

Article

IN THE SHADOW OF GHADAR: MARXISM AND ANTI-COLONIALISM IN COLONIAL PUNJAB

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Abstract

The Ghadr Party, an eclectic group of diasporic Punjabis, was perhaps one of the most significant political movements led by emigre Indians in the early twentieth century. Designated as one of the biggest threats to colonial rule in the 1910s, the Ghadr Party spread its operations over five continents, and repeatedly committed acts of sabotage aimed at colonial officials from India. By the 1920s, however, the birth of popular movements in India marginalized various groups that believed in the spectacular actions of a vanguard as a strategy for overcoming the stifling impact of colonial rule. Members of the party, eager to find a foothold in the changed political scenario, opened discussions for building a popular front in Punjab, with many returning to the country to participate in such an endeavour.

In this article, I study the encounter between the Ghadarite tradition and the communist movement in colonial Punjab through the writings of Sohan Singh Josh, who attempted to bring these two traditions together to produce a viable political project. I argue that Ghadar's encounter with Marxism not only influenced the former, but also radically transformed Marxism itself, particularly on questions of History, violence and volition.

Keywords

Anti-colonialism, Punjab, Marxism, Communism, Intellectual History

The relationship between Marxism and the colonial world can best be described as a missed encounter, since the political trajectories of late 19th century “social democracy” in Europe and the burgeoning critiques of colonial rule by anti-colonial intellectuals and organizations did not cross paths until the 1920s. Positivist Marxism, tied to a linear conception of history, could only view the colonial world as a permanent site of deficit, removed from the universal history of class struggle prevalent in the industrially advanced West. Such a conception of a civilizational hierarchy was not only a result of an ideological construction peculiar to 18th- and 19th-century¹ European

¹ This is not to make a simplistic binary between Europe and non-Europe. In fact, Lenin (and one can argue already Marx) emphasized the importance of subjective, strategic interventions on part of the communists in order to overthrow capitalism. The same argument can be extended to Antonio Gramsci and Walter Benjamin, who did not see History as inherently emancipatory. My argument is that this tension between History and volition in European

thought, but was also tied to an objective process of economic, political and ideological differentiation produced by the uneven development of capitalism across global space.² Yet, a missed encounter does not merely play the role of keeping apart political ideologies emanating from distinct historical contexts. Rather, this lack of historical correspondence between specific political ideologies becomes the condition of possibility for their encounter, overdetermined by contingent events, yet structured by the persistence of deeper, subterranean currents that allow for mutual translation.³

In this article, I interrogate the advent of communist ideas in colonial Punjab in the 1920s as a new ideological current in the Indian political landscape. I focus in particular on the simultaneous appropriation of the Ghadar Party history and European Marxism by Punjabi radicals to produce a specific communist praxis in colonial Punjab. My aim here is not to recount the complex reasons the Ghadar Party joined the communist movement in India. Instead, I write a history of the *intellectual trajectory* of communism in Punjab as a peculiar encounter between European Marxism and the anti-colonial struggle. Further, rather than asking the usual question of how Marxism entered and transformed the political landscape of colonial India, I seek to explore the ways in which political practices in colonial Punjab impacted Marxist ideology, rethinking and displacing its internal coordinates. The colonial deficit in Marxist thought was not only viewed by anti-colonial intellectuals as a limit to Marxism's global import, but also as a provocation to improvise and reconstitute its framework to permit its resonance in the colonial world.⁴ Thus, I argue that a rupture from a pristine Marxism was not a sign of a "deviation" from "the idea", but instead was a vehicle for its inscription in a historically specific site, and, consequently, for its universalization outside its point of origin in Europe.⁵

Marxism was accentuated in colonial conditions, since the inaugural gesture of anti-colonial movements was a rejection of History. This had implications for Marxian categories such as the revolutionary subject, alienation, ideology etc., some of which I explore in this article.

² Contemporary scholarship convincingly argues against a conception of linear economic, social and political development within capitalist modernity. Instead, it posits uneven productive space as constitutive of Capital against its own fantasies of homogeneity. Unevenness produced disparate ideological and political practices, the result of which are finally being registered within intellectual history. See, for example, Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008) and Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

³ See Louis Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-1987* (London: Verso, 2006).

⁴ For a similar argument, see Shruti Kapila, 'The Majority of Democracy', *Social Text Online* (2015), https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/the-majority-of-democracy/ accessed 16th August 2015. Intellectual history must move beyond the global division of labor in which European intellectuals think and non-Europeans practice. Instead, we should study these practices as profound reconceptualizations of modern ideas in and of themselves. Bruno Bosteels has recently emphasized the theoretical importance of these innovative practices as "theoretical acts" or acts of theoretical production. See Bruno Bosteels, *Marx and Freud in Latin America: Politics, Psychoanalysis and Religion in Times of Terror* (London: Verso, 2011).

⁵ Many Indian intellectuals were aware of socialism and Marxism during the 19th century. As a political project, however, Marxism became relevant in India only in the 1920s as it took root in the working class and the broader anti-

I explore these questions through the story and writings of Sohan Singh Josh, a communist from colonial Punjab and vocal defender of the Ghadarite tradition. Josh's oeuvre is ideally placed to delineate the convergence of Marxism and the Ghadar Party as he identified with, and worked through, both these traditions to formulate communist politics in colonial Punjab. By showing how he developed a new practice of Marxism, particularly on the question of the "revolutionary subject", I examine how such practice formed the basis for a new framework for Marxist theory itself. In other words, I consider communism in Punjab as a productive site for theoretical reflection, rather than merely a place for passive reception of European ideas.

Marxism and Ghadar: The Encounter

A detailed survey of the Ghadar Party's encounter with global communism is beyond the scope of this article. It is important, however, to briefly comment on the conjuncture that permitted these two projects to intersect in the aftermath of the First World War.

The Ghadar Party was formed in 1913 to challenge British sovereignty over India. The party consisted of Indians (mostly Punjabis) living outside and aimed to ignite a rebellion across colonial India, particularly in the British Indian military to win independence. The party was able to build an impressive anti-imperial geography, with a network in countries as diverse as the United States (mostly California), Canada, Honduras, Afghanistan, China and the Soviet Union. Apart from doing propaganda work through a number of publications, the Ghadar Party sought alliances with anti-British forces, including Germany and Turkey. With bases in multiple countries and participating in "conspiratorial" activities, Ghadar was an integral actor in what Tim Harper has recently called the "Asian Underground", a global space consisting of exiles, rebels and criminals found in major urban centers of Asia during the early twentieth century.⁶

By the late 1910s and early 1920s, the Ghadar Party was politically and organizationally exhausted.⁷ The party failed to induce widespread rebellion in the British Indian military, particularly with the defeat of the daring attempt to seize control of the Mian Mir Cantonment in Lahore, which the party hoped would trigger military revolt. The colonial state punished the architects of this botched attempt in the "Lahore Conspiracy Case" and concomitantly launched a crackdown on Ghadarite activities throughout the Empire, reduced its capacity to pose a substantial challenge to colonial authority.⁸ In addition, after the US' entry into the war, Woodrow

colonial movement. See P.C. Joshi and K. Damodaran, *Marx Comes to India*, (New Delhi: Manohar Book Service, 1975).

