

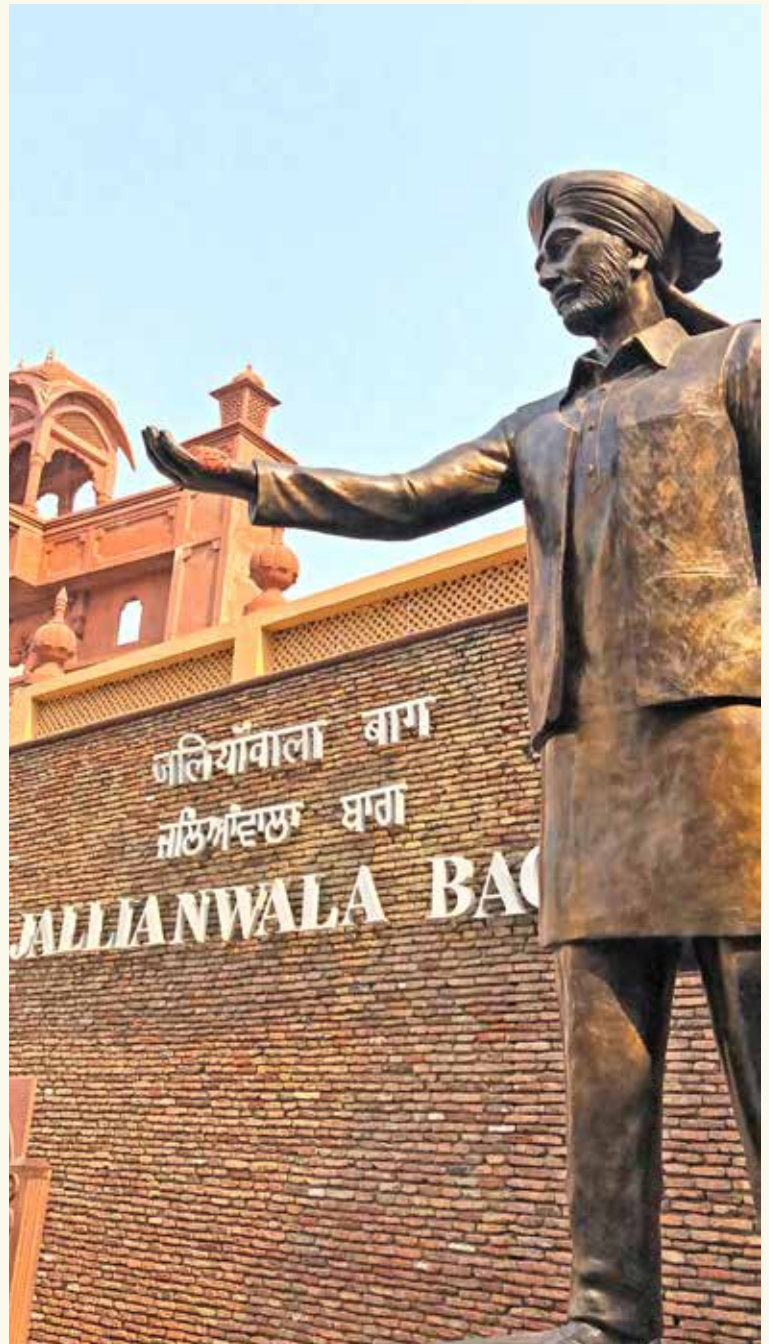
THE BRITISH BUTCHERY – A CENTURY OF GRIEF

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I had been to Amritsar between 7.11.2018 and 10.11.2018. What was initially described as a Diwali weekend holiday plan became a pilgrimage to discover the greatness of our blessed land. The Golden Temple and the Jalianwala Bagh massacre ring in us the moment the name “Amritsar” is uttered. The Golden Temple is a pilgrimage not just for the Sikhs but the Hindus world over. Harmandir Sahib’s holy precincts reinforces the faith in humanity and the oneness of creation.

