



Ambedkar Times

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AMBEDKARTIMES.COM TAKES PRIDE IN CONGRATULATING HONOURABLE DR. RONKI RAM

Ambedkartimes.com takes immense pride in congratulating Honorable Professor Ronki Ram on his victory in the recently concluded Panjab University Syndicate election (December 15, 2014) as well as Deans of the Faculties. Professor Ronki Ram, who is Shaheed Bhagat Singh Professor of Political Science and Hon. Director of Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) North-Western Regional Centre at Panjab University, Chandigarh (India) won the Syndicate election with the highest number of votes and declared Dean of Arts Faculty unopposed.



We are proud of his long association with the www.ambedkartimes.com and wish him more and more laurels in future too.

Prem K. Chumber
Editor-In-Chief
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REMEMBERING KOMAGATA MARU

Prem K. Chumber
(Editor-in Chief)

Komagata Maru reminds us of the great sacrifices made by Punjabis for the honour of our motherland and to seek freedom in order to live with self-respect and dignity. Komagata Maru incident also reminds us of the draconian exclusionary laws brought into practice to keep out immigrants from the colonies of the British Raj. The first of such laws was passed on January 8, 1908, which debarred all those persons from entering into Canada who did not "come from the country of their birth or citizenship by a continuous journey and or through tickets purchased before leaving their country of their birth or nationality." In fact, this or any such type of law was enacted to preclude immigration from India. Given the long distance between India and Canada, unbroken or continuous voyage from India was next to impossible then. Generally, such a long distance voyage required some halt in Japan or Hawaii that activated the exclusionary clauses of the above-mentioned laws.

A total number of 376 passengers from Punjab boarded the Komagata Maru, a Japanese steamship hired by Baba Gurdit Singh Sandhu, who publicly espoused the Ghadarite cause during his

sojourn in Hong Kong. Baba Gurdit Singh Sandhu was well aware of the exclusionary immigration laws of the Canadian government. But given his revolutionary spirit, he was determined to challenge such inhuman legislation leading to a prolonged battle with the Canadian white regime. In the due course of whole of the episode, tremendous political awareness was generated. Public meeting were organized by the Canadian conservative political leadership to build up pressure to keep the passengers out. On the other end a "shore committee" was organized under the leadership of Hassan Rahim and Sohan Lal Pathak. Indo Canadians also held protest meetings in Canada and the United States to build up pressure against the exclusionary immigration laws. After a prolonged confrontation which also witnessed some violent outburst from the stranded passengers who were demanding that justice be given to them, only 20 passengers were allowed to enter Canada and the rest of them were deported back on the same ship. The Komagata Maru, which sailed from Hong Kong, Shanghai, China to Yokohama and finally to its destination in Vancouver arrived in Calcutta on September 27, 1914. The political events that surrounded the episode met their thunderous flare up at the Budge Budge leading

to the killing of 19 innocent passengers who were already harassed to the core. During the melee some of the passenger escaped and the remainder were arrested and imprisoned or put under house arrest in their respective villages until the end of the World War I.

The Komagata Maru incident provided impetus to the Ghadar movement and sharpened the ongoing freedom struggle in the country. This incident is metamorphosed into a vibrant memory of great sacrifices and candid concern for freedom, dignity and justice. The incident did not stop haunting the conscience of the perpetrators of such inhuman atrocities on the enthusiastic passengers who wanted to take a whiff of fresh air on the promised soil of Canada. On May 23, 2008, the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia did penance in unanimously passing a resolution that "this Legislature apologizes for the events of May 23, 1914, when 376 passengers of the Komagata Maru, stationed off Vancouver harbor, were denied entry by Canada. The House deeply regrets that the passengers, who sought refuge in our country and our province, were turned away without benefit of the fair and impartial treatment befitting a society where people of all cultures are welcomed and accepted".

