

JALLIANWALA BAGH



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PROLOGUE

"IT WAS A MOST wonderful spectacle."
And it was!

"The whole of India, from one end to the other," wrote Gandhi, "observed a complete *hartal*."

That was April 6, 1919.

"Who knows," Gandhi wondered, "how it all came about. There was no organisation and no previous preparation."

Gandhi was ill when the Rowlatt Committee's report was published. "Its recommendations startled me," he said. Breaking a tradition, he went to the Legislature to hear the debate on the Rowlatt Bill, the only occasion he did so. "Sastriji (Srinivasa Sastri) delivered an impassioned speech", he recorded. "But his solemn warning was entirely lost upon the Government. . . . I earnestly pleaded with the Viceroy (and) told him that the Government's action left me no other course except to resort to Satyagraha."

He went to Madras where one night came to him an idea. "I was still in the twilight between sleep and consciousness when suddenly the idea broke upon me—it was as if in a dream. . . . we should call upon the country to observe a general *hartal*. . . . Let all the people of India suspend their business and observe the day as one of fasting and prayer."

The Satyagraha pledge to be taken by the people said, "Being consciously of opinion that the (Rowlatt) Bills. . . . are unjust, subversive of the principles of liberty and justice, and destructive of the elementary rights of individuals on which the safety of the community as a whole and the State itself is based, we solemnly affirm that, in the event of these Bills becoming law and until they are withdrawn, we shall refuse civilly to obey these laws and such other laws as a committee to be hereafter appointed may think fit, and we further affirm that, in this struggle, we will faithfully follow truth and refrain from violence to life, person or property."

Gandhi said, "The step taken probably is the most momentous in the history of India. . . . let the Civil Service Corporation understand that it can remain in India only as its trustee and servant, not in name but in deed. . . . I consider the Bills to be unmistakable symptoms of a deep-rooted disease in the

governing body. It needs, therefore, to be drastically treated... Milder measures have utterly failed. The rest lies in the laps of the Gods."

The 30th March, 1919, was fixed for the national protest but this was later changed to April 6. It was a simple, yet unique programme of mass action—24-hour fast as a necessary discipline, the stopping of all work, the closing of all markets and business places and the holding of public meetings.

The notice was short, hardly two weeks. And "the response was magnificent throughout the length and breadth of India."

In many places *hartal* had been observed on March 30, too, the day earlier fixed for the protest. In the capital the *hartal* procession was checked by the police who opened fire and forced the crowds into the adjoining Queen's Gardens. The crowd later collected in front of the Town Hall, where the police again opened fire. At least eight people were killed. "The reign of repression commenced in Delhi", wrote Gandhi. The *hartal* on April 6 was, however, peaceful in Delhi but it continued for more than ten days. There was firing again on April 17 in Ballimaran.

The happenings in Delhi were repeated in Lahore and Amritsar. Events in Punjab were nearing a climax. The administration responded to the people's protest with acts of the utmost severity. Frequent appeals went out to Gandhi to visit Delhi and Punjab. He set out from Bombay for Delhi and Amritsar on April 7. The train was nearing Palwal when he was served with a written order banning his entry into Punjab. He refused to get down from the train. At Palwal he was put under police custody, taken to Mathura and the next morning put in a goods train going towards Bombay. At Sawai Madhopur he was transferred to another train and taken to Bombay.

The news of Gandhi's arrest sent a wave of indignation throughout India. In Bombay tension was high. Huge crowds which had assembled in the streets of the city were dispersed by mounted police and many people were trampled under foot. There were wide-spread disturbances in Gujarat and unprecedented scenes of mob fury at Nadiad and Viramgam.

1 India was accepting the challenge to her liberty, honour and self-respect.



INDIA IN 1919

THE END OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR found India in a state of suppressed excitement. Industrialisation had spread and the capitalist class had grown in wealth and power. This handful at the top had prospered and were greedy for more power and opportunity to invest their savings and add to their wealth. The great majority, however, were not so fortunate and looked forward to a lightening of the burdens that crushed them. Political agitation, peaceful and wholly constitutional as it was, seemed to be working itself to a head and people talked with assurance of self-determination and self-government. Some of this unrest was visible also among the masses, especially the peasantry. In the rural areas of Punjab, the forcible methods of recruitment were still bitterly remembered and the fierce suppression of the 'Komagata Maru' people and others by conspiracy trials added to the wide-spread resentment. The soldiers, back from active service on distant fronts, were no longer the subservient robots that they used to be. They had grown mentally and there was much discontent among them.

"Among the Muslims there was anger about the treatment of Turkey and the Khilafat question and an agitation was growing. The treaty with Turkey had not been signed yet, but the whole situation was ominous. So, while they agitated, they waited.

"The dominant note all over India was one of waiting and expectation, full of hope and yet tinged with fear and anxiety. Then came the Rowlatt Bills with their drastic provisions for arrest and trial without any of the checks and formalities which the law is supposed to provide. A wave of anger greeted them all over India."

Thus wrote Jawaharlal Nehru in his *Autobiography*.

The year 1919 was a year of grave political turmoil and distress in India. The financial stability of the pre-war days was shattered. In 1916 came the first dose of heavy taxation. Next year, it was to go up further because, besides meeting the expenses of Indian armies overseas, the Government felt it necessary to make a gift of a hundred million pounds to the British exchequer. By March 1919, the protest against the heavy burden of taxation had become very vocal.

Together with the taxes, prices rose steeply—even more than in Europe. Dr. Rajendra Prasad wrote, "As a result India became involved in currency

difficulties of the most serious nature, which may claim to be ranked among her sacrifices in the cause of victory."

Industrial and agrarian unrest swept the country of which the Champaran and Kheda agitations were two manifestations. Gandhi by his leadership of these agitations had infused into the Indian people the spirit of resistance. "Public life," he said, "became instinct with a new vigour."

Economic distress was only part of the picture of Indian destitution. Famine was caused by wide-spread failure of rains in 1918-19. Plague and other epidemics broke out in several parts of India. From influenza alone some six million people died within four or five months. Medical aid was hopelessly inadequate.

To this gathering discontent was fed popular resentment over the repressive political policy of the Government, particularly in Bengal. It was in this context that Sir S. Subramania Iyer wrote his famous letter to President Wilson of the U.S.A. containing a strong indictment of British rule; and when he was rebuked by the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, he renounced his knighthood. The country was astir.

Racial arrogance added fuel to the fire. The personal assault by Mr. Clayton on Mr. Hassan Imam, ex-Judge of the Calcutta High Court and former President of the Congress, caused wide-spread resentment.

As Jawaharlal Nehru recorded, the Indian soldiers on their return to their homes in the Punjab found marks of these terrible hardships and autocracy. The Rowlatt Committee sensed the mood of the soldiers and said that the situation could be met only with special repressive legislation.

Punjab at this time was governed by Sir Michael O' Dwyer. The Lieutenant Governor was a firm believer in strong-arm methods. He made no secret of his contempt for the demand for political reforms, for the educated classes and for the people's political aspirations. Symbolic of this attitude was his order banning entry into Punjab of Lokmanya Tilak and Bepin Chandra Pal.

Sir Michael O'Dwyer had become Lieutenant Governor of Punjab in 1913. A few weeks after his appointment, he gave a warning to the press which was followed by action under the Press Act. Security was demanded and forfeited in a number of cases. He prevented the entry of respected newspapers like *New India*, *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and *Independent*. He put down the Ghadar movement in a merciless manner; and this was done, "not without inflicting injustice on hundreds of innocent men".*

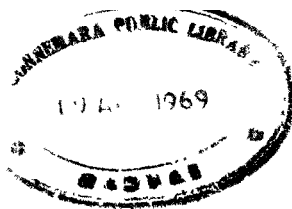
Sir Michael's despotism and contempt for the rule of law found consummation

*Report of the Commissioners appointed by the Punjab Sub-Committee of the A. I. C. C. to conduct an enquiry into the Punjab disturbances. This report is referred to as the Congress Enquiry Committee Report in this booklet.

mation in the manner in which he sought to recruit people for the army and to collect money for the war fund. He gave the call, "Two hundred thousand men for the regular army-voluntarism if possible, conscription if necessary . . . Government should take power to enforce the quotas." The Punjab Government issued a circular suggesting methods of collecting money for the war fund. Judicial processes were abused and in open courts the magistrates used to acquit criminals or convict them specifically stating that the accused had either given or withheld money for the war fund. Such abuse of judicial processes was not restricted to petty cases but was extended to cover even murderous assaults. Open bribery, threats, coercion and cruelty were resorted to.

An English Sessions Judge of Muzaffargarh was constrained to say in a judgement that the methods used by Sir Michael O' Dwyer "were frequently unauthorised, objectionable and oppressive. . . they were found intolerable by the people." In one of the districts, an over-zealous Tahsildar was murdered by an infuriated mob. Any expression of honest resentment was branded as sedition and suppressed with an iron hand. Annie Besant wrote, "The harsh oppressive rule of Sir Michael O' Dwyer, his press-gang methods of recruitment, his forced war loans and his cruel persecution of all political leaders kept the covered-up embers of resentment alive and ready to break into flame."

"Thus", said the Congress Enquiry Committee later, "Sir Michael galvanised Punjab into life and made the Punjabis feel akin in a manner that they had never done before. When, therefore, the month of April was reached and he had ocular demonstration of the oneness of Punjab and the oneness of India he was stupefied and he delivered his splenetic speech on 7th April. He wanted to make and did make a supreme effort to crush the spirit that was struggling to be free from the thralldom under which he had bound it during his iron rule. He scented danger in every honest speech and detected conspiracy in every combination, and thus forgetting himself, issued his orders against Dr. Satya Pal and Dr. Kitchlu and Mr. Gandhi. He must have known that this could only end in exasperating a people who had already been incensed against his rule. We feel tempted to say that he invited violence from the people so that he could crush them."



