in the Mandi State and the revolutionists in Punjab. It was resolved to collect bombs and arms in the State, bring up men from Punjab to murder the Wazir and the representative of the Government of India and take possession of the State. The idea was to use Mandi as a vantage point for extensive operations around. In a separate trial as Mandi Conspiracy Case five persons were convicted, one being sentenced to transportation for life and others receiving various terms of imprisonment.

There were men of outstanding ability, courage and resourcefulness. Decision was taken at Lahore on February 12, 1915, for effecting a mass rising on February 21, 1915, and emissaries were sent to several cantonments to announce the coming event. The infected troops were to rise throughout Punjab on receipt of news of an outbreak at Mian Mir.

Arrangements were made for collecting groups of villagers in Lahore to participate in the insurrection. Bombs were manufactured; arms got together to be given to men responsible for serious actions. To complete the arrangement, instruments for cutting telegraph wires and destroying centres of communications



were collected on a large scale. Flags representing Free India were prepared which were to be hoisted in proper quarters after the revolution had succeeded. In a word, everything was put hastily in the line for the general rising.

Almost at the last stage of preparation it came to be known that the police had got scent of the affair through a spy and steps had been taken to prevent the occurrence by all means. Guards were placed at important centres and troops having sympathy or promising support to the organisers of the revolt, were transferred to different places overnight.

Confronted with this contingency the leaders hurriedly advanced the date to February 19 so that efforts of long months might not go in vain. But the time was rather too short to reach the changed date to the various centres not very close to one another. The result was disastrous for the organisers; before anything could be done, the grand project ended in a dismal failure.

There were mass arrests of the members of the revolutionary party in Punjab. Houses were searched frantically for every bit of paper and other articles furnishing any clue to the conspiracy. On February 19, a search at Mochi Gate, Lahore, resulted in the find of complete bombs, and other materials for the manufacture of bombs, a revolver, and a dagger. On February 20, revolver cartridges of various bores, percussion caps, files, duplicators, a sword stick, flags and seditious literatures were recovered. Searches conducted on February 24, 1915, at a house at Gumti Bazar and another at Wachhwali, Lahore, discovered four Bengal bombs, a pistol, cartridges of various bores, a bottle containing a solution called "Greek Fire" and chemicals for bombs.

A conspiracy case of unprecedented magnitude was started in the Lahore Central Jail on April 27, 1915, before a Special Tribunal constituted for the purpose with sixty-two accused rising eventually to eighty of whom sixteen were found to be absconders.

The accused were charged in a wholesale fashion under Sections 121, 121A, 122, 122-109, 123, 124A, 124A-107, 131, 132, 302, 303/109/120B, 395, 395-397, 396, 412, 414 I.P.C., Sections 3, 4, 5, and 6 of the Explosive Substances Act (Act VI of 1908).

Judgment was delivered on September 13, 1915, in a case which was unique in its origin, motive, time, character and ramifications, the number of men involved and the area covered by their activities.

Twenty-four men were condemned to death and twenty-six to transportation for life. Others received varying terms of imprisonment, only a few being acquitted.

On November 14, 1915, the Governor General-in-Council commuted the death sentences of seventeen leaving the seven others to die. They were:

- (i) BAKSHISH SINGH,
- (ii) BISHNU GANESH PINGLEY,
- (iii) SURAIN SINGH, son of Ishar Singh,
- (iv) SURAIN SINGH, son of Bur Singh,
- (v) HARANAM SINGH of Sialkot,
- (vi) JAGGAT SINGH, and
- (vii) KARTAR SINGH (Saraba)

All of these fighters for India's freedom who had worked long years and suffered privations and sacrificed everything that man runs after, were executed in the Lahore Central Jail on November 17, 1915.

In the Court room as also standing before the gallows the condemned men refused to accept their endeavour to be termed a 'conspiracy'. They contended that it was an open challenge to the foreigners who charged the patriots sacrificing everything for the freedom of their Motherland with the offence of sedition, of waging war against the King.

Kartar Singh was not at all sorry for what they had done; rather he felt proud for enjoying the privilege of throwing out the challenge at the face of a lot of usurpers. He was really sorry over the outcome of their efforts. He averred that every slave had a right to revolt and it could never be a crime to rise in defence of the primary rights of the sons of the very soil.

When asked to appeal he retorted, "Why should I? If I had more lives than one, it would have been a great honour to me to sacrifice each of them for my country."

## **Lahore Conspiracy**

### **(1st Supplementary) Trial**

(1915-1916)

The heroes of Punjab were given no rest. With the conclusion of the comprehensive Lahore Conspiracy Case a supplementary trial of a larger number of accused persons was started on October 29, 1915, before the same Tribunal.

The evidence adduced by the prosecution in the most part was almost the same as in the first case relating to preparations in U.S. A., receiving aid from the enemy country, stirrings in the Far East, return of the emigrants to India and forthwith entering into a conspiracy to wage war against the King, etc., etc.

