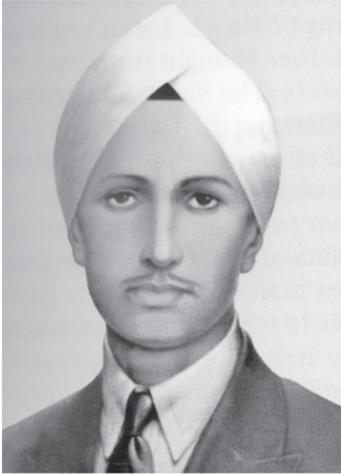


Remembering Kartar Singh Sarabha: 120th Birth anniversary

Kartar Singh Sarabha was one of the first to sacrifice his life for India's freedom. He was fifteen in 1912 when he came for higher education to U.C. Berkeley. On reaching San Francisco, the teenager was asked humiliating questions by the Immigration department.



Birth Anniversary: May 24

He saw other Indians being subjected to similar treatment while potential immigrants with Caucasian features were let in with the barest of formalities. He asked someone sitting next to him as to why this was happening. "It is because

Indians are slaves," he was told. The degrading experience stayed etched in young Kartar's memory.

Kartar met other like-minded Indians at the university campus and came to learn more about the injustices being meted out to the Indian expatriate community. Several students worked as farm labor during summer or winter breaks and faced unequal treatment. Kartar had also worked as a fruit picker alongside several other Sikh laborers and knew of the racial slurs that were thrown at them. He realized that they were paid less than other farm workers because of the color of their skin.

In April 1913, Indians in Astoria, Oregon formed the Hindustani Association of the Pacific Coast with its main objective to liberate India from British colonialism and help establish a free and independent India. Its headquarter was established in San Francisco and a newspaper titled Gadar was launched for free distribution to promote the aims, objectives and activities of the association. Gadar was published in Punjabi and Urdu and in other Indian languages and was sent to Indians all over the world. Kartar was put in charge of Gadar in Punjabi. It carried articles about the atrocities of the British on Indians and racial prejudice and discrimination against Indians in the United States. The articles exhorted people to join the association, unite and rise up against British rule. The Gadar magazine became very popular for its revolutionary and patriotic ideas and over a period of time, the Hindustani Association of the Pacific Coast itself became known as the Gadar Party.

The organization was still very young, when in August, 1914, World War I broke out, and the British forces got busy fighting the Germans. The Gadarites decided that the time for action had come as World War I provided them a golden opportu-

nity to attain their goal. They published a 'declaration of war' against the British in the August issue of Gadar and sent it to Indians everywhere, especially Indian soldiers in British cantonments. The Gadarites inspired thousands of Indians who returned to India determined to overthrow the British Government.

Kartar Singh left the United States on September 15, 1914, with Satyen Sen and Vishnu Ganesh Pingle. They met with the well-known revolutionary Rash Behari Bose in Benares and shared their plans for throwing the British out of India. Unfortunately, this information reached the British and several Gadarites were arrested at the ports on landing. Meanwhile, Kartar went about preparing the base for the revolution in Punjab. He drew plans to infiltrate the Indian army, went to several cantonments with Pingle to excite the soldiers to fight – not for the British but against the British Empire – and free India from the shackles of British imperialism.

On January 25, 1915, Rash Behari Bose reached Amritsar and went about assessing the preparations. At a meeting on February 12, 1915, the date for the revolt was set – February 21, 1915. The plan was to attack cantonments of Mian Mir and Ferozepur while Ambala was to be prepped for a mutiny. As the Gadarites went about making their final preparations for the attack, they were unaware of a traitor, Kirpal Singh in their midst, who had revealed the plan to the police. The daring attempt to free India from the British serfdom was foiled by the traitor. Many Gadarites were arrested and put in jail. Kartar, Harnam Singh Tundilat and Jagit Singh escaped the police net. They decided to go to Afghanistan and continue their struggle from there. But Kartar's conscience did not permit him to run away when all his comrades had been arrested. On March 2, 1915, they came back to Sargodha and propagated rebellion

amongst the army personnel there. Risaldar Ganda Singh who was to help them get rifles, got them arrested instead.

Kartar went to trial with other Gadarites in Lahore in what came to be called the Lahore Conspiracy case. In September 1915, the sentence was pronounced: on November 16, 1915, Kartar Singh Sarabha, only 19 years old, along with twenty seven of his comrades, was to be hanged to death. But so severe was the public outcry at the judgement that Lord Hardinge, the Governor General of India, was forced to intervene. At the last moment, the sentence of 17 of the Gadarites was changed from death to imprisonment and deportation for life to the Andaman Cellular jail.

