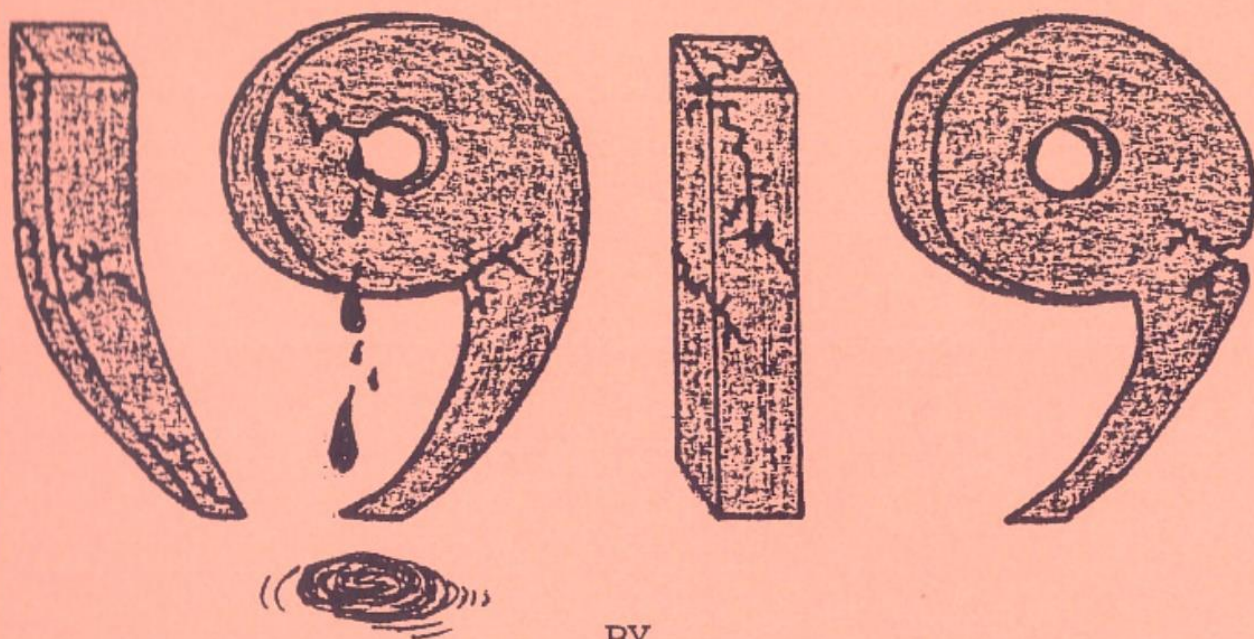


TARA ARTS GROUP

INKALAB



BY

JATINER VERMA

Know whence you came; there is really
no limit to where you can go.... to
know one's past-ones history - is
not the same as drowning in it.
It is to learning how to use it.

JAMES BALDWIN

INKALAB 1919

British policy towards India during the period after 1917 took two contradictory paths. In a passing phase of parliamentary gratitude for the contribution Indians had made in money and manpower to the war effort, the British government secured the India Act through Parliament in 1919. This measure was supposed to involve Indians in the governance of India but in fact failed to bring any reform and left power where it had been previously.

The other path was that of the British rulers in India itself. The government in India had begun to feel itself menaced by revolutionary activity. A committee was set up under Mr. Justice Rowlatt to inquire into the "criminal conspiracies" (the activities of revolutionaries). The Rowlatt Report was published in 1918 and its recommendations were enacted into legislation on the 21st March 1919. The Rowlatt Acts empowered the legal process. The drastic changes were summed up by contemporaries in the slogan "na vakil, na dalil, na apil" (no lawyer, no argument, no appeal).

Thus whilst the British at Westminster were envisaging some delegation of authority, the British in Delhi were increasing their authority by measures which included summary internment and summary justice. These acts resulted a storm of protest throughout India.

