Chapter – 1

An Intellectual Genius by Wisdom
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AN INTELLECTUAL GENIUS BY WISDOM

Har Dayal was born in the old city of Delhi on October 14, 1884. In a area called Cheera Khana close to Chandani Chowk and Red Fort. The area has since been known as Har Dayal Katra. He was born in a very respectable Kayasth family of old Delhi. Har Dayal’s father Gauri Dayal and mother Bholirani had seven children. Har Dayal’s father Gauridayal knew Urdu, Persian and Sanskrit languages and served as a reader in the District Court at Delhi.

Har Dayal was a handsome man with a chiseled nose, strong chin and a trimmed moustache. He wore steel rimmed spectacles but behind them his eyes which were sharp and penetrating. A friend once presented him with gold rimmed glasses, but he put them away, saying they were not for him. He wore rumpled, inexpensive and badly cut clothes. His complexion for a north Indian was a darkish. He was not tall just about 5 feet 7 inches but he had a strong presence, and people especially students were drawn towards him. His laugh was hearty, a trait inherited by his progeny. By far his most outstanding feature was his colossal intellectual power. His prowess in this regard was legendry, he was capable of brilliant and provocative ideas and possessed encyclopaedic memory. He mastered fourteen languages including Esperanto.1

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Har Dayal was sent to primary school at the age of four. He passed middle school from Cambridge mission school at the age of twelve and matriculated at fourteen. In both exams he stood first in the class. From his early days he displayed prodigious memory and proved to be a precocious child who participated in school and other social activities. He was modest and shy, always stood behind and never came to forefront. He used to read editorials of “Tribune” and the weekly “Harbinger” when he was in class sixth and could reproduce them word by word. He was known as a “miracle Boy” full of compassion and generosity. Kuldeep Dhiman in his article illustrates that Har Dayal geniusness as “in a room filled with wonder struck audience, or young man is playing chess. Nothing unusual about a young man playing chess, but this man is also counting the ringing of a bell, listening to Arabic and Latin verses and repeating them, and solving a mathematical problem – all at the same time, such was the awe inspiring genius. Har Dayal a scholar, writer and freedom fighter. Mr. Hanwant Sahai recalls that once in winter evening on return from a high lands, Har Dayal took off his new woolen coat and giving it to a beggar saying that, “your need is greater than mine. Have it”. Recalling this incidence Har Dayal later on wrote that “many animals, wild and domesticated are much better off than this miserable class of human beings such poor woe begone creatures shock and shame us at the street corners in every country. A starving wretch,


clad in rags, who begs money or food is a very saddening sight that haunts the mind for days.⁶

Har Dayal knew Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali and Tamil that is why he was called “haft zuban” – master of seven languages. Beside he knew seven foreign languages viz. English, French, German, Italian, Turkish, Swedish and Portugese.⁷ Har Dayal’s intellectual grooming and quest began when he joined the Stephen College, Delhi. Here he beside his text books, started the study of the ‘Gita’, ‘Manu Smiriti’ and ‘Rig veda’.⁸ He became a firm theist and started performing religious penances in quest of inner happiness. After getting the Bachelor of Arts degree he was awarded a stipened and joined the Government College at Lahore. He obtained Master of Arts degree in English language and literature. Later on he did M.A. with History as a subject.

Har Dayal was endowed with strong memory. People close to him and his friends point out that he had a photogenic memory whatever he read it was imprinted in his mind. He could reproduce Shakespeare’s “Othello” Tennyson’s “In memorium”. He earned the title of “Brightest Star of Punjab University”, Government College Lahore.⁹ Har Dayal found the intellectual environment of Lahore stimulating and got involved in social, political and religious movements. He became a member of the Rational Society and he remained interested in this movement throughout his life.¹⁰ Apart from his

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⁹. Dharamvira, op. cit., p. 15.
interest in academic pursuits he was activated by zeal for public welfare as student. He led a group of workers from Lahore to help the earthquake victim of Kangra. In recognition of his brilliant academic career on the recommendation of the Punjab university the Government of India awarded him a scholarship of 200 sterling each year for three years and provided a round trip passage. The contract involved a bond in the amount of Rs. 3,400 which would be forfeited in the event the recipient of the scholarship did not fulfill the terms of the contract. No particular educational institution was designed nor was a required course of study indicated.

