# INDIAN DIASPORA RECOGNITION OF THE GHADAR MOVEMENT IN THE STRUGGLE FOR INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE

**By Ashook Ramsaran**

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## 1. *THEME:* INDIAN DIASPORA RECOGNITION OF THE GHADAR MOVEMENT IN THE STRUGGLE FOR INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE

The focus of my presentation today will be on:

"**INDIAN DIASPORA RECOGNITION OF THE GHADAR MOVEMENT IN THE STRUGGLE FOR INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE"**:

This is consistent with the conference objectives:

- To analyze the historical background of the Ghadar Movement and its ideological foundations.
- To assess the impact of the Ghadar Movement on India's struggle for independence.
- To explore the role of the Indian diaspora in emerging India.

Obviously, this is an extremely important topic which is very wide in scope and content. Hence, my focus on this one specific aspect of the Ghadar Movement and efforts at recognition at its centennial in 2013.

The Ghadar Movement and its impact and influence on the struggle for India's independence is well known both in India and the Indian Diaspora outside of India.

## *2.* INTRODUCTION

I am grateful to the organizers of this conference for inviting me to share my knowledge, efforts and experiences in recognition of the enormous significance of the Ghadar Movement, its impact on the struggle for India's independence, its centennial and recognition at the 2013 Pravasi Bharatiya Divas – as well as the positive influence of the Indian Diaspora in beneficial changes in India and other countries.

I am honored to be among outstanding scholars, researchers and historian, and hope that m presentation is informative and useful.

As then President of GOPIO, I was initiated actions and was actively engaged in global efforts to commemorate the Centennial of the Ghadar Movement, as significantly as well engaged the Government of India to recognize and honour the Ghadar heroes at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 20013.

**BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GHADAR MOVEMENT IN USA**

## *3.* THE GADAR MOVEMENT & EARLY HISTORY

In 1913, the Hindustan Association of the Pacific Coast (USA) was started to free India from the British serfdom. The association headquarters was set up in a building purchased with funds collected from the community and was named *Yoganter Ashram* which is now known as Gadar Memorial Hall and is part of the Indian Consulate in San Francisco. The association started publishing a magazine named *Gadar* to expose the British imperialism and called upon the Indian people to unite and rise up against British rule. Over a period of time, the publication *Gadar*, became well known among Indians and the Hindustan Association of the Pacific Coast itself became known as the Gadar party.

The Gadar (mutiny) took place in India in 1857. This was truly an uprising which later became a movement to free India from the British rule. Today it is popularly known as India's first war of Independence. The freedom movement in the USA, started in 1913 to free India, has become known as the Gadar Movement. The Government of India declared 2007 as the year of celebration to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the "First War of India's Independence Movement". It also established 12 chairs in different universities in memory of freedom fighters as part of the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of India's First War of Independence. One of the chairs has been named after the Gadar hero Kartar Singh Sarabha.

The history of the Gadar movement is testament of the deep and abiding love that the Indian emigrants had for India, their motherland. The Gadarites wanted India freed from the British and did not hesitate to make any sacrifice for the cause of freedom, dignity and prosperity of their motherland. They fought valiantly for their cause; several Gadarites were imprisoned, many for life, and some were executed by hanging. They are heroes, deserving highest of admiration and deepest respect. The determination, courage and sacrifices of the Gadarites inspired many freedom fighters to continue their mission for India's independence. The Gadar Movement is an integral part of the rich heritage in the United States for the Indian Americans and of Indian history. The Gadarites left an extra-ordinary legacy for future generations and a global centennial commemoration is a fitting and well deserved tribute.
The Gadarites also sought help from anti-British governments in other countries. In December 1915, they established a Free Hindustan government-in-exile in Kabul, Afghanistan, with Raja Mohinder Pratap as President, Maulavi Barkatullah as Prime Minister and Champakaran Pillai as Foreign Minister. The government-in-exile tried to establish diplomatic relationships with countries, such as Turkey, Germany, Japan, and others, opposed to the British in World War l. The Gadarites established contact with the Indian troops at Hong Kong, Singapore, and in some other countries and hoped for their participation in the uprising against the British.

The British Government tried to suppress the Gadar Movement and had hired agents to penetrate the Gadar party almost from the beginning. Har Dyal used the columns of Gadar to caution his compatriots against British spies. The traitors of the Gadar movement leaked out the secret plans to British spies who diverted ships carrying arms and ammunitions to elsewhere. Germany was originally planning to send more ships carrying arms and ammunition to India, but lost interest in the venture after seeing the fate of the original vessels.