⁶ Tim Harper, 'Singapore, 1915, and the Birth of the Asian Underground' *Modern Asian Studies* 47 (2013), pp.1782-1811.

⁷ The Indian intelligence community also felt that Ghadar activists had "little concrete result to show" during this period. See H. Williamson, *India and Communism* (Calcutta: Government of India Press, Calcutta. 1933), pp. 156-158.

⁸ See Malwinder Singh Warraich and Harinder Singh (eds.), *Lahore Conspiracy Case I and II* (Chandigarh: Unistar, 2008).

Wilson's government outlawed anti-British groups, including the Ghadar Party in California,, decimating its organizational structure through a number of sedition cases. Finally, the defeat of the Axis in the war (a major funder and supplier of weapons to the Ghadar Party) removed a major global ally, making geopolitical realities increasingly bleak for transnational anti-colonial groups.⁹ Top intelligence officials in Colonial India assessed Ghadar's political capacity by concluding that there was "very little concrete result to show" and the party was "rendered inoperative" after the "Armistice was signed".¹⁰ The Ghadar Party continued its activities in the Pacific and even in North America, but leading members of the group desperately searched for new ideological and geostrategic anchors.

During the same period, Bolshevik Russia found itself in the midst of a civil war, and faced hostile territories to the West. Furthermore, the failure of communist uprisings in Europe meant Russia needed to seek new allies beyond their traditional relationships with European communists. This conjuncture propelled the colonial world, and the anti-colonial movements germinating in it, as potential allies in the struggle for global communism.¹¹ Lenin's thesis on the colonial question, the holding of the Congress of the Peoples of the East at Baku, and the formation of the University of the Toilers of the East at Tashkent were tied to the transformed political possibilities presented by the post-war conjuncture, with the colonial world at the center of this new imaginary.¹² Ghadar Party leaders who were sympathetic to Marxist thought, such as Santokh Singh and Rattan Singh, became voting delegates and official observers, respectively, at the fourth Communist International Meeting, cementing relations between Soviet Russia and the anti-colonial movement in India.¹³ Santokh Singh also enhanced his understanding of Marxism by studying the subject

⁹ See Kris Manjappa, *M.N. Roy: Marxism and Colonial Cosmopolitanism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010).

¹⁰ H. Williamson, *India and Communism* (Calcutta: Government of India Press, Calcutta, 1933), p. 157.

¹¹ See Alexandre Bennigsen and Enders Wimbush, *Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union: A Revolutionary Strategy For the Colonial World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

¹² The Second meeting of the Communist International witnessed the first in-depth debate on the role of the colonial world in global communism. Lenin presented his thesis on the "National and Colonial Questions", which he followed by presenting another document, that was written by the Indian delegate, M.N. Roy. It signalled the emergence of the non-European world as the principal theatre for communist politics during the twentieth century. See Vladimir Lenin, 'Draft Thesis on the National and Colonial Questions' *Selected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1938), vol. x.

¹³ The encounter between the anti-colonial movement in India and Soviet Russia occurred via three different trajectories. First, M.N. Roy attended the second session of the Communist International as an official delegate from Mexico and forcefully presented the case for including colonies in the global communist movement. Previously, he had been a member of the "terrorist" underground in Bengal targeting British officials. The second political tradition to encounter Soviet communism was political Islam, particularly those young activists who left colonial India to fight for a global Caliphate. Their interactions with pro-Soviet forces in Central Asia convinced them to begin the study of communism, eventually leading to the formation of the first Communist Party of India at Tashkent in 1921. The Third trajectory is that of the Ghadarite revolutionaries, as we discuss later. See Kris Manjappa, *M.N. Roy: Marxism and Colonial Cosmopolitanism* (Delhi: Routledge, 2010), and Ammar Jan, "Islam, Communism and the Search for a Fiction", in *Muslims Against Muslim League: Critiques of the Idea of Pakistan*, eds. Megan Robb and Ali Qasmi (Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

closely during his stay in the Soviet Union, a continuation of his exploration of Marxist ideas from his stay on the East Coast.¹⁴

Santokh Singh was part of a number of transnational Ghadarite militants who had not only acquainted themselves with Marxist philosophy, but were also seeking avenues to enter the transformed political landscape of colonial Punjab. The ‘Punjab Disturbances’ of 1919-1920 and the violent response of the colonial state, including the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, had not only solidified anti-colonial feelings in the province, but also opened a new sequence for political action, displacing the vanguardism of the previous decades with mass mobilization as central to the political imaginary in India.¹⁵ As a Ghadar militant, Santokh Singh inhabited transnational spaces incongruous with imperial geography, but now he aimed to situate himself in mass politics inside Punjab. He returned to colonial Punjab in 1926 to organize a workers and peasants political party influenced by Marxism.¹⁶ After a brief internment in his native village at Amritsar, he began publishing *Kirti* magazine, an organ given the twin tasks of disseminating “communist ideology” in vernacular idioms, and defending the legacy of Ghadarite heroes.¹⁷ Singh’s failing health compelled him to seek allies in political communities in the Punjab to continue his work, which is how he met Sohan Singh Josh, a young and emerging political leader in the Punjab and future editor of *Kirti* magazine.

Josh was born into a peasant family at Chetenpura village of Amritsar in 1896. To support his family, he took up a number of petty jobs before being appointed for a junior post in the Censor’s Office in Bombay. He was assigned the task of reading letters from the Punjabi diaspora in order to prevent “seditious” literature from entering India.¹⁸ In a move that would seem both ironic and embarrassing later in his life, Josh destroyed “hundreds of letters” written by Punjabi radicals to their relatives and comrades in Punjab, people whose activities he would later radically identify with.

...the Censor Office were merciless-- a cog in the machine working like automats, showing no sympathy or human emotions either for the addressers or the addressees. Rather, we were keen on collecting as much information as possible from those letters for the special files allocated in the name of patriotic Indians who

¹⁴ David Petrie, *Communism in India* (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1928), pp. 152-157.