He left his wife Sundarani (who was later to joined him at Oxford) and parents to sail for England in 1905. Lala Har Dayal had by this time gained enough attention in public and in the eyes of the Government intelligence against James Campbell then a personal assistant to the Director of Criminal Intelligence characterized Har Dayal as “something of a fire brand in politics… even before he left India in 1905 at the age 21”, for England on the Government Scholarship. In spite of the report by the British Criminal Investigation Department in 1904, he secured the scholarship for higher studies. The report said “A sense of revolt had taken deep root in his mind and had even permeated a select circle of his friends.” Har Dayal was asked to explain his conduct by the home and education

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14. Home Department Political File No. 25.7.1938, National Archive of India hereafter NAI.
departments about such accusations. He denied all these allegations and termed them as ‘groundless’ to the satisfaction of the authorities.

In Oxford he joined St. John College and chose to study “Later period European History and British India” as the subject matter of his special studies. He received a designation of Casberd Exhibitioner in History and as he was already Aitchison – Ramratan Sanskrit scholar the advantage in lieu was that he was made a Boden Sanskrit scholar, these honours fetched him stipend giving him the complete amount of 130 pounds which smoothened his academic pursuit abroad. His extraordinary brilliance made him the favourite student of his teachers at Oxford. Besides History, he studied politics, economics and sociology. C.F. Andrews wrote that “I did not remember when I met Har Dayal at Oxford but he was busy with his studies and made his requirements very less for living, he used to live in small house, in nature he was like saints”.

He developed in Oxford total independence, controlled his desires and adopted twin objectives of knowledge and service. He was somewhat an ascetic. He neither drink alcohol nor smoked, he ate vegetarian food and shed off European clothes and opted for wearing kurta and dhoti and always slept on the floor. He engaged himself in the study of different religions and regarded Buddha as his role model. He intended to devote his life for the upliftment of moral and civic education of people and for this purpose he established as “World Fellowship of Faith” in London.15

As a nationalist and a revolutionary he was steadfast, but otherwise he was many different people at different times. He was an anarchist, whose creed was the bomb, yet in later years he was a pacifist. He was an ascetic. At one time he even thought of founding a new religion. He was a staunch Hindu, but he never worshipped or bothered with prayers or the scriptures as ritual. He cared little about God - man believed in. He rejected the west and yet for a while, embraced it. He was a scholar whose knowledge was prodigious he was a man of culture and sensitivity, he was a marxist a rationalist, a modernist and a humanist. He was a paradox appearing to be many things at one and the same time. He changed track at various stages of his life. But his 'inner spirit' was steadfast and he never wavered from his single aim and ardent desire to throw the British out of India and see his motherland free from the foreign rule. This was the fierce fire that raged within him unchangeably and steadily. Har Dayal’s personal sacrifices were enormous. The nation owes him a great debt of gratitude, and nothing can dim the flaming magnificence of his patriotism and idealism.\textsuperscript{17}

Bhai Parmanand (History teacher at Kings college) wrote that Har Dayal due to his good character and clean life style became very famous at Oxford with other students of the university both Indian and foreigners respected him and took him as a model personality for themselves. During that period of colonial India there was a craze for ICS and Barristry from Oxford but Har Dayal was never attracted towards them for he never took these professions in high regard. Har Dayal felt that it was against his

\textsuperscript{17} E. Jaiwant Paul and Shubh Paul, op.cit., p. 2.
principles and gave up for ICS idea declaring “to be hell with ICS”. In the company of revolutionaries Har Dayal was a completely changed man. First he discarded English food then English dress and finally English speech which according to him were “all badges of slavery”.