The incidents at Ferozepore, Anarkali Bazar, plan for assaulting the Moga Treasury and all others in their train were recapitulated and revived for bringing about a conviction of the accused. The First Supplementary Conspiracy Trial was started with no less than 102 accused of whom nine were absconders, cases of six were withdrawn and accused discharged, one turned approver and granted pardon, another ten were discharged by the Court leaving a total of seventy-six accused to stand the trial.

The accused comprised absconders in the original case against whom proceedings were taken under Section 512 Cr. P. C. and some of whom had since been arrested; alleged associates of those convicted in the previous case and those who were accused of having committed fresh offences since the last trial.

On March 30, 1916, judgment was delivered in which six were awarded the highest penalty of the law, forty-five to undergo transportation for life, eight received imprisonment for various terms and fifteen were acquitted.

Of the six condemned men sentence of one was changed to transportation for life. The other five were:

(i) HER SINGH BAHOOVAL, Hoshiarpur, found to have taken part in Sannawal and Chabba dacoities and to have been present in the Kapurthala rising;

(ii) ISHAR SINGH, *alias* Suran Singh of Bhudike, Moga, Ferozepore, was present at the Ferozepore Raid and the attack

on the Doraha Bridge and to have been the foremost in the Kapurthala Raid;

(iii) RANGA SINGH *alias* Roda Singh of Khurdapur, Kartarpur, Jullundur, was in close touch with Dhundike revolutionists and was present at the Kapurthala meeting and selected to form one of the Valla Bridge attacking party;

(iv) RUR SINGH of Talwandi, Dusanj, Moga, Ferozepore, one of the Dhundike revolutionists, assisted in the initial assault on the Valla Bridge;

(v) UTTAM SINGH of Hansi Jograon, Ludhiana, early got into touch with the Lohatbadi revolutionists and assisted in procuring arms and ammunitions in Lohatbadi and in making bombs and taking part in the Ferozepore district raid. He was also present at the Kapurthala gathering on June 5, 1915, when the Valla Bridge attack was planned. He also absconded to Faridkot State to evade arrest.

On June 12, 1916, the five comrades were hanged in the Lahore Jail.

### ***Lahore Conspiracy (2nd Supplementary) Trial***

(1916)

On the same charges and on the same evidence as in the first two Lahore Conspiracy Trials, a large number of men were hauled up before the same Tribunal (the Second Supplementary) and trial commenced on November 8, 1916. It was a comparatively short trial inasmuch as evidence was concluded on December 14, 1916. By this time prosecution witnesses had been well trained and got used to say whatever the police would like them to adduce and the accused persons also got accustomed with the nature of evidence and the fate that awaited them.

On January 5, 1917, six persons were sentenced to death. In a review of the case the Government commuted the punishment of one to one of transportation for life.

(i) BABU RAM,

(ii) BALWANT SINGH,

- (iii) SAFIZ ABDULLA,
- (iv) RUR SINGH, and
- (v) NAINA

added themselves to the list of martyrs who had sanctified the gallows of the Lahore Central Jail on March 29, 1917.

Of the other accused no details are available in spite of a diligent search. About Balwant Singh it is known that unquestionably he was one of the most prominent and influential men in the revolutionary movement in Canada. He visited U.K. early in 1913 and saw a number of men having extreme political views. In the August of the same year he visited Lahore and made eloquent speeches on *Ghadr* and the movements supporting India's struggle for independence outside India.

In 1914 he returned to Canada arriving at the same time when the *Komagata Maru* affair had been agitating the Sikh community there and took a prominent part in the agitation arising out of the vessel's voyage. He was the most ardent advocate of the plan for returning to India for revolutionary purposes and in December 1914, he left Canada and stopped for some time in San Francisco where he was in touch with the headquarters of the *Ghadr* Party. He was next heard of as having reached Siam in July and arrested in Bangkok in August, 1915.

He was deported to Singapore and brought to India under custody to stand his trial in the omnibus conspiracy cases the fever of which had engrossed the attention of the authorities who found it a handy instrument to teach the sturdy daring Punjabis a lesson in loyalty and good citizenship.

## ***Swelling The Number***

(1915)

One of the many whose bones were laid in the soil of the Andamans was BHAN SINGH, who was sent to the Convict Settlement in 1915 (?).

Bhan Singh for his strong views came early into conflict with the convict warders and petty officers. He was put in cell meant for additional punishment (*dholai*). The Superintendent on being informed came and hurled abuses on the prisoner in a most filthy language. Bhan Singh protested in a voice befitting the occasion which to the officer was rather a new experience.

On the order of the Superintendent a large number of men fell upon and belaboured Bhan Singh in a most brutal manner and as the effect of which Bhan Singh vomited a large quantity of blood.

He was removed to jail hospital where his condition did not improve. He continued to spit blood off and on. The battered man struggled for two months clinging to life which ebbed slowly till one day he was found dead in his cell. (Ref. V. D. Savarkar: *Story of My Transportation for Life*, p. 389)

## ***'Let My Mother Weep and of None Else'***

(1915)

Coming from a minstrel family of Punjab, PRATAP SINGH enjoyed unbounded confidence of Rash Behari Bose amongst his friends and co-workers of northern India. Singh was the undisputed leader of the Rajput revolutionaries of his time. He was engaged in creating disaffection in the Rajput troops and braved the risk of meeting his leader, then an absconder at Nabadwip, Bengal, in secret and secure his advice for operations in Punjab. Pratap Singh was introduced to Rash Behari by Amir Chand of Delhi and he never betrayed the words of assurance spoken about him.