¹⁵ The “Punjab Disturbances” and the Amritsar Massacre could be seen as moments of the birth of “the political” in modern India. Not only did anti-colonialism gain mass appeal in colonial India, but the multiple contradictions forming the social body also found expression in the political domain, resulting in contestations over the place of religion, caste and class within the nation. For an excellent discussion on the colonial anxieties over the “disturbances”, see Hussain Nasser, ‘Towards The Jurisprudence of Emergency: Colonial Rule and The Rule of Law’ *Law And Critique* 10 (1999).

¹⁶ H. Williamson, *India and Communism* (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1933), pp 159-160.

¹⁷ See Ali Raza, ‘Separating the Wheat from the Chaff Meerut and the Creation of “Official” Communism in India’ in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and Middle East* 33:3 (2013), pp. 316-333.

¹⁸ See Sohan Josh, *My Tryst with Secularism* (Columbia: South Asia Books, 1991).

were considered “conspirators, suspects or seditionists” by the British Government. I was a mercenary... I was a Sikh, and like other Sikhs was loyal to the government.¹⁹

The Akali movement in colonial Punjab radicalized Josh, turning him into a major proponent of anti-British views.²⁰ The movement had the overt aim of reclaiming control of Gurdawaras from corrupt, pro-British *mahants*, and also became the concentrated expression of anger amongst the once loyal Sikhs against the increasingly authoritarian British rule in the Punjab. In 1922, Josh was one of the prominent leaders of the Akali movement who were arrested by British authorities, and was sentenced after proclaiming in front of the magistrate that he had “little faith in British rule”.²¹ He gained further fame and notoriety after leading a group of political prisoners to engage in civil disobedience within the jails, questioning the sovereignty of colonial power on the bodies of the condemned prisoners.

Our struggle in jail was part of the general struggle that was being waged throughout the country for religious and political reforms.... We knew that no improvements inside the jails could take place without struggles and sufferings; we knew how the *Ghadar* patriots had fought in Andaman and Indian jails, and had made great sacrifices for winning their rights for *kachcha* and *pagree*.²²

Josh placed himself within the tradition of the Ghadar activists, the people he had spied on for years, and aimed to emulate their politics, an identification we shall dwell on later. In jail, he was torn in the struggle between “fanatical Akalis” who insisted on singing songs glorifying Sikh rule over India, and pro-Congress prisoners who protested against Sikh rule for being exclusive of the larger Indian nation.²³ He became increasingly dissatisfied with the parochial turn in Akali politics, claiming that a major challenge confronting the anti-colonial movement was to overcome identitarian divisions. After a number of clashes with the Akali leadership, both intellectual and physical, he began to search for alternative ideological and organizational anchors for his politics.²⁴ This is roughly the point (1927) when he met Santokh Singh, who immediately recruited Josh to *Kirti* as an editor, an encounter that would prove to be most enduring for Josh’s political

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 14.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 20.

²¹ Ibid., p. 88.

²² Ibid., p. 48.

²³ Sohan Josh, *My Tryst with Secularism* (Columbia: South Asia Books, 1991), p. 51..

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 72-73.

trajectory.²⁵ He would later describe the political significance of *Kirti* as a “the continuation of the Ghadar Movement in a new way”.²⁶

He became the most prominent leader and intellectual of the communist movement in the Punjab in the 1930s and 1940s, being repeatedly arrested by the colonial state for his seditious activities, and served a 5-year jail term for the “Meerut Conspiracy Case”.²⁷ Josh led an electoral campaign in 1937 against Sardar Raghbir Singh (a major landlord in Amritsar) on a platform calling for an end to “landlordism”, defeating the latter by 12000 votes and becoming one of the 5 communist MLAs in the Punjab Legislative Assembly.²⁸ Josh remained a member of the Communist Party of India until his death in 1984, serving as a major chronicler of the radical tradition in the Punjab, giving special emphasis to the Ghadar Party and the Communist Movement as part of the continuum of perpetual rebellion.

Thus, we witness the intersection of three different political currents in the 1920s: Leninism’s decisive move to explore revolutionary potentialities in the East, the Ghadar Party’s attempts to find a foothold within colonial Punjab, and Sohan Singh Josh’s search for a new ideological anchor for himself in mass politics in Punjab. Here, I am most interested in the third strand, i.e. Josh’s attempts to place communist politics in Punjab as a continuation of the twin legacy of European Marxism and the Ghadar Party. In his writings, Josh does not view Punjab’s radical tradition as a story of deficit due to its missed encounter with Marxism, a position that would make orthodox Marxism appear as the universal kernel of wisdom able to unlock the impasse of any particular situation. Instead, he develops a framework in which Marxism itself needed a particular, historically dense site that would not only make it relevant for political action, but in the process, would also change its own theoretical premises. Consider how Josh rather embarrassingly writes about his lack of knowledge of Marxism when he joined *Kirti*, a “Marxist magazine”, as an editor.

I did not know much of Marxist theory. I knew only what I had read and learnt from the *Liberty and the Great Libertarians*, which also contained excerpts from the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Hence, whatever I knew was eclectic, anarchistic and communistic all mixed together and unsystematic.²⁹

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 101-102. Santokh Singh was impressed by Josh’s statement in the Akali leaders’ conspiracy case and approached him through his Ghaddarite comrade, Bhai Bhag Singh, a Canadian, to write articles for the newly found *Kirti* at the end of 1926.

²⁶ Sohan Josh, *My meetings with Bhagat Singh and Other Early Revolutionaries* (New Delhi: Communist Party of India, 1976), p. 13.

²⁷ See Sohan Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party: A Short History* (New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1977).

²⁸ Sohan Josh, *My Tryst with Secularism* (Columbia: South Asia Books, 1991), p. 215.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 102.

I read this “unsystematic” thought not as a limitation, but as a vehicle for producing political novelty within the realm of communist praxis. Here, I take a methodological liberty. I study Josh (and other anti-colonial Marxists) as an author of a new practice of communism, without necessarily developing a theoretical or conceptual framework adequate to this novelty. I consider his oeuvre as an ideal site of this novelty, as he brought together disparate strands to build a viable project for political action in colonial Punjab.³⁰

To explore this singularity, we must ask why someone who wished to situate himself in the tradition of the transnational Ghadar Party and “global communism” premised his politics on the peasantry, the archetypal figure of backwardness in modernist discourse. I examine this question through a study of transnationalism in the early twentieth century, as well as the socio-historical specificity of the Punjab.