Before leaving for India, the Gadarites had hoped that the embers of freedom had caught fire in India too and Indians were ready for a revolution. So when the World War l provided a golden opportunity for them to attain their goal, they hurried homeward for rebellion and overthrow of the British Government. The irony of that valiant effort was that while the Gadarites had gone to India to fight readily for the freedom of their motherland, the Indian political leadership openly and willingly co-operated with the British, thereby prolonging India‟s serfdom. While the overseas Indians prayed in Gurudwaras and temples for the success of the Gadarites‟ mission, the people in India flocked to Gurudwaras and temples to pray for the victory of the British!

Many Gadarites who reached India before the end of 1914, found no arms to start rebellion. A number of Gadarites including Sohan Singh Bhakna, president, and Kesar Singh and Jawala Singh, vice presidents were taken captives on reaching India while Kartar Singh Sarabha, V.G. Pingle and several others were able to evade arrest. An estimated 8000 Overseas Indians left for India from 1914-18, about 3000 were intercepted; more than 300 were put in jails while many more were restricted to their villages.

Kartar Singh Sarabha and other Gadarite leaders had come to India to overthrow the British rule and wanted to unite and work with all those forces that were working to liberate India. They made alliance with well-known revolutionaries in India such as Ras Behari Bose. They organized meetings to plan for the revolution, procure arms and arrange funds to carry out propaganda and other activities for the achievement of their goal. Since many Gadarites were retired military soldiers, they planned to infiltrate into various units of the armed forces, established contacts with their colleagues still working in the armed forces and incited them to revolt and become part of the rebellious force to liberate India. The Gadarites‟ plan included recruiting new people to join them, looting military arsenals, making bombs and robbing government treasuries. Most of the plans of the Gadarites either failed or were foiled by the British agents and by the end of February 1915, most of the Gadar activists were taken captives.

The Gadarites were prosecuted in batches by the Special Tribunal in what are known as Lahore conspiracy trials. As many as 46 including Kartar Singh Sarabha and Vishnu Ganesh Pingle were given death sentences, 69 were imprisoned for life and 125 were given varying terms of imprisonment . In the United States too, several Gadarites and their German supporters, were prosecuted in the San Francisco Hindu German Conspiracy Trial (1917-18). Twenty-nine “Hindus” and Germans were convicted for varying terms of imprisonment for violating the American Neutrality Laws

The Gadarites had a flame of liberty lit in their hearts, and did not hesitate to make any sacrifice for the cause of freedom, dignity and prosperity of their motherland. They fought valiantly for their cause. Although the movement did not achieve its stated objective, but it had awakened the sleeping India and left a major impact on India‟s struggle for freedom. The heroism, courage and sacrifices of the Gadarites inspired many freedom fighters to continue their mission.

A prominent Indian writer, Khushwant Singh, wrote in Illustrated Weekly, on February 26, 1961, “In the early months of World war I, an ambitious attempt to free their country was made by Indians living overseas, particularly in the United States and Canada. Although the overwhelming majority of the Gadrites were Sikhs and the centers of revolutionary activity were the Sikh temples in Canada, the United States, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Singapore, many of the leaders were of other parties and from different parts of India, Hardyal, Ras Bihari Bose, Barkutullah, Seth Husain Rahim, Tarak Nath Das and Vishnu Ganesh Pingley. …… The Gadar was the first organized violent bid for freedom after the uprising of 1857. Many hundreds paid the ultimate price with their lives.”

## *4.* 90TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION IN 2003

In 2003, GOPIO, the National Federation of Indian American Associations (NFIA) and the Global Punjabi Diaspora jointly organized the 90th anniversary of Gadar movement to pay tribute to the pioneers, patriots and heroes of the Gadar movement.

The celebration included a whole day conference during which eminent speakers recalled the contributions of unsung pioneers, patriots and Gadar heroes. The presentations, discussions and deliberations focused on the impact which the Gadar movement had on India’s struggle for freedom and emphasized that the Gadarites were truly the trail blazers of that struggle even while far away from the shores of India.