The history in our text books and museums focus on the history of the nation states and its leaders, the focus is on wars and kings and governments. But rarely do we find histories that look at people. The British rule in India has impacted several ordinary lives. The heaviest burden was borne by those who lost their loved ones. Several saw their own family members killed before their eyes, properties destroyed and virtually brought to the streets from a life of comfort. The brutality has no appropriate language to describe. But the common thread in the stories of all those Indians affected by the colonisation is resilience. It’s a tribute to the resilience of the human spirit that India has bounced back even after facing such grave adversity.



Jalianwala Bagh has become a common part of Indian historical narrative. Even though colonial violence was a routine feature of British rule, the scale and the extent of the massacre at Jalianwala Bagh shocked and gripped popular imagination. The event has been interpreted in many ways, significantly as a movement which propelled the



anticolonial resistance. 100 years are about to roll by but the pangs of agony refuse to die down. The centenary anniversary of this grief demands an answer to this brutality of the British. What better time than now to extract that revenge and set the history balanced, though not in violent terms.

1200 lives were lost, at least 3600 men were wounded and some permanently disabled in the massacre. 120 people mostly women and children jumped to death in the well in the Bagh. Such an act has never been committed in the whole world on an innocent, defenceless congregation of people to silently protest the Rowlatt Act and celebrate Baishaki. 1650 rounds of ammunition were fired from the command of the devilish mind of Gen. Dyer. In his admission before the inquiry committee that was constituted after the incident, he said if he could have taken the armoured car into the Bagh, he would have done so and opened fire with them. He stopped shooting, when he did, because the ammunition had run out. He had made up his mind not to spare any one of the 20000 assembled in Jalianwala Bagh and he bayed for all the blood. Navi Gali, the entrance of the Bagh was daubed of dead bodies. When it was finally over the Bagh looked like a battle field ... yet not a stone had been thrown, not a stick raised in defiance.

Winston Churchill addressing the house of commons said

“An episode without precedent or parallel in the modern history of the British Empire... an extraordinary event, a monstrous event, an event which stands in singular and sinister isolation”.

Herbert Asquith, former Prime Minister of UK claimed

“There has never been such an incident in the whole annals of Anglo-Indian history nor, I believe in the history of our empire since its very inception down to the present day It is one of the worst outrages in the whole of history”.

East India Company was established on 31st December 1600. The first ship sailed to Surat in 1608 which was then under the Mughal King Jehangir's rule. Even before they set their foot on the Indian soil, they knew what ailed the fragmented Indian society. The crown rule which was born out of this trade was between 1858 to 1947 i.e, 89 years of subjugation. Immediately after the Bengal mutiny of 1857 the British crown took over India.