THE BLACK BILL

IT WAS IN THIS ATMOSPHERE of popular distrust of the administration that the Rowlatt Bills came upon India. When the war ended, the people were looking forward to the repeal of the Defence of India Act. They had come to detest this Act because, contrary to Government's declaration, it was used by men like Sir Michael O'Dwyer to suppress political aspirations. Tilak and Pal had been kept away from Punjab under this Act and Annie Besant and her associates were interned because they came to represent in its intense form the Indian Home Rule movement.

There had been promises in August 1917 of advance towards responsible government and it was generally hoped that the Defence of India Act would be repealed and that the people would have respite from the unwelcome attentions of the Secret Services Department. The people had earned the right to this expectation from their generous participation in the British war effort.

The Rowlatt Bills, therefore, came as a surprise. They were sprung upon an indignant people. The Viceroy's speech ushering in the Bills seemed to suggest that they were designed to answer the fears of the British element in the civil services; which provoked Gandhi to ask whether these interests were superior to those of India.

The Rowlatt Bills take their popular name from the President of the Sedition Committee. This Committee was appointed by the Government of India on December 10, 1917, with Mr. Justice Rowlatt as President to report on what were termed as "criminal conspiracies connected with revolutionary movements in India," and advise about legislation to deal with them. The Committee was required to sit *in camera*. Its report was presented on April 15, 1918.

The public had no knowledge of the nature of the evidence given before the Committee or even the names of those who gave it. The witnesses were not cross-examined on behalf of the people who were unrepresented.

When the Bill was introduced in the Imperial Legislative Council, Mr. Srinivasa Sastri made his memorable speech. Gandhi listened to him and wrote, "The Viceroy seemed to be listening spell-bound, his eyes were rivetted on Sastriji as the latter poured forth the hot stream of his eloquence. For a moment it seemed to me as if the Viceroy could not but be deeply moved by it, it was so true and so full of meaning."

Mr. Sastri said, "I have known governments lose their heads; I have known a reign of terror being brought about; I have known the best, the noblest Indians, the highest Characters amongst us brought under suspicion, standing in hourly dread of the visitations of the C.I.D. When Government undertakes a repressive policy, the innocent are not safe...the innocent then is he who forswears politics, mumbles his prayer and *salaams* all officials."

Mr. Sastri gave the warning, "There will be such a lowering of public spirit, there will be such a lowering of the political tone in the country that all your talk of responsible government will be mere mockery."

"You may enlarge your Councils, you may devise wide electorates, but the men that will then fill your Councils will be toadies and timid men; the bureaucracy armed with these repressive powers will reign unchecked under the outward forms of democratic government."

He declared, "Much better that a few rascals should walk abroad than that an honest man should be obliged for fear of the law of the land to remain shut up in his house, to refrain from the activities which it is in his nature to indulge in, to abstain from all political and public work, merely because there is a dreadful law in the land."

He further warned, "You cannot place on the statute book such drastic legislation without putting into the hands of over-enthusiastic executive officers what I consider short cuts to administrative peace." He counselled government against carrying the measure in the teeth of the opposition, "unanimous and unsparing," of their Indian colleagues and asked, "Whom have you behind now amongst Indians? The tragic story of India may be summed up in these words that you have governed all these centuries in India in isolation without having any responsible section of public opinion behind you."

Mr. Sastri referred to the Government's fear of agitation and said, "None of us has the power to go and stir up a violent agitation. . . . It is impossible. Agitation must be there already. . . . It is there. . . . None of us has had a share yet in this business, but, if our appeals fall flat, if the Bill goes through, I do not believe there is anyone here who would be doing his duty if he did not join the agitation."

In spite of this passionate protest the Bill was rushed through, and during all the crucial stages of the voting, no Indian member of the Legislative Council voted in any manner in its favour except one member of the Executive Council—and he, too, was to resign soon afterwards after having witnessed the consequences in Punjab.

The Bill was finally passed on March 18, 1918, and three important members of the Council, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Mr. Mohammed Ali Jinnah and Mr. Mazarul Haque resigned.

The Act extended to the whole of British India. It provided for the speedy trial of offences connected with what were called anarchical or revolutionary movements. And the only means of determining if such movements existed was the report of an ordinary policeman of the lowest rank "which would travel upwards gathering importance in its career till at last it blossomed into a pronouncement of the Governor General in Council."

The speedy trials were to be conducted without commitment and with no right to appeal. They could take place *in camera*. The relevant provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code and the Evidence Act were suspended for purposes of this legislation. The procedures for trials involving death penalty were reduced to those adopted for the trial of warrant cases by magistrates.

Nor was this all. Preventive powers were conferred on the authorities; this included the taking of security from ordinary people and the insistence on their giving an undertaking that they would not commit a scheduled offence, that they would not change residence without notice and that they would report to the nearest police station from time to time. The authorities were given power to use all means to enforce compliance. The people affected would have no right of counsel in their pleadings. In short, as the Congress Enquiry Report said, "the Act created licentious conditions of judicial administration". The Report added that the provisions for arrest without warrant and confinement under all sorts of conditions meant "organised terror and disorder, martial law without the name".

There were shouts every where : *Na Appeal, Na Dalil, Na Vakil*.

Gandhi wrote, "When you have failed to bring the error home to the law giver by way of petitions and the like, the only remedy open to you, if you do not wish to submit to it, is to compel him to retrace his steps by suffering in your own person, that is by inviting the penalty for the breach of the law. . . . There come occasions when (a civil resister) will consider certain laws to be so unjust as to render obedience to them a dishonour ; he then openly and civilly breaks them . . . It is open to him to withdraw his cooperation from the State by disobeying such other laws whose breach does not involve moral turpitude.

"I submit that no State, however despotic, has the right to enact laws which are repugnant to the whole body of the people."

A NATION ROUSED

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NATIONAL protest against the Rowlatt Bills lies in the fact that it marks the beginning of the struggle for a larger cause. Many measures were introduced by the colonial government later—measures which matched the Rowlatt Bills in their Draconian character but the public mind by then had become indifferent to the minor manifestations of British rule in its preoccupation with the objective of ending foreign domination in India for ever.

Gandhi's call came at a time when the emotions of the people of India were struggling for self-expression. The call for *hartal* became the *mantra* of liberation.

In Punjab, where the indignities of British rule were particularly felt through the instrumentality of O'Dwyerean despotism, the impact of Gandhi's call was instant and abiding.

Amritsar observed a complete *hartal* on March 30. There was a huge meeting on that day attended by some 35,000 people. Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlu, a leader of great popularity, addressed the meeting requesting the people that the resistance should be peaceful.

Amritsar in those days presented a strange spectacle of defiant determination. Sir Michael O'Dwyer neither had bargained for this nor could put up with this. He ordered that Dr. Satya Pal, another leader of great popularity, be prohibited from speaking in public. Dr. Satya Pal was interned in Amritsar. This was on March 29. Dr. Kitchlu was served with a similar order four days later.

The authorities had hoped that the orders passed on Dr. Kitchlu and Dr. Satya Pal would provoke the people into acts of violence but the magic of Gandhi worked. Adding incense to the fury of the Punjab administration was the great demonstration of solidarity between the Sikhs, the Muslims and the Hindus.

On the 6th of April, 1919, life in Punjab was brought to a standstill by a massive *hartal*. The *hartal* in Amritsar was complete. All communities took part in the demonstration. The crowds were peaceful and there were no incidents. A huge public meeting was held presided over by a barrister, Mr. Badrul Islam Khan. The meeting was attended by 50,000 people. Mr. Badrul Islam Khan told the gathering, "Mahatma Gandhi's advice is that we should

patiently bear grief and sorrow and thus save ourselves from violence and harshness."

April 9 was Ram Naumi. Though a Hindu festival, the Muslims took part in it in large numbers. There was a huge procession in which members of all communities participated. The procession was peaceful. Slogans like 'Mahatma Ki Jai', 'Dr. Kitchlu Ki Jai' and 'Dr. Satya Pal Ki Jai' rent the air. The Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar himself admitted that it was a dignified demonstration. He said, "As a rule they were very civil; every car in the procession stopped in front of me and the band played *God Save the King*."

This unfolding of national consciousness enraged Sir Michael O'Dwyer and herein was born his conspiracy to destroy the peace of Amritsar.

The next day Dr. Kitchlu and Dr. Satya Pal received orders of deportation and were removed from the city. The news spread throughout Amritsar like lightning. There was a spontaneous *hartal*. A huge crowd of people, bare-headed and unarmed, went in a procession towards the Deputy Commissioner's bungalow to plead for the release of their leaders. There were many Europeans all along the route and not one of them was molested.

The crowd marched through the principal streets of Amritsar but was stopped at the railway carriage over-bridge which was guarded by a military picket. The people explained that they only wanted to make a *fariyad* (prayer) to the Deputy Commissioner. The authorities would not listen to them and suddenly the military opened fire killing and wounding many people.

As would be seen later, there is evidence that this unprovoked firing was the result of deliberate policy. The crowds, till then peaceful, became inflamed by this naked use of force. In their midst were the bodies of the innocent men felled by the bullets of the assassins in the garb of authority. The crowds split up and went to various places carrying the killed and the wounded. One crowd soon assembled near the over-bridge and at the foot-bridge and this time it was armed with sticks.