Beyond Global and Local: The Broken Time of Politics in Colonial Punjab

My engagement with anti-colonial politics in “global space” is different from current scholarship on the subject that examines diasporic politics as a rootless “cosmopolitanism”, dissolving the centrality of “place” with its historical, cultural and affective density, within a universalizing narrative of the “global”.³¹ As Tim Harper has argued, such a banal focus on flows and encounters risks obfuscating the anxieties and violence emanating from global migration, flattening such frictions by constructing a fiction of a seamless emergence of a smooth, “cosmopolitan” humanity. Such a methodological construction has an uncanny resemblance with colonial narratives that portrayed global revolutionaries as external threats that required the tightening of imperial borders to prevent their intrusion into the imperial body politic.³²

My own task is to restore the centrality of these transnational, anti-imperial networks to the imperial geography *from which* they emanated. For despite the global itineraries of Ghadar revolutions, they never could, nor in my opinion did they seek to, escape the history that compelled them to migrate from Punjab. Ever since its formation, the primary aim of the party was to influence political life inside India, while preparing revolutionaries to “return” to the country to carry out subversive activities. One of the primary tropes of the Ghadar Party was a call to acknowledge the trauma of the War of Independence of 1857, a gesture seeking to produce politics by a *confrontation* with History, rather than seeking a *flight* from it.³³ In this section, I first study

³⁰ I agree with Shruti Kapila’s argument that the Indian political was formed less as a result of “applying” western ideas in India, and more through creating ruptures from received ideologies. Citations of European ideas in the works of Indian thinkers often functioned as a point of departure from, rather than a fidelity to a theoretical framework. See Shruti Kapila, ‘Global Intellectual History and the Indian Political’ *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*, eds. Darrin MacMahon and Samuel Moyn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

³¹ For example, see Kris Manjappa, *M.N. Roy: Marxism and Colonial Cosmopolitanism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010).

³² See Nivedita Saxena and Siddharta Srivastava, ‘An Analysis of the Modern Offence of Sedition’ *NUJS Law Review* 7:2 (2014), pp. 121-147.

³³ See Sohan Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party: A Short History*. (New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1978).

both the peculiar historical conditions prevalent in colonial Punjab that facilitated the formation of the transnational Ghadar network. Second, I show how Josh attempted to constitute a political praxis adequate to the Ghadar legacy *inside* colonial Punjab to overcome the internal/external divide constitutive of colonial propaganda, finding in the figure of the peasant a potential embodiment of the emancipatory promise offered by transnational revolutionaries.

In colonial Punjab (much like the rest of the colonial world), capitalism, state formation and, consequently, political subjectivity, did not follow a linear trajectory. Instead, we are presented with a broken time that cannot be narrativized under a master-signifier such as Capital, colonialism or even less so, feudalism.³⁴ The special relationship enjoyed by the region with the colonial state meant that the imperatives of security, capital, and land were superimposed onto each other in a complex unity. The Land Alienation Act (1900) is a classic example of the contradictory tendencies existing in colonial Punjab that the British had to negotiate in order to reproduce their power. Punjab's landed elite felt threatened by the increasing encroachment of urban-based finance capital on agricultural lands. Yet, the resentment displayed by Punjab's landed elite against this process of land alienation greatly perturbed colonial officials since they required their support in maintaining stability in Punjab, as well as for recruitment for the Indian military. The result was a peculiar social arrangement in which "non-agriculturalist tribes" were barred from acquiring agricultural land, solidifying economic, caste and political barriers between urban and rural Punjab.³⁵ Simultaneously, the Punjab's peasantry, apart from producing for the world market, was physically assimilated into a global geography through their participation in the Indian military, traveling to disparate locales, from the Far East to the Middle East to the East Coast in the United States.³⁶

A worrying factor for the British was the fact that, despite the integration of a surplus rural population into the military, the agrarian crisis affecting the middle and the poor peasants was too acute to be resolved through an absorption of the surplus peasantry into the state apparatus. Recurrent agrarian crises often led to localized peasant uprisings, such as the 1907 "disturbances" against the Colonisation Bill, the largest mass agitation by the peasantry against colonial rule.³⁷ Such specific arrangements meant that the peasantry represented the poor and backward "other" of industrial progress, while simultaneously being central to modern geo-politics due their critical

³⁴ In recent years, scholars as diverse as Jairus Banaji and Etienne Balibar have argued that there is no straightforward correspondence between "base and superstructure" or the content and form in capitalism. Beyond necessitating a detailed analysis of a particular formation, such an approach also keeps open the possibility of historical and political contingencies. See Jairus Banaji, *Theory as History: Essays on Mode of Production and Exploitation* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011).

³⁵ See Hassan Javid, 'Class, Power, and Patronage: Landowners and Politics in Punjab', *History and Anthropology* 22:3 (2011), pp. 337- 369.

³⁶ See Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

³⁷ See Barrie Gerald, 'The Punjab disturbances of 1907: The Response of the British Government in India to Agrarian Unrest' *Modern Asian Studies* 1 (1967), pp. 353-358.

role in the British Indian military, creating a peculiar tension in assigning it a political temporality. It is not surprising, that the first truly “global” political movement from colonial India, the Ghadar Party, was fuelled by Punjabi peasants living in the diaspora, signifying this paradox.

Communism and the Peasant Question

The presence of multiple temporal rhythms made it impossible to decipher a singular socio-political logic for colonial Punjab. It meant that the question of “the global” had to be rethought and reconstituted in relation to the internal dynamics of the politically charged 1920s and 1930s colonial India. Josh locates the rise of the Ghadar Party rebellion within the double consciousness of the Punjabi peasantry, impoverished, yet globally mobile.

The main reasons for Indians going abroad was economic... The economic conditions of the Punjab peasants had worsened during the second half of the nineteenth century due to the increased land revenue, heavy indirect taxes, sahuکار’s debts and fragmentation of land holdings. Land on which they were making their poor living had passed into the hands of the rich peasantry and banya sahuکار. There was no employment for the peasant youth except enrolling themselves as military recruits in the British army....The Punjabi soldier had proved his worth in the wars of expansion of the British Empire. He had gone overseas, fought many battles in different countries under the British flag and seen people of different religions, colours and nationalities. This broadened his mental horizon to an extent, he acquired an adventurous spirit.³⁸

According to Josh, the intersection of extreme misery and the acquisition of a transnational “mental horizon” imbued the Punjabi peasant with an “adventurous spirit”. The critical place occupied by the Punjabi peasantry within the coercive apparatus of the colonial state made it a special target for appeals by revolutionaries aiming to subvert colonial authority. For this reason, the planned rebellion by the Ghadar Party in 1914-1915 rested on the assumption that there would be a combination of military rebellion, beginning in the Mian Mir Cantonment of Lahore, and mass peasant support in the Punjabi countryside.³⁹ Josh argued that the reasons for the failed rebellion, known in the British legal lexicon as the ‘Lahore Conspiracy Case’ lay precisely in the inability of the Ghadar leadership to win over the active support of the peasantry.