It was during his stay in Oxford Har Dayal came in close contact with several Indian revolutionaries and ideologues such as Shamji Krishna Verma, V.D. Sawarkar, Govind Bihari Lal and several others. Interaction with these political and intellectual giants of India residing abroad at that time struck and influence his revolutionary and patriotic spirit which was to blossom in the later part of his revolutionary career. He for a while not attracted towards Dadabhai Naoroji, the founder and the president of Indian Association London, which was attended by students of London, Cambridge and Oxford, Har Dayal was one of them, attending the weekly meetings. But the moderate appeal of Indian Association did not appeal Har Dayal. Against this organization Shyamji Krishna Verma an Arya Samajist established the Indian Home Rule Society in London on 18 Feb. 1905. ‘India House’ [65 thornwell Avenue, Highgate] became the center of League activities in England, Shyamji was not in complete agreement with Naoroji and Gandhi’s view but had chosen Tilak to be his political torch bearer. Har Dayal too disassociated himself from Indian Association and become a regular visitor of India House. In 1907 along with Shyamji he enunciated the ‘Principles of Dissociation’ with the British rule in India but not on exact similar lines of that of Gandhi or the early moderates. Har Dayal wrote “A

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sketch of a complete political movement for the emancipation of India” and submitted to Shyamji Krishna Varman, this sketch was worked out by Har Dayal in addition to the idea of a society of political missionaries which he explained in an article published in the Indian Sociologists in May 1907.19

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar a Chitpavan brahman and Bhai Parmanand were regular visitors of India House which became a meeting place of revolutionary ideas and revolutionaries. In order to give impetus as well as practical result to the revolutionary ideas Savarkar started a secret revolutionary society in India and London and named it Abhinav Bharat (Young India) patterned after Mazzini’s Young Italy20. Savarkar translated autobiography of Mazzini in Marathi which became so popular with Indian masses that it was “taken out in processions as if it were a sacred religious volume”.21 The relation of Har Dayal and Savarkar to Krishna Varma is conceived differently by Lala Lajpat Rai who observes : “To say that Har Dayal and Savarkar were his disciple would be to belittle these too greatmen but there can be no doubt that Shyamaji’s ideas did influence them.22 Har Dayal became an active member of Abhinav Bharat. He took oath as other members of this secret society. “In the sacred name of Chhatrapati Shivaji, in the name of my sacred religion, for the sake of my beloved country, invoking my forefather’s, I swear, that my nation will be prosperous, only after freedom, full freedom is achieved convinced of this, I dedicate my

19. For detail, See Appendix 3.
health, wealth and talents for the freedom of my country and for her total uplift. I will work hard to my utmost capacity till my last breath. I will not spare myself or slacken in this mission. I will follow all the rules and regulations of Abhinava Bharat....".23

According to Bal Shastri Har Dayal started taking interest in politics after meeting Savarkar but this is not true. Even while in Lahore he was exposed to both the Arya Samaj of Swami Dayanand Saraswati and Brahma Samaj of Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Both reform movement at that time, was gaining foot in Indian socio-political fabric but with different methodological leanings. Britishers in India conceived Arya Samaj as a nationalist revival against western influence.24 While Arya Samaj gave the call, ‘Go Back to Vedas’ with suggestion that ‘any scientific principle which is thought to be of modern origin may be proved to be set forth in the Vedas’. Brahma Samaj on the other hand drew from the rationalism of the west. Brahmoism (also called as ‘a new sect of protestant Hinduism’) denied the authority of script, uses of priests who determined man’s faith and repudiate the claims of caste and custom to regulate his domestic or social relations.25

In his early years he was inspired by both the movement but he had a strong inclination towards Brahma samaj. Perhaps for this reason he was offered the principalship of Dayal Singh College at Laohore, run by the

23 . Balashastri Hardas, op.cit., p. 188.
society, once he had completed his education which even then included graduation from one of the major English universities. In his Lahore days Lala Har Dayal had an influential interaction with Hansraj, Principal of D.A.V. College Lahore, Lala Lajpat rai, and an Arya Samaj missionary Bahi Parmananda. These exposure at home started within him a quest for rational interpretation of India's future which was re-energized and stirred by the influence of German nationalist ideology, expressed in such books current at Oxford as Bluntschli's *Theory of the State* and List's *National System of Political Economy* which was intensifying the young Englishmen's patriotism. England then was hospitable to 20th century's causes and movements. Nationalism of subject people (Irish and Polish), revolutions against native despots (Russian Turks etc) the movements for vote for women, and labour and socialistic developments. Har Dayal's mind was always an enormous and readily absorbing sponge, became imbued with the unrest of New century.