Two barristers tried to intervene and pacify the crowd, but, even while they were on this mission of peace, the military again opened fire killing 20 people. Ambulance and first aid were prevented from reaching the injured people and an English woman shouted, "Hindus and the Mohammadans have got what they deserved." The crowd was now thoroughly provoked. They attacked several institutions including banks and set fire to large numbers of buildings; in the process the lives of some Europeans were lost.

These scenes of mob fury unnerved the authorities for a time. But they had already been mentally prepared for the unleashing of brutal repression.

The Commissioner, Mr. Kitchin, was sent by the Lieutenant Governor from

Lahore to Amritsar. He reached the city on the 10th of April, without being molested. At 11 in the night a troop-train came with men under the command of a Major MacDonald. Mr. Kitchin told him that the situation was beyond control and that he should take such steps as the military situation demanded. Later, giving evidence before the Hunter Committee* he was specifically asked "Why was not a civil magistrate sent?" He had no adequate reply. But the reason is clear. Sir Michael O'Dwyer had already decided to create a military situation.

Mr. Kitchin returned to Lahore on the 11th. The Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Miles Irving, handed over the charge of Amritsar to the military. This was conveyed to the Lieutenant Governor and he approved. Next morning, Mr. Kitchin again motored to Amritsar and he saw no indication of any disturbance.

Meanwhile Brigadier General Reginald Edward Harry Dyer, the Commander of a Brigade at Jullundur, arrived in Amritsar, established his headquarters at Rambagh and took over full control. The first thing he did was to make arrests.

What about the people? On the night of the 10th, the city was unguarded and yet there was no robbery or looting. Early on the 11th they wanted to dispose of the dead. The military authorities would not, to begin with, allow a funeral procession. After many pleadings, permission was given on the understanding that the procession would end before 2 in the afternoon. There was a mammoth procession, entirely peaceful, which ended before the appointed time.

On that day and on the day following, strong contingents of the army and the police started entering houses indiscriminately, arresting people and beating and humiliating many women and children.

Amritsar, on those days, presented a picture of an army camp. Lala Girdhari Lal, Deputy Chairman of the Punjab Chamber of Commerce, who reached Amritsar by Calcutta Mail from Kanpur on April 11 slightly before noon, said that he saw batches of policemen guarding the railway station and the railway lines. The station itself looked like a military post. There was no porter nor conveyance. With great difficulty he reached the foot-bridge where there was a guard of some European soldiers who would not let any one enter the city without a thorough search. At every step outside the city one could see nothing but military or police at short distances with rifles and bayonets. Water supply had been stopped and so was the electric connection.

All was dark in Amritsar on the eve of April 13, 1919.

*The Committee appointed by the Government of India to enquire into the disturbances in Delhi, Punjab and Bombay

THE IMPERIAL DESIGN

THE IMPUNITY WITH WHICH THE wildest excesses of repression were unleashed on an innocent people was not the result of a momentary mood. Sir Michael O'Dwyer had fashioned his entire policy in Punjab on the basis of British racial arrogance. He had been waiting for the moment when the Indian people could be taught a lesson.

If his six years before 1919 were a preparation for the events of the fateful month of April, his immediate utterances after the great *hartal* were the crowning piece of his sadistic logic. He spoke to the Punjab Legislative Council on the 7th of April when he said that the demonstration of the previous day was peurile and that ignorant and credulous people had been misled. He declared, "The Government of this province is and will remain determined that public order, which was maintained so successfully during the time of war, shall not be disturbed in times of peace... Those who appealed to ignorance have a day of reckoning in store for them."

On the same day, Sir Michael talked to a Jullundur barrister, Raizada Bhagat Ram. The Raizada, narrating his interview, said, "The Lieutenant Governor asked me what sort of a *hartal* we had at Jullundur. I replied it was a complete *hartal* and that there was no disturbance. Sir Michael O'Dwyer asked me what I attributed it to. I answered, 'To my mind it was due to the soul force of Mr. Gandhi.' On this, Sir Michael raised his fist and said, 'Raizada Saheb, remember, there is another force greater than soul force'."

All this was much before April 10, the day of unbounded mob fury. It was evident that Sir Michael and the British Civil Servants in the Punjab, appointing themselves to be the preservers of the colonial regime, had decided to teach the people of India a lesson which they would remember. It was indeed a lesson and the people of India remembered it but not in the way in which Sir Michael O'Dwyer had planned it.

It was not an accident that even before Martial Law, the city of Amritsar was handed over to the military. Lord Hunter himself could not escape drawing attention to this. Nor was it an accident that General Dyer did what he did on the fateful 13th of April, 1919. His evidence before the Hunter Committee is replete with his boastfulness about his having thrown to the winds every canon

of military behaviour. The incidents of the crawling lane were later to be attributed by the British officers to the events of April 10 but in fact, the only harmonious construction of all that happened in Punjab in the days of April is that the civil and military hot-heads had decided on that course long before that.

How else will one explain—as the Congress Enquiry Committee itself was baffled to explain—that Dr. Satya Pal and Dr. Kitchlu were ordered out of Amritsar ? What else could be the explanation for banning the entry into the Punjab of Mahatma Gandhi ? What else could be the reason for an unarmed, unshod, bare-headed crowd, meaning no more than to pray for their leaders' release, being stopped at the overbridge and fired upon ? All the evidence before the Hunter Committee and the Martial Law Commission could not bring out a single cogent explanation for this unprovoked firing. The Congress Enquiry Committee had to come to the conclusion that the authorities seemed bent on provoking the people and there was not even the pretence of trying to pacify them. It was clear that the authorities had decided that a staggering blow should be delivered; the Committee, said, "it was a calculated act of inhumanity."

The Report added, "Had not the spirit of Satyagraha permeated the people, the results would have been infinitely more disastrous. The restraining influence of Satyagraha was powerful enough to control the anger of the people."

Jallianwala Bagh was coming. If the people had prepared to voice their protest, the authorities had prepared more to embark on a mad spree of murder. The Congress Enquiry Committee found evidence to prove that the police did not even try to save the lives of the people who were attacked by the mobs. Obviously, they were preparing for an excuse. The Committee learnt from witnesses that the British were telling that for every European life, one thousand Indians would be sacrificed. They did not care for the life of one European but they were more interested in getting the lives of a thousand Indians. They were even talking of bombarding Amritsar.

The day after Jallianwala Bagh the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Miles Irving told a meeting of the local residents, "The revenge will be taken upon you and your children."

By a strange irony Jawaharlal Nehru travelled with some military officers from Amritsar to Delhi towards the end of 1919. "One of them", Nehru wrote in his *Autobiography*, "was holding forth in an aggressive and triumphant tone and soon I discovered that he was Dyer.....He pointed out how he had the whole town (Amritsar) at his mercy and he had felt like reducing the rebellious city to a heap of ashes."

It was all murder aforethought but Amritsar was not reduced to a heap of ashes nor the aspirations of the common people of India.

MASSACRE AT AMRITSAR

JALLIANWALA BAGH—IT IS more than a name and a memory. Through the ages in all parts of this earth many spots have been consecrated by the blood and sacrifice of men and women, to fame and fortune unknown, who thought that it was better to die withstanding the tyrant than to bend to his will.

In India's struggle against colonial despotism, many places on this vast land have been hallowed by the demonstration of the defiant spirit—but none more abiding than this garden of sacrifice.

What was Jallianwala Bagh ?

It was a private property owned in common by some people, an irregular quadrangle indifferently walled. In the words of Sir Valentine Chirol, the London *Times* Correspondent, "It was once a garden but in modern times a waste space frequently used for fairs and public meetings, about the size perhaps of the Trafalgar Square enclosed in almost entirely by walls above which rise the backs of native houses facing into the congested streets of the city."

The entrance to Jallianwala Bagh was through a narrow lane. In the waste space were three trees, a dilapidated tomb and a well—which was soon to be turned into the well of death.

The main entrance was a narrow passage. There were no other regular points of entry or exit, though at four or five points one could, with difficulty, get out through narrow openings. The ground at the entrance was an elevation which commanded the view of the entire Bagh.

Into this space on the fateful 13th of April, 1919 were assembled at the approaching hour of dusk, some 20,000 people whose one thought was to uphold the dignity of the people of India and express their will to freedom. Among them were many children and even infants whom the women carried. They had no arms of any kind, for they had come not to give battle but to demonstrate their solidarity.

The public meeting at Jallianwala Bagh had been hastily arranged. In many ways it was an expression of the spontaneous urge of the people of the sacred city to proclaim that their sensibilities had not been dulled by O'Dwyerean tyranny. After the events of April 10, 11 and 12, the people of Amritsar sought

a way of expressing their many emotions—anger, grief and resolution. The announcements made in the different parts of the city about the meeting to be held were sketchy. Very few people knew who was organising the meeting and who would speak to them but they did not care. Their one intent was to assemble together and to say that the struggle was not over.

Towards them was coming Brigadier-General Dyer who by his own admission, was unversed in the art of meeting civil disquiet. His only concern seemed to be to add to his laurels of the Afghan war by another display of what he considered to be military efficiency. For him even an unarmed crowd was a hostile army. "For me", he said, "the battle field of France and Amritsar was the same." Before leaving Jullundur for Amritsar he told his son that a big show was coming.

General Dyer who had established his headquarters at Rambagh two days earlier, entered the city on the morning of April 13 with an escort and made a promulgation that no procession of any kind would be permitted to march in any part of the city or outside of it at any time. The promulgation was read out by an interpreter in Punjabi and Urdu, at intervals during General Dyer's march through the city which, he said, occupied only two or three hours and did not cover the most populous parts of the city.

It was a Sunday and the day of Baisakhi. In Punjab, the harvest festival of Baisakhi is celebrated with great enthusiasm as the day which marks the end of the period of long and arduous labour. Peasants from all parts of the State assemble in the main cities. For the Sikhs it is the day on which the Khalsa came into being. Naturally the sacred city of the Golden Temple was filled on that day by people from all over the district many of whom had come to take a dip in the holy tank.