Former president of India, K. R. Narayanan came to the USA to deliver the keynote address. Several dignitaries including Consul General Viswanathan, then Ambassador-at-Large for NRI/PIO, Hon. Bhishma K. Agnihotri, former Premier of British Columbia Ujjal Singh Dosanjh, Amb. Sachin Siv of US.

Mission to the United Nations and several distinguished speakers and local dignitaries attended the function.

Previously and during the last three years, GOPIO has been organizing tribute events for the pioneers, patriots and Gadar heroes to continue creating awareness for the new generation of Indian Americans.

## *5.* GHADAR CENTENNIAL COMMEMORATION PLANNING

GOPIO's plans for the Gadar Centennial Commemoration include participation and support of Office of the Prime Minister of India, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs; Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Culture, UNESCO, State of California, City of San Francisco, as well as Indian civic organizations, institutions, groups and individuals. Specific agenda items included: Declaration of 2013 as the year of Centennial Commemoration of Gadar Movement; Issue a suitably designed postage stamp commemorating the Gadar Movement; Publish a historic Centennial Commemoration book about the Gadar Movement, sacrifices of the Gadar Heroes, brief bio-data (where available) of all the 48 martyrs and 69 Gadarites who were given life imprisonment, for free distribution to libraries, schools, institutions and organizations; Establish chairs in memory of the Gadar heroes in India and at least one or more in the USA. Plans for Gadar Centennial Commemoration 2012/2013 included: Gadar Centennial Commemoration per city: Forum in several cities in USA, Canada, UK, Europe, Australia, New Zealand and India, with a November 1, 2013 finale in San Francisco with a fitting memorial as a lasting tribute to the Gadar heroes

### THE CAMPAIGN FOR CENTENNIAL COMMEMORATION

Following the January 25, 2013 meeting with Minister Ravi, GOPIO made a formal request on February 11, 2012 to India's Prime Minister, Hon Dr. Manmohan Singh, appealing for the Prime Minister and respective ministries and branches of the Government of India to:

- Declare 2013 as the year of Centennial Commemoration of Gadar Movement;
- Issue a suitably designed postage stamp commemorating the Gadar Movement;
- Publish a historic Centennial Commemoration book about the Gadar Movement, sacrifices of the Gadar Heroes, brief bio-data, if available, of all the 48 martyrs and 69 Gadarites who were given life imprisonment, for free distribution to libraries, schools, institutions and organizations.
- Establish chairs in memory of the Gadar heroes in India and at least one or more in the USA.
- Direct all Indian Consulates in USA and Canada to commemorate the centennial of the Gadar Movement by holding official community events.
- Help community organizations in the USA to get officials and dignitaries from India to participate in centennial community events in selected major cities

GOPIO issued regular news bulletins starting in March 2012, appealing to people of Indian origin, NRI/PIO organizations, agencies and institutions to join the Centennial Commemoration Committee for a joint commemoration of the upcoming 100$^{th}$ anniversary of the Gadar movement in 2013. The GOPIO statement read, "Together, we would like to develop plans for the celebration in various cities in the USA, Canada and other countries where Gadar party had its branches and from where 6000-8000 people went back to India at the call of the Gadar Party". GOPIO's news bulletins also provided regular events updates and developments as the campaign progressed.

## *6.* MEETINGS IN INDIA 2012 RE GADAR CENTENNIAL

As part of the continuing effort to solicit support of GOPIO's plans for GGCC (as well as promote and address the interests and concerns of the Indian Diaspora), a delegation of GOPIO International executives held substantive and productive meetings with several prominent officials of the Government of India, as well as associated agencies in India. GOPIO garnered extensive support for its Gadar Centennial Commemoration among government officials, universities, and descendants of Gadar heroes, historians and interested individuals in India. The delegation included GOPIO Chairman Inder Singh, GOPIO President Ashook Ramsaran, accompanied by Munish Gupta, GOPIO Regional Coordinator (Africa), as well as K. N. Gupta, Director, GOPIO Liaison to Government of India. GOPIO officials presented copies of a new book, *Global Indian Diaspora - GOPIO Making an Impact* to all officials.

The meetings were held in New Delhi, Chandigarh and Ludhiana starting on August 2 and concluded on August 9, 2012 in New Delhi, Chandigarh and Ludhiana. The delegation met with: Punjab's Governor Shivraj Patil; Gadar heroes' descendants S.B, Singh and Dr Savitri Sawhney who also wrote of her father's history in the Gadar Freedom Movement; Prof. Chaman Lal of Jawaharlal Nehru University; Prof. Nisha Dube, Vice Chancellor of Barkatullah University in Bhopal, who plans on GGCC seminar or lecture series in 2013, as well other programs to commemorate India's freedom movement. Barkatullah University was named after Maulvi Barkatullah, a Gadar hero.