During his stay in Europe Har Dayal began to advocate the significance of western sciences. He wrote the Vedas of today are the five fundamental sciences of chemistry, physics, biology, psychology and sociology and that the *angas and upangas* are their division and subdivision like astronomy, geology, history, economics, and politics etc. come to the west, the mother of the arts and sciences today. Do not in your method try to

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27. Dharamvira, op.cit., p. 32.
follow in the footsteps of your old rishis but set up new ideals of rishihood for the future".  

Further he describes:

"this medievalism will not die out till our young men and women learn to live and move in an intellectual atmosphere emanating from Paris and Geneva and not in the .... vapours of bankrupt Hindu or muslim theology and sociology. The study of advanced European thought is the great tonic for India. It is the efficacious antidote to the poison of indolence, stupidity, pessimism and inefficiency that is undermining our vitality under two will produce worthy leaders of modern thought but only after her children have assimilated the teachings of the west. How can great thinkers arise in modern India when our best men are content to live in the cramped and dead world of ancient books ? ..... Europe is living India is half dead. Let us restore India to full vitality by borrowing the elixir of Europe ‘Rite urupara nor muktih’.

He wrote that the spread of western Education would end the rampant regime of intolerance and world do what Akbar attempted in his days. It is remarkably evident that these writings of Har Dayal not only show his mental make-up but is also a prove that his ideas are the product of composite impact of Brahmo Samaj and other western ideologies with whom he came in contact at London.

After developing a stern tincture for nationalism and determination to fight for freedom of his country, Har Dayal found that it was paradoxical contradiction to continue with scholarship that was being paid by the British government to him for education at Oxford. Eventually the logical outcome was that he “resigned” from the scholarship knowing full well the difficulties he might and must have to face in days to come. He wrote:

29. Ibid., p. 151.
“Articles of Agreement made on the 26th day of June, nineteen hundred and five, between Har Dayal.... Of the first part and the secretary of state for India in council of the second part”. I beg to resign the scholarship which was awarded to me in accordance with article 6 of the said “Agreement” this resignation to take effect from September 18, 1907”.

“I beg to inquire if I should make any payment to the Secretary of State for India under article 7 of the above mentioned agreement in order that the bond given by me and two sureties in accordance with Article 8 of the same agreement may be null and void. I beg to state that the scholarship had not been “forfeited” but has been resigned by me”.

“I also beg to state that the cost of my “free passage” from India to England in September 1905 announced to nearly pound 34 (thirty four pounds). I was given a second class ticket from Delhi to Bombay (G.I.R.R.) and a second (B) saloon ticket from Bombay to London by the P and O Co’s Egypt. I am not certain if I travelled from Delhi to Bombay at the expense of the government of India. I beg the favour of your informing me of the exact sum that help resents the cost of my free passage” from India to England”.

“If any payments are due from me under article 7 of the above mentioned agreement, I shall be much obliged if you kindly inform me when and to whom such payment should be made in order that the bond given under article A of the agreement may be null and void”.

Har Dayal’s resigning from the scholarship was very displeasing for Sir William Curzon Wyllie Who remarked that, “as he will fail to complete
three years residence in this country he may be held to be liable to the penalty attached to the forfeiture of this scholarship”. But Har Dayal had made it clear in his letter that “the scholarship has not been ‘forfeited’ but has been resigned by me”. Another letter was dispatched to Lala Har Dayal demanding from him the reasons for wanting to resign. In lieu to this Har Dayal wrote “I regret that I am unable to communicate to his Majesty’s Secretary of State for India the reasons which have led me to offer my resignation of the Government scholarship that I hold”.