It was about four in the afternoon. The General marched off towards the city with picketing parties consisting of 90 men with rifles and *Khukris*. He had also with him two armoured cars. He went at the "ordinary walking pace". "Why did you not proceed with speed?" he was asked. He replied, "It was very hot." He reached Jallianwala Bagh shortly after 5 p.m.

Inside the walled garden was a seething mass of humanity; on a platform within were some leaders. An aeroplane hovered over the garden before the troops arrived.

General Dyer arrived at the garden, took his position on the commanding elevation, deployed 25 soldiers to the right and 25 to the left on the high ground on the north side of the quadrangle. "When you got into the Bagh what did you do?" Lord Hunter asked. He replied, "I opened fire."

"At once?"

"Immediately; I had thought about the matter and I do not imagine it took me more than 30 seconds to make up my mind as to what my duty was."

"Did it not occur to you that it was a proper measure to ask the crowd to disperse before you took that step of actually firing?"

"No, at the time I did not. I merely felt that my orders had not been obeyed, that martial law was flouted, that it was my duty to fire immediately by rifle."

"Martial law had not been proclaimed. Before you took that step, which was a serious step, did you not consider the propriety of consulting the Deputy Commissioner who was the civil authority responsible for the law and order of the city?"

"There was no Deputy Commissioner to consult at the time. I did not think it wise to ask anybody further."

"In firing was it your object to disperse?"

"No, Sir. I was going to fire until they dispersed."

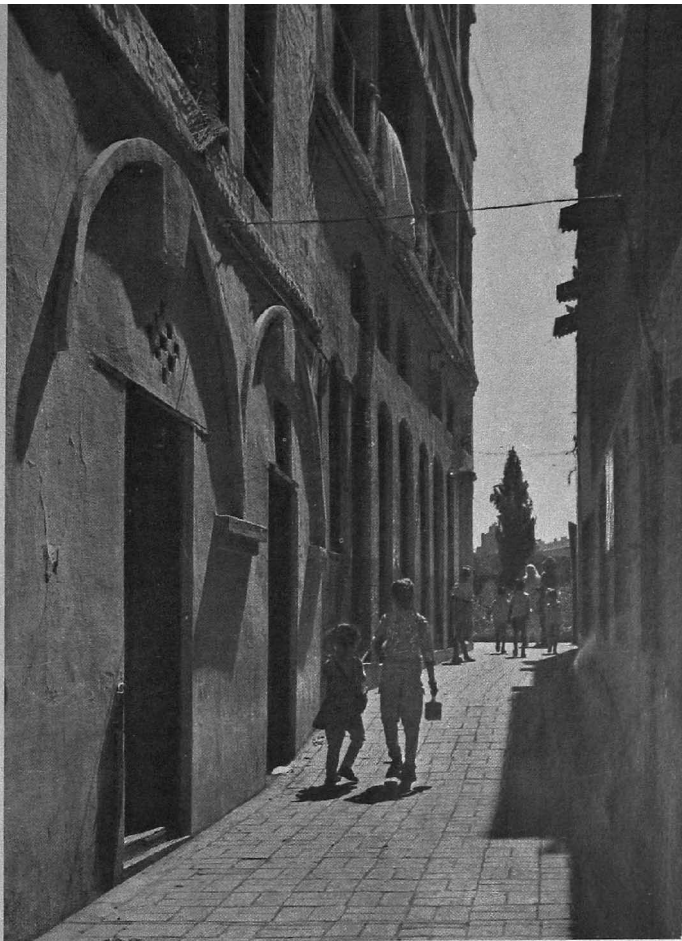
"After the crowd indicated that it was going to disperse why did you not stop?"

"I thought it was my duty to go on until it dispersed. If I fired a little, I should be wrong in firing at all."

The firing went on for about ten minutes. In all, 1,650 rounds of ammunition were expended. General Dyer said he stopped shooting when he did because the ammunition had run out and that if there had been enough passage he would have taken even the armoured cars in. From time to time, he "checked his fire and directed it upon places where the crowd was the thickest because he had made up his mind to punish them for having assembled."

Lala Girdharilal had watched this insensate firing from his house overlooking the garden of death. He said, "I saw hundreds of people killed on the spot. Quick-fire guns were used. The worst part of the whole thing was that firing was directed towards the gates through which the people were running out. There were small outlets, four or five in all, and bullets actually rained over the people at all these gates. Shots were also fired into the thick of the meeting. There was not a corner left of the garden facing the firing line where people did not die in large numbers. Many got trampled under the feet of the rushing crowd and thus lost their lives. Blood was pouring in profusion. Even those who lay flat on the ground were shot."

Sir Valentine Chirol described the scene thus, "One cannot possibly realise the frightfulness of it all until one has actually looked upon the Jallianwala Bagh. . . I entered by the same narrow lane by which General Dyer entered with about 50 rifles. I stood on the same rising ground on which he stood, when without a word of warning, he opened fire at about 100 yards range upon a dense crowd,



**BRITISH GENERAL DYER CONDUCTED SOLDIERS FOR -
FIRING INNOCENT INDIANS THROUGH THIS PASSAGE**

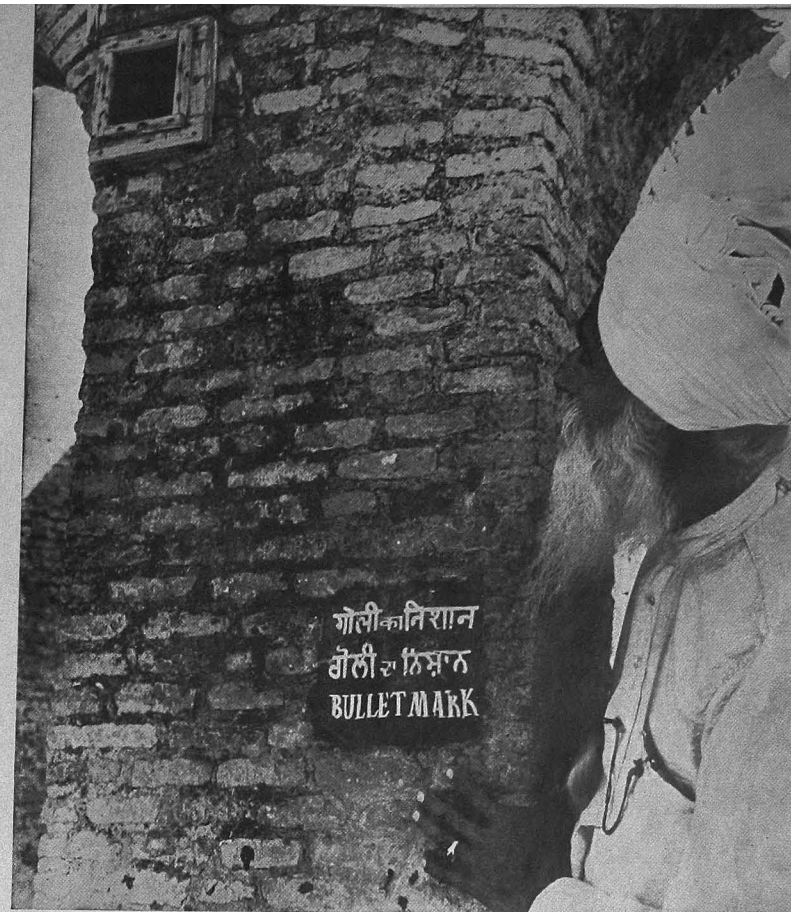
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ਕੇ ਲਿਯੇ ਫ਼ੌਜੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਅੰਦਰ ਆਇਆ ਸੀ

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ਚਲਵਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਇਸ ਰਸਤੇ ਤੋਂ ਅੰਦਰ ਆਇਆ ਸੀ ॥ M.S.

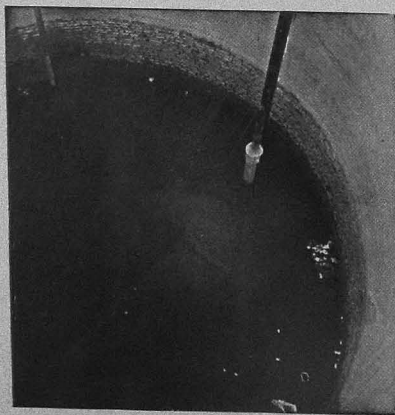
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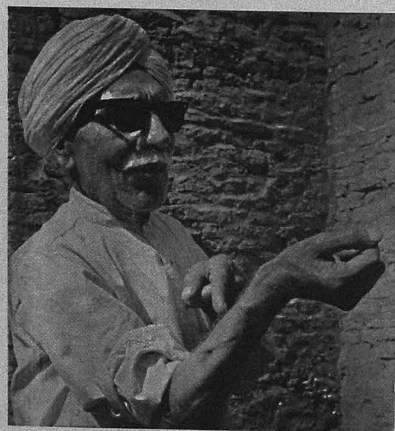
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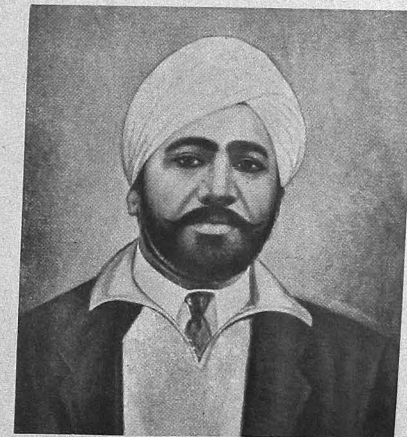