Meetings with officials of the government included: Mr. T K A Nair, Special Assistant to Hon. Dr Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India and discussed plans for GOPIO's Gadar Centennial Commemoration (GGCC) worldwide, as well as in collaboration with Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) at Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) 2013 in Kochi, India. The GOPIO delegation also held substantive meetings with: MOIA's Minster Vayalar Ravi and MOIA's Secretary Parvez Dewan; Dr Karan Singh, President of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)

and Dr Suresh Goel, Secretary General of ICCR, for promotion of GCC programs worldwide, as well as encouraging Diaspora youths to take advantage of ICCR programs and facilities; Minister of State of

External Affairs Preneet Kaur; Foreign Secretary Ranjan Matthai; MEA's Additional Secretary Basant Gupta; MP Dr. Shashi Tharoor; and Shri Baleshwar Agrawal, General Secretary of Antarashtriya Sahyog Parishad. The discussions were positive and productive. GOPIO obtained overwhelming support for its plans for a global Gadar Centennial as outlined in the GOPIO Gadar Centennial booklet.

Minister of State for External Affairs, Hon. Preneet Kaur, expressed support for GGCC and other GOPIO projects. At a meeting with Ranjan Mathai, Foreign Secretary of Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), it was agreed that GGCC would be substantially promoted. Each of India's foreign missions will be directed to mark the Gadar Centennial in the same manner as other significant historic events, such as the birthday of Rabindranath Tagore.

In depth discussions were held with G. Gurucharan, CEO and staff of Indian Centre for Migration (a society of MOIA) on several Diaspora projects in which GOPIO will collaborate. These included GGCC book production and GGCC exhibit. MOIA Minister Vayalar Ravi provided encouragement for GOPIO's efforts for GGCC and PBD2013 where GCC would be prominent. A subsequent meeting with MOIA Secretary Parvez Dewan developed collaborative steps with GOPIO to include GGCC initiatives in PBD2013. Key highlights at PBD2013 will comprise of: (1) an oration, (2) a panel session, (3) an exhibit, and (4) release of Gadar Centennial Book by Hon. Dr Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India. Discussions with Sayantan Chakravarty of *Empire India* concluded an agreement for media partnership and publication of Gadar articles in upcoming issues of *Empire India*.

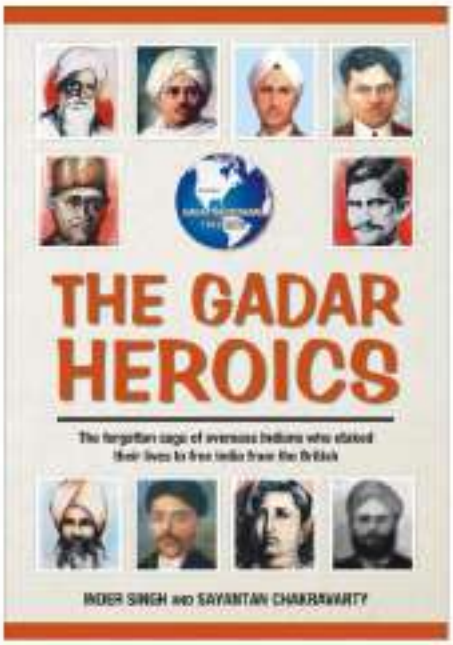
## ANNOUNCEMENT ON GADAR BY GOV'T OF INDIA

GOPIO's initiatives and solicitation to various departments of the government, in particular the Office of the Prime Minister, had a very positive result, firstly with approval by the Office of the Prime Minister to make Gadar a prominent part of the upcoming Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD 2013). The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) on 15th October, 2012 announced details of the annual convention for overseas Indians, Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD 2013) program to be held in Kochi, India on January 7—9, 2013, to include GADAR Centennial events at PBD2013 based on GOPIO's initiatives to the Prime Minister's Office and MOIA. These events included: An Oration at the plenary session, a Gadar Exhibit and Hon. Prime Minister's speech on 8th January to make favorable mention of Gadar. MOIA Press Release on 15th October, 2012 stated that, "Since we are celebrating the centenary of the Gadar Movement in 2013, the PBD Oration this time will be on the Gadar Movement. We will also have an exhibition on the Gadar Movement", said MOIA Minister Ravi.