The Principal of St. Johns College did his best to dissuade him and even suggested “you do not wish to accept money from the Govt. of India, that is fine. But you must stay on till you get your degree. You can’t throw away two and a half years of excellent work here, I will personally be responsible for your expenses Har Dayal was grateful for this offer but was quite adamant. Har Dayal’s history sheet (Home Pol A 1913) also confirms the offer of the college and it further states ‘we then blossomed forth as complete nationalist who would accept no favours at the hands of the Government or of any Englishman.\textsuperscript{30}

While giving up his scholarship he consulted to Bhai Parmanand who assured him of health and financial assistance. Even Shyamaji Krishna Verma also promised him Rs. 1000 till he complete his education, a promise that was never fulfilled. Har Dayal asked the support of 16 shillings per week till one year from Krishna Verma and was also receiving two scholarship for Sanskrit and Philosophy i.e. 80 and 50 pounds respectively.

\textsuperscript{30} E. Jaiwant Paul, op.cit., p. 45.
These assistance did not solve his problems but he was so adamant for returning the money that he even wanted with those amount which he had taken and utilized earlier. He once said “neither I had to join any service nor I had to parade my degree under British rule”. Criticising British education system he remarked “Foreign education kills all our national feelings, its just like that Indians cultured Afghans and bring them to Bengal and teach them Sanskrit and gave them degree”.\textsuperscript{31} Elaborating his views about English education system and treatment of Indians by Britishers he wrote “the idea which Englishmen form of Indian character from those students which join English universities is far from becoming creditable to the latter they were surprised to find how these young men reconcile themselves to the idea of joining the educational institutions of three conqueror and how sadly they lack all sense of liberty the result of all this is that they regard Indians as no better thorn negroes or Zulus.\textsuperscript{32}

Gobind Bihari Lal describes “before him and after him no body had given his scholarship on the ground of India’s cause of freedom”.\textsuperscript{33} Finally Har Dayal decided to return to India for there were several problems and reasons mounting before him while living with his wife at Oxford on 97 South Moore Road. Har Dayal did consult his wife and discussed politics and economics with her. He had a plan to send Sundarani as a representative of woman masses which however never reached to a positive practical result as she was suffering from hysteria. His wife’s ill health,
financial crisis (as Shyamji Krishna Verma did not fulfill his promise) and his brother-in-laws pending marriage were some of the reasons which made him to return to India.

They came back by II class ticket which was sent by his father in law, on his return journey in Colombo, Har Dayal destroyed the copy of “Indian Sociologists”, on the advice of his wife who suggested that “its very dangerous…”.

Revolutionary movement had taken roots in India on a massive scale, Bapat being the first person who brought bomb to India. Bombs, pistols, came hidden in books and shoes. Revolutionary activism supported by the extremists made the British colonial authorities anxious in India. During his time in India he stayed at different places. From Poona he went to Delhi and then to Punjab and Kanpur. At Kanpur Har Dayal stayed for twenty two days at Trithrunath’s house, father of Jag Mohan a friend of Har Dayal at Oxford. Jitendra Mohan Chatterjee notes about him that “the only dream he saw was the liberation of his country”. For this purpose he wanted to run organization on similar lines like that of “Servants of Indian Society”, who trained Indian youths. He asked his wife the permission to become ascetic and leave his family and married life. Both felt pains of separation but Har Dayal decided to sacrifice his family life for higher morals and principles. Sundarani was pregnant at that time and later gave birth to a daughter, Shanti, the first and last child of the couple. At the time of Shanti’s birth Har Dayal was out of the country once again. He could never

34 . Ibid., p. 48.
see his child and wife. Such was his predicament that he quoted the views of Henry Facet in his 'Hints for Self Culture' that "To die is nothing but to live and not to see the dear ones that is calamity". Obviously, Har Dayal had his own family in his mind while discussing the views of Henry Facet.