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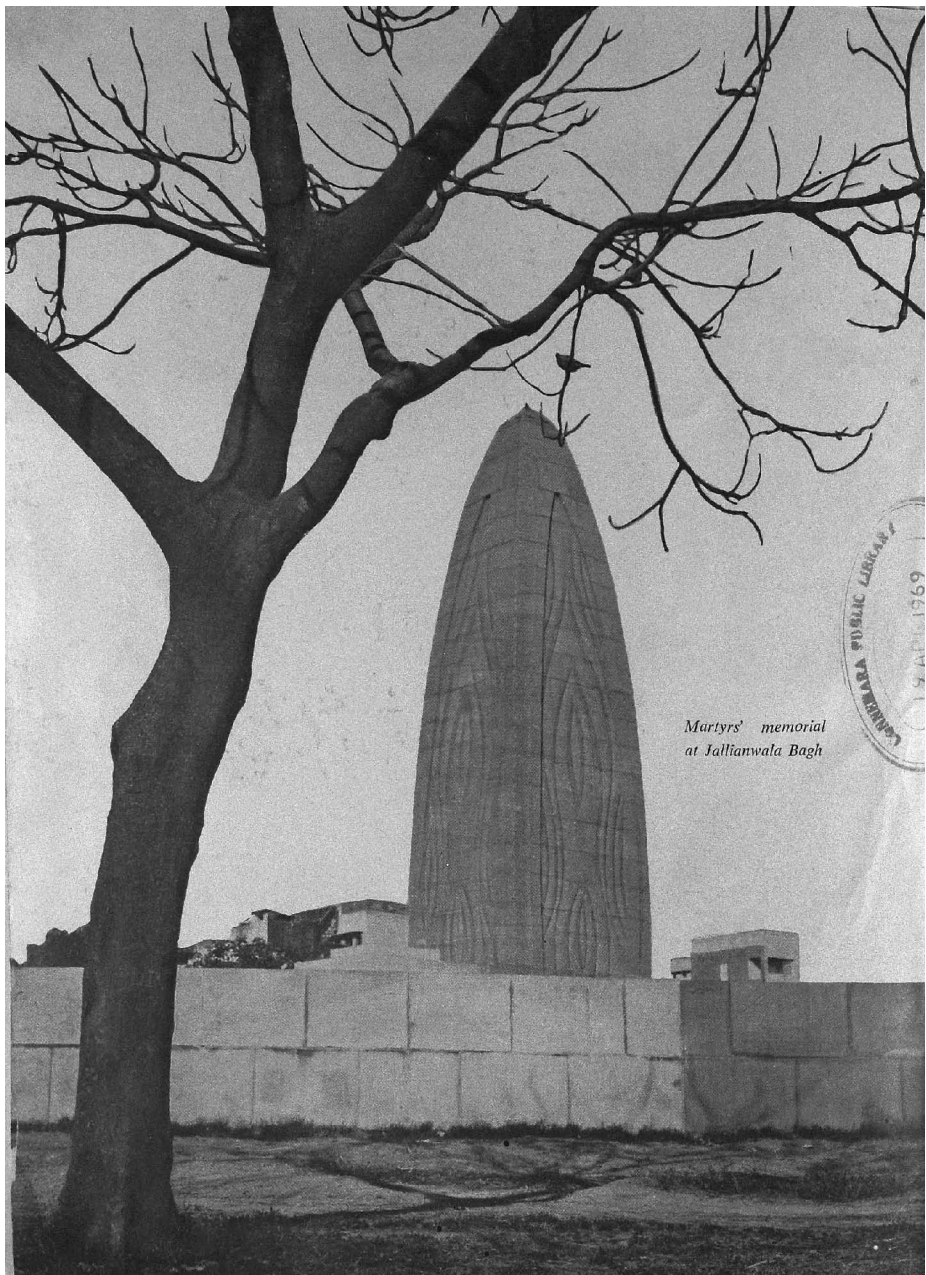
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1. A view of Jallianwala Bagh; the place has now been transformed by the construction of monuments to the memory of the martyrs.
2. The well where many people, fleeing from the bullets, fell and died.
3. Seventy-year old Asa Ram, who is among the few who still live to tell about the horrors of April 13, 1919, showing the bullet marks in his fore-arm. An interview given by him appears on pages 18 to 20.
4. An old man poignantly looking at the bullet marks left by the firing on the walls surrounding Jallianwala Bagh.
5. Udham Singh, who shot Sir Michael O'Dwyer in London on March 13, 1940, making good a resolve he had taken at Jallianwala Bagh on April 13, 1919.



5

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*Martyrs' memorial
at Jallianwala Bagh*

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collected mainly in the lower and distant part of the enclosure around a platform from which speeches were being delivered. The crowd was practically unarmed and all quite defenceless. The panic-stricken multitude broke at once; but, for ten consecutive minutes, he (General Dyer) kept up a fusillade—in all 1,650 rounds—on that seething mass of humanity, caught like rats in a trap, vainly rushing from a few narrow exits, or lying flat on the ground to escape the rain of bullets, which he personally directed to the points where the crowd was the thickest. The ‘targets’, to use his own words, were good, and then at the end of those ten minutes, having almost exhausted his ammunition, he marched his men off by the way they came.

“But for General Dyer’s own statement before the Hunter Commission, one might have pleaded that, left to his own unbalanced judgement by the precipitate abdication of the civil authority, he simply saw red. . . . But on his own showing he deliberately made up his mind while marching his men to Jallian-wala and would not have flinched from still greater slaughter if the narrowness of the approaches had not compelled him to leave his machine guns behind. His purpose, he declared, was to strike terror into the whole of Punjab.”

There on Baisakhi day in 1919, the day on which the Sikhs celebrate the coming of the Khalsa, lay dead and wounded the flower of Indian nationalism. Various figures have been given for the number of the people killed but the Congress Enquiry Committee thought that even the figure of a thousand killed could not have been an exaggerated calculation. General Dyer’s plan was to kill the largest number.

The dying and the wounded were left behind by the pompous General who marched off, his ‘duty’ done. It was not his job to render aid, he said. The wounded could go to the hospitals if they liked, he taunted. Did he not know that the curfew of his imposition had forbidden the people to move after eight in the night? And they could do so only at the risk of being shot at sight. He could not care.

Hundreds of wounded lay in agony that night and the dead lay scattered on the grounds even on the following day, petrifying in the April heat. It was a day of the vultures and jackals.

But not all the curfew would stop the flow of human feeling. Defying death, many women went to the garden that night in search of their husbands, alive or dead. By then their hearts had been steeled and they were beyond the pale of grief. One of them was Attar Kaur, a young woman of 25 whose husband Shri Bhagmal Bhatia, a firewood dealer, had taken leave of her earlier in the afternoon. Towards the evening she heard the sounds of shooting. Two men, profusely bleeding, were rushing towards the lane. Not stopping to think, she rushed towards the Bagh where hundreds were crying for water and help. She sat down

near the well in which were buried a few hundred people, some alive and many dead. An injured man asked her if his son lying nearby had life yet in him. Concealing the truth, she said the son was not dead.

Moving amidst the dead and the wounded she soon lost her consciousness, and when she regained it she found that her clothes had been bathed in blood. She resumed the search and located her husband's body close to the well with a bullet in his chest, and bullets in his legs. It was already past nine in the evening. The body was removed to her house and was cremated next morning together with 4 or 5 other bodies placed on a single pyre.

Four months later some constables came to her to offer cash so that she might forget what had happened. They were giving her Rs. 25,000 and said they would give her more. She politely declined the offer; for, the memory was more sacred than all that money could buy.

Rattan Devi, a woman of 43 years, knew her husband Chhaju Ram had gone to Jallianwala Bagh. On hearing the shooting, she rushed to the ground and with no great difficulty could locate the body of her husband. She had to arrange for the body to be taken home but before this could be done it was eight and the curfew was in force. "I stood waiting and crying", she said. All that she could do that night was to persuade two other Sikh gentlemen who had come in search of their friends and relatives to put her husband's body on a wooden block nearby. After that no one came and she stayed by her husband's body throughout the night.

Near her, three men and a boy were crying in agony. The boy was asking for water but there was no water anywhere nearby.

Early next morning she brought her husband home.

Of her experience that night, she said, "Heaps of bodies lay there—some on the backs, some with their faces upturned. A Jat who got entangled in the wall asked me to raise his legs, which I did, taking hold of his clothes drenched in blood. Many of the dead were poor innocent children. The dogs barked all the time."

Shri Asa Ram is one of the very few persons who were injured during the firing at Jallianwala Bagh and who live to tell us the tragic story today. This is the account given by him recently at Amritsar.

"It was a Sunday and happened to be the day of Baisakhi festival. Hundreds of villagers had come on the occasion of this festival to Amritsar.

"On the 12th April we had come to know that a meeting was to be held next day at Jallianwala Bagh. Four of us—my friends Sunder Singh, Gandu Ram and Malla Ram and myself—decided to attend the meeting in case it was held. All of us knew that the army had taken over the city and anything could happen. They were ruthless and could go to any length. Two of my friends, Gandu Ram

and Malla Ram, who were bachelors, dissuaded me from attending the meeting because I had been married very recently. My age at that time was about 19 years and six months and my friends also belonged to more or less the same age-group.