## CENTENNIAL COMMEMORATION BOOKLET

In March 2012, GOPIO also produced a comprehensive 29-page GOPIO Gadar Centennial booklet with details on history of the Gadar Movement; Gadar Centennial Commemoration Team; Plans: Gadar Centennial Commemoration 2013 Forum: Gadar Centennial Commemoration per city: USA, Canada, UK/Europe, Australia/ New Zealand, India; Finale on November 1, 2013: Gadar Centennial Commemoration – San Francisco; References & Support; Excerpts from Speeches; Articles: Gadar Memorial in San Francisco to be Museum and Library; GOPIO Launches Gadar Centennial Commemoration; Gadar – Overseas Indians Attempt to Free India from British Slavery; Photos: Gadar Movement; List of Gadar Heroes.

THE GADAR HEROICS - Published 2013



## 7. GADAR CENTENNIAL COMMENORATION IN USA

GOPIO International under the able leadership of Dr Piyush Agrawal (Senior Vice President) and Dr Renuka Misra (National Coordinator, USA), in collaboration with GOPIO Chapters of Metro DC and Virginia, held a very successful launch of its GOPIO Gadar Centennial Commemoration in the USA on Saturday, November 3, 2012 at the Embassy of India in Washington, DC. Hon. Nirupama Rao, India's Ambassador to the USA, was the Chief Guest. Three (3) other Indian Diaspora ambassadors to the United States also participated in the launch program: Hon. Ambassador Bayney Karran of Guyana; Hon. Ambassador Dr Neil Parsan of Trinidad & Tobago; and Hon. Ambassador Subash Mungra of Suriname. The launch event on November 3, 2012 included a lecture/discussion on "The Role of Gadar Movement for India's Independence" by prominent Gadar researchers and historians, a release of the GOPIO publication on "Global Indian Diaspora", distribution of a GOPIO Gadar Centennial Commemoration Press/VIP information kit and GOPIO Gadar Centennial lapel pin as well as showing of the GOPIO Gadar Centennial Commemoration documentary.