In 1915, Pratap Singh was first arrested in connection with

the Delhi Conspiracy Case but was discharged for want of evidence. He was arrested for the second time. The police offered him heavy sums for divulging secrets of the party. The prisoner's answer to the police has become classic. He said,

"You say that my mother is weeping day and night and is very disconsolate over my fate. But I refuse to be the cause for weeping for any other mother and if ever it so happens, that would be death to me and disgrace to my mother."

He was tortured for months in the Bareilly Jail where he died when he was only 22 years of age.

### ***An Unwonted Business***

(1916)

The efforts of the revolutionaries to seduce the troops in their barracks and cantonments had proof of their partial success with the 7th Rajputs. At a Summary General Court-Martial held at Delhi on February 28, 1916, Drill Havildar, JALESWAR SINGH and a Naik, both of the 7th Rajputs, were arraigned on the following charge:

"That knowing the existence of a conspiracy against the State, they failed to give information thereof to the Commanding or other superior Officers; and that at Benares between the 1st January and 15th April, 1915, being aware of the existence of a conspiracy by members of the *Ghadr* party to overthrow Government established by law in British India, in pursuance of which conspiracy, certain men of the same regiment had agreed to join the said party and rise in mutiny, they failed to give information thereof to their Commanding or other superior Officers."

Both the accused were sentenced to death. The Naik's sentence was subsequently commuted to one of transportation for life. Jaleswar faced death with courage worthy of a true son of India on March 21, 1916, in the Civil Jail, Delhi.

## ***Of the Many***

(1917)

RAMRAKHA was an accused in the Mandalay Supplementary Trial in February 1917 and was sentenced to transportation for life on July 6, 1917.

He was sent to the Andamans and subjected to hard labour but because of his sturdy health, he could put up with it for a long time. But he came into conflict with the authorities on the score of personal religious observances. Some privileges which he demanded as of right were denied to him. Persecution of a severe nature followed. He resorted to hunger strike and died after prolonged suffering in his small cell in the Bastille of India, the Andaman Cellular Jail.

## ***The Lure of Serving the Motherland***

(1915-1917)

A man who had long lived outside India particularly in Canada came back to India at the call of the Motherland. On his arrival in Calcutta in 1915, he was put under surveillance and sent to Punjab under escort. He had a shrewd suspicion that he might be imprisoned on reaching the destination and got down at an intermediate station without the knowledge of his guards.

With great difficulty he reached Punjab on his own account and joined the revolutionary party already very active there. He had acquired an efficient knowledge of bomb-making, two of his manufactures being used in the Mansuran dacoity, an incident prominently mentioned in the Lahore Conspiracy Case.

Having found that his stay in Punjab was extremely risky, MATHURA SINGH escaped to Kabul and then crossed the frontier to go to Russia. He reached Tashkend with great difficulty and sent through a competent agent a letter to the Czar, a task enjoined by his party leaders. He was satisfied to learn that the letter actually reached the Czar who expressed sympathy for India's aspirations. Subsequently it transpired that due to internal troubles the Czar was not inclined to do anything more and Mathura Singh had to take a journey back towards India.



At the intervention of the British Government the Russian Government arrested Dr. Singh and he was brought into Punjab and kept in the Lahore Jail from the last week of January, 1916.

On February 21, 1917, Dr. Singh was placed before a Special Tribunal with the charge of waging war against the King, etc., etc. (Sections 121, 121A, 131, 132, 302-109 I. P. C.).

The judgment awarding capital punishment was received by the accused with the greatest unconcern. Dr. Mathura Singh, a redoubtable fighter and a strong arm of the revolution, was hanged on March 27, 1917, in the Lahore Central Jail.

### **At Long Last**

(1917)

An accused in the original Lahore Conspiracy Case, JAWAND SINGH, was able for a long time to evade arrest. Ultimately the police found him in May 1917, and a Special Tribunal was at once constituted to put him on trial.

All the charges that had been advanced in the original case were preferred against him. The greater part of the evidence in the case was of a kind that was familiar in all the trials of the same character. From the time of Hardayal's arrival in U. S. A. and all the subsequent events in its train were there. It was 'proved' that he was one of the most active members in the party, inasmuch as Jawand Singh was individually responsible for more murders and dacoities than any other member of the party to which he belonged.

It was contended by the police that he accompanied the group committing dacoity at Sannawal on January 23, 1915, at Mansuran on January 27, at Chabba on February 2, at Valla Bridge Raid on June 12, 1915.

As was the usual practice with the Special Tribunal's sitting in Lahore at the time, Jawand Singh was found guilty of five charges out of seven, and was sentenced to death on May 30, 1917. Like one who had attached very little value to life during a stormy career of service to his Motherland, Jawand received the sentence in a most *nonchalant* and callous manner.