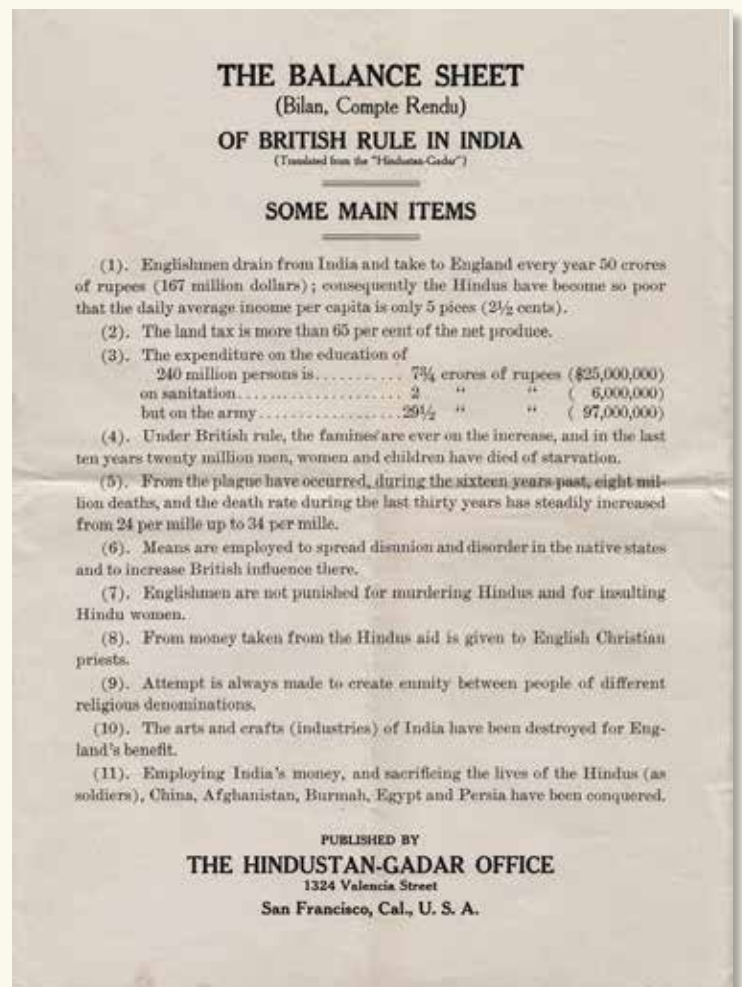
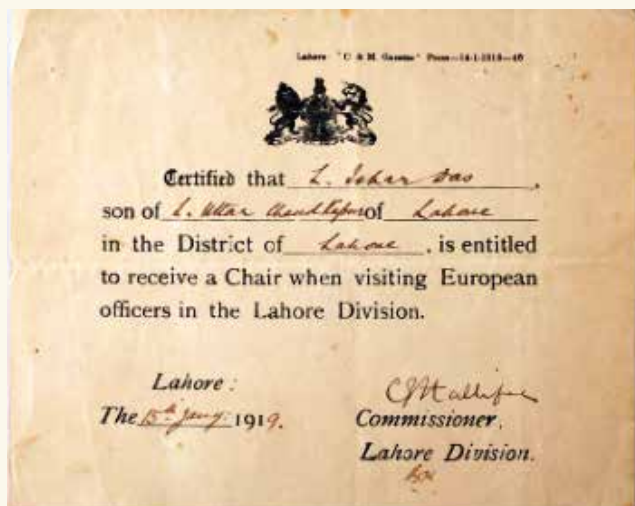
The darkest day of the crown rule was the Jalianwala Bagh massacre on the Baishaki day of 13th April 1919. We have commenced the centenary of this painful saga and on 13th April 2019 a full 100 years would have gone by from this darkest hour in history. The anarchical and the revolutionary crimes Act 1919 was the outcome of the recommendations of Justice S.A.T. Rowlatt Committee, which history records as the Rowlatt Act. This sowed the seeds for suppressing any rebellion against the British rule. The Act gave

1. Arbitrary powers to arrest a suspecting person without warrant.
2. Imprison him without trial
3. No order under this Act can be called in question in any court.

People described the Act as “Na Appeal, Na Dalil, Na Vakeel”.

Mahatma Gandhi described the Act as an unmistakable symptom of deep seated disease in the British. This much to speak of the British love for democracy and fairness in action. Before we even look at the events that unfolded on the fateful Baishaki of 1919 one has to appreciate that the British colonisation was to create a vassal state of India and loot her vast resources through a process of divide and rule. The balance sheet published by the Hindustan – Gadar office, tells it all.

When you read this Gazette issued by the colonial administration, even the most insensitive blood will boil. It required the Commissioner’s written authorisation for an Indian to get a seat in the presence of the British. The Brahminical order which exploited the division of labour that Manusmriti gave to us, to assert its supremacy, deservedly, post independence, got a taste of its misdoings



with the rise of the Dalits and the constitutional reservation to help them reap the full benefits of independence. How could then the Indian society mutely accept this British brutality ? Today as the fastest growing economy, we are in a commanding position to assert. It is time to give back though not in the same coin.