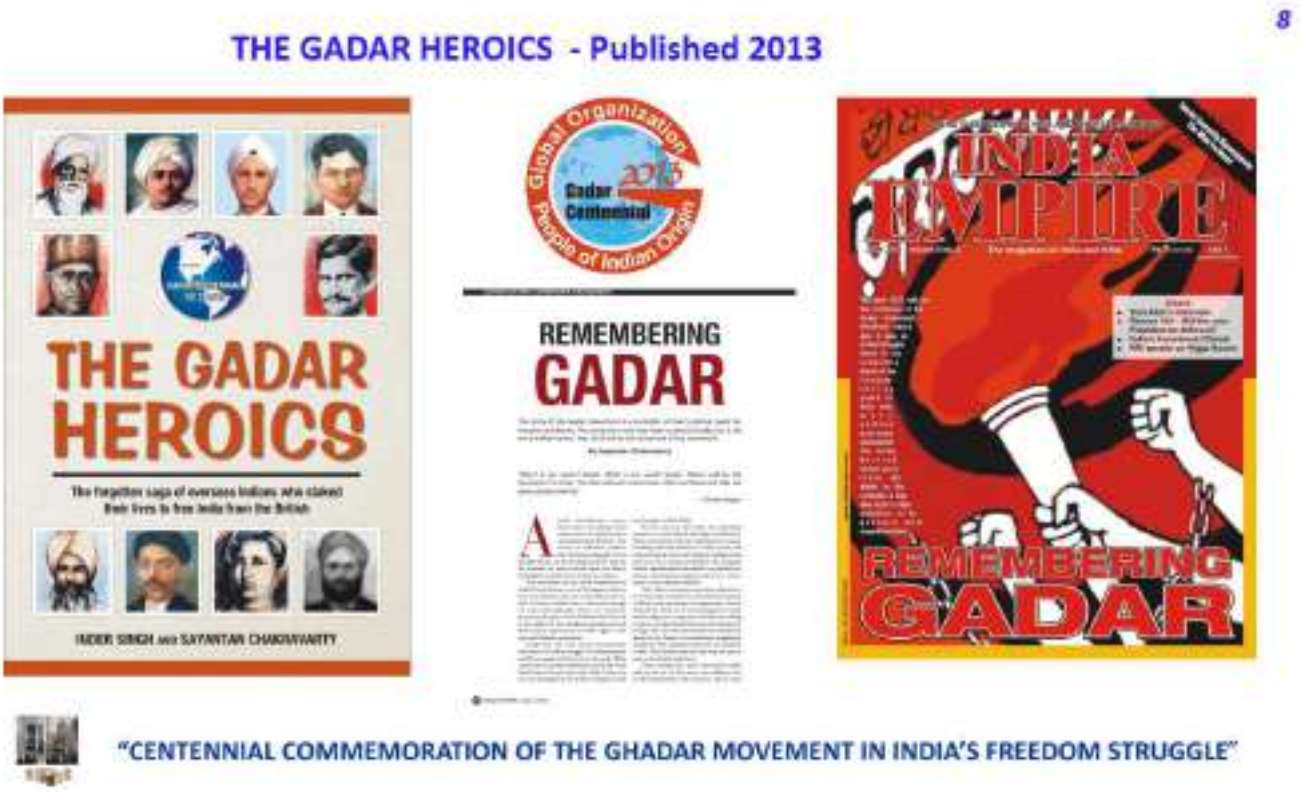
CENTENNIAL COMMEMORATION OF THE GHADAR IN WASHINGTON, DC 7

The launch program included a welcome by Dr Renuka Mishra (GOPIO National Coordinator USA) followed by remarks by Dr. Zafar Iqbal (President, GOPIO Metro DC) and Mr Jay Bhandari (President, GOPIO Virginia). GOPIO chairman Inder Singh delivered a compelling presentation on *Role of Gadar Movement for India's Independence*; prominent Indian community advocate Dr Rajen Anand spoke on *The Importance of the Gadar Movement;* and Kewal Kanda of California discussed *The Gadar Memorial Hall.*

Amb. Rao spoke glowingly about the launch and positively supportive of GOPIO's initiative and GOPIO Gadar Centennial Commemoration, highlighting GOPIO's initiatives on matters of interest and concern in the Indian Diaspora. Amb. Rao said that "it is a privilege to cooperate with GOPIO in this auspicious venture." Ambassadors Karran, Parsan and Mungra reiterated the long and lasting bonds of heritage and history between their respective countries and India, with lots of inspiration and encouragement derived from the Gadar Movement for the struggle for independence in their respective countries.
Their attendance and participation certainly enhanced the program and made it more global in outreach and appeal.

The GOPIO Book "Global Indian Diaspora" was released by Amb. Rao and also presented to Ambassadors Karran, Parsan and Mungra. That was followed by discussion of GOPIO Gadar Centennial Commemoration worldwide and in particular the USA by Ashook Ramsaran (President of GOPIO International) and Dr Piyush Agrawal (Senior Vice President of GOPIO International) respectively. Dr Renuka Mishra concluded the program with thanks and appreciation, then followed the showing of the GOPIO's Gadar Centennial Commemoration documentary.

## *8.* GHADAR CENTENNIAL PUBLICATION OF "THE GADAR HEROICS"



# THE GADAR HEROICS

**The forgotten saga of overseas Indians who staked their lives to free India from the British**

**INDER SINGH AND SAYANTAN CHAKRAVARTY**

## CENTENNIAL COMMEMORATION DOCUMENTARY DVD

GOPIO produced a comprehensive 20-minute Gadar Centennial documentary on DVD which included the Gadar history, centennial plans and interviews by scholars and officials: Dr. Karan Singh, Min Vayalar Ravi, MP Dr Shashi Tharoor, Inder Singh, Ashook Ramsaran, Dr Piyush Agrawal, Consul General of San Francisco, S. B. Singh, and others. Included in the program for GGCC per city worldwide is a suggested format of Gadar seminar to be followed by reception/dinner or lunch as required. GOPIO produced a special GOPIO Gadar lapel pin for free distribution at meetings, GGCC seminar and other events. GOPIO ordered a specially emblazoned shawl to be given to special recipients at GGCC seminar and other events. GOPIO also posted the entire 29-page GGCC booklet on its website for worldwide access and viewing. In addition, *Empire India* became a very supportive media partner and published articles on Gadar by GOPIO chairman Inder Singh and others for global distribution on a monthly basis.

## CONVENTION 2013 RECOGNITION OF GADAR DESCENDANTS

GOPIO held its annual convention on January 6, 2013 in Kochi, India, preceding the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD 2013) events. At the GOPIO conference, an entire session was allocated to Gadar movement and centennial in 2013.

Conference Session II: *Freedom Movements in the Diaspora - Gadar & Others*

Chaired by Inder Singh (Chairman GOPIO Int'l, USA and co-chaired by Dr. Neerja Arun (GOPIO Academic Council Co-Chair, and Coordinator-cum-Director, Gujarat Univ. International Program, Ahmedabad, India). The lead speaker was Prof. Harish Puri (Researcher, Historian and Author of Books on Gadar Movement, India) who was also selected for the Gadar oration at PBD2013. Other speakers: Dr Savitri Sawhney (Daughter of Gadar Hero Khankhoje, Author, India); Manpreet Kaur Singh (Author, Journalist, Australia); Dr. Teresa Wycliffe (Community Leader, GOPIO Metro DC, USA). The session was concluded by Harbachan Singh (Director, Liaison to United Nations, USA**).**

The GOPIO CSA banquet later that evening was a very prominent, high profile, well publicized event with chief guest Governor H. R. Bhardwaj, currently Governor of Karnataka and Kerala; MOIA Minister Vayalar Ravi as Guest of Honor; and other guests including Kerala Chief Oommen Chandy, Kerala NRI Minister K.C. Joseph; former Governor M. M. Jacob; and Lord Bhikhu Parekh from the House of Lords, UK. The capacity crowd witnessed GOPIO's recognition of 6 persons for outstanding community service; 3 for special recognition and 1 posthumously for outstanding community service. In addition, special GOPIO Gadar shawls were presented to descendant of Gadar heroes including Dr Savitri Sawhney, a descendant of a Gadar hero. Also recognized was Prof. Harish Puri.

*Empire India* produced a comprehensive pull-out section titled “The Gadar Story” which was widely distributed at GOPIO events and PBD2013.

## *9.* GADAR PROMINENT AT PBD 2013

GOPIO initiated the effort to include the Gadar Centennial an integral part of PBD2013 with direct appeal to the Prime Minister and MOIA Minister Ravi, meetings with PMO, MOIA and Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) as well as Dr Karan Singh of ICCR. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh inaugurated the 11th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2013 in Kochi on 8th January, 2013 and emphasized the Gadar Centennial and its importance of the Gadar Movement in Indian history.

In his inaugural address, the Prime Minister said, “Over the ages, the relationship between Pravasis and Bharat has taken many forms. One of its most glorious manifestations has been their contribution to India’s independence movement. Nearly a hundred years ago, almost to this day, Mahatma Gandhi

returned to lead a nation's march to freedom. This year, we are celebrating the centenary of the Gadar Movement, which was a luminous spark of support in distant California for the struggle for independence being waged at home in our country. Apart from commemorating it by the issue of a special postage stamp today, we will also upgrade the Gadar Memorial in San Francisco into a functional museum and library with a sculpture to honour the Gadar Babas, the heroes of this great national movement".

*Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2013 Oration on Gadar*

*The PM releases Ghadar Movement Centenary commemorative postage stamp at the PBD-2013. (Photo: Courtesy, PIB*

GOPIO's statement in response read: "GOPIO has been relentlessly pursuing with various agencies of the government and we are overjoyed to hear the acknowledgement of Gadar Movement by the Prime Minister of India at the annual convention of NRIs/PIOs (PBD 2013). The Prime Minister's announcement on January 8 at the PBD 2013 that the Gadar Memorial in San Francisco will be upgraded into a "functional museum and library with a sculpture to honor the Gadari Babas, the heroes of the great movement" is welcome news".

Earlier in the program, MOIA Minister Ravi, in his speech at the inaugural, said, "This is the centenary of the Gadar Movement when migrants from India settled in Canada and USA rose in their opposition to British rule in India, unmindful of the consequences in their love for motherland. Today is also a day to pay homage to them." Later in the day at PBD2013, Gadar historian and scholar Prof. Harish Puri, formerly of Guru Nanak Dev University, author of newly released book "Ghadar Movement", spoke for 45 minutes in a plenary session devoted exclusively to Gadar Movement.