The execution was carried out on June 10, 1917, in the Lahore Central Jail.

**A Remarkable Feat**

(1915)

In one of the most congested parts of the city of Calcutta, just opposite the second main gate of the Calcutta Medical College, Madhu Sudan Bhattacharyya, a C. I. D. Inspector, got down at about 10 a.m. on January 16, 1915, from a south-going Shambazar tram-car. It was just a few yards from the crossing of the Colootola and College Streets towards the south.

Madhu Sudan was in charge of keeping watch over certain political suspects and it was quite natural that he in his turn was being closely watched by those over whom he had been directing his surveillance. As soon as he stepped down from the tram-car, two young Bengali youths came running from the opposite foot-path, got very close to their prey, each whipping out a revolver, a Mauser and a Webley, and fired three shots in not as many seconds. Madhu, mortally wounded, reeled and dropped on the ground.

The unknown youths ran into Pratap Chatterjee Street, a blind lane chased by some bystanders, who were prevented from coming very close by repeated revolver firings. The fugitives then jumped over a low wall into the compound of an adjoining house and could not be further traced.

Madhu was immediately removed to the Medical College but his life was extinct. Two wounds were inflicted on him, one on the shoulder and the other on the back giving rise to the presumption that when he received the shot on the shoulder he turned back and got the other shot which penetrated his chest.

The police published descriptions of the two young men as collected from eye-witnesses, as (i) dark-complexioned, strong-built, medium stature, heavy moustache, wearing a white *alwan* and guernsey and (ii) fair complexioned, thin-built, medium stature, moustache, wearing a *badami alwan* and a Punjabi shirt.

**A Successful Ruse**

(1915)

The order of attacking police officers and doing away with them was taken measuring their capacity of doing mischief to the cause of the revolution. Jatindra Nath Mukherjee, the leader,

had decided that Suresh Chandra Mukherjee, an Inspector of the Special Branch of the Criminal Investigation Department, must not live beyond a certain date and 'soldiers' were not lacking to carry out his wishes even at the risk of their lives.

Chittapriya Ray Chaudhuri was on the list of 'proclaimed offenders' and the police had been vigorously searching for him for a long time without much success. He, along with three or four other compatriots, took upon himself the onerous duty and executed his plan in such a manner on February 28, 1915, as ultimately to prove successful beyond imagination.

That was the Convocation Day of the Calcutta University and responsible officers were out to examine the arrangements that would guarantee absolute safety to the Viceroy who was to address the gathering. Suresh, with a Sub-Inspector and an *orderly*, went in the morning to the Cornwallis Square for the purpose. He was standing on the south-west corner of the park (Hedua), when his attention was drawn towards a group of youngmen whose movements seemed to be suspicious. Suresh at once recognised Chittapriya Ray Chaudhuri as one belonging to the group.

Suresh asked his *orderly* to go and arrest Chittapriya. As soon as Chitta was brought close to him, Suresh stretched his hand to arrest him. Chitta leaned forward a little and in a trice drew out a revolver from his waist and fired. The trigger, however, jammed. But came forward another to fire point-blank at Suresh and he fell on the ground. Three or four others came running to the spot and fired more shots at the prostrate body of the officer and also wounded his *orderly*, Sheo Prasad Kahar, seriously. Sheo Prasad did not lose his balance at once but tried to get hold of the young man who had shot his master, but he dropped on the ground due to exhaustion. Suresh received five shots under the mouth, on the chest, back, stomach and shoulder. Death was instantaneous. The condition of the *orderly* gradually deteriorated and he expired on the third day of his scuffle.

Nothing could be known about the culprits save and except that one of them was accepted by the police to be Chittapriya, the Dan Breen of India's fight for Freedom.

## ***An Irresponsible Act***

(1915)

In connection with the Garden Reach highway looting taking place on February 12, 1915, the police sent up a number of youngmen on the mere suspicion of having had something to do with the incident. Of these there was one SAROJ BIJUSAN DAS, a teacher of the Metropolitan Institution, Calcutta. As an undertrial he was sent to jail on February 13, 1915, and was declared to be in good health up to the 18th of the same month.

In the usual course of jail rules, Saroj was vaccinated by the Sub-Assistant Surgeon and within a few days developed a virulent type of small-pox. The relations were informed and the Government were pleased to allow bail to the prisoner. Saroj was removed to his house where death relieved him from the conditions of judicial bail on March 2, 1915.

## ***The First Open Encounter***

(1915-1924)

As days wore on the nervousness and uncertainty of the early days gave place to more successful onslaughts on the prestige of British bureaucracy. By 1914 the revolutionaries seemed to be the masters of the situation. The abortive attempts at hold-ups and assassinations were on the decline. In Calcutta there were eleven successive outrages of which four were committed with the help of automobile taxi-cabs, a new feature in revolutionary crime. They commenced with the Garden Reach dacoity on February 12, 1915, where a sum of Rs. 18,000 of Messrs. Bird & Co. was involved. It was followed by a dacoity at Beliaghata (Feb. 22) where the raiders succeeded in extorting from the cashier of a rice merchant Rs. 20,000 in cash and currency notes. The third was of a more daring nature committed on December 2, where the revolutionaries were successful in securing Rs. 25,000 from the shop of a rice merchant in the Corporation Street, Calcutta.