In the Punjab the protest were of a peaceful nature until the 9th of April when authorities in Amritsar arrested two nationalist leaders, Doctors Saifuddin Kitchlew and Satyapal, and deported them from the

Punjab. People proceeded to the Deputy Commissioner's bungalow to vent their feelings but were turned away by the Police, who in doing so killed six of them and wounded several others. The crowd then rioted in the City assaulting white people and damaging English owned property.

General R.E.H.Dyer was called to Amritsar to restore order. He reached Amritsar on the 11th April, arrogated power to his command and proclaimed all public meetings illegal.

On the 13th April was the Sikh Festival of Baisakhi. It was a tradition, going back to the previous century, that the peasants from the outlying villages would come to Amritsar from the Baisakhi Fair in the large enclosed area known as the Jallianwala Bagh to see the tamasha and have a day of innocent pleasure. This particular occasion saw the local Congress leaders take the opportunity to talk to the crowds. The people saw it all as a part of the spectacle of the Fair.

On hearing of the gathering General Dyer, accompanied by a platoon of soldiers, left for the Bagh. He occupied the only entrance and exit to the garden and without any warning to the people to disperse, opened fire. The firing lasted for approximately six minutes, killing 379 and wounding about 2,000. Dyer ordered two armoured cars to block the only exit and returned to his camp, leaving the wounded with the dead to the vultures, with no possibility of help reaching them.

INKALAAB, 1919

Scenario

- PROLOGUE: Front room of an Asian household, somewhere in Britain, 1980
- SCENE I: Recruitment of soldiers for the First World War - village Patala, Amritsar District, Punjab, 1915.
- SCENE II: Dispossession of land - village Patala, Amritsar District, 1919.
- SCENE III: Home coming. Sarfraz's house in the army barracks, Jullunder, 1919.
- SCENE IV: Amritsar city. Paan-walli's stall in the bazaar, April 1919.
- SCENE V: Text and Sub-text of Empire. Asim in the Missionary's house; Plomer and Dyer in the European Club.
- SCENE VI: Amritsar city. Before the Religious Tract Society's depot.
- SCENE VII: General Dyer's office, April 12, 1919; Sarfraz's house in the Army barracks, Amritsar; Dyer's office, April 13, 1919.
- SCENE VIII: Jallianwalla Bagh, April 13, 1919.

INKALAAB, 1919

Cast (in order of appearance)

Woman Rekha Prashar
 Man Jatinder Verma
 Son Yogesh Bhatt

Sarfraz Jatinder Verma
 Asim Yogesh Bhatt
 Salma Rekha Prashar
 Old Man Rajiv Trikha
 Villagers Bahuddeen Latif

Reynu Sethi
 Mahendra Pankhania
 Naushaba Khan
 Suman Buchar

Munshi Lal Praveen Bahl
 Magistrate Paul Bhattacharjee
 Paan-Walli Naushaba Khan
 Inspector Plomer Rajiv Trikha
 Policeman Mahendra Pankhania
 Missionary Reynu Sethi
 General Dyer Paul Bhattacharjee
 Townspeople Suman Buchar

Praveen Bahl
 Bahuddeen Latif

Woman in the Bagh Reynu Sethi
 Peasants Praveen Bahl
 Bahuddeen Latif
 Rajiv Trikha

Man in the Bagh Mahendra Pankhania
 Congress-Walli Suman Buchar
 Soldier Yogesh Bhatt

Congrass Walli..	...	...	...	Suman Bhuchar
Soldier...	...	...	...	.Yogesh Bhatt
Soldier...	...	...	...	Bahudeen Latif
Lighting..	...	...	...	..Imamul Amin
Sound ...	...	...	...	...Najma Kazi
Props ...	...	...	...	.Yogesh Bhatt
Costumes..	...	...	...	Sudar Bhuchar
Publicity Design	...	...	...	Rekha Prashar
Make Up...	...	...	..Paul	Bhattacharjee
Publicity.	...	...	...	Poonam Trikha
Publicity.	...	...	...	.Sunil Sagar

Directed by Jatinder Verma

Produced by Tara Arts Group

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Tara Arts Group gratefully acknowledges the support of the following:

Greater London Arts Association - Arts Council of Great Britain - National Westminster Bank - Barclays Bank - Midlands Bank - Commission For Racial Equality.