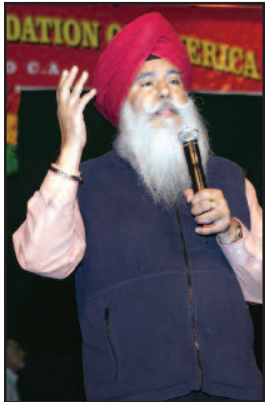
Chai Ki Chuski Victory Party in the honor of Congressman Ami Bera, MD (CA-07)

The Victory Party was organized by Pratbha Shalini, Dr. Bhavin Parikh, Bobbie Singh-Allen, EGUSD Board member & the local Indo-American Community which was held at the home of Dr. Janak & Nalini Mehtani, 2300 California Ave Carmichael CA 95608, on Saturday, December 13, 2014 where large number of people attended this Victory Party to congratulate Congressman Ami Bera including the members of "United Awareness Committee of Ravidassia Community", honored Congressman Ami Bera.

Pictures credit: www.ambedkartimes.com



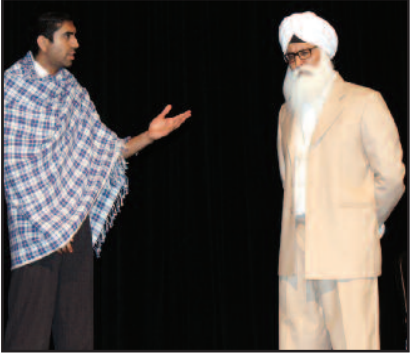
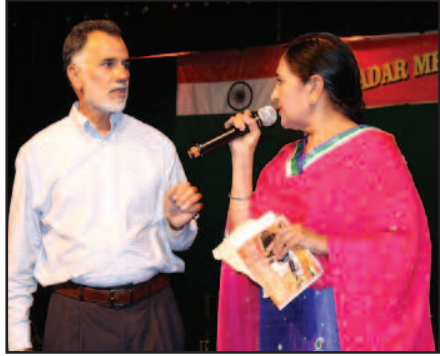
13th Gadar Memorial Conference and Mela



Gadar Memorial Foundation of America (Sacramento, California) organized a function dedicated to the memory of Komagata Maru anniversary at Cosumnes Oaks High School Performing Art Center, Elk Grove (California) on Saturday December 6, 2014. On the occasion, 'Komagata Maru Safar Zari Hai', play directed by Davinder Daman, was enacted in a praiseworthy way which was watched and widely appreciated with great interest.

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Editor-In-Chief www.ambedkartimes.com



Komagata Maru: A brief history



Dr. Gurumel Sidhu

First emigrants from India came to Canada in the beginning of the 20th century. Looking at the influx of these Indians, Canadian citizens urged the Canadian Government to pass laws against the "brown invasion", referring to the skin color of Indians. Canadian felt that these people would take over their jobs in lumber-mills, and factories. Due to these concern, Canadian Government passed stringent laws against the Indian immigrants. Two conditions were imposed:

1. Must come from the country of their birth or citizenship by a continuous journey and or through tickets purchased before leaving their country of birth or nationality.

2. Must carry \$ 200.00 in their pockets.

These conditions were unjust, outrageous and discriminatory because, (1) Technically, Indian, like Canadians, were British subject, (2) There were no such conditions against Chinese and Japanese immigrants, and 3. They averagely earned about 10 cents a day. Additionally, Canadian Government imposed some other restrictions, for example, in 1907 Indians were stripped of their right to vote, prohibited to run for any public office or serve on any jury, and were not allowed to become accountants, lawyers and pharmacists. Also, the Canadian Government instructed the steamship companies not to sell tickets to Indians. The event of streamline, Komagata Maru, traveling to British Columbia, was an outright challenge to these exclusionist Canadian laws. The Komagata Maru was a Japanese streamliner chartered by a businessman, Gurdit Singh.