There were three successful attempts on the lives of police

officers and another on a spy. All these and a few other incidents were attributed to Jatin Mukherjee and his lieutenants. The incident in the precincts of the High Court led to Jatin's arrest on January 26, 1910, from 275, Upper Chitpore Road together with a large number of other suspects in Calcutta and in the Districts of Howrah and 24-Parganas. He was absolved of his complicity with the crime by the Commissioner of Police, Calcutta, on January 31. But he was held in custody in connection with a Gang Case that was then in the offing. The Howrah Gang Case was started on February 12, 1910, before the District Magistrate, Howrah. The accused were committed for trial before the High Court on July 20, 1910, as being members of a gang of political dacoits. While awaiting his trial an attempt was made to implicate him with the murder of Shams-ul-Alam through a confessional statement of the accused who was alleged to have said:

"I was introduced to a gentleman named Jatindra Nath Mukherji of 273, Upper Chitpur Road, by a boy.... in the month of September.... By reading the *Yugantar* I got a very strong wish to do brave and violent works, and I asked Jatin Mukherji to give me work. He told me about the shooting of Shams-ul-Alam, Deputy Superintendent, who conducted the (Alipore) Bomb Case, and he ordered a boy named.... to make arrangements for this case. I asked Jatin for such works, and he asked me whether I shall be able to shoot Shams-ul-Alam. I answered that I will be able."

With the confession of Biren, police did not lose a moment to start another case against Jatin. On the night of February 19, 1910, the relatives of Jatin were informed that he would be removed to the Presidency Jail the next morning. The relatives appeared at the jail, with their lawyer to find that the Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta was getting ready for the hearing of a case on the accusation of the condemned person. Biren having finished his statement the Magistrate asked the defence Counsel to cross-examine the deponent forthwith. The defence lawyer protested against the whole procedure and declined to oblige the Magistrate on the ground that there had been no opportunity to receive his client's instructions and that he had practically no matter on which to cross-examine. He applied for an adjournment to enable him to obtain a postponement of the execution of Biren and to get adequate instructions from his client.

The Magistrate yielded to grant a stay of proceedings for a short while. The Counsel for the defence accompanied by the Commissioner of Police rushed to Belvedere to move the Lieutenant Governor to postpone the execution of Biren. The Lieutenant Governor did not like to intervene and Biren was executed before he could be cross-examined on his statement.

The case against Jatin was not withdrawn on the ground that as Biren had deposed before a competent Magistrate his statement was valid as evidence against whom it was made.

The matter was referred to the High Court for opinion and at the hearing of the Howrah Gang Case on February 21, 1911, the Chief Justice gave the following ruling:

"The Magistrate failed to secure to the Counsel for the accused an interview with his client, so that the Counsel was unable to obtain requisite instructions and we must accordingly hold that there was not an opportunity sufficient to bring the case within the provisions of Section 33 of the Indian Evidence Act.

"Biren's deposition, therefore, is not relevant. It is, moreover, patent with regard to all the circumstances that even if relevant the deposition could possess little or no value as proof of what it imputed to the accused."

The Crown Counsel did not like to proceed any further, and Jatin and another were discharged before conclusion of the "Gang Case."

At one and the same time Jatin crossed two danger lines but his activities instead of receiving a set-back were pursued with redoubled vigour.

When the police failed to tackle repeated outrages involving life and property of the public and information trickled down about Jatin's complicity with some of them there began a regular hunt for the man to secure his arrest. Naturally enough Jatin with a few trusted lieutenants had to go into hiding. There was no clue to be had of Jatin and the police lost all hopes of arresting him and gave their soul the consolation that he might have retired for good from active politics or had died in one of the actions.

On the other hand Jatin with some of his co-workers had been shifting from place to place to evade police watch and arrest. On February 20, 1915, the premises No. 73, Pathuriaghata Street, Calcutta, was rented by one Phani Bhusan Ray, apparently a fictitious person, to find accommodation for Jatin and his

revolutionary compatriots. On the morning of February 24, 1915, a man, named Nirod Halder, supposed to be a police spy, entered the house and shouting a name went upstairs. He was overjoyed to see Jatin sitting with five or six other youngmen in the room. Recognising Jatin he exclaimed, "Well, Jatin, then you are here?" One of the youngmen advanced a few paces and pointed a revolver at Nirod and as soon as he turned his back and tried to slip out of the room, a bullet pierced him on the spine and he fell down on the ground.

Taking him to be dead three of the youngmen left the place in bicycles whilst others walked away with their baggages.

Nirod was injured and the police who came immediately after the incident on information, rushed him to the Mayo Hospital. He was sufficiently conscious to say that he was definite about seeing Jatin amongst the group of men huddled together and that Jatin himself had shot him.