"We met at a decided spot in Jallianwala Bagh around 4 o'clock on that eventful day. Jallianwala Bagh was filled with people—I think there must have been about 20,000 people. We were more or less in the centre of the garden being very close to the platform. We were keen to have a close view of the leaders who were to address us. The meeting started around 4.30 P.M. About half an hour later, when one of the speakers was addressing us we heard the soldiers entering from the narrow lane into the garden. They were led by some European officers. They immediately took position near the entrance. Some of the people got a little panicky on seeing the army but the speaker on the platform said loudly : "Don't be afraid. The army is not going to fire at innocent people." At this, the crowd sat down and started listening to the speaker. Within minutes of this, the army started firing. They fired in all directions even at people who were at the exits trying to get away from the place of meeting. They fired ruthlessly and indiscriminately and stopped only after about ten minutes when they had completely exhausted their ammunition.

"Among us, Sunder Singh was the only one who escaped unhurt. Gandu Ram and Malla Ram lay dead before me and I was seriously injured. One bullet pierced through my right fore-arm completely smashing one of my bones. Another bullet pierced through my left arm. I was badly bleeding and I could hear people crying all over the place. It was a ghastly scene. There was no one to help anyone.

"I somehow managed to reach my home which was not very far from Jallianwala Bagh. One of my neighbours, living in the same house, was a police constable named Lal Singh. When he saw me in that condition, he advised me to get away from Amritsar as soon as possible because he thought if it was discovered that I had been present at Jallianwala Bagh, I would be shot like a dog. Throughout the night I was crying with pain and no medical assistance could be obtained from anywhere because nobody dared move out.

"In the early hours of the morning, I left the town along with my family. Another family, living in our building, accompanied us. After walking for about two miles, we reached the village of Sultanwind. There we were lucky to get two horses for our onward journey. Towards the evening we reached the town of Fateh Bagh near Taran Taran where I had some friends and where I thought I could consult a doctor without the fear of being caught by the police.

"The doctor wanted to amputate my right arm but my wife and other members of my family did not let him do so. He bandaged both of my arms and I

was under his treatment for over four months. When the wounds healed, I realised that I had lost the use of one of my arms for the rest of my life and unfortunately it was the right arm. My left arm was a little better but with this also I could not lift anything heavy.

“When I came back from Fateh Bagh after a few months, I happened to go to Jallianwala Bagh. I was told that they had taken out dozens of bodies from the well which was situated within the Bagh. When the firing was started people got panicky and many of them fell into the well which was on the level of the meeting ground. For days nobody bothered to dig out the bodies from the well. So one could not say how many people had really died in the well. But over weeks, when the stink became unbearable the bodies were taken out and it appears that over 100 people had died in that well alone.”

This was Baisakhi day in Amritsar, the day of the coming of the Khalsa. From the dead of Jallianwala Bagh was soon to rise a nation determined to avenge the cruelty not by heaping injury on the tyrant but by making him bow to the spirit of human dignity and freedom.

THE DEATH DANCE

“DO YOU PEOPLE WANT peace or war ? We are prepared in every way.” This was the challenge thrown to the citizens of Amritsar by the Commissioner, Mr. Kitchin, on the day following the great massacre. General Dyer was present and he added a footnote, “If you want peace, then obey my orders and open all your shops; else I will shoot.”

But the worst speech was by the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Miles Irving, who said, “The revenge will be taken upon you and your children.”

Sir Michael O’Dwyer had earlier spoken of the day of reckoning. Was that day the 13th day of April or was more to follow? He had spoken of another force which would over-power soul force. Had not that been sufficiently displayed at Jallianwala Bagh?

Mr. Miles Irving’s words of revenge proclaimed the fact that the British officers were not satisfied with their murder lust. The worst was yet to come.

If at Jallianwala Bagh was packed into a single evening all the cruelties which the tyrants of the past had spread over decades, the days that followed were filled with unmentionable indignities heaped on the Indian people. The whole of Punjab was in ferment. Amritsar was dazed. The people went through their indignities without much protest but the protest was taken up in other parts of Punjab—in Lahore, in Kasur, in Gujranwala and a host of other places.

In Amritsar itself the shops opened on the 15th but civil rule was not to come. Martial law was proclaimed and what was true in fact became true in law. Then came the infamous crawling order. The crawling lane is a narrow and thickly populated place with numerous blind alleys shooting out. Those who wanted to go out even for the most essential jobs would have to pass some part of the lane and they were told to crawl. Sanitary or medical service was rendered only on condition of crawling. In the middle of the lane was an oblong platform which was specially raised for flogging people. General Dyer wanted the people to go on all fours. But, in fact, the process consisted in people lying flat on their bellies and crawling like reptiles. Any lifting of the knees or bending brought the rifle butts on the backs of the people.

General Dyer said later that “it did not enter his brain that any sensible man, in the circumstances, would voluntarily go through that lane”. That was the

extent of his depravity. He told the Hunter Committee that people were obliged to crawl only when they moved out between six in the morning and eight in the evening. But then after eight they could not move out in any case because of the curfew. General Dyer could not care and he told the Hunter Committee, "If they had suffered a little it would be no harm under Martial Law."

General Dyer's sadism did not end with the crawling order. He directed that all people should *salaam*, in effect, every Englishman, that all lawyers should work like constables and even as coolies and that even for small offences flogging should be resorted to. Arrests were made in large numbers and special tribunals meted out summary justice. People were asked to identify those who killed a few Europeans on April 10. Those who refused to give false evidence were subjected to the third degree. Bribery was rampant. All kinds of indignities were visited on the people during this blackest chapter in the history of British rule in India.

Sir Chiman Lal Setalvad, a member of the Hunter Committee, wrote of those days in Punjab:

"In Gujranwala and some districts, orders were passed requiring Indians going in conveyances to alight from them on seeing the European officer on the road and *salaam* him. When two students of fourteen years of age failed to *salaam* at Lyallpur and gave wrong names and addresses, a notice under Martial Law was issued that all students over fourteen years of age of various schools and colleges should parade in front of the Government office and salute the Union Jack at eight every morning until the two offenders were given up. At Kasur when one school master represented that his boys had gone out of hand, six biggest boys of the school were selected and were given six stripes each in the presence of other boys. Armoured trains and aeroplanes were used and people in various villages were fired at. Under the Martial Law, whipping from five to 30 stripes was inflicted on 258 persons in Lahore and other places." Responsible persons were arrested without any reason, hand-cuffed and kept in jail for weeks together without being brought to trial. "Sixty-five students and all the professors of the Sanatan Dharam College, Lahore, were arrested and taken to the fort three miles away and interned there for thirty hours because the notice stuck on the compound wall of the college from the military authorities was torn by somebody. One thousand students in Lahore were made to walk 16 miles a day in the heat of May for many days to attend a roll-call."

At Lahore, Gujranwala and Kasur serious disturbances continued and in quelling them the police resorted to repeated firings and even used aeroplanes in their assault on the people.

On the 19th July, Mr. Sankaran Nair resigned from the Governor-General's Executive Council as a protest against the excesses in Punjab.

Even the moderates in India were outraged by the demonstration of barbarity by British officers. The Moderates Conference was held in that year when its President, Sir Sivaswamy Iyer, said, "The wholesale slaughter of hundreds of unarmed men at Jallianwala Bagh without giving the crowd an opportunity to disperse, the indifference of General Dyer to the condition of hundreds of people who were wounded in the firing of machine-guns into crowds who had dispersed and taken to their heels, the flogging of men in public, the order compelling thousands of students to walk 16 miles a day for roll-calls, the arrest and detention of 500 students and professors, the compelling of school children of five to seven to attend on parade to salute the flag, the order imposing upon owners of property the responsibilities for the safety of the Martial Law posters stuck on their properties, the flogging of a marriage party, the censorship of mails, the closure of the Badshahi mosque for six weeks, the arrest and detention of people without any substantial reason, especially of people who had rendered services to the State. the flogging of six of the biggest boys in the Islamia school simply because they happened to be school boys and big boys, the construction of an open cage for the confinement of arrested persons, the invention of novel punishments like the crawling order, the skipping order. . . . the hand-cuffing and roping together of persons and keeping them in open trucks for 15 hours, the use of aeroplanes and Lewis guns. against unarmed citizens, the taking of hostages and the confiscation and destruction of property for the purpose of securing the attendance of absentees, the hand-cuffing of Hindus and Mohammedans in pairs with the object of demonstrating the consequences of Hindu-Muslim unity, the cutting off of electric and water supplies from Indian houses, the removal of fans from Indian houses and giving them for use to Europeans, the commandeering of all vehicles owned by Indians and giving them to Europeans for use, the feverish disposal of cases with the object of forestalling the termination of Martial Law, are some of the many incidents of the administration of Martial Law which created a reign of terror in the Punjab and have shocked the public."

Annie Besant wrote, "I have been shocked to read the evidence given by the military authorities before the Hunter Committee. Nothing more than is recorded out of their mouths was done by the Germans in Belgium."

A PEOPLE IN RAGE

THE EVENTS IN PUNJAB stirred the people throughout India. Gandhi was impatient to go to that province and be with the stricken people but his repeated pleadings with the Viceroy brought no response and it was not until much later in the year that he could go to Punjab. That was in the middle of October. As he arrived in Lahore, "the railway station from end to end was one seething mass of humanity. The entire populace had turned out of doors in eager expectation as if to meet a dear relation after a long separation and was delirious with joy."

Gandhi was asked to serve on the Committee appointed by the Congress under Pandit Motilal Nehru to enquire into the events in Punjab. The other members of the Committee were Chittaranjan Das, Abbas Tyabji and M. R. Jayakar. The responsibility of organising the work largely devolved on Gandhi. He toured the province extensively.

The Amritsar area was placed under the special charge of Chittaranjan Das, and Jawaharlal Nehru was deputed to accompany him and assist in the enquiry.

The report of the Committee was published on March 25, 1920. About it Gandhi wrote, "I would recommend a perusal of this report to any one who wants to have an idea of the atrocity that was perpetrated on the Punjab people. . . there is not a single conscious exaggeration in it anywhere."

