

A man beyond boundaries

'Gianchandani's beliefs and struggle unrestrained by class, religion, geography'

Speakers gather to pay tribute to late left-wing intellectual, writer and activist

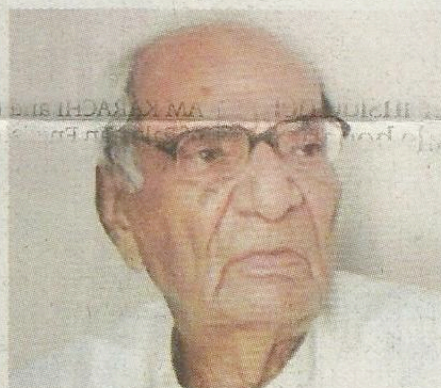
OUR CORRESPONDENT
KARACHI

Sobho Gianchandani's personality, his beliefs and his struggle were unrestrained by class, religion or geography. He was a man beyond boundaries.

This was said by Comrade Rochi Ram at a reference organised by the Sobho Gianchandani Memorial Committee and the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research at the Arts Council auditorium on Sunday. The renowned left-wing intellectual, writer and activist, who Rabindranath Tagore had referred to as 'the man from Moen Jo Daro', passed away on December 8, 2014.

"Perhaps Gianchandani represented the Pakistan that Muhammad Ali Jinnah wanted to create," said activist IA Rehman of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. "I learnt the real meaning of patriotism from him. He remained here till his last breath, because he did not want to leave his birthplace and his people."

A message sent by the Communist Party of India especially for the event said that Gianchandani had repeatedly been asked by Liaquat Ali Khan to go to India. "He refused every time, saying that 'I am a Sindhi, this is my land and I will never leave it,'" read the message. "His most



Sobho Gianchandani

painful confinement was under the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto regime."

Meanwhile, historian Dr Mubarak Ali, who spoke to the audience via Skype, said that Gianchandani's decision to stay in Pakistan was actually in defiance of the two-nation theory.

Discussing the fate of left-wing politics in Pakistan, he said that progressive movements had not declined. "Whenever there is darkness, there are stars to keep hope alive," he said. He added that those who felt that communism had died a natural death after the collapse of the Soviet Union should look to Gianchandani's struggle. "His words were a ray of hope that, sooner or later, the fascist system would change."

According to social activist Qadir Buksh Soomro, Gianchandani was not only a master of Sindhi, Arabic and Persian,

but was also well-acquainted with religion. "He once wrote a letter to Maulana Maududi about mistakes in his Quranic translations," Soomro commented. "Maududi replied saying that he had done a great favour to the Muslims."

Activist Kawish Rizvi remarked that through the 95 years of Gianchandani's life, there was not a single stain on his stature

Critic Mazhar Jamil said that Gianchandani had been highly influenced by his grandfather. "His grandfather was a staunch devotee of Guru Nanak but he or his family never practiced Sikhism, instead choosing to remain secular."

Activist Kawish Rizvi remarked that through the 95 years of Gianchandani's life, there was not a single stain on his stature. Despite being jailed multiple times before and after Partition, he steadfastly advocated for the rights of the oppressed.

Rizvi added that Gianchandani believed in Jinnah's speech of August 11, 1947, which he claimed was censored afterwards. "He was one of those great men who, in their gathering, pondered upon ideologies for the benefit of mankind."

Glowing tributes paid to communist Sobho Gayan

KARACHI: Well wishers, comrades, poets, writers, intellectuals, human rights activists and politicians here on Sunday paid rich tributes to the noted Communist leader, writer and intellectual of the country Sobho Gayanchandani at a reference, jointly organized by many civil society organizations under the banner of Comrade Sobho Gayanchandani Memorial Committee Karachi in collaboration with Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi at its Auditorium.

On the occasion, Urdu translation of a Sindhi book "Roshni Jo Safar", an autobiography of Sobho Gayanchandani was also launched.

