

More Nobel laureates of Lahore

Lahore
Dawn
20-1-02

BY SYED BIRJEES ASGHAR

In an article titled *The Nobel laureates of Lahore* which appeared in *Dawn Magazine* of July 8, 2001, this writer had presented the theme that four of the Nobel laureates of the last century had been either born, studied or at times worked in Lahore. They were Rudyard Kipling, Editor of *Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore (Nobel Prize for Literature — 1907), Dr Harr Gobind Khorrana (Nobel Prize in Physiology — 1968), Dr Abdus Salam (Nobel Prize in Physics — 1979) and Subramaniam Chandrashekar (Nobel Prize

for Physics — 1983).

The theme ended on a note that yet another Nobel laureate, Dr Arthur Holy Compton (Nobel Prize for scientific studies in X-radiations — 1927) had worked in Lahore. But biographical notes about him and his stay or work in Lahore were amiss, although his association with Lahore was in no doubt. Hence, he could be called an additional half-Lahori Nobel laureate.

After the article appeared, a few learned readers wrote and informed me about Dr Compton's stay in Lahore. This writer would like to

share the information with *Dawn* readers.

A worthy reader has stated that Dr Arthur H. Compton did indeed live in the city. He used to reside in Ewing Hall, a hostel of Forman Christian College (Now GFCC), situated at Nila Gumbad in front of the Patiala Block of the King Edward Medical College.

Yet another reader, a retired federal secretary informed that during the days when the Institute of Chemical Technology was operating at the old campus of the Punjab University on the Mall, a plaque existed outside a laboratory of the institute which stated that Dr Arthur

Holy Compton had worked there.

Yet another recently-retired chairman of one of the PU departments has informed this writer that a plaque did exist at the old campus outside a laboratory of the department of chemistry which commemorated Dr Compton having worked there. This plaque now does not exist at the old campus perhaps having been lost during the shift of these departments to the new campus. With this evidence, one could confirm the association of this scientist with the Punjab University. So the list of Nobel laureates with whom

Lahore could claim association would be a definite four-and-a-half as the original article claimed.

But let us now move onwards. Another Nobel laureate of transitory association of a few months at least was — hold your breath — Sir Winston Spencer Churchill — the World War II Prime Minister of Great Britain who earned the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1953 and was received on his behalf by Lady Churchill from the Royal Swedish Academy. History has recorded Churchill to be the greatest Englishman of the 20th Century.

Sir Winston was the grandson of the fabled Duke of Wellington. After his schooling from one of the private schools to which the sons of the blue blood lineages were sent (Eaton, Harrow Winchester) he joined the British Army at the turn of the century. As a young military officer he was posted at Landikotal in the NWFP, close to the Afghanistan border and Central Asia where the big Russian-British game for the control of Czarist-influenced Afghanistan was going on at the time (a bigger game is still on in Afghanistan in wake of the Sept 11 events). Churchill undertook many

ore

Lahore.

Dawn

20-1-02

Sir Winston was the grandson of the fabled Duke of Wellington. After his schooling from one of the private schools to which the sons of the blue blood lineages were sent (Eaton, Harrow Winchester) he joined the British Army at the turn of the century. As a young military officer he was posted at Landikotal in the NWFP, close to the Afghanistan border and Central Asia where the big Russian-British game for the control of Czarist-influenced Afghanistan was going on at the time (a bigger game is still on in Afghanistan in wake of the Sept 11 events). Churchill undertook many

intelligence-gathering forays into Afghanistan and beyond in the North. Around twenty dispatches by him were published in the erstwhile *Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, then edited by another Englishman, Rudyard Kipling. A description of his meetings with Kipling exists in the *Kipling Papers* kept at the old India Office Library in London.

For his arrangements with C&MG, Churchill had to travel to Lahore on occasions to negotiate with Kipling. And he kept on returning to Lahore from his Hindukush posting again and again. A writer for *Dawn* had stated that the records of Lahore Polo Club show that Churchill had indeed played at the club. Surely, his visits to Lahore were not for polo playing or

possibly for gymkhana-izing only. He would have closely seen the life in Lahore in those colonial days of strong British hold over the subcontinent. The impressions gathered or the views then formed about this country, its culture, its people, their aspirations must have influenced the thinking of this statesman-cum-politician-cum-historian, author-cum-painter-cum-bricklayer and many times important minister of the realm between the two World Wars. These impressions must have played a role in forming the thoughts of his contemporaries as well as holding on to the colonial rule over the Jewel Colony or to let it go out of the British hold under the garb of Lady Independence which, anyhow, came about 50 years later. ■

S