The Committee had no hesitation in coming to the conclusion that the provocation every time came from the Government of Sir Michael O'Dwyer. It asked for the repeal of the Rowlatt Act, the relieving of Sir Michael O'Dwyer of all responsible offices, the relieving of General Dyer and other concerned officials of any position of responsibility and the recall of the Viceroy.

Parallel to the enquiry by the Congress, another enquiry was conducted by an official committee headed by Lord Hunter, a former Solicitor General for Scotland. This was set up in October 1919, and its seven other members included three Indians, among them Sir Chiman Lal Setalvad.

The Congress urged at least the temporary release of the principal Punjab leaders then in jail so that the enquiry might be useful. This plea was rejected by the Government, upon which the Congress decided to boycott the Hunter Committee.

The Hunter Committee's report was submitted on March 8, 1920. This was forwarded by the Governor General in Council to the Secretary of State, the Right Honourable Edwin Montagu, on May 3, 1920.

In its comments which were sent along with the report, the Government of India agreed with the Hunter Committee in its criticism of General Dyer's conduct but eulogised Sir Michael O'Dwyer. The Government of India considered it fortunate that Punjab was in charge of this man of "great experience and courage".

The Secretary of State in his reply to the Governor General in Council also joined in the criticism of General Dyer. He also paid tribute to the "great energy and courage which Sir Michael O'Dwyer brought to his task" and expressed appreciation of his services, though he could not endorse Sir Michael's unqualified approval of General Dyer's action at Jallianwala Bagh. The British Cabinet also praised the manner in which the Governor General fulfilled his trust. Significantly all the three Indian members of the Hunter Committee gave dissenting notes as also the only Indian member of the Governor General's Executive Council.

General Dyer was ultimately asked to resign. The House of Commons approved the Hunter Committee Report and the Government's action. The House of Lords, however, thought otherwise and passed a motion by Lord Finlay on July 19, 1920, censuring the British Government for the orders passed against General Dyer. Subsequently, some people in England raised subscriptions for presenting General Dyer with a purse in appreciation of his services. "The vote of the House of Lords and the raising of this fund created great resentment in India", wrote Sir Chiman Lal Setalvad.

Rabindranath Tagore wrote from London on July 22:

"The result of the Dyer debates in both Houses of Parliament makes painfully evident the attitude of mind of the ruling classes of the country towards India. It shows that no outrage, however monstrous, committed against us by the agents of their Government, can arouse feelings of indignation in the hearts of those from whom our governors are chosen. The unashamed condonation of brutality expressed in their speeches and echoed in their newspapers is ugly in its frightfulness. The late events have conclusively proved that our true salvation lies in our own hands; that a nation's greatness can never find its foundation in half-hearted concessions of contemptuous niggardliness."

Indian public opinion was outraged by the British attitude. Mr. Edwin Montagu's attempt to parade British policy as one of justice and fair-play by condemning only General Dyer while praising the Viceroy and the Lieutenant

Governor and upholding the officers responsible for the inhumanities in various parts of India was seen by the nationalist movement as an argument for continued British rule of India. The reforms were now clearly seen, as Gandhi had seen earlier, as a camouflage for perpetuating the colonial rule.

The full significance of the events of Jallianwala Bagh was stated by Gandhi in these words, "The report (of the Committee appointed by the Congress) will enable the reader to see to what length the British Government is capable of going and what inhumanities and barbarity it is capable of perpetrating in order to maintain itself in power."

Essentially General Dyer was no more than a cog in the wheel. The grand operator was Sir Michael O'Dwyer who had not only the blessings of Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy, but the fulsome praise of Mr. Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State.

The Congress at Amritsar asked for the recall of both the Viceroy and the Lieutenant Governor but the British Government knew its mind.

And so the Congress moved on to Calcutta where it protested against the exoneration of Sir Michael O'Dwyer "who proved himself directly responsible for most of the official crimes and callous to the sufferings of the people". The Congress protested against the "woeful lack of sympathy with the people of India" betrayed by the House of Lords and its "virtual support of the systematic terrorism and frightfulness adopted in Punjab". The Congress said the pronouncement by the Viceroy was "proof of the entire absence of repentance".

In his Presidential address to the Calcutta Congress, Lala Lajpat Rai said, "The person who is principally responsible for the Punjab tragedy, the man whose general policy created the atmosphere which made it possible for a Dyer, a Bosworth Smith, an O'Brien, a Doveton, a Frank Johnson and other small fry to commit the unmentionable outrages of which they were guilty in the five days immediately preceding the introduction of Martial Law and all through its continuance in the spring of 1919 in the Punjab, is Sir Michael O'Dwyer."

By exonerating him the British Government was proclaiming its policy in India of denying her political aspirations.

TWENTY-ONE YEARS LATER

SIR MICHAEL O'DWYER RETURNED to his country without a scar on his body. The people of India if they had wanted could have turned their wrath on the person of this tyrant but they knew that freedom was not won by eliminating an individual. Freedom's battle had to be joined in India's towns and villages and that was coming.

But there was one man who had seen the orgy of murder at Jallianwala Bagh, who had been moved beyond grief by the sight of Punjab under the heels of Sir Michael O'Dwyer. On the day of massacre at Jallianwala Bagh he led a batch of boys from the orphanage to render whatever little help he could to the dying and the wounded. The helplessness of his countrymen moved this young man of twenty towards determination to avenge the indignity which had been heaped on India.

He was a poor young boy and by the time his determination took concrete shape the people responsible for the Punjab tragedy were already in England. He worked hard and with his hard-earned money went to London.

The echo of Jallianwala Bagh in remote Punjab was heard in the streets of London twenty-one years later almost to a day.

It was the 13th of March, 1940. There was a meeting of the Indian Association. An Indian gunman shot at some of the 'dignitaries' assembled there. The next morning's newspapers carried the item that Sir Michael O'Dwyer, ex-Governor of the Punjab, was shot dead. The Secretary of State, Lord Zetland, escaped with a slight bullet graze. Sir Louis Dane, a former Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, was wounded and his arm was broken. Lord Lemington, a former Governor of Bombay, was also injured.

The man who fired those shots was Udham Singh, the boy from the orphanage at Amritsar, who took the resolve at Jallianwala Bagh on April 13, 1919.

He told the Court of Law, "He (Sir Michael) deserved it. I do not care ; I do not mind dying. I am dying for my country."

He was sentenced to death on June 10, 1940, and was executed two days later.

FRAGRANT MEMORY

JALLIANWALA BAGH WAS FAST BECOMING the principal shrine of pilgrimage for the citizens of India. During the Amritsar Congress, thousands of people went to offer homage to the memory of those who died that India might live. The Congress decided to acquire for the nation this hallowed spot. Money poured in from all corners of the country for the memorial.

If the memory of the martyrdom at Jallianwala Bagh is enshrined for ever in the hearts of the Indian people, the nobility of emotion which it immediately produced among all classes of men and women in India provided a heart-warming spectacle. Of that nobility there can be no greater expression than the letter written by Rabindranath Tagore to the Viceroy. Tagore said :

The enormity of the measures taken by the Government of the Punjab for quelling some local disturbances has, with a rude shock, revealed to our minds the helplessness of our position as British subjects in India. The disproportionate severity of the punishments inflicted upon the unfortunate people and the methods of carrying them out, we are convinced, are without parallel in the history of civilised governments, barring some conspicuous exceptions, recent or remote. Considering that such treatment has been meted out to a population, disarmed and resourceless, by a power which has the most terribly efficient organisation for destruction of human lives, we must strongly assert that it can claim no political expediency, far less moral justification. The accounts of the insults and sufferings undergone by our brothers in the Punjab have trickled through the gagged silence, reaching every corner of India, and the universal agony of indignation roused in the hearts of the people has been ignored by our rulers—possibly congratulating themselves for imparting what they imagine as salutary lessons. Knowing that our appeals have been vain and the passion of vengeance is blinding the noble vision of statesmanship of our Government, which could so easily afford to be magnanimous, as befitting its physical strength and moral tradition, the very least that I can do for my country is to take all consequences upon myself in giving voice to the protest of the millions of my countrymen, surprised to a dumb anguish of terror. The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in the incongruous context of humilia-

tion, and I, for my part, wish to stand, shorn of all special distinctions, by the side of those countrymen who, for their so-called insignificance, are liable to suffer degradation not fit for human beings. And these are the reasons which have painfully compelled me to ask Your Excellency, with due deference and regret, to relieve me of my title of knighthood which I had the honour to accept from His Majesty the King at the hand of your predecessor for whose nobleness of heart I still entertain great admiration.

Over the decades men and women from all parts of the world have gone to the spot, where a martyrs' memorial now stands, to say their tribute in flowers and to atone for the wrong done to men by a few of their own fellow-men. The memory of Jallianwala Bagh is fragrant and the fragrance is increased by the thought that among those who have stood sentinel to man's determination to retain his spirit are many Englishmen themselves who have poured forth their hearts in genuine expressions of sympathy for the spirit of India and their sense of shame that a few among their own countrymen could have perpetrated this greatest assault on civilisation. Here are some extracts from the Visitors' Book at Jallianwala Bagh :

My heart is filled with shame at seeing for myself this place of cruelty & callousness
 To millions of my fellow countrymen, the word Amritsar means one thing only, a source of shame.
 The story of April 13, 1919 is another example of the fact that imperialism is in itself an evil thing, ~~which~~ & has a deteriorating effect on the ruling race as well as working havoc upon the ruled. Physical suffering & endurance here is terrible enough but the psychological & spiritual misery must have been worse.
 To spend an hour here is a sort of penance.