Abid Hasan Manto, President of Pakistan Workers Party; I. A. Rehman of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP); Nirmal Gayanchandani (son of Sobho); Karamat Ali, Chief Executive of Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER); Prof. Dr Jafar Ahmed, Director of Pakistan Study Centre, University of Karachi; writer

Amanullah Shaikh, Fatah Malik, Advocate General of Sindh; Secretary General of Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP) Imdad Qazij; Prof. Dr. Ghazala Rehman from Szabist; Muslim Shamim, advocate; Qadir Bukhsh Soomro from Academy of Letters Sindh; author Syed Mazhar Jameel; Comrade Rochi Ram, advocate; Vice President of National Party Senator Tahir Bizenjo; Monis Ayaz, son of Shaikh Ayaz; Abdul Razzaq Soomro; advocate and others spoke about various aspects of Comrade Sobho and his struggle for poor and downtrodden people.

Senior labour leader Abid Hasan Manto, who is also President of Pakistan Workers' Party said a befitting tribute to Comrade Sobho Gayanchandani can be the unity of the workers and making the workers movements stronger in Pakistan.

He dispelled the notion that the socialists' movement in the world has been defeated. Actually the capitalist world is decaying because of its exploitative nature and neoliberal

economic policies. "There are a lot of economic and social unrest among the workers of the first world despite the fact the capitalism has made itself stronger in these developed countries," he said adding that the socialism had achieved a lot of successes in the past and can regain its strength once again. "It can regain strength with unity only," he added.

Manto recalled the trade union movement was quite stronger in Karachi and workers had launched a number of successful movements in the past, but, later they were divided on the linguistic and sectarian lines, which has weakened the labour movement. He asked the educated people and intellectuals to come forward and help unite the workers for a stronger movement.

I. A. Rahman, Secretary General of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) said the land of Sindh has a specialty, which has been absent in other parts of Pakistan. Sindh has given birth to many great leaders and struggling

people like Sobho Gayanchandani. "This land has also a credit that its own people had created the key educational institutions and its people played key roles in many movements," Sindh has produced a world class literature, Rehman added.

He said Sobho had spent a major portion of his life in jails because he was a communist and was struggling for rights of the workers. Talking about Sobho's life, he recalled that the former had some regrets like his son did not get a job because their family belonged to Hindus. Sobho lost his elections in Larkana and despite the fact he received many Muslim votes, he was defeated.

The noted historian Dr. Mubarak Ali via Skype addressed the gathering. He said last time he met with late Sobho Gayanchandani in May 2014 when he came in Karachi to attend a conference by PILER on Labour and People. PILER had initiated the Sobho Gayanchandani Award and first recipient of the award was Dr. Mubarak Ali in the May Day in

2014.

Sobho adopted socialism because his family was educated and studied in Shangi Negan. "Sobho's decision to stay in Pakistan at the time partition was actually his defiance of the two-nations theory," he remarked.

Dr. Mubarak Ali said in Pakistan sometimes it is felt that there is a perpetual struggle between secular or liberal force and fundamentalists we feel that fundamental forces have become stronger. Sobho was like a twinkling star who tried to remove darkness from the society, he said adding that Sobho was a symbol of hope. "We need to move forward for creation of a society where every person has a liberty," Dr. Mubarak said.

Karamat Ali, Chief Executive of PILER said although Sobho was born in a Hindu family, his actual religion was humanity. The Communist Party of India had asked all its Muslim and Hindu members to go to Pakistan and India respectively at the time of parti-

tion in 1947, but Sobho refused to go to India and preferred to stay in his homeland, Sindh. "He was punished by Pakistani establishment for this action as he suffered a lot of persecution as other Hindu community members are facing." Ali asked the progressive and secular elements of Pakistan to join hands in a strong progressive and democratic movement.

