

Godha Ram Channon papers

Ms. Coll. 1430

Finding aid prepared by Sam Allingham.

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University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Creator	Channon, Godha Ram, 1882-1954
Title	Godha Ram Channon papers
Call number	Ms. Coll. 1430
Date [bulk]	1930-1954
Date [inclusive]	1913-1983
Extent	2 boxes
Language	English
Language Note	The bulk of the collection is in English; material in Hindi and Urdu have been separated into a distinct series.
Abstract	Godha Ram Channon (1882-1954) was an Indian-American political activist who played a critical role in the Indian independence movement as a member of the Ghadar Party, an expatriate revolutionary organization based in San Francisco. This collection includes material collected and created by Godha Ram Channon, as well as a small amount produced and collected by his son, V.P.: correspondence; writing by Godha Ram Channon and others; personal and professional material; material related to events planned and attended by Channon; material in Urdu and Hindi; newspaper clippings; photographs; and a small amount of miscellaneous material.

Cite as:

Godha Ram Channon papers, 1913-1983 (bulk: 1930-1954), Ms. Coll. 1430, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

Biography/History

Godha Ram Channon (1882-1954) was an Indian-American political activist who played a critical role in the Indian independence movement as a member of the Ghadar Party, an expatriate revolutionary organization based in San Francisco. Born in the village of Koradhi in Punjab (now Pakistan), Channon served in the Revenue Department of the government of Punjab and as an official of the Maharaja of Patiala. During this time, he became familiar with the works of Har Dayal, later a prominent member of the Ghadar Party. In 1912, Channon visited California to study American agricultural methods. At the advice of Dayal, who was spending time in America, he took up residence in San Francisco, where he founded the India-China Trading Company, an import/export business, and began political work with the Ghadar Party.

Within the Ghadar Party, Channon's role was primarily editorial and literary. He served as the chief Urdu calligrapher for party publications, as well as writing and editing articles. In 1917, he was one of the defendants in the Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial, in which members of the Ghadar Party were accused by the U.S. government (at the behest of the United Kingdom) of fomenting a military uprising in India in collaboration with Germany. Convicted of violating the neutrality of the United States, Channon began a nearly year-long prison sentence in 1918, leaving prison at the time of the Armistice of World War I. After decades of commercial success and advocacy on the behalf of India-related causes, such as citizenship eligibility for Indian immigrants in the United States and a U.S. pledge to support Indian independence in the wake of World War II, Channon served as a link between the newly independent nation and the expatriate Indian community on the American West Coast. He was Secretary of the Reception Committee who planned and supervised visits by the Indian Prime Minister Nehru and Ambassador to the United States V.L. Pandit in 1949 and 1950. Channon finally visited India for the first time since his emigration in 1952. Though he supported the new Indian government, Channon was disappointed by the partition of India, especially since his own homeland in Punjab (which became part of the new nation of Pakistan) suffered from violent dislocation of Hindi nationals, rioting, and looting. He advocated for many displaced citizens of Punjab, helping them emigrate to and seek employment in the United States.

Godha Ram Channon died in 1954; at which point, Channon's son, V.P. Channon, assumed responsibility for much of the business of the India-China Trading Company. The younger Channon sold the company to the Sidha Corporation in 1980.

Scope and Contents

This collection includes material collected and created by Godha Ram Channon, as well as a small amount produced and collected by his son, V.P.: correspondence; writing by Godha Ram and others; personal and professional material; material related to events planned and attended by Godha Ram Channon; material in Urdu and Hindi; newspaper clippings; photographs; and a small amount of miscellaneous material.

The majority of the correspondence is either to or from Godha Ram Channon, and concerns commercial and political matters; there is a smaller amount of correspondence between V.P. and various correspondents, mostly concerning V.P.'s trip to India in 1981. While there is no distinguishing professional, political, and personal correspondence, the tone of the letters is formal, and there is little to no discussion of private or family matters. Godha Ram Channon's wife, for example, is almost never mentioned.