The British unleashed a reign of terror post the massacre. A British national Ms. Sherwood was assaulted by the crowd. Gen. Dyer then ordered repressive actions against Indians.

1. Marshal Law was promulgated.
2. People were flogged in the street in which Ms. Sherwood lived.
3. Those who passed through that street had to crawl on their bellies and cross as four legged.
4. All the lawyers of the town were made to work like ordinary coolies.
5. Indescribable torture in detention to extract confession or evidence.
6. Compulsory salami of the British forces when seen on the streets otherwise flogged.

Even though Gandhiji announced a Satyagraha all across the country, yet he observed "We don't want to punish Dyer. We have no desire for revenge. We want to change the system that produced Dyer". The bitter truth is neither Gandhiji could avenge Dyer nor change the system in India. What followed in 1947 was only transfer of power. This compassion from the Mahatma encouraged the tyrants to commit more heinous crimes on the Indian society. The English had forcibly humiliated the dignified and honourable Indians. One Udham Singh came upto the expectations of millions of people. A blooming youth of 20 years at that time, he pledged to avenge the killings. He went to Harmandir Sahib and after a dip in the pious sarovar took the vow that he would lay down his life to take vengeance on the perpetrators. On 15th March 1940, attending a meeting at Caxton Hall, London organised by East India Association and the Royal Central Asian Society in which Sir Michael O'Dyer, the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab of 1919, the prime culprit, was listed to speak, seized the opportunity to gun down O'Dyer dead as the programme was concluding.



“I did it,” he shouted, “because I had grudge against him. He deserved it. He was the real culprit, he wanted to crush the spirit of my people, so I have crushed him. For full 21 years I have been trying to wreck vengeance. I am happy that I have done the job. I am not scared of death. I am dying for my country. I have seen my people starving in India under the British rule. I have protested against this. It was my duty. What greater honour could be bestowed on me than death for the sake of my motherland”.

Udham Singh’s last wish to marry the gallows was fulfilled. On 31st of July 1940 he was hanged at Pentonville prison. He did not live to see India’s independence but ensured that the honour and pride of being an Indian was restored. The revolver used by Udham Singh is now displayed at the Black Museum, Scotland yard.



Dyer Reginold Headward Harry (1864 – 1927), the Brigadier General who ordered the firing at the Jalianwala Bagh paid for his sins in later years. He resigned from the service after the massacre. He was stricken by paralysis in November 1921 from which he never recovered. He died after a prolonged period of illness for six years due to arterio – sclerosis and cerebral hemorrhage. Minutes before his death he murmured “But I don’t want to get better. So many people who knew the conditions in Amritsar say I did right..... yet, so many others say I did wrong. I only want to die and know from my Maker whether I did right or wrong”.

It requires no superior signs of predictions that the Maker never forgave him for the savage attack on the innocent. After 34 years of continuous representation to the British Government, on 19th July 1974 the Pious remains of Udham Singh were flown to India. The ashes were put into seven urns. One was immersed in Haridwar, the second at Kiratpur Sahib, third at Jalianwala Bagh, the fourth at Rose Sherif Sirhind, the fifth was kept at his birth place Sunam where a memorial was built for the martyr. Shaheed Udham Singh aka “Ram Mohammed Singh Azad” which name he adopted

and used all his life, suggestive of his true secular ideology, became immortal and is the galvanizing inspiration for freedom struggles the world over. He set out on a glorious path with conviction and resolution. Free India salutes this brave son. The true homage to him is to make the British atone and pay for their sins.

Udham Singh's sacrifice was instrumental in accelerating the freedom for the land from foreign yolk. The digitised records of the episode reveal that the British paid Rs.22 Lakhs in compensation as a whole to the families of 376 people who were killed and more than 1200 injured who claimed the compensation. This pittance when it came to light triggered public conscience and debate.