Nirod was admitted in the hospital at about 8-10 a.m. and expired on the 26th idem at 2 p.m. The usual post-mortem examination was gone through and the Coroner with the Jury held that beyond the dying declaration of the deceased there was no evidence to support the allegation that he had been shot by Jatin Mukherji. The Jury returned a verdict of "death due to a gun-shot wound caused by some unknown person."

Jatin with his trusted and gallant friends remained in Calcutta for a few days more and some of the most daring revolutionary actions of the week and the one following were attributed to them.

It became impossible for them to stay in Calcutta any longer.

By previous arrangement Jatin and Chittapriya reached Kaptipoda (Mahuldiha) in March 1915, and a few days later came Niren and Manoranjan.

The atmosphere of freedom after a stay in hiding in dark, dingy places, shut out from daylight for a considerable period, sent a thrill of joy in the hearts of the two youngsters. They began to leap, frisk, run and play. Manoranjan had a Mauser pistol in his hand. Pointing the weapon in joke towards Niren enquired of him whether he had any fear of death and what would he do if a shot hit him.

Niren told that a practical experiment would prove that he

cared a two-pence for life as they were out to die. Manoranjan continued his joke asking if he would shoot, of course in the fullest confidence that the pistol had no cartridge inside it. Niren gave the assent. Manoranjan drew the trigger; and, lo! a bullet passed straight through his right leg just under the knee. Niren did not betray any nervousness as if nothing had happened to him except that it interfered with his free movement at least for the time being.

No medical aid was to be had. The only remedy was to apply powdered quinine tablets available at the time. News reached Calcutta. Competent medical assistance was rushed to the place. It was found on examination that the bullet had passed through the flesh without injuring the bone. It took some time before Niren could get his normal movement back.

Jyotish Chandra Pal reached Kaptipoda a little later and got involved in the first open encounter with the British forces on the soil of Orissa.

Before Jatin had reached Orissa it was thought incumbent to make provision for maintaining contact with Calcutta and a firm ostensibly dealing in bicycles and clocks, etc. was opened in Balasore under the name of Universal Emporium.

In addition to their shelter at Kaptipoda a second centre was opened at Taldiah about six miles away from this place just before a week of the clash. Niren and Jyotish were sent there to engage themselves in agriculture and setting up a shop. The two wings met twice in the meantime.

The Police in Calcutta received information by March, 1915 of the Universal Emporium at Balasore and that non-local men had been visiting the place from time to time. The Calcutta Criminal Investigation Department moved quickly in the matter and some topmost officers proceeded towards Balasore in the first few days of September, 1915. The Universal Emporium was searched on September 5, and two men were taken into custody.

Acting on the clue gathered from a scrap of paper lying on the floor about Kaptipoda, a non-descript village in the small Nilgherry State contiguous to Mayurbhanj State, separated by a narrow stream, the District Magistrate of Balasore rushed towards the place with a contingent of armed forces and high police officials of Calcutta on September 6, after dusk. They



came to know that the strangers had been living in a hut in Mohuldia *mouza* on the other side of a misnomer for a stream.

There had been unusual stir in the locality of quiet Kaptipoda during the night of September 6, caused by the presence of several Europeans and men in European costume attended with a large retinue. They had reached the place on elephants and the tinkling of the bells attached to their necks aroused suspicion in the minds of a few who were interested in the 'Sadhu' (Jatin) and his two associates. One of the frightened men ran to Jatin and informed him all that had been brewing in the locality on an unprecedented scale in the jungle region of Mayurbhanj.

Jatin, Chittapriya and Manoranjan left the place after destroying whatever they could and marched towards Taldiah to get Niren and Jyotish with them. A considerable valuable time was lost in this endeavour but Jatin could never think of his own safety and leave his young comrades in the lurch.

The District Magistrate prevented by darkness waited for the dawn and searched the place early next morning. Targets placed high on a tree and a mud wall behind the hut were found to bear bullet marks. Some gunpowder, stray bullets, etc., were also found but not the wanted persons. From available information the police came to know of the other shelter at Taldiah and it became clear that dividing themselves in two batches they lived considerably apart.

After coming together Jatin and his companions made their way towards the Balasore railway station. They reached up to the village Haripur Aria, not very far from their destination but could suspect that danger awaited them at the place.

They went back and came out into the open to explore if there was any other avenue of escape.

Under instructions the Mayurbhanj police continued the search whilst the Magistrate returned to Balasore to make arrangements for blocking the roads leading from the State to Balasore as it was thought probable that the Bengalis would make for the railway. Every policeman was asked to keep watch about the movement of strangers. It was nearly a common talk amongst the people that some 'Bengali dacoits' had been roaming about. A man who had a shop at Balasore town, which he used to visit daily, on his way home on September 8, overheard a

policeman at the ferry ghat asking the ferryman to keep a look-out for outsiders and to inform the police if he had noticed any. On returning home this shopkeeper mentioned the fact to his brother, an agriculturist, and asked him to keep himself on the alert.

On Thursday morning, September 9, at about 9 a.m. the agriculturist, already in possession of the fact, had just landed from his small dugout and fastened it to a peg on the bank when on the opposite bank five strangers appeared and called out to him that they were *sarkari log* and wished to be taken across the river. He refused to do so on the ground that their boat was not *sarkari* (meaning ferry) boat and it was too small to carry so many persons without sinking.