The writing by Godha Ram Channon concerns literary and political matters, such as the efficacy of Dollar Exchange with America after Indian independence, while the writing by others consists primarily of political articles concerning Indian independence and partition.

Personal and professional material are collected together in a single series because it is impossible to distinguish Godha Ram Channon's work as an import/export merchant with his (sometimes clandestine) political work. This series contains personal documents, such as resumes and letters of recommendation; legal documents, such as mortgages; identification and membership cards; contact lists of names and addresses; research material and library call slips; photographs; notebooks; and financial documents.

Event material consists of documents related to the planning and execution of official visits by Indian Prime Minister Nehru and Ambassador to the United States V.I. Pandit, as well as playbills and fliers for events collected by Godha Ram Channon. Hindi and Urdu material consists of publications in both languages and handwritten material, some of it presumably in Godha Ram Channon's hand.

The newspaper clippings are predominately of articles related to India's struggle for independence and the political situation after Indian independence and partition.

The photographs are wide-ranging in subject, from photos of documents to travel pictures to portraits of Channon's family and associates.

The miscellaneous documents contain a yearbook of uncertain provenance, a printed card with medical advice, and several sheets of stamps.

A non-inclusive selection of scanned digital copies of material from this collection is available at the South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA) at the following address:
<https://www.saada.org/browse/collection/godha-ram-channon-papers>

Administrative Information

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2020 March 12

Finding aid prepared by Sam Allingham.

Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research use.

Use Restrictions

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Source of Acquisition

Purchased 2014.

Controlled Access Headings

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Business letters
- Business records
- Correspondence

GEOGRAPHIC NAME(S)

- India--History--20th century
- India--History--British occupation, 1765-1947
- India--Politics and government--1919-1947
- India--Politics and government--1947-
- India--Social life and customs

SUBJECT(S)

- Business
- Emigration and immigration
- Ethnic conflict--India
- Indian diaspora studies
- Political science

Collection Inventory

I. CORRESPONDENCE.

Scope and Contents note

This series contains four subseries: correspondence to and from Godha Ram Channon; correspondence to and from his son, V.P. Channon; correspondence to and from others; and a small series of empty envelopes. The correspondence provides a sense of the breadth of Godha Ram Channon's political and business connections; there are many recipients but very few repeat correspondents. While the correspondence contains personal, political, and professional exchanges, the tone is formal, and there are few discussions of private or family matters. Godha Ram Channon's wife, for example, is rarely mentioned. The subseries are arranged chronologically.

TO AND FROM GODHA RAM CHANNON.

	Box	Folder
1923-1946.	1	1
1947.	1	2
1948.	1	3
1949.	1	4
1950.	1	5
1951.	1	6
1952-1953.	1	7
undated.	1	8

TO AND FROM V.P. CHANNON.

	Box	Folder
1970-1985.	1	9
undated.	1	10

TO AND FROM OTHERS.

	Box	Folder
Gurem, Isher Singh and Portuguese Embassy of Goa, 1938.	1	11
Unknown recipients, undated.	1	12

EMPTY ENVELOPES.

	Box	Folder
1947-1984, undated.	1	13

II. WRITING.

Scope and Contents note

This series consists of two subseries: writing by Godha Ram Channon and writing by others. The writing by Channon spans literary and political topics, such as the nature of true love and the feasibility of a dollar exchange program between the newly independent nation of India and the United States. The writing by others consists mostly of long-form political articles, both published and in typescript, concerning the international context for Indian independence and for India's struggles as a newly independent state. The subseries are arranged chronologically.

BY GODHA RAM CHANNON.

	Box	Folder
Essays and articles in typescript, 1913-circa 1950.	1	14
Notes on horoscopes, circa 1981.	1	15
Handwritten notes.	1	16

BY OTHERS.