Should a nation apologise for the crimes of its past? Reconciliation has to be more than empty symbolic gestures. Today's generation cannot escape accountability since it is a beneficiary of the rewards from the past crimes on alien lands. Apologies are frequently associated with demands for reparations. President Ronald Reagan apologised to Japanese Americans interned in the context of World War II, each surviving victim received \$20,000 in compensation. German contrition for the holocaust was linked to reparations to Israel. In 2013, UK Government eventually offered 'sincere regret' and \$2600 each to around 5000 people tortured during the Mav Mav rebellion in the 1950s. The British Government is facing legal claims by 44000 Kenyans. One of the tragedies of colonialism is that not only did it pillage, it also curtailed voice. It denied the history of the invaded and imposed a white narrative. 5 times USA officials apologized for its wrongs. But Britain has no remorse. It has not yet apologized for Jalianwala Bagh massacre. PM David Cameron laid a wreath at the memorial built in honour of the dead in Amritsar when he last visited.



It is time Britain pays for this massacre and partition of the country and loot of our resources. Despite Brexit uncertainties India – UK trade is up by 15% which is £18 billion worth. 60% of UK work visas were issued to Indians. Let us force United Kingdom to pay a large compensation particularly to restore our monuments destroyed during their forced rule, compensate the present generation of those who suffered / died at British hands. **Let us force the UK parliament to apologise for the Jalianwala Bagh Massacre during the centenary remembrance of this human suffering. A national movement to push our Government to force the issue is the need of the hour.** Let 'Kohinoor', the pride of India's legacy be brought back from British archives along with the revolver used by Udham Singh and a huge reparation. That would be the best tribute to the sacrifices of heroes like Udham Singh. Will we ?



*Our flag does not fly because the wind moves it.
It flies with the last breath of each Indian who died protecting it.*

TRAVELOGUE

My travel to Amritsar during the Diwali holidays (7 – 10.11.2018) was a memorable experience. When the expectations were ordinary and the outcome at the end of the trip is extra ordinary, the pleasure of travel is all the more intense. Amritsar is a 'must' visit for every Indian. The food capital of the country has much more to offer than food. One can relive the freedom struggle and the supreme sacrifices of many as he moves along the various museums, exhibition galleries, laser shows, 7-D. films.

Never miss while in Amritsar

- * The Partition Museum
- * The War hereos' Museum
- * Gobind Garh Fort
- * Jalianwala Bagh
- * The Wagah Border
- * The Golden Temple

The world's first Partition Museum opened at the historic Town Hall building in Amritsar on 24th October 2016. The Partition of India was one of the most defining moments in the nation's history. It is perhaps the largest migration in human history involving about 18 million people. It focuses on the story and trauma of the millions who suffered from the bloody consequences of a ruthless partition. It is a world class physical museum devoted to the partition's victims, survivors and its lasting legacy. TAACTH which manages the museum is a not for profit non-governmental organisation. The second phase of the museum opened on 17th August, 2017. One ends up after signing in the gallery of hope with a feeling of gratitude to that generation of India, who helped rebuild India despite suffering the trauma of partition. 'A Must visit' to reconnect with history and be inspired by the sacrifices of many.





Punjab State war heroes' museum at Amritsar is aimed at showcasing the gallantry deeds of the brave hearts of Punjab. This magnificent campus built at a cost of Rs.130 crores boasts of a 45 metre high stainless steel sword in the central edifice. About 3500 martyrs names are inscribed on the memorial. The memorial museum houses 9 state of Art galleries from the era of Sri Hargobind Singh, the 6th Sikh Guru through the rise of the Sikh empire to post independence wars till 2002. A mural has been built to commemorate the battle of Saragarhi. A 7-D auditorium gives a realistic experience of several war zones. It is a source of inspiration for fellow Indians on the supreme sacrifices of the brave Sikh warriors. Miss it only at a cost of losing a life changing experience. You can rediscover your love for our blessed country.