Prof. Dr. Jafar Ahmed, Director of Pakistan Study Centre, University of Karachi said late Sobho Gayanchandani was a creative writer who had written stories, and articles on variety of subjects.

There is need to work and conduct research on the writings of Sobho Gayanchandani. He presented a reference from the autobiography of Sobho and said he (Sobho) studied in Shantiniketan established by Rabindranath Tagore. Sobho wanted to set up an institution like Shantiniketan in Sindh as well.

Writer and intellectual Amanullah Shaikh said he spent a major portion

THE NEWS

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Glowing tributes paid to Sobho Gianchandani

By our correspondent

Karachi

Comrades, poets, writers, intellectuals, human rights activists and politicians paid rich tributes to the noted Communist leader, writer and intellectual Sobho Gianchandani at a reference on Sunday.

Urdu translation of Gianchandani's Sindhi autobiography "Roshni Jo Safar" was also launched at the event jointly organised by the Comrade Sobho Gianchandani Memorial Committee in collaboration with the Arts Council at its auditorium.

The leader's son, Nirmal Gianchandani, was also present on the occasion.

The secretary-general of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, IA Rehman, said Sindh was distinguished from other parts of the country because the land gave birth to several leaders who proved themselves through their struggles, just like Gianchandani.

"The land also has the credit of creating monumental educational institutions and its people playing key roles in a number of movements," he said.

Shedding light on the revolutionary's life, he further added that Gianchandani had spent a major portion of his life in jail because of being a communist and struggling for the rights of workers.

Talking about Comrade's life, he recalled that the deceased had been disheartened at his son not being able to get a job because the family belonged to the Hindu community.

"Even though a large number of Muslims voted for him in Larkana, he lost the election," said Rehman.

Noted historian Mubarak Ali while talking to the congregation via a video link said he had last met Comrade Gianchandani in May, 2014 when he had been in Karachi to attend a labours' conference.

He said the Comrade had been cultured in socialism because he had been educated in Shantiniketan established by Rabindranath Tagore. "His decision to stay in Pakistan at the time of partition was actually his defiance of the two-nation theory," he said.

In Pakistan, said Dr Ali, it felt that sometimes there was a perpetual struggle between secular or liberal forces and the fundamentalists. With time, the fundamentalist forces became stronger.

Ali said Comrade Gianchandani was like a glowing star who had attempted to remove the darkness from the society by becoming a symbol of hope.

"We need to move forward for creating a society where every person has liberty," he said.

Director Pakistan Study Centre at Karachi University, Prof Dr Jaffar Ahmed, said the late Comrade had been a creative writer and thinker who had written copiously on various subjects.

He called for compiling and researching the late leader's writings.

Ahmed said Gianchandani had wanted to setup an institution like the Shantiniketan in Sindh as well but his dream remained unfulfilled.

Writer and intellectual Amanullah Shaikh said he too hailed from Larkana and had spent a major portion of his life with the Comrade. "He (Gianchandani) used to have three pictures — one of Lenin, one of Tagore and

one of Vivekananda — on the walls of his home. They represent his lifelong struggle," he said.

"We need to study the reason why Sobho had refused to migrate at the time of partition. He loved his motherland and his decision proved to be right at the end."

Pakistan Workers' Party President Abid Hasan Manto said the most befitting recruit to the late Comrade's life would be strengthening the workers' movement in Pakistan.

He dispelled the notion that socialist movements in the world had been defeated. "Actually, it is the capitalist world which is decaying because of its exploitative nature and neoliberal economic policies," he said.

"There is a lot of economic and social unrest among workers of the first world despite the fact that their economies thrive on capitalism."

Manto believed that socialism could regain its strength once again. "But it can only be possible through unity," he said.

"The trade union movement was quite strong in Karachi where workers launched quite a few successful movements in the past. But the movements were later divided on linguistic and sectarian lines, causing them to crumble."

Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research Chief Executive Karamat Ali said though Gianchandani had been born in a Hindu family, his actual religion was humanity.

Messages from Communist Party India (CPI) and CPI-Marxist were also read out on the occasion. An audio message by peasants' leader Jam Saqi was also played for the audience.

Urdu translation of Sobho Gyanchandani's memoirs launched

By Maleeha Hamid Siddiqui

KARACHI: Speakers at a condolence reference paid homage to the late leftist leader Sobho Gyanchandani for his contribution to the communist, peasant and progressive movements. An Urdu translation of his autobiography was also launched on the occasion.

The reference was organised by The Comrade Sobho Gyanchandani Memorial Committee at the Karachi Arts Council on Sunday.

I A Rehman, the secretary general of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, spoke about Comrade Sobho's optimistic attitude despite his personal suffering. "He once told me about his eldest son Kanhayyo who was unable to find a job even though he had an MBBS degree."

Mr Rehman thought the situation ironical in a country where fake degrees can be bought, based on which well-connected people are given jobs and ministerial positions.

He related another such story

that Comrade Sobho had shared. "Another time when he had lost in an election, he said: 'why does this happen to us?'" Perhaps, there was no *dharna* brigade behind him, quipped the rights activist. "He was saddened by these things but he never gave up. His motto was 'what next?'"

Earlier, the director of the Pakistan Study Centre at Karachi University, Dr Jaffar Ahmed, discussed the main takeaways from the Urdu translation of Comrade Sobho's memoirs *Roshni Ke Safar Main*.

"One has read books by left-wing intellectuals and leaders, mostly filled with regrets and disappointments. They all felt their struggle was in vain. But this is not the case when one reads Sobho's autobiography."

His childhood memories, his experience of the famous Rabinranath Tagore Shantiniketan in West Bengal, his erudition were other important takeaways from the book, Dr Ahmed added. "The book also talks

about crucial periods in history as witnessed by Comrade Sobho including the change in position by the Communist Party from fighting against the British colonial power to becoming their allies and the subsequent confusion it created in the minds of its committed workers. His struggles in the new country and his imprisonment experiences are some of the important facets of this book."

Moonis Ayaz, son of renowned poet and writer Sheikh Ayaz, was also present at the condolence reference and spoke about his personal relationship with Comrade Sobho, whom he used to call *Chacha* (uncle), and his son. "I concur what has been told earlier about *Chacha* that his children and books were his weaknesses. I was very close to his son

Kanhayyo whose sudden death caused a lot of grief to *Chacha*. His son was intelligent and a humanist. *Chacha* was a father figure to us and was personally involved in our lives. I learnt a lot from him."

Syed Mazhar Jameel, author of *Sobho Gyanchandani: Shaksyat aur Fun*, gave a brief background about the late leftist leader. His life began at a village called Bindi near Moenjodaro and he was heavily influenced by his paternal grandfather who would read out *shlokas* of Guru Nanak and poetry of Rumi. Mr Jameel delved into detail about Comrade Sobho's experiences in Shantiniketan including the setting up of study circles by the young fiery student.

The leader of Awami Workers Party, Abid Hasan Minto, uti-

lised the condolence reference to motivate the left-wing workers, labour leaders and peasant representatives to unite and work from one platform. "We all have to come together to stem the deterioration of society. This was Sobho's mission and we need to continue with it."

Normally at a condolence reference tributes are given in the form of speeches but in the case of comrade Sobho, they were also expressed in poetic verses in Sindhi, English and Urdu by several admirers, including Muslim Shamim, Imdad Hussain and Dr Ghazala Rehman.

The programme ended with a performance on the poetry of Sheikh Ayaz, Rabinranath Tagore and Shah Abdul Latif Bhittawi by classical dancer Sheema Kermani.

DAWN MONDAY JANUARY 26, 2015



A DANCE performance of the kundalini reference for Buddha Gyandharani held at the Arts Council Sunday — White Star