Gurdit Singh was staying in Hong Kong in Gurdwara. On January 3, 1914 he lectured on the purpose of Ghadar movement. He said that the primary purpose of every Indian was to fight for the independence for his country. Many Indians staying in Hong Kong heard him and were willing to continue the movement. But they needed work to earn money and contribute towards the noble cause of independence. There were looking for an opportunity to go to Canada and approached Gurdit Singh to do something. Gurdit Singh thought it was his duty to help his countrymen in the name of Ghadar movement. There were two Indian students on their way to America for study, one was Bir Singh from Taran Taran and the other was Daljit Singh from Mukatsar who was an associate editor of a Khalsa Advocate published from Amritsar. Daljit Singh and Bir Singh, respectively, became personal and

assistant secretary of Gurdit Singh. They organized a passenger's committee and began corresponding with the Khalsa Diwan Society of Vancouver founded on July 22, 1906.

Gurdit Singh contacted many companies for hiring a ship. An English company, Jordan Co., agreed to give him a ship named Kut Sang at \$ 9,000 a month but baked out at the moment of signing of papers due to an intervention of the British Government. Then he found a German shipping agent, A. Bruno, who offered him a small steamer, Komagata Maru, used for carrying coal. The ship was owned by a Japanese company, Shinyei Kisen Goshi Kaisa. The ship was

100 meters long, 13 meters across and was driven by a 265 horsepower steam engine. On the upper deck there were a few living cabins and the lower deck was dirty due to carrying coal. The terms and conditions were for six months at 11,000

Hong Kong dollars per month: the first month to be paid at the time of signing; second within a week; the third and fourth within two weeks; and the remainder within two months of the sailing of the ship. The company agreed to provide the Captain and the crew but would not install wireless telegraphy in the ship. Initially Gurdit Singh agreed to put most of the money with the intention to collect from the passenger in the long run. Daljit Singh started selling tickets at 210.00 Hong Kong dollars which was equivalent to a regular return fare. Actually he sold tickets worth \$ 10,000 before the arrangement of a ship. Someone reported this to Hong Kong police and they raided Gurdit Singh's room in Gurdwara and seized confiscated all the papers. But the contract was signed a day earlier, therefore, papers were not delivered to him as yet. Police produced him before the magistrate but there was no concrete evidence. However, this worried some passengers and they backed out to sail. Gurdit Singh took charge of Komagata Maru on 25 March, 1914. He got the ship cleaned, fixed the decks and furnished with 533 wooden benches for passengers to sit or sleep, arranged portable coal stoves to cook and fixed the latrines. One Punjabi doctor and a Granthi was also



hired. He got the ship cleared from the health officer and announced to start the journey on March 28, 1914. But Gurdit Singh was arrested by the British Government of Hong Kong for selling tickets for an illegal journey-- illegal in the sense that Canadian law prohibited the sale of tickets to Indians if they did not travel straight to Canada from an Indian port. Hong Kong Governor, Mr. F. W. May, cabled London they instructed him to inform Canadian Government.. He cabled Canadian authorities that, : 150 Indian Sikhs have chartered steamer from here to British Columbia, are not on through tickets from India. Am advised that local emigration

clause do not apply to other than Chinese emigration. Please telegraph whether in the circumstances they will be permitted to land in Canada." No response came, therefore the Governor has to let the ship sail. The journey began on April 4, 1914. Initially

there were 150 passengers, 111 joined in Shanghai, 86 at the Moji Port and 14 more from Yokohama in Japan, totaling 376 passengers. When Komagata Maru reached Shanghai, a German cable company sent a message to German press telling about the departure of Komagata Maru from Shanghai to Vancouver on April 14, 1914 with "400 Indians on board." This news was picked up by British press and Vancouver daily news paper, "Province" published inflammatory news under the heading of, "Boat Loads of Hindu on way to Vancouver." Other newspapers followed and published news as, "Hindu Invasion of Canada." The Canadian authorities first reaction was that "Hindus would never be allowed to land in Canada." The Punjabis already settled in Vancouver area held meetings in Gurdwara to deal with the situation. Money and other provisions were arranged to help the passengers on arrival. Entire Indian community united to stand against the Canadian opposition.