The strangers then suggested that the boatman should go across and take the clothing and *jhola* (haversack) and that they themselves would swim across. The man did not agree but suggested to the strangers that there were four boats a little distance higher up and they could get across in one of them. Jatin and his friends following the suggestion of the man went towards the boats referred to and they were noticed to cross the river. It came to the mind of the man what his brother had told him the previous night and being curious about the strangers advanced towards the place where the strangers had landed on their side of the river. Reaching the bank the strangers proceeded towards the jungle when the man shouted to say that there was no road that way. So the strangers turned towards him. One of the men from the throng that had collected by this time questioned them as to who they were and failing to elicit any satisfactory answer his suspicion was aroused.

The man, who had by now a few men around him suggested that one should go and inform the *daffadar*, while he and his other companions would keep an eye on the strangers who after walking along the edge of the river for some distance, struck a path leading to the Bund Road running parallel with the river at a distance of about fifty paces from it.

As the strangers seemed to be in some doubt which way to go, the same man asked them to say where they wanted to proceed and he would show them the way. The strangers said that they wished to get at the railway line and the man asked them to follow the Bund Road towards the north-west. Along this the strangers

went, but after a few minutes seated themselves to take rest at a place close to Gobindapur village.

The man slipped away to bring some more villagers and on return saw the strangers moving on. The *daffadar's* brother ran forward to block the way and asked the strangers to accompany him to the thana. He was pushed away. Being challenged for the second time, they produced pistols from the waist-cloths. Stray shots were fired to scare away the villagers which gradually swelled in number. The strangers reached Dumuda village at 11 a.m. thus chased.

Finding no damage done by the shots fired, one villager mustered courage to close up with the strangers. When he had reached within twenty five paces of the fugitives they opened fire. Unfortunately a bullet from Manoranjan's pistol hit Raju Mahanti who fell on the ground.

Excepting four all fled away. The *daffadar's* brother and three others started for Balasore, a distance of about eight miles to inform the police and the Magistrate. The strangers moved on some little way and then sat down and took some refreshment. Closely followed by the villagers, they left the Bund Road and turned off east across the country.

After crossing the road the strangers were confronted by a small stream. This they waded across, carrying their revolvers and their clothes tied round their heads. They crossed one at a time, firing occasionally to keep the villagers back. Then they started moving in the direction of Chasakhand village. Taking their stand on the embankment of an old tank in the middle of some paddy-fields, behind an ant-hill, from where whilst protected from being seen because of the bushes, they commanded a view all round.

The force from Balasore reached the river Burah Balang more or less about this time. The Magistrate split the police up into two parties, one going across country from Mayurbhanj Road and the other going along the Midnapore Road. Both the parties converged on the spot which had been indicated by a white flag planted by the Sub-Inspector of Police who had reached the place with the *daffadar* earlier.

Magistrate shot a '303 sporting rifle to make the fugitives

realise that the attacking party had long range rifles with them and to make them surrender without any loss of life.

The fire was replied and the exchange of shots continued for about twenty minutes resulting in some casualty in the police rank. There was a lull when two men were seen to stand and hold up their arms. The Magistrate ordered "cease fire". The police party advanced cautiously and at the end found that one person had already been killed and two others were wounded. Arrangements were made to bring the dead, the wounded and the arrested persons to Balasore. The dead body was sent to the morgue, the wounded to the hospital and the arrested to the lock-up.

CHITTAPRIYA RAY CHOWDHURY was killed on the spot. JATIN was seriously wounded and admitted to the hospital at 8.30 p.m. on September 9, suffering from lacerated wounds in abdomen and left hand; bones of left hand also being shattered. Jyotish had two wounds caused by the same bullet which entered by the left side of the back and emerging out by the chest.

Jatin died at 5 a.m. the next morning, the 10th September, 1915. Jyotish got round and was sent to prison on September 22. He was subsequently placed on trial with Niren and Manoranjan.

JYOTISH CHANDRA PAL, MANORANJAN SEN GUPTA and NIRENDRA DAS GUPTA were produced for trial before a Special Tribunal on October 1, 1915, which began sitting regularly from October 7, at Balasore. Charges of murder, attempt to murder in connection with the attack upon villagers and attempt to murder the District Magistrate and his police force and also under the Arms Act, were framed against the accused. Judgment was delivered on October 16, when Manoranjan and Niren were sentenced to death and Jyotish to fourteen years' transportation.

On October 30, the Lieutenant Governor of Bihar and Orissa rejected the petition for clemency made on behalf of the condemned prisoners and the two young lads, Manoranjan and Niren, were executed on November 22, 1915, in the Balasore Jail.

Jatindra Nath Mukherjee was a man of unique personality. He possessed an illimitable fund of "strength—strength physical, strength mental, strength moral and above all strength spiritual, which is the one inexhaustible and imperishable source of all strength."