The actions of General Dyer were approved by the Governor of the Punjab, Sir Michael O'Dwyer; a man fond of quoting in Punjabi the Persian couplet:

"The spring at its source may be turned with a twig;
when it has grown to a river, it cannot be crossed
by an elephant."

Martial Law was declared in the Punjab immediately, and General Dyer appointed administrator. Under his authority, martial law proved especially onerous: for example, an order was issued forcing Indians to crawl on all fours past the spot where a missionary had been attacked.

In October 1919 a committee of investigation under Lord Hunter, a Scottish Judge, began its hearings. General Dyer's evidence before the Hunter Commission elucidates the reasoning behind his course of action at the Jallian-wala Bagh:

"I had before me in the Bagh, not a fortuitous gathering but a mob who was there with the express intention of challenging the Government and defying me."

"If more troops had been at hand, the casualties would have been greater in proportion. It was no longer a question of merely dispersing the crowd but one of producing a sufficient moral effect from a military point of view not only on those who were present, but more especially throughout the Punjab."

"I did not take any measures for the relief of the wounded. It was not my job. I merely wanted to punish the naughty boys."

The Hunter Commission presented its report in 1920 and criticised General Dyer only for not issuing to the crowd an order to disperse before opening fire, and continuing

to fire for as long as he did. It recommended his dismissal. Simultaneously, a committee under Gandhi was set up by the Indian Congress. The Gandhi Committee severely censured Dyer and Sir Michael O'Dwyer regarding the events at the Bagh. His inquiry concluded that Dyer's proclamation had not been well issued and that most of the people had been entirely unaware of it.

General Dyer was retired from the army with full pension benefits and other rights due to his name. His actions were supported by many of the whites in India and Britain alike. His admiring countrymen and MPs took up a collection on his behalf, presenting him with a sum of 26,000 pounds as a testimonial to their "saviour of India."

The story of Jallianwala Bagh was only completed in 1941 when Udham Singh, whose father was killed in the massacre, shot Sir Michael O'Dwyer at a public meeting in London's Caxton Hall.

The consequences of the massacre at Jallianwala were such as to make 1919 stand out like "the Mutiny of 1857."

Racial tensions were intensified on the sides of both whites and Indians. The British became acutely sensitive to the deliberate use of force by the authorities and probably allowed the police of non-cooperation more scope than they would have before 1919. For Indian nationalists henceforth the struggle was to present no compromise and the good faith of the British was always to be doubted.

TO MY RUPADI

KYA SOACH RAHAY HO?

Inaame vefa do mujheh, kya soach rahay ho?
Seeneh sey laga lo mujheh, kya soach rahay ho?
Bus eb to muhobatt ka kero aaj swagat,
Tum apna bana lo mujheh, kya soach rahay ho?
Kya apna banana tumheh munzoor nehein hein,
Itna to bata do mujheh, kya soach rahay ho?
Tum mujko satane par a gar tulhee gaye ho,
Gee bhar kar sata lo mujheh, kya soach rahay ho?
Mere hee bhula ne mein agar tumko khushi hein
Achaa to bhula do mujheh kya soach rahay ho?
Mein pyar ke kabil nahein hoon to meri jan
Nazaroo say geera do mujheh, kya soach rahay ho?
'Afzal' he sahey jane do budtur he sahey mein
Jo chahein samaj lo mujheh, kya soach rahein ho?

There is not anywhere in the world
a poor creature who's been lynched
or tortured in whom I am not murdered
and humiliated...

AIME CESAIRE

COUNTER TAX & CO

ACCOUNTANTS & TAXATION CONSULTANTS

161/167 HIGH STREET
ACTON, LONDON, W3 6LP

01-922 1249
01-993 6351

76 GRASMERE GARDENS
HARROW WEALD
HARROW, MIDDLESEX

01-427 9302

FOR ALL YOUR TAX PROBLEMS

TARA ARTS GROUP

33 WAVERTREE ROAD

LONDON, S.W.2

Tel: 01-870 4290