Komagata Maru left Japan on May 3, 1914, and reached Vancouver, on May 23, 1914, and anchored in Georgia Gulf of Pacific Ocean at Vancouver. Its passengers included 376 Indians, all Punjabis. Among them 340 were Sikhs, 12 Hindus, and 24 Muslims. Canadian authorities did

not let the ship anchor close to the shore and passengers were barred from leaving the ship claiming that the ship has not travelled directly

from India and most passengers did not carry \$ 200.00, therefore, they violated the exclusionist laws of Canada. For two months the Canadian authorities and the Indians of British Columbia were involved in legal battle. After a long tussle, only 24 passengers, including returning residents and the family of the ship's doctor, were allowed to land. The rest were detained on the ship for two months. When the ship did not leave, Canadian authorities tried to seize it by force but they failed. The Government brought a navy cruiser, loaded with guns and anchored along side, guns pointed towards Komagata Maru. Gauging the seriousness of situation, Gurdit Singh, negotiated the departure of the ship after consulting the matter with other passengers. Negotiations included that the Canadian authorities would provide adequate provisions for the journey back and the ship will be fully fuelled.

Return to India

On July 23, 1914, Komagata Maru started the journey back and arrived in Calcutta on September 27, 1914. Close to the entry into the Budge Budge harbor, the ship was controlled by a British gunboat and the passengers were placed under guard. The British government labeled all men as self-confessed lawbreakers as well as dangerous political trouble makers. When the ship docked most of the passengers were taken into custody, tortured, some killed and the rest locked in jails without any judicial trials, and sent to Andaman Nickovar, called Kalapani.

Gurdit Singh along with 20 other men, identified as leaders, resisted arrest but were forcibly taken into custody. One of the passengers assaulted a policeman and riot started. Passengers were fired at and 19 of them killed. Some escaped, but the remainder were imprisoned or sent to their villages and kept under village arrest for the duration of the First World War. This incident became known as the Budge Budge Riot. Gurdit Singh managed to escape and lived in hiding until 1922. He was urged by Mahatma Gandhi to give himself up as a 'true patriot'; he duly did so, and was imprisoned for five years. **(1-559-250-1790)**

Dr. Harmesh Kumar's lecture at ICSSR North-Western Regional Center: Punjab University Chandigarh

The ICSSR North-Western Regional Centre, P.U. Chandigarh organized a Lecture by Dr. Harmesh Lal, President, Therapeutic Residential Care Services, Inc., USA, on "Making Sense of Psychosocial Well Being in Contemporary Era of Neo Liberalism" at the ICSSR Complex, P.U. Chandigarh.

Professor Ronki Ram, Honorary Director ICSSR North-Western Regional Centre, Fellow and Shaheed Bhagat Singh Professor of Political Science, Dean, Faculty of Arts while welcoming the guests and introducing the speaker briefed about the changing economic regime in the world from state run administration to market inclined governance and the ways it affects social security patterns.

Dr. Harmesh Kumar deliberated at length on the impact of Neo-liberal



policies on psycho-social support bases in US society and the lessons India can learn from that experience. Traditions, customs and local discourses, averred Dr. Harmesh, are basic agents of psycho-

social support bases. Traditions of community help and social work help in building up psycho-social support bases. However, for the sustainability of such supporting structures, state initiatives and material support are most desirable. But with the coming of Neo-liberalism such state supports gets with-

drawn leading to far reaching implications for psycho-social support bases. He focused upon the substitutes of psycho-social life in the face of surging market and the withdrawal of the safety net sys-

tem of the state. Most of the consequences of the capitalistic and neo liberal adopted by USA has come to forefront during the last economic recession since 2008.

Dr. Rakesh Khullar, P.U. Health Centre in his presidential remarks stated that today's lecture is co-incidental with the World Universal Health Coverage Day (UHC). Psychosocial well-being is mind's ability to adjust and adapt the physical body to our surroundings. It is becoming increasingly difficult to stay physically and mentally healthy in this contemporary world of neo liberalism. Dr. P.K. Saini, Deputy Director ICSSR North-Western Regional Centre, P.U. Chandigarh proposed vote of thanks. The lecture was followed by lively discussion in which teachers, research scholars and students participated.