During the peak days of the revolutionary activities in Bengal

he stood at the confluent where different streams flowing from diverse sources would release their problems for satisfactory solution. And he amply fulfilled their expectations.

Jatin infused his comrades with inspiration, courage and determination and it was a pleasure and a safe haven for them to relegate every concern to his loving care. Jatin's love for the Motherland and broad sympathies for his countrymen were without parallel. In 1914, when there was an ominous lull in the revolutionary circle he stepped into the arena to take charge of operations and every firebrand was glad to forego his angularity with a sense of confidence in him. In the same year he met Rash Behari Bose at Benares to establish a link with the workers functioning in northern India and the relation of these two great revolutionaries was most cordial of deep understanding and mutual dependence.

The spiritual side was predominant in Jatin's character but it never interfered with his world of action. He could view at things in their proper perspective and in absolute detachment. He wrote to his sister Binodabala from the Alipore Central Jail on August 20, 1910,

"You have seen how ephemeral are the things and events of this world. And he must be very fortunate who gets an opportunity to sacrifice his ephemeral life for a great Cause."

The thirst for freedom of the Motherland transcended every other considerations in his life. His love and sympathy for "younger brothers", as he would most lovingly call his co-workers, assumed legendary tenderness. His body and heart of steel was wedded to a softness that would put the falling dew into shade.

The only gateway to death the triumphal arch of a fight in the open, was erected for him by Providence and was quite in keeping with the life-history of a great hero. When he entered it, he left behind a perennial inspiration for his compeers and successors-in-arms while passing on to immortality and undying fame.

Of the three friends, Chitta, Manoranjan and Niren it should be remembered that their advent into the world were separated only by a few years. They were students in the same school at Madaripur when they were arrested in the first week of December 1913, and made co-accused in the Gopalpur-Kwakuri

Dacoity Case (Faridpur Conspiracy Case) which was withdrawn on April 20, 1914. They almost kept together in exploits of daring and danger and lost their lives for the same cause one in the field of battle and two on the gallows separated not even by three months.

Niren and Manoranjan were cousins. Their respective village residences were situated at a distance of just a couple of hundred yards. From the first to the last in political actions and Government prosecutions they held each other in close embrace and lived to the last day of life together. They were executed on the same day, in the same prison and almost at the same time. A remarkable coincidence indeed!

The spirit of these young lads had harboured no fear and it helped them in driving away all doleful thoughts and misgivings about themselves.

Chittapriya Ray Chowdhury when he finally left home and disappeared in the underground in a secret interview with his relations said,

*"Gita holds that soul is immortal and its principal function is to make men assume new forms (in repeated births)."*

During a period when the police was in hot pursuit, he said, "Death is waiting at my door (near my head) and I am not afraid of it. It is better to die (soon) than to pass days in idleness. In such a case I shall take a new birth, become active very soon and in an able and strong body would be able to destroy Englishmen."

Niren Das Gupta wrote to his parents, brothers and sisters before his execution:

"There need none be sorry for my death. Moreover, the Hindus do believe in utmost faith that they do not die with the mortal death."

Jatindra Nath, that doyen of Indian revolutionaries, wrote to his sister from the Alipore Central Jail, already referred to, on August 20, 1910,

"My eyes are fixed at the feet of that all-beneficent Lord of the Universe Whatever He dispenses, I shall accept it as His Blessings. He never does anything which may harm us in the least. In our ignorance we fail to realise that there is some great motive behind what we declare as harmful (to us)."

Didi wrote back in reply, "Let me not see the lion caged again."

Even in a life of privations and constant danger both Manoranjan and Niren gained substantially in weight and physical features, so much so that Manoranjan looked at the time like a Punjabi stalwart than a puny Bengali. As stated by the last friend and/or relative to meet them in this world, the accused in the dock looked remarkably fresh and healthy. They wore a smiling face and maintained a jovial mood to the last. They displayed complete unconcern about the outcome of the trial. Manoranjan told the said relative that he should not give himself up to sorrow because it might well have happened to them what had befallen 'Dada' and dear Chitta. In fact, as he said, it was their firm determination, while facing police fire, to continue the fight till the last breath in the nostril and to die a hero's death on the battlefield. But 'Dada' ordained otherwise and like disciplined soldiers they had to submit to the command of the General.

In the last letters sent to parents and loving sisters and brothers they wrote, in essence, that it was useless to weep over death; more so it was unbecoming over the death of a martyr. It was to be kept in mind that "men do not die with death and that is the Hindu view of life".

In a separate letter to a friend they expressed their unshaken faith in rebirth and the absolute certainty of their coming and dying again and again till the Motherland had been cleared off the pollution of the foreigners' domination.

Jyotish Chandra was sent to the Andamans where he developed signs of insanity. After some years he was removed to the Berhampore Jail where he slowly recovered. His relations and friends used to meet him from time to time. At the last interview they had some clothes for him which he deemed to be unnecessary as he had been informed about his release in the course of a fortnight.

All on a sudden a telegram reached the relations at Madaripur from the Berhampore jail containing news of his serious illness. In another seven hours a second telegram stated that the prisoner had expired.

The last of the heroes of the first open encounter with the