Gobind Garh Fort is a live museum, a repository of Punjab's history. It has many attractions within the fort including live performances of Punjab folk dance, museums, 7-D theatre screening the glory of Maharaja Ranjeet Singhji. Laser show 'Whispering Walls' every evening is a unique experience.

Jalianwala Bagh adjoins the Golden Temple. The well that consumed 120 lives and the memorial for the dead will bring back memories of British repression. Shri. Udham Singh's statue at the entrance reminds us of his supreme sacrifice to restore the Indian pride.

Wagah is a village and union council located in the Lahore zone of Pakistan. The Indian border town is Attari. Wagah is famous for the border ceremony each day. The lowering of the flags ceremony at the Wagah border is a daily military practice that the security forces of India and Pakistan have jointly followed since 1959. The drill is characterised by elaborate and rapid dance like manoeuvres and raising legs as high as possible. Similar Parades organised at Mahavir / Sadqi border near Fazilka and Hussainiwala / Ganda Singh Wala border near Ferozpur are not too well known. The Border Security Force (BSF) and Pakistan Rangers conduct the drill jointly.

We get a patriotic high as we reach Attari, 30 kms from Amritsar. The electrifying effect of a huge crowd on either side with national songs reverberating the atmosphere and the BSF commanding you to increase your vocal chord output to outclass the chanting on the other side. The Parade is just for half an hour but the build up makes it all exciting. On 8th November 2018 when we visited the Wagah Border, there were about 10000 people on the Indian side, every inch occupied but the Pakistani side was just about full. In view of the increasing attendance on the India side, BSF has augmented the facilities. The stand has also been expanded to accommodate the growing tourist demand. On festival occasions the forces exchange sweets. When the tensions between the nations increase, these basic pleasantries are also suspended. The Pakistani Rangers have a one legged Jawan who dances with the Pakistani flag for most part of the ceremony and also beckons fellow Pakistanis to join in chorus.



These efforts at the border are purely symbolic. In fact they add to the divide. The Pakistani Rangers do not enter our side nor we move to their land. There is a genuine feel to walk across to the other side and shake hands. School children who throng both sides are left deeply disappointed that such comradeship is not possible. If the effort has to move beyond symbolism, our BSF should march towards their stands with both flags in their hands and likewise from their side. The only saving grace is that there is no chanting 'Hindustan or Pakistan Murdabad'. The Parade protocol has ensured that verbal tirades against each other is not permitted. While people to people contact can bring about lasting peace, seeing each other from a distance deepens the divide. The only grace, on our side, is patriotism is not on sale. Admission to the stands is free. On the Pakistani side too, I believe it is so. The VIP allotment of about 1000 seats by BSF should be done away with and only the disabled and children should get the preference. One visit is a rich experience though you come back with more expectations from such exercises.



The Golden Temple also known as Harmandir Sahib (abode of God) is not only a religious place of the Sikhs but also a symbol of human brotherhood and equality. It represents a distinct identity, glory and heritage of the Sikhs. The construction work on the Sarovar (Holy tank) and the town around started in 1577 A.D. The foundation for the temple was laid by a muslim saint Hazrat Mian Mirji of Lahore. It's architecture represents a unique harmony between the muslims and Hindus way of construction. The temple was destroyed several times by Afghan invaders and was firmly built in marble and copper overlaid with gold foils during the reign (1801 – 39) of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh. The damages of Operation Blue Star of June 1984 have been erased even though the Sikhs recollect the event with a heavy heart. Even though we missed the langar, it is a definitive inclusion in the 'Must Dos' at the Golden Temple.

The Punjabi Jhuti (shoes), the Amritsari Kulcha, Lassi are a toast to the vibrancy of Amritsar. A visit, at least once in a lifetime to Amritsar is a delight beyond words.