	Box	Folder
1906-1959.	1	17
undated.	1	18

III. PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL MATERIAL.

Scope and Contents note

Personal and professional material are collected together in a single series because it is impossible to distinguish Channon's work as an import/export merchant with his (sometimes clandestine) political work. It contains personal documents, such as resumes and letters of recommendation; legal documents, such as mortgages; identification and membership cards; contact lists of names and addresses, as well as business cards; research material and library call slips; photographs; postcards from Japan, Hyderabad (modern day Pakistan), and India; notebooks; financial documents; and advertisements from the India-China Trading Company clipped from newspapers and magazines. The material is arranged chronologically at the file level.

	Box	Folder
Godha Ram Channon personal documents, 1930-1960, undated.	1	19

Godha Ram Channon legal documents, 1924-1948, undated.	1	20
Godha Ram Channon identification and membership cards, 1950-1952.	1	21
Contact lists, 1907-1951.	2	1
Contact lists, undated.	2	2
Business cards, undated.	2	3
Applications received by Godha Ram Channon from Indians seeking employment in the United States, circa 1952.	2	4
Godha Ram Channon research material on literary and political topics, undated.	2	5
Godha Ram Channon library call slips, undated.	2	6
Photographs of Godha Ram Channon, circa 1952, undated.	2	7
Material from V.P. Channon's trip to India, 1981.	2	8
Godha Ram Channon notebook with language learning materials in Japanese and Tamil, with comic laid in, circa 1943.	2	9
Postcards of India, Hyderabad, and Japan, undated.	2	10
Financial documents, personal and professional, 1934-1981, undated.	2	11
Advertisements in print periodicals for Channon's import/export business, circa 1942-1951.	2	12

IV. EVENT MATERIAL.

Scope and Contents note

This series contains material surrounding California visits by Indian Prime Minister Nehru (1949) and Indian Ambassador to the United States V.I. Pandit (1950), sponsored by a committee of Indian activists on the West Coast, for which Godha Ram Channon served as secretary. In addition, there is a collection of programs and ephemera from cultural and political events related to Indian political debates and the Indian diaspora. The material is arranged chronologically.

	Box	Folder
Visit to California by Indian Prime Minister Pandit Nehru, including meeting minutes, guest lists, programs, and budget documents, 1949.	2	13
Visit to California by Indian Ambassador to the United States, V.L. Pandit, including meeting minutes, guest lists, programs, and budget documents, 1949-1950.	2	14
Assorted event fliers, 1932-1983.	2	15

VII. COLLECTED PHOTOGRAPHS.

Scope and Contents note

This series contains photographs collected by Godha Ram. (Photographs of Godha Ram himself can be found in Series III: Personal and professional material.) The subjects of the photographs are various, and include photos of documents, travel photos, and family portraits. The material is arranged alphabetically by subject and chronologically at the file level, though many of the photographs are undated.

	Box	Folder
Documents, 1952.	2	25
Portraits, 1951, undated.	2	26
	Box	Folder
Portraits, undated.	1	1
	Box	Folder

Travel, 1939, undated.	2	27
	Box	Folder

Travel, undated.	1	1
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V. HINDI AND URDU MATERIAL.

HINDI MATERIAL.

	Box	Folder
Publications, circa 1981.	2	16
Handwritten material, circa 1981.	2	17

URDU MATERIAL.

	Oversize	Folder
Publications, 1951.	1	1
	Oversize	Folder
Publications, circa 1981.	2	18
Handwritten material, circa 1951-1981.	2	19

VI. NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS.

Scope and Contents note

This series contains newspaper clippings collected by Godha Ram. The clippings primarily concern international politics, especially relations between India, Britain, and the United States in the aftermath of World War II and Indian independence. The material is arranged chronologically.

	Box	Folder
1938-1945.	2	20
1946-1949.	2	21
1950-1951.	2	22
1952.	2	23
1982-1984, undated.	2	24

VIII. MISCELLANEOUS.

Scope and Contents note

The miscellaneous material consists of only a single file folder. The material includes a yearbook of uncertain provenance, a printed card with medical advice, and several sheets of stamps.

	Box	Folder
Miscellaneous.	2	28