

Komagata Maru Incident

The Komagata Maru incident is about a Japanese steamship called 'Komagata Maru' that voyaged from Hong Kong (part of British Empire) to Vancouver, British Columbia in Canada passing through Shanghai, China to Yokohama (Japan) in the year 1914, carrying 376 passengers from Punjab, part of British India. The incident got highlighted because out of all the passengers 24 were admitted to Canada, but the other 352 passengers were not allowed inside Canada, and the ship was forcefully returned to India.

Komagata Maru Incident & Ghadr Party

With the Komagata Maru incident, the situation in Punjab worsened. The reasons being:

- The ship was carrying the majority of Sikh and Punjabi Muslims passengers.
- The ship was returned only after two months of privation and uncertainty which later took the form of an embroiled controversy.
- The belief of Canadian authorities being influenced by British hurt Indians
- While the ship returned to Calcutta in September 1914, the passengers were asked to take Punjab-bound train, which they refused and in conflict 22 people died

Ghadar Party Response:

The 'Komagata Maru' incident was quoted largely at that time by various Indian groups to underscore inconsistencies in Canadian immigration laws.

The emotions ignited after this incident was taken advantage of by the Indian revolutionaries, particularly, the Ghadar Party members to gather support from the people for their cause.

Many meetings were held in California in 1914 by Ghadarites to the Indian community there where the Ghadar leaders used this incident to appeal to the community for their engagement with their cause. People were also recruited to the movement in the wake of this unfortunate incident. Prominent Ghadar leaders included Tarak Nath Das, Barkatullah and Sohan Singh.

People Associated with the Ghadr Party Response:

1. Kartar Singh Saraba and Raghubar Dayal Gupta left for India.
2. Rashbehari Bose and Sachin Sanyal were asked to lead the movement.

Significance of Komagata Maru Incident

- Violation of human rights like arbitrary detention helped Indian independence fighters to expose the true face of British administration
- Journey of Komagata maru touched various ports during the course where the delivery of political lecture helped rally the support of other countries
- Exposition of Asian Exclusion Act-the discriminatory immigration laws for Asians only allowed the leaders to raise question on Whiteman's burden theory as they denied in acceptance of that "burden"

- Ghadar Party used the incident to rally support with the intention to organize a massive uprising against the British Empire

Thus, it can be said that Komatagata maru incident was an important landmark event in the political history of India. It ignited the masses and provided them a plank to carry out attacks against Britishers.

UPSC Question Komagata Maru Incident

Consider the following statements:

- Komagata Maru was a Japanese steamship.
- Komagata Maru carried 100 passengers.

Which of the following statements is/are correct?

- a) Only 1
- b) Only 2
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) None of the above

Answer: A