M. Wind (later Knight) etc.
 21.1.36 Bowdon

24.1.39

Use a catalogue for what was done in our name, your generosity of spirit is our inspiration. We thank you for the flowers with which you try to cover up our sin.

Southey 4/39

I am ashamed to be an Euro-
pean, when I hear of the murder, made
in the name of civilisation. then I
should bear the name of uncivilised
with more pride as I bear the name
of civilized.

L. Carrière
Holland
8/3/25

In visiting this place I am filled with
a deep shame for my race. I feel that
every Indian in the street looks at me
and says to himself "Member of a race
of murderers." I only hope that this
terrible murder may help to hasten the
end of that hateful thing Empireism.

22/1/38

Donald G. Cunningham
England.

My first six days in India has brought me in
delight to the garden which I pray will
out of the funeral sacrifice & there has India has
become here of that emergence to new birth the
new bloom and blossoms of wisdom, beauty and
peacefulness. I feel that I am on the most precious
symbol of so much that India has produced. But
with the birds we long to know in the beauty of the
lovely & peaceful heaven. It is a most lovely
and beautiful scene.

W. H. H. H.
No. 12. 1. 4.

BIRTH OF AN ERA

IF AT PLASSEY, THE foundations of British domination were laid, at Amritsar they were shaken", thus goes the judgment of a historian. Gandhi said, Jallianwala Bagh was only a beginning. "We must be prepared to contemplate with equanimity not a thousand murders of innocent men and women but many thousands before we attain a status in the world that shall not be surpassed by any nation. We hope, therefore, that all concerned will *take* rather than *lose* heart and treat hanging as an ordinary affair of life." "There is a dawn of a new day", exulted Lala Lajpat Rai, "the dawn of a new spirit. The year 1919 shall be memorable in the history of India not for the Reforms Act but for Jallianwala Bagh."

The Indian National Congress was soon to meet at Calcutta to decide on a programme of non-cooperation. In his presidential address, Lala Lajpat Rai said, "Our politics is no more of the humdrum kind. . . . We are no longer content with resolutions, prayers and memorials. We have advanced from the first stage of very humble submission, have crossed the boundaries of respectful demand and have entered into the arena of backing our demands by vigorous and compelling action. . . . The country is at present in the throes of a momentous struggle."

1919 was the year of the great divide—one of the most fateful years in the history of British rule in India. For the first time after 1857 the British authority was challenged on a scale never known before; and the imperial power used the most terrible methods of frightfulness to crush the rebellion. It is a significant year in the history of Indian nationalism because its most successful prophet rose to unquestioned national leadership in that year almost overnight.

"Satyagraha day, all India hartals and complete suspension of business, firing by the police at Delhi and Amritsar and the killing of many people, mob violence in Amritsar and Ahmedabad, the massacre of Jallianwala Bagh, the long horror and terrible indignity of martial law in Punjab"—that was 1919 as Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in his *Autobiography*.

"Jallianwala Bagh quickened India's political life and drew Gandhi into politics", wrote Louis Fischer. In a sense he was right. Though Gandhi had

started his Satyagraha Sabha earlier than Jallianwala Bagh and had given the call for the national demonstration on April 6, he was still not certain about what role he would play in the Indian struggle. Many things were settled by Jallianwala Bagh. The most momentous for India was that Gandhi was going to lead India's struggle for freedom.

The Congress was meeting in Amritsar towards the end of 1919. "The Amritsar Congress", wrote Nehru, "was the first Gandhi Congress."

The Congress was again to meet in Punjab in 1929—at Lahore. "After ten years", said Nehru, "it had come back to Punjab and people's minds leapt over that decade and went back to the events of 1919—Jallianwala Bagh, martial law with all its humiliations, the Congress session at Amritsar to be followed by the beginning of non-cooperation. Much had happened during this decade and India's face had changed. . . . political tension was growing; the atmosphere of struggle was developing fast, the long shadow of the conflict to come lay over the land."

The air in India was held by a strange determination. The 6th of April 1919 was a symbol.

Motilal Nehru, addressing the Congress session at Amritsar on December 27, 1919, said, "That day (April 6, 1919) must remain a red letter day for India. The spirit of Satyagraha was nobly shown by the great and peaceful demonstration. . . . Much has of late been said and written about Punjab, much still remains. But the lessons which the crowded events of the year have to teach us and the English people are clear. To us they point to the path of steadfast endeavour, the path of sacrifice, of patience and deed; that is the only way to reach our goal. To Englishmen, they teach the oft-repeated truth that tyranny degrades those who exercise it as much as those who suffer under it. . . . If our lives and honour are to remain at the mercy of an irresponsible executive and military, if the ordinary rights of human beings are denied to us, then all talk of reforms is a mockery. Better to breathe God's free air in rags than be a corpse in the finest raiment."

The year 1919 was the year of the great divide because that was the year when the people of India took the great leap into the era of struggle. As Nehru wrote, the long shadow of the conflict to come lay over the land.

The lines of struggle were to be drawn soon afterwards in Calcutta where the Congress said that the only effectual means to vindicate national honour was the establishment of Swarajya. It declared that there was no course left open to the people of India but to adopt the policy of progressive non-cooperation until Swarajya was established. It launched a programme of surrender of titles and honorary offices, resignation from nominated seats in local bodies, boycott

of foreign goods and of Government functions, withdrawal of students from Government institutions, boycott of British courts, refusal to serve in Mesopotamia, boycott of elections to the Reformed Councils, adoption of Swadeshi and the propagation of Khadi, which, in the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, was the livery of India's freedom.

Gandhi himself moved the resolution on non-cooperation at Calcutta. And at the Nagpur Congress on December 28, 1920, the Congress creed was changed and, on a resolution moved by Gandhi, it was declared that "the object of the Indian National Congress is the attainment of Swarajya by the people of India".

Even before Calcutta, the people of India had decided to observe every year the week beginning April 6, the day of the first national demonstration, to April 13, the day of the martyrdom at Jallianwala Bagh, as the National Week. In June 1920, Gandhi wrote in *Young India*, "No country has ever risen without being purified through the fire of suffering. English and French histories are replete with instances of men continuing the pursuit of their right irrespective of the amount of suffering involved. . . . Why should we expect to write our history differently. . . . The frightfulness at Amritsar drew away public attention from the greater, though slower, frightfulness at Lahore where an attempt was made to emasculate the inhabitants by slow processes. But before we rise higher, we shall have to undergo such processes many more times till they teach us to take up suffering voluntarily and to find joy in it. I am convinced that the Lahorians never deserved the cruel insults that they were subjected to. . . . A wilful ruler was determined to crush the spirit of the people just trying to throw off his chafing yoke. And if I am told that all this was due to my preaching of Satyagraha, my answer is that I would preach Satyagraha all the more forcibly for that, so long as I have breath left in me, and tell the people that next time they would answer O'Dwyerean insolence, not by opening shops by reason of threats of forcible sales but by allowing the tyrant to do his worst and let him sell their all but their unconquerable souls.

"The cup of humiliation was full during the closing scenes in the Viceregal Council. Mr. Sastri could not move his resolution on the Punjab. The Indian victims of Jallianwala Bagh received Rs. 1,250, the English victims of mob frenzy received lakhs. The State officials who were guilty of crimes against the people, whose servants they were, were reprimanded. And the Councillors were satisfied. If India were powerful, India would not have stood this addition of insult to her injury. . . . The movement of non-cooperation is nothing but an attempt to isolate the brute force of the British from all the trappings under which it is hidden; and to show that brute force by itself, cannot, for one single minute, hold India. Our salvation and its time are solely dependent upon us."

For his slogan of Swarajya within a year, Gandhi was laughed at by disbelievers. There were some whose faith in the constitutional processes was still unshaken. Addressing them through his column in *Young India*, Gandhi said, "To get Swarajya is to get rid of our helplessness. . . . For me the only training in Swarajya we need is the ability to defend ourselves against the whole world and to live our life in perfect freedom even though it may be full of defects. It is as amazing as it is humiliating that less than a hundred thousand white men should be able to rule 350 million Indians. They do so somewhat undoubtedly by force but more by securing our cooperation in a thousand ways and making us more and more helpless and dependent on them as time goes forward. Let us not mistake reformed Councils, more law courts and even Governorships for real freedom or power. They are but subtler methods of emasculation. The British cannot rule us by mere force. And so they resort to all means, honourable and dishonourable, in order to retain their hold on India. They want India's billions and they want India's man-power for their imperialistic greed. If you refuse to supply them with men and money, we achieve our goal, namely, Swarajya, equality, manliness."

In May 1920, the findings of the Hunter Committee were published. Before the results of the investigation could be released, the Government pushed through the Indemnity Act to protect officials. Gandhi was profoundly shocked. On August 1, 1920, he gave the signal for the campaign with his famous letter to the Viceroy. "I can retain neither respect nor affection for a Government which has been living from wrong to wrong in order to defend its immorality."

There was now no going back from the path of struggle. The non-cooperation movement soon gathered momentum and Gandhi wrote, "There is little doubt now that the boycott of the Councils will be extensive, if not complete. The students have become disturbed. . . . Pandit Motilal Nehru's great renunciation of a legal practice, which was probably second to nobody's, is by itself an event calculated to change ridicule into respect."

The Gandhi movement was on.

About the events of 1919, Sir Chiman Lal Setalvad, the eminent Indian Jurist who was a member of the Hunter Committee, said, "The excesses of the Martial Law Administration that came to light inflamed public feelings and directly led to the boycott of the new Constitution by Mr. Gandhi and the Congress. It is evident that if these events had not happened, the Congress would have joined in working the Constitution of 1919."

Jallianwala Bagh changed the political history of India.