Having admiration for his intellectualism and ardent love for country, Lala Lajpat Rai advised Har Dayal to join as the editor of paper 'Punjabee'. Har Dayal had been contributing to various journals and magazines and propogated his views on revolution and nationalism. He had a very large personal collection of books, in his library there was over 500 books. Some of the important books were "Prosperous British India" by Digby, "Poverty and British Rule in India" by Nauroji, R.C. Dutt's "Economic History of India", Nash's "The Great Famine", "History of French and Dutch Revolution" and "Bhagwat Geeta". Beside "Ramayan" his favourites books were "Social contract" of Rousseau and Edwin Arnold's "Light of Asia". According to Chatterjee he used to write lot for "Punjabe" his style being didactic and suggestive and he used to quote from various sources in order to goal his political view. He used to distribute the revolutionary books and biographies of revolutionaries among his fellowmen.

Har Dayal was of the opinion that with the spread of western education Indians were forgetting their own cultural values he concluded that as a consequence patriotism would decay under a system which discourages the study of our national past. He was of the view that "British

Educational policy separates the cultured classes from the common people, diminishes their reverence and love for heroes of ancient and medieval India and curbs their political aspirations”. But when someone countered that he himself had studied in western institutions. Har Dayal replied “I am what I am in spite of the education imparted by the foreign Christians in St. Stephen’s College. If I was a product of this system of education, how is it that you don’t find so many Har Dayals”? He himself proclaimed that he was a revolutionary first and everything else afterwards.\(^{37}\)

As a nationalist and a revolutionary he was steadfast. Yet he was a different at different times. He was an anarchist whose creed was the bomb, yet in later years he was a pacifist. He was an ascetic who at one time thought of founding a new religion. He was a staunch Hindu but he never worshipped or bothered with prayers or scriptures and cared little what God a man believed in. “He rejected the west and yet for a while embraced it. He was a scholar whose knowledge was prodigious, he was a man of culture and sensitivity, he was a marxist, rationalist, a modernist, and a humanist.’\(^{38}\) One can say that he was a mixture of opposite a paradox, he changed tracks at various stages of his life.

Despite of all paradoxes and say of antagonism in his personality this man evolved later on to be a cosmopolitan world citizen i.e. he propagated “one state, one flag, one language, one ethnic, one ideal, one love and one life...”.\(^{39}\) His was to be a world of life, trust and respect among people where colonialism and nationalism both disappear in a true

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38. Ibid., p. 2.
internationalism of peace and prosperity for a man with beatitude. For Har Dayal single and continuing theme was his search for a philosophical synthesis of East and West which would chart the course to the moral, spiritual and intellectual perfection of man.

The influence on him of books and persons varied at different times and stages of life. At Oxford days and during his wandering quest the most reverend personality for him was Buddha, whom he mostly repeated in his “Hints for Self Culture”. He did Ph.D. on “Boddhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist and Sanskrit Literature”. But beside Buddha some of his favourite authors and books were Shakespeare, Tennyson, Ranade, Todd and Lala Lajpat Rai. Last but not the least R.C. Dutt and R.P. Paranjpee had profound impact on him.

Satindra Singh in his book “Ghadar 1915 India’s First Armed Revolution” notes that there were four phases in Har Dayal’s life: First his “intransigent nationalism” which resulted in his becoming “fanatic protagonist” of Indian culture, this was followed by an “enthusiasm for the west, then its rejection when the holocaust of 1914 out raged his moral sensibilities and finally a “balanced view” brought on by maturity. Har Dayal always admired India’s simplicity and spirituality and admired as well the versatility and richness of European culture. Har Dayal felt that the East had much to offer the West, and on the eve of world war II, he exhorted Indians to send “pilgrims of peace to Europe on fire”, he was a … of genius, not merely a norm of talent. Singh concluded: “A lesser man whose youthful hope of liberating his motherland was dashed to pieces on exile for thirty years would come home ended in disillusionment, cynicism and bitterness. But not Har Dayal, he marched onto a still Nobler goal -liberation of all mankind’. This great man died on a lecture tour in the city Philadelphia in America 1939.