A wiser, more capable and far-sighted leadership with widespread organisation was needed to take advantage of the unrest prevailing among the peasantry and in the

³⁸ Sohan Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party: A Short History* (New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1977), p. 40.

³⁹ See Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

Sikh-Hindu and Muslim regiments, prepare them for a combined assault and start the revolution... But the above formula of men, money and arms was inadequate and insufficient. Because even if all these three were there, the revolution perhaps could not have succeeded without the mass backing and an organised central leadership and its far-flung branches following a strict discipline.⁴⁰

The active support of the peasantry here appears as the “missing link” between the heroic but doomed voluntarism of the Ghadarite revolutionaries and a transformative politics in India. The formation of the Kirti Kissan Party in Punjab was meant to overcome this lacuna and to situate revolutionary politics in the midst of the agrarian crisis. Thus, communist politics began in Punjab by invoking the revolutionary potential of the “peasant masses”, as Josh's reflections on the Kirti Kissan Party conferences demonstrate:

...I spoke at great length about the starving and famished conditions of the working masses, especially the peasant masses.... We wanted to wean away the poor and the middle peasantry from the influence of the Zamindara League and expose the pro-landlord politics of Choudhry Chhotu Ram... The agenda of the Rohtak conference was almost the same as that of the Lyallpur conference...The main task was to meet the land needs of the peasantry.⁴¹

The seamless insertion of the peasantry as the principal vehicle for radical politics is apparent from these lines. In fact, the primary activities of the Communists in Punjab revolved around the “Qarza committees” formed to organize against increasing rural indebtedness and high rates of land revenue.⁴² This also explains why the first (successful) electoral campaign of communists in the Punjab was entirely centered on the agrarian situation. Josh’s electoral campaign against Sardar Raghbir Singh was also premised on fighting the problems faced by middle and poor peasants.

But he [Raghbir Singh] was not all virtue, and he was a known oppressor of peasants of villages in his possession and under his domination, depriving them of their share of irrigation water and harshly raising rents from them. Further, he was a lackey of the British who had never raised his voice against the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, and in fact favoured the continuation of British Raj. All these factors provided us with enough ammunition to expose him throughout the length and breadth of the Tarn Taran.⁴³

⁴⁰ Sohan Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party: A Short History* (New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1978), pp. 269-270.

⁴¹ Sohan Josh, *My Tryst with Secularism* (Columbia: South Asia Books, 1991), p. 121.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 200.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

Josh links the destitute conditions of the peasantry with colonial exploitation (an oppressive landlord who was also a “lackey of the British”), placing the two within a continuum. As stated above, Josh went on to achieve a historic win against Raghbir Singh, with a margin of 12,000 votes. Gains such as these made by communists in the 1930s, are often attributed to the “global” appeal of communism during the inter-war and post-war periods.⁴⁴ While broadly correct, such an analysis nevertheless carries the risk of depicting anti-colonial politics as either a mere reiteration of ideas already developed *elsewhere*, or at best local “modifications,” denying the possibility of intellectual autonomy to the non-European world.

Borrowing from Dipesh Chakrabarty, I posit that European ideas, including Marxism, had to be stretched each time they were deployed in colonial India, displaying both their utility, but also their imprecision when dealing with novel political practices outside the sites of their origin.⁴⁵ To this sharp analysis I make one addition; not only does historical difference force us to expand upon existing theoretical frameworks, but it also compels us to reconstitute such frameworks, challenging the very idea of an original site. I, therefore, argue that the elevation of the peasantry as the principal revolutionary subject in colonial Punjab, far from being a particularistic *deviation* from a pristine Marxist theory, provides us with tools for rethinking Marxism on the basis of a *new practice of theory*.

Peasant Deviation Or Anti-colonial Innovation?

Rochona Majumdar has powerfully argued that the primary displacement in revolutionary thought in colonial India occurred through the politicization of the peasantry during the anti-colonial movement, a social group deemed “pre-political” in the most radical canons of European thought. Yet, the stubborn persistence of the peasantry in the social body, and increasingly visible presence in Indian political life, interrupted linear representations of socio-political development.⁴⁶ As Majumdar rightly points out, however, “peasant” was less of an empirical, objective category, than a master-signifier for social groups and classes (such as tribals, unemployed, urban poor, etc) marginalized by the process of primitive accumulation, but without a proper name in political thought. She places this importance attached to the peasantry as part of the “romantic” search for a non-industrial “revolutionary subject” in the twentieth century.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ See for example, Joachim Haberlen, ‘Between Global Aspirations and Local Realities: The Global Dimensions of Interwar Communism’, *Journal of Global History* 7 (2012), p. 415.

⁴⁵ Dipesh Chakrabarty, ‘Belatedness as Possibility: Subaltern Histories, Once More’ in *The Indian Postcolonial: A Critical Reader*, eds. Elleke Boehmer and Rosinka Chaudhuri, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 163-176.

⁴⁶ Rochona Majumdar, ‘Subaltern Studies as a History of Social Movements in India’, *Journal of South Asian Studies* 38 (2015), p. 50.

⁴⁷ The same question found its most forceful expression in the Chinese countryside, where the Communist Party of China decided to mobilize the peasantry into a fighting force. Yet, Mao Zedong’s contribution to the rethinking of revolutionary subjectivity, particularly with respect to the peasantry, remains one of the most unacknowledged aspects

The framework developed by Majumdar is useful in highlighting the political significance of processes and social groups that produced the modern political in India through the *interruption* of a specific modernity imagined by colonial (and colonized) elites. One of the key contributions of Subaltern Studies has been its focus on the peasantry as introducing a gap between Europeans notions of an ideal modern citizenry and the actual practice of modern subjects, a productive space between *imagining* and *inhabiting* modernity. I build on this framework to posit that a praxis premised on the interruption of capitalist modernity rather than its maturation, the excluded remainder of the historical process, in this case the peasantry, threatened the disintegration/transformation of the political order. Consider Josh's analysis of why the peasantry provided communists an opportunity to establish a foothold within the political landscape of colonial Punjab.