But for Kartar, the gallows awaited. During the trial, he had refused counsel. While the judge was impressed by the young man's intellect, he showed no mercy. He labeled the young boy the 'most dangerous of all rebels'. The judge said, "He is very proud of the crimes committed by him. He does not deserve mercy and should be sentenced to death." Witnesses say that the 19 year old sang patriotic songs all the way to the gallows, kissed the hangman's noose, and embraced martyrdom.

At the age of 19, Kartar Singh, student, revolutionary, inspiring jewel in India's freedom struggle, became Shaheed Kartar Singh Sarabha. No wonder, this young man inspired the likes of Shaheed Bhagat Singh, who is known to have called him his guru.



Inder Singh writes regularly on the Indian Diaspora. He is a noted member of the SoCal community.

LETTERS

Pot Calling the Kettle Black

The brouhaha by Reverend Thomas Reese, and Katrina Lantos Swett, et al, of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom ("India dismisses US Report on Religious Intolerance, IJ, May 6), whose members are only devout Christians and a Muslim and their surrogates of the same religious stripe, like Thomas Hansen, reminds me of the old adage: "The pot calling the kettle black." They need to clean up their own backyard first before pontificating on others.

Kudos to the Indian Embassy because no self-respecting country would allow such people in to investigate "religious freedom" when they have already prejudged the issues, per their barking and prognostications.

Would America allow such a delegation from India, or elsewhere, to probe religious freedom here? Let's see what they would find. The litany of acts of religious intolerance in India pales in comparison to that in America, especially when India's population is much larger.

There have been numerous attacks and vandalism of mosques, Sikh and Hindu temples in America. Only recently, a gurudwara in Spokane, Washington was vandalized, including desecration of the holy book, not to mention the massacres at Wisconsin gurudwara and the Emmanuel African Methodist Church in Charleston. The Muslim holy book was publicly burnt by

Terry Jones, a pastor in 2012. As to claims of church burnings, there've been intentional burning of seven African American churches in just the St. Louis area.

An accurate internationally accepted gauge of how minorities in a country treated is if their numbers are increasing or decreasing. In this respect, some of India's minorities' populations are increasing fast, especially Muslims and Christians. For instance, Muslims formed about nine percent of post-partition India's population, but now are over sixteen percent and estimated to increase to twenty percent in 2020. The largest number of illegal immigrants pouring into India are Bangladeshi Muslims. Now why would they risk their lives to go to a country that persecutes them per morons of the USCIRF?

India does not have a real majority because the Hindus are very diverse group based on beliefs, regions, languages, castes, etc., that

each group is really a "minority" within the "majority."

Hansen's bravado that it will discourage investment in India doesn't explain why India is now the fastest growing economy in the world. It didn't stop the economic rise of China, where religious freedom is severely curtailed (Muslims are banned from wearing headscarves and keeping beards) and these USCIRF reverends are permanently banned.

Religious intolerance is perpetrated by a small number of bigoted individuals, whether here or in India. However, the question is: Is the present democratically elected government in India promulgating laws favoring a particular religion, or restricted any religion's activities, or tried to amend India's secular constitution? Hell no.

A.K. Sharma, Flintridge, CA

It may be a little unusual for a Guru to be in business making everyday products for human consumption (IJ, May 13). Patanjali Ayurved is a non-profit company, in India, the brain child of Guru Ramdev who has become very well known as a friend of the new prime minister, Narendra Modi, who took office just two years ago. Nothing exotic about it perhaps, except when examined and commented on in the business newspaper, Financial Times. (March 28, '16) in a lengthy feature article.

Patanjali Ayurved is a privately held company run by Ramdev's close associate, Acharya Balkrishna. He is the company's chairman, manag-

Yogi in Business

ing director and primary shareholder. The company manufactures and sells about five hundred consumer products including toothpastes, shampoos and other personal care products made from local herbal recipes as well as convenience foods like corn flakes and noodles. The company's sales for the year ending March 2015 touched \$300 million and is expected to double in the next one year. The company's business model is nothing short of rewriting the rules for such industries. They operate from a business zone in Haryana and have the motto: No per-

sonal wealth, No personal profit".

The main competitors to Patanjali Ayurved, operating in India are: Colgate Palmolive, Nestles and Glaxo Smith-Kline. The company has been able to keep its product line at a price 10% to 45% below the foreign products selling in India. Initial capital for the fledgling operation came from private loans from friends of Ramdev. Now they have a credit line from the state owned Punjab National Bank.

It is probably fair to assume that the feature article in the business newspaper was motivated by the competition to three major foreign companies operating in India successfully now, rather than any attempt to fish for trouble from the close philosophical relationship that Ramdev has with the prime minister.

P.Mahadevan, Fullerton, CA

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