## GADAR MEMORIAL & MUSEUM IN SAN FRANCISCO

India's Minister of Finance, Hon P. Chidambaran, in his 2013-2014 budget announcement on February 28, 2013, allocated funding for construction of Gadar Memorial & Museum in San Francisco. The statement read: "To mark the centenary of the Ghadar movement, the Government will fund the conversion of the Ghadar Memorial in San Francisco into a museum and library.

The Hindustan Gadar Party, when founded in 1913 to join in the struggle for India's independence, started its operation from 436 Hill Street, San Francisco. Its original home was known as "Yugantar Ashram" and it was from here that the freedom fighters of the Hindustan Gadar Party, also known as "Gadri Babas" were active from 1913 to 1917. It was from this place that they would organize and launch a revolution and publish a powerful weekly paper called "Gadar" to propagate the cause of Indian independence. The Party's Headquarters subsequently moved to "5 Wood Street", the present location. The activities of the Gadar Party were so intense, its popularity instantaneous, the edifice soon came to be called "Gadar Ashram".

After India won its freedom, the Ashram along with its belongings including some historical records etc. was handed over in 1949 to the Government of India through the Indian Consulate. However, *de jure* transfer was effected in June 1952. The building, at that stage, was about 30 years old and it was very much in a dilapidated condition. Efforts were made from 1952 onwards to set up a suitable memorial, by the local Indian community and the Government of India, the latter sanctioning US$ 83,000 for the restoration work. The ground breaking ceremony for the restoration of the Building was performed by Sardar Swaran Singh, the then Minister of External Affairs in September 1974. The Gadar Memorial was finally inaugurated by Shri T.N.Kaul, at that time India's Ambassador to US in March 1975. The planned Gadar Memorial and Museum at the Gadar Hall in San Francisco is a fitting tribute to the Gadar heroes and well deserved recognition for their sacrifices.

## *11.* CONCLUDING REMARKS

I had remarked at the conclusion of PBD213:

"In addition to the prime Minister's speech on Ghadar at PBD2013, the release of the postage stamp and the Oration on Ghadar at PBD2013, the many publications on the Ghadar Centennial, the Ghadar museum in San Francisco and continuing recognition of the Ghadar Movement, to is a significant and historic recognition of those who made ultimate sacrifices for the freedom of India. These are historic markers for all time, transcending time and place, reflecting the commitment and resilience of the Indian Diaspora. The results of diaspora organizations' initiatives and efforts are also remarkable achievements for all persons of Indian origin and the Indian Diaspora.

The history of the Ghadar Movement is significant is the history of India and its diaspora - and will always be an inspiration to those who aspire for greater achievements".

Thank you for the opportunity to make this presentation.

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## Ashook K. Ramsaran

Ashook K. Ramsaran, born in Guyana (formerly British Guiana), is 3rd generation of Indian origin. His great grandfather arrived in Guyana from India in 1853 and his great grandmother arrived in 1860 as Indian indentured labourers to work on British owned sugar plantations.

Ramsaran resides in the USA since emigrating from Guyana in 1968. He earned advanced engineering degrees at Polytechnic-New York University and established an electronics manufacturing company in New York. He is married to Camille Ramgadoo (also of Guyana), father of Arnold and late Gerald, grandfather of Jaden and Gavin, all residing in Queens, New York.
Ramsaran is President of Indian Diaspora Council International (IDC); Executive Vice-President, Queens Civic Congress (QCC); Chair, Community Advisory Council, NY Presbyterian Hospital/Queens NYP/Q); Board Member, Center for Caribbean & Latin Amer. Studies, St. John's University (SJU/CLACS); Delegate of Queens General Assembly (QGA); Executive Board Member, India Empire (a Diaspora Publication, Delhi, India); and board member of several other organizations; past President, GOPIO Int'l.

Ramsaran was instrumental in the 2011 establishment of the Kolkata Memorial (India) and its inscription recognizing Indian Indenturedship 1834-1917; the Indian Arrival Monuments at Highbury and Monument Gardens in Guyana (2013) and others in Trinidad; Grenada, as well as street namings in New York to recognize outstanding individuals and institutions.

Ramsaran has been accorded numerous national and international awards, including the prestigious Government of India's Pravasi Samman Award, Indian Commemoration Trust (Guyana); National Council of Indian Culture (Trinidad); Guadeloupe and others; Several New York State/City, organization and official proclamations, citations and awards.