The (Zamindara) League stood for the interests of the landlord and the kulaks: the Chaudhuri used the word zamindar to cover over the entire peasantry, including the poor and the middle peasantry. The provincial Congress committee was also holding its conference to defend the interests of the corrupt banis and put forward its own political program. We wanted to wean away the poor and the middle peasantry..... Our strong point was that we were against landlordism, and wanted their lands to be distributed among the landless and the poor peasantry.⁴⁸

The *non-place* occupied by the peasantry in existing forms of representations, which had been “covered over” in colonial and nationalist discourse, made it possible for it to become a political subject. Here, we witness an important similarity between Ghadar Party activities and peasant revolts that allowed for their simultaneous incorporation into communist thought. Anti-colonial groups such as the Ghadar Party constructed a transnational, anti-colonial geography exceeding the limits of imperial sovereignty. As Enseng Ho has argued, this *excess* allowed anti-colonial groups to haunt the colonial imaginary, since their ability “for geographical mobility often meant crossing imperial and departmental jurisdictions” from where they appeared as “sophisticated as empire itself, and enough so to represent a potential threat”.⁴⁹ The conflagration of peasant discontent into a political crisis also remained a concern for British officials, who recognized that the “trials and troubles of the Indian peasant are many and he who seeks to ease their lot may well succeed in not only gaining their confidence but also their blind and unthinking devotion”.⁵⁰ Therefore, contrary to the “external” threat posed by Ghadar, the peasantry represented an

of contemporary scholarship on the subject. See Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Tse Tung* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 2014)

⁴⁸ Sohan Josh, *My Tryst with Secularism* (Columbia: South Asia Books, 1991), p. 118.

⁴⁹ Enseng Ho, ‘Empire through Diasporic Eyes: A View from the Other Boat’ *Comparative Studies of Society and History* 46:2 (2004), pp. 210-246.

⁵⁰ H. Williamson, *India and Communism* (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1933), p. 153.

immanent excess, whose financial precarity often turned into political defiance, threatening the internal stability of the Empire.

Colonial anxiety over a fusion between these *global* and *local* symbols of interruption triggered simultaneously a transnational and national operation to contain the “threat” posed by such groups, with colonial officials vowing to “stamp” them out “like the plague”.⁵¹ Following from Agamben, I posit that such excessive figures were at the heart of colonial sovereignty, since their inclusion into the legitimate body politic could only be realized through the exclusionary gesture of sovereign violence.⁵² Such an *inclusion through exclusion* was not only a response to a foreign intrusion or an external threat, but was also critical in structuring the internal life of the Empire, a fact borne by the flurry of “sedition” charges against the leading figures of the National movement inside India.⁵³ Thus, Josh’s attempts to forge an identity between “global” groups such as the Ghadar party and “local” agrarian movements stemmed from each’s *excessive* presence in imperial categorizations, with their lack of place endowing them with a disruptive potential in the present.

We see that groups such as the Ghadar party were not merely “cosmopolitan,” a category unable to explain their political specificity beyond mundane theme of geographical mobility. Instead, we should view them as part of a *political project* in fidelity to the disruption of a historically specific Empire, which could align with other groups (internal or external) that posed a similar threat to imperial rule. British officials themselves placed these two threats together, condemning *Kirti* for simultaneously “advocating the organisation of workers and peasants” and “championing the cause and ideals of the Ghadar conspirators”, in the worse combination of “internal” and “external” threats imagined by colonial authorities.⁵⁴ Therefore, rather than creating a socio-cultural homology as a basis for political identification, it was the ability of both the Ghadarites and the insurgent peasantry to interrupt colonial sovereignty that allowed their adequation in a shared political project, without posing a logical contradiction.

Loss, Volition and Sacrifice

Yet, the mere interruption of social processes does not allow us access to the historicity of communist thought, i.e. how a *specific* politics was imagined, practiced and sustained in a given historical situation. Instead, we run the risk of reading a particular political interruption in the colonial world as simply a *repetition* of similar insurrectionary moments elsewhere in modernity, whose consequences had already been deduced by European thinkers. We know from Deleuze, however, that no repetition is innocent of improvisation, even if the novelty appears to be part of

⁵¹David Petrie, *Communism in India* (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1928), pp. 321.

⁵² Agamben, Giorgio *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2004).

⁵³ See Shruti Kapila, ‘Once Again, Sedition is at the Heart of Defining the Nation’, *The Wire*, 2nd of February, 2016 <https://thewire.in/22763/once-again-sedition-is-at-the-heart-of-defining-the-nation/> accessed on 4th of March, 2016.

⁵⁴H. Williamson, *India and Communism* (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1933), pp. 160.

a world constantly repeating itself.⁵⁵ A repetition of an idea in a novel setting is always also a movement of an internal loss, displacing its own coordinates to permit the emergence of unfamiliar elements, even if the lack of an adequate language corresponding to this novelty cloaks the new inside the vocabulary of the familiar. The peasantry signified a critical new element in Marxism's repetition in the non-European world which induced a deeper loss than merely a displacement of the proletariat as a political subject.

The classical Marxist conception of the proletariat was tied to a stagist view of history in which the proletariat represented the maturation and exhaustion of the capitalist mode of production, allowing it to embody an epoch-shifting potential to take humanity beyond the present. The absence of the proletariat as a principal political subject was also a loss of such certainty in the Big Other of History and its sociologically predictable laws, turning political action into a *creative* and *productive* process tied to the contingency of the historical conjuncture. Thus, rather than simply an exchange of positions between the proletariat and the peasantry within a shared conception of History, the erasure of scientific guarantees turned *volition* into a central aspect of political subjectivity in anti-colonial thought. I study volition through the trope of sacrifice which, apart from signalling a confrontation with History through its interruption, allows us to examine a precise practice through which anti-colonial thinkers, including Marxists, produced autonomous political ideas.

Let us take an example of the Ghadar party's elucidation of colonial rule. For the Ghadarites, participation in colonial institutions represented a process of financial and psychic self-enslavement for the colonized subjects. Consider the following lines from the first edition of *Ghadar di Goonj*, the official newspaper of the Ghadar Party.

The world derisively accosts us: O Coolie, O Coolie. We have no fluttering flag of our own anywhere. We go fighting to wave the British flag over our heads. This is a very shameful thing for us. You became slaves to the English nation and disgraceful to the name of Hindustan.⁵⁶

The emphasis on shame (as we shall discuss later) is immediately followed by a call to arms to arrest this subjection by inculcating a spirit of self-abnegation.

Make the platoons aware, why are you sleeping, O swordsmen? Indians won battles in Burma, Egypt, China and Sudan, Shame on us we that we helped our enemy. This is what a wretched slave does..... Driving out the British tyrants, we have to

⁵⁵ See Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

⁵⁶ Quoted in Sohan Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party: A Short History* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1977), p. 172.

brighten the name of India like bright torch. If we remain alive we shall rule and if we die, the world will sing songs of praise for us.⁵⁷

In a gesture common to various anti-colonial movements, the Ghadar Party called for an active *distancing* from the material and ideological coordinates of imperial rule. The lack of political institutions expressing the will of anti-colonial organizations compelled groups like the Ghadar Party to substitute the pursuit of material benefits with voluntary suffering in order to resist assimilation into the imperial project. In psychoanalytic terms, “sacrifice” was offered by anti-colonial militants not in the name of universally accepted institutions or a political community, but instead as an act that *brought into existence* a new political community.⁵⁸ In other words, since there was no institutional or sociological guarantee for the existence of ideals such as “liberty” or “nation”, *sacrificing* in the name of such ideals became the alternative ground for their production by inscribing them on a suffering body. Thus, anti-colonial movements in India had to produce the grounds on which to premise their political ideals, with concepts attaining their sanctity not from a legal regime, but from sacrifices offered by anti-colonial militants in their name. It is for this reason that Josh elevated the element of self-abnegation central to Ghadarite subjectivity as the party’s most essential and eternal contribution to communist politics in the region.

The Ghadar armed struggle was not fought in vain. It left an indelible heritage of revolutionary spirit and courage in the country. It set a new precedent of selflessness, self-sacrifice and self-abnegation for the cause of freedom and took it to a new height...Their martyrdom taught us at every moment of our duty and obligation towards India’s freedom.⁵⁹

The appeal of the figure of the martyr in Josh's writings stem from his ability to become a productive symbol for a regulative idea. Writing in the *Kirti* magazine, the official organ of the communist movement of the Punjab, Josh depicted a martyr as the epitome of the revolutionary subject.

The martyr is far higher than the standard of his time, and his views are far loftier than those of other people. The people who are tightly bound with the chains of conservative views cannot understand his lofty flights (of imagination) and independent views...then comes his turn for execution. Does he become upset on

⁵⁷ *Ghadar di Goonj*, 1 (1913), p.1 and Sohan Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party: A Short History* (New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1977), p. 191.

⁵⁸ See Dennis Keenan, *The Question of Sacrifice* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), pp. 33-45.

⁵⁹ Sohan Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party: A Short History* (New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1977), p. 271.

hearing of his death? Does he begin to cry? Does he make entreaties to save himself? Never. He rejoices, merry-makes, leaps and jumps and sings smilingly.⁶⁰

This description of a joyful martyr elevated confrontation with death as a more authentic mode of existence than mere attachment to life privileged in liberal humanism. But more importantly, it is the martyr's indifference to existing temporality that made his actions indiscernible to those attached to a defaulting present. One may argue that suffering and sacrifice became universal tropes for political claim-making in colonial Punjab as acts in excess of the present, interrupting its reproduction. In fact, Marx himself had to be placed within this tradition of conscious self-abnegation to make him legible in the region's politics. In a speech on Marx, which could have easily have extended to revolutionaries from the Ghadar Party, Josh describes Marx as one who "suffered" for humanity.

He had been passing his life in securing bread for the poor people. The German Government offered to give him the higher posts several times but he refused to accept them and said that in order to provide happiness in the world it was necessary that some people should be in distress. Happiness cannot prevail over the world unless some persons become martyrs for the sufferings of the people.⁶¹

The transformation of Marx into a colonial, or better still, an anti-colonial militant undergoing voluntary suffering was part of the larger shift in communist practice in the colonial world, particularly on political subjectivity. Josh privileged the consciously suffering partisan as a bearer of revolutionary potentiality, rather than situating the latter in a sociologically deduced group, such as the industrial working class. In a classical anti-colonial gesture, Josh cloaks his departure from orthodox Marxism by invoking, if not incorporating, Marx into a new conception of revolutionary subjectivity. Yet, much like every border, the line separating orthodox from anti-colonial Marxism also co-joined them. As we have discussed, for Josh, what was at stake was not a rejection of Marxism as a "foreign idea" to be substituted by indigenous thought, but to use the particularity of the historical situation, and its attendant cultural and political repertoires, to produce a *new practice* of Marxism. The giant shadow of the Ghadar movement and the persistence of agrarian revolts produced a historically specific communist subjectivity that overcame the loss of historical certainty through volition and sacrifice. This new dialectic of Marxism developed in Punjab provides us with a window to re-open Marx's own oeuvre to examine repressed elements that resonate with this praxis, as we shall see in the next section.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 98-99.

⁶¹ Copy of speech delivered by Sohan Singh Josh at Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar, trans. Morid Hussain, *Meerut Conspiracy Case, Prosecution Exhibits*, pp. 37-38.

Encountering Two Genealogies of Shame

We have studied how communism arrived in colonial Punjab as a peculiar encounter between Marxism and Ghadarite anti-colonialism, resulting in a complex interplay between external imperatives and internal displacements. Yet, there perhaps appears to be a deeper subterranean connection between the political practice of the Ghadar Party and Marxism, despite their production in distinct spatial (and temporal) locales.⁶² Once again, we look at Josh's attempts at fusing these disparate currents to unearth these connections.

For Josh, the history of communism in Punjab, and the history of the Ghadar Party, were an attempt to continue the work of a deeper undercurrent in Punjab's collective unconscious, the revolt of 1857. The uprising and its subsequent defeat aided in securing a special place for Punjab in colonial administration, while also served as an untapped source of accumulated rage against the Empire.

According to British authorities themselves, the most important factor which tilted the balance in favour of British victory was the arrival in time of the Sikh regiments in Delhi...The Sikh chieftains, in their selfish interests, with their illiterate armies openly sided with the British rulers and stabbed the revolt in the back.... Even backward areas heard many rumours and stories current [sic] during those days. It gave a good jostling the high and the low [sic]. It aroused feelings of sympathy for the rebels and people were sorry they did not succeed.⁶³

We see the double movement in which Punjab had been integrated into Empire through the loyalty of its military regiments and the ruling elite, yet tales of the revolt circulated in colonial Punjab as a heroic episode of resistance. This interplay between a revolutionary promise and a haunting betrayal retained 1857 as an unfinished experience in popular memory. Much like the British invocation of the event each time there were anti-British "disturbances" in order to justify excessive state violence⁶⁴, anti-colonial movements also had to engage with 1857 as a settling of scores from the past, as well as to retroactively save its heroic promise by situating it in existing anti-colonial struggles.

As discussed earlier, for a militant anti-colonial organization like Ghadar, belief in an onward march of progress was replaced by the humiliation of participating in a project of self-enslavement. Shame became the raw material for fueling political and ethical action by militants in the Punjab. Shame also served as the affective motif through which they mobilized the

⁶² My argument is partly informed by Bruno Bosteels' excellent discussion on the persistence of subterranean undercurrents in social formations, and their re-emergence through encounters in distinct historical moments. See Bruno Bosteels, *The Actuality of Communism* (London: Verso 2011).

⁶³ Sohan Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party: A Short History*. (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1977), pp. 12-13.

⁶⁴ Mark, Condos, 'Licence to Kill: The Murderous Outrages Act and the rule of law in colonial India, 1867-1925', *Modern Asian Studies* 50 (2015), pp. 1 - 39.

revolutionary potentialities of past revolts, such as 1857, which had been obscured by Punjab's apparent loyalty to Empire. Ghadar leaders displaced existing codes of loyalty and honor towards the British state onto the register of anti-colonial shame. In the first edition of its newspaper, *Ghadar di Goonj*, published in 1914 and cited almost verbatim by Josh in his works on the Ghadar Party, the theme of humiliation is deployed to counter-pose the Punjab's alleged attachment to Empire.

Are you not ashamed that in times of war you are ordered to the trenches and the British troops are kept in the rear in security? For all danger to your lives you get only nine rupees a month and out of this, you have to clothe and feed yourself and save from this for your family, whereas the British soldier gets three good square meals a day and is provided with the best of uniforms, besides getting forty five rupees a month and bonus, etc.⁶⁵

In a classic example of counter-interpellation, these words were aimed at disrupting the process of recognition through which colonized Punjabis came to identify with Empire, by emphasizing the physical separation between Indian and white soldiers in the British military. It is this estrangement from dominant modes of identification induced by shame that opened up a separation from colonial ideology, denoting the disjointedness between colonial self-representation and its actual practices in Punjab. Josh stressed the centrality of Ghadar's contribution in the realm of ideology, by "reminding Indians" of the realities of colonial rule.

The Ghadar heroes' everlasting contribution was that they raised the banner of Ghadar (revolt) against British slavery and reminded Indians that the motherland was still fettered in British chains and they had to be broken...And they reminded us that the war for independence started in 1857 and carried forward by them in 1914-1915 still remained unfinished and that it had to be concluded.⁶⁶

By inducing a consciousness turned against itself, shame had the power to "remind" colonial subjects of an originary event in which revolt and subjection lay anchored in the same instance. For Josh, the "unfinished" work of Ghadar, that "had to be concluded," was continued by the communist movement in India, which "always sought and got inspiration from the 1857 revolt". Thus Ghadar's summoning of 1857 allowed it to become a vanishing mediator between military revolts against the British and the advent of mass anti-colonial politics in India, tying the two moments together in a history of continuing rebellion.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Sohan Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party: A Short History* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1977), p. 191.

⁶⁶ Sohan Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party: A Short History* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1977), p. 271.

Should we view Marxism's relationship with Ghadar's history as simply an extension or negation of Marxist thought, or can it aid us in locating elements within Marx's *oeuvre* that allowed for such belated resonance in the non-European world? I argue that there were, perhaps, deeper undercurrents structuring Marx's writings that allowed aspects of his thought to be incorporated into an anti-colonial subjectivity premised on shame and suffering. In a beautiful but rather understudied commentary on German patriotism in a letter to Ruge written in 1843, Marx highlights the revolutionary potential in *shame*, if directed at one's own participation in a farcical political project, in this case, German nationalism.

The glorious robes of liberalism have fallen away and the most repulsive despotism stands revealed for all the world to see. This, too, is a revelation, albeit a negative one. It is a truth which at the very least teaches us to see the hollowness of our patriotism, the perverted nature of our state and to hide our faces in shame. I can see you smile and say: what good will that do? Revolutions are not made by shame. And my answer is that shame is a revolution in itself... Shame is a kind of anger turned in on itself. And if a whole nation were to feel ashamed it would be like a lion recoiling in order to spring.⁶⁷

It is difficult to miss the resonance between the deployment of shame by Marx and by the Ghadarite revolutionaries, as if there was a secret knot that tied together the two political projects and permitted a mutual incorporation. Here, shame is deployed as an "anger turned on itself" in an act of self-accountability. "Shame is in itself a revolution" insofar as revolution demands a minimal separation, "a recoiling" from the laws of the world, only in order prepare for subjective interventions "to spring". Much like the Ghadar party, Marx emphasizes subjective transformation, rather than an expression of objective relations, as a necessary pre-condition for meaningful intervention. We are miles away from discussions of teleological laws of History predestined to move towards a revolutionary event, and are instead presented with a revolutionary subjectivity that is incongruous with fantasies of linear development.⁶⁸ The encounter between "Marxism" and the anti-colonial movement compels us to register the consequences of communist praxis in the colonial world within traditional Marxism, including making audible the silences

⁶⁷ Karl Marx, *Early Writings*. trans., Rodney Livingston and Gregor Benton (New York: Vintage 1975), pp. 199-200.

⁶⁸ In recent years, there has been an emphasis on recovering the political aspects (i.e. interventions) of marx, rather than simply viewing him as a scholar of political economy. In such analyzes, Marx is not seen as either a critic or an enthusiast for modernity, but rather a militant who was actively strategizing to overturn the status quo. It is this legacy of Marx that became relevant in the non-European world. See Alain Badiou, *Communist Hypothesis* (London: Verso Books, 2009), Harry Cleaver, 'Karl Marx: Economist or Revolutionary?' in *Marx, Schumpeter and Keynes: A Centenary Celebration of Dissent*, eds. Suzanne W. Helburn and David F. Bramhall (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1986), pp. 121-146, and Daniel Bensaid, *Marx for our Times: Adventures and Misadventures of a Critique* (London: Verso, 2002).

within the texts of Marx, a long-neglected task that is finally being undertaken in intellectual history.⁶⁹

The Ghadar movement, and its appropriation by communists in Punjab, became one of the many sites of the encounter that turned Marxism into a theory of rupture from History, rather than simply an expression of its teleological movement. Josh's appropriation of Marxism not only overcame the internal impasse of the radical tradition in Punjab, but also aided in restoring to Marxism its own forgotten legacy, obscured by the positivism dominant in 19th Century Europe.

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⁶⁹ I have in mind Bruno Bosteels and Kevin Anderson's work. See Bruno Bosteels, *Marx and Freud in latin America: Politics,Psychoanalysis and Religion in Times of Terror* (London: Verso, 2011), and Kevin Anderson,*Marx at the Margins; On Nationalism, Ethnicity and Non